BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 19

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 19, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

363 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 19

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles 21

The world in its friendships and the flesh in its worst forms have under the cunning wiles of Satan rudely shaken the king on the throne; and he would have stumbled to rise no more, but that the word and the purpose of God are in question. So grace meets and triumphs over the sin, for God is pledged to bring the king through all. “Yet again there is war.” David is still the point of attack, as it were the citadel, hitherto found impregnable, of the kingdom which stands or falls with him. After proving that all attempts have as yet only established David more firmly (if possible) in his kingdom, Satan turns to other means to attain his end. David's heart is lifted up with vanity, and he seeks to gratify himself with his own glory, as if independent of God, forgetting that it was God Who had clothed him with honor and renown as with a garment.

It is a like vain glory which has wrought ruin in the church. It began in the admiration of itself. The attributing to itself, as the source, all the things it admired, early shut out the Lord from view, and then it became a question only of proselytizing. The Lord was forgotten, and increased numbers the aim. The professing church has boasted of its own riches, saying it has need of nothing; while the truth is, it is wretched and miserable and poor, blind and naked (see Rev. 3:17). Becoming more boastful, yet more wretched, it awaits a fuller development of pride, to be followed by sure and unsparing judgment. “I will spue thee out of my mouth” is not all. Compare Rev. 17, 18.

David's sin lies not in the bare fact of numbering the people; for they had been numbered by God's command before. God looks at the hidden spring. Fleshly and worldly ostentation, springing up in his heart, for the moment shut out the thought of God. Had David forgotten the grace that took him while yet unknown, and even unthought of by his own family, and anointed him to be king? His heart swelling with his own greatness, as if acquired by his own power, he would know the extent of his rule from Beersheba even unto Dan. God judged the secret motive, and later on David judges himself. “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 very foolishly” (21: 8). Does not Psa. 30 refer to this time when prosperity for a moment hid God from his soul? “And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.” When restored, all breaks into the praise of God, “To the end my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent; O Lord my God. I will give thanks unto Thee forever.”

To trust in prosperity, in earthly riches, is a danger for most if not all saints. It was so in the days of old when prosperity in earthly things was a mark of God's favor. How much greater the folly of trusting to them now, when our true riches are revealed to be heavenly and not earthly! To boast of spiritual gifts and attainments as if acquired by our own skill is even more offensive to the Lord, Who alone gives as it pleases Him. It is to put God's blessings and favors in the place of God Himself. If the perishable things of this life are His gift, how much more the spiritual and eternal! Forget not all His benefits, but bless the Lord.

It was the same spirit of pride and self-complacency as in Nebuchadnezzar. The self-complacency might be greater in him, but the sin was greater in David. It was but natural in the heathen king, and he had a wider domain than David; but David knew God, therefore his guilt was greater. Hear

the heathen's confession of sin. For one year after the warning from Daniel he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon and said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty.” In like spirit David looked on Jerusalem and all Israel, and in the consciousness of being king would know the extent of his power and the number of the people. The iniquity of his sin in the sight of God may be seen in the manner of God's judgment. On his fall before when owned, the prophet said, “The Lord hath put away thy sin.” In this the confession is not met with the declaration of mercy, but with an offer of three kinds of judgment. Had David dared to choose, he would have found how vain was his numbering the people. As it was, piously choosing to fall into the hand of God and leaving all in His hand, thousands were cut off as in a moment. It was a solemn rebuke to David. The Lord is saying to him, “All souls are mine"; and He can increase or diminish the number at a word.

Though the same kind of sin in both David and Nebuchadnezzar, how different the manner of judgment! David confesses his sin and the chastisement comes after. Nebuchadnezzar confesses after his recovery. In both we see how swiftly judgment overtook the sin. When the numbering was completed, immediately Israel is smitten and the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword stands over Jerusalem: David makes confession and rears an altar. Here grace triumphs over judgment. There is submission to the Lord, and confidence in Him. David chooses nothing but to fall into the hand of the Lord, “for very great are His mercies.” Remark that faith accompanies true confession; and it would appear before the three days are ended the Lord said to the destroying angel, “It is enough, stay now thine hand.” In this case the people suffered, for the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. We do not read of any special judgment on the Babylonians, it falls upon the king alone. Upon him it was sudden and terrible. In the same hour of his boasting the judgment fell on him (see Dan. 4:25, 33), swift and unexpected. So it was with the antediluvians, so with Sodom; so it will be in the days of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26-30). There doubtless were consternation and fear in his court, for it was no ordinary case of insanity, as infidels since have dared to say, as they do of the possessed of demons in the Gospels. Were there such infidels then? Wonderful as the account is, believers know that it is true. Indeed the words of scripture are far too precise to admit of any meaning short of literal fact. He was driven from the abodes of men, did eat grass as oxen, his body was wet with the dew of heaven (i.e., wore no clothing), his hair grew like eagle's feathers, and his hair like bird's claws. It was God's rebuke, terrible in its measure, but blessed in its ultimate result.

Dan. 4 appears to be in the main the confession of Nebuchadnezzar after his restoration to his throne. He relates how he was warned, his exceeding pride and sin, and how great the judgment upon him; how at the end of the days he lifted up his eyes, at the end of the seven times meted to his punishment; and his reason came as suddenly as it was taken from him; and his first thing is to honor Him that liveth forever. Therefore he thinks it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God had wrought towards him (ver. 2). And he tells of a miracle at his return to his kingdom as striking as when men drove him away (he was not shut up in a madhouse). “At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me, and I was established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto me.” That his lords and courtiers should seek him after seven years' estrangement, that excellent majesty should be added unto him, mark the miraculous controlling power of Him Who holds all things in His hand. Nebuchadnezzar, in the opening and

closing verses of this chapter (Dan. 4), praises the King of heaven, the One Who had shown signs and wonders to him.

David's praise rises higher, but then his confession was deeper, “I have done very foolishly.” This was an intelligent saint, that an ignorant heathen. But the word of God closes its history of the mighty man of the earth, the head of gold, with his being a worshipper by grace. There is a faith that believes “that He is,” and God is a rewarder of such. Shall we not see him in the kingdom of God among those who come from the east and the west, from the north and the south? There was not “much” given to him, but God looks to what a man hath.

This attempt of Satan against Israel is also baffled, and becomes the occasion for a further and greater display of that grace which is the only foundation of God's kingdom among men. If the sword of the Lord is drawn out against rebellious man, His grace lingers over him, and puts back the sword, for a time into its sheath. It is here as we read in the prophets, “But I wrought for My name's sake.” That wondrous name had been declared to Moses. A name which shot forth bright but transient rays before the glorious light was displayed in Christ. Oftentimes mercy and goodness rose above the law on which man had perched himself. What more glorious proof of that name could there be before Christ came than when Jehovah restrains the avenging sword that was already stretched out over Jerusalem?

In Chronicles this is the last recorded attempt of Satan against the kingdom during David's life. In it David failing, but grace triumphing, brings to view, in a little, the grace now fully displayed in Christ; for here in result an altar is built on the floor of a Jebusite, a Gentile. The ark of the covenant was in the tent in the city of David (16:1). And the old altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle of the Lord which Moses made in the wilderness, “were at that season in the high place at Gibeon,” and David is afraid to go there, because of the sword of the angel of the Lord. This sword is always connected with the old altar and the tabernacle that Moses made. But here is an altar altogether new, built by the man who feared to go to the other. Is not David's son made the occasion of showing that grace without law is the only foundation even for the kingdom, and that the priests of the Aaronic type have nothing to do with it? For it is David the king that builds it, and sacrifices on it, and the Lord answers by fire. It is a new way, unknown to the law, where are found both Israelite and Jebusite. What right had the priests who served at the altar in Gibeon to the altar built by the king? And what right have those who plead works as a ground of acceptance with God to the altar which is the expression of pure, unmingled, sovereign grace, without works? Here is a transient ray from that name long before declared to Moses, and now in far fuller character to all that have ears to hear. R. B.

Chapter 2

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles 22-29

The opening words of chapter 22 taken in immediate connection with ver. 28 of the preceding chapter (of which the 29th and 30th are parenthetical) show David, as it were, recognizing and bowing to the truth that neither himself could stand, nor the kingdom be established, save as the fruit of grace without the works of law. For that was the great truth stamped upon the altar built on Oman's threshing floor. It was in connection with, and the immediate sequence of, the word of grace, “It is enough, stay now thy hand,” i.e., mercy free and pure. The old altar is connected with law, and judgment, and the sword; and David is afraid. His fear is not the result of having no confidence in the Lord, but rather a tacit confession that he deserved death and could not stand before the sword. He builds an altar and turns to it where there is no angel with a drawn sword to fear, and says, “This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.” This is the altar of thanksgiving for the mercy which rose above the law that demanded righteous judgment. With what deep feeling of heart David would say, “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Psalm 148), and while fearing the just judgment of God, yet peacefully resting upon His grace symbolized by a new altar exclaim (as in Psalm 144), “I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God.” A new altar demands and necessitates a new song. But the time was not yet come for the full display of this grace, indeed could only come by Him of Whom the Holy Spirit wrote by the pen of John, “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). So afterward Solomon and all the congregation go to the high place at Gibeon, the place of law, turning from the new altar on the threshing floor of the Jebusite, where only sovereign grace untrammeled by the requirements of the law was found. There were deeper evils in man yet to be brought into the light before God's due time came, when His grace revealed in the cross could meet the need of the worst. Therefore a little longer for Israel to continue under the law, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

This is the last attempt of Satan, recorded in Chronicles, against the kingdom during the life of David. He failed, but grace triumphed, and brings to view a better blessing, with victory through the grace of God, deliverance from the snares of the devil. Satan was bruised under his feet; and in the same manner we shall be victors, for it is written, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20)—your feet!

David's closing days are in peace, and the house of God is his uppermost thought. Though not allowed to build it, it is his part to prepare all the material, to give the patterns and appoint the order of service; and in giving these he was greater than Solomon who only built according to the prepared plan. God made David to understand (28:19), even as He made Moses understand when He showed the patterns for the service of the tabernacle, “See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount” (Hebrews 8:5). Besides the things, there were the twelve legions and their captains, and their monthly service. Surely all this care and minute arrangement will have its answer in the peaceful glories of Messiah's reign!

Not without a special divine purpose are all the sons of Moses reckoned among the mass of common Levites. “Now concerning Moses, the man of God [he himself is most prominent, and distinguished by that title], his sons were named of the tribe of Levi.” (23:14). No succession here of that kind of which a Judaizing Christendom boasts. His immediate successor in leading Israel into the promised land was Joshua the son of Nun. It was according to the wisdom of God in that dispensation that the sons of Aaron should inherit his honors, and ordinarily that the eldest should be high priest after him. All this necessarily passed away when the True and Great High. Priest came, Who abides forever. But to be the leader of His people was an appointment that God kept in His own immediate hand (Joshua 1:1, 2); and both were needed.

We pass over the names and the apportioned work in the following chapters; not that they are unimportant, but the full meaning of their enumeration may be only clearly seen when all shall be accomplished under the reign of the true Solomon. But we may be allowed to point out that in all this the singers have a prominent place (25. is all about the singers). How the Lord delights in the songs of His people! He names the families of the singers, and gives through David the psalms to be sung; and so we read as the heading to most, if not all, of the psalms, “To the chief musician,” &c. Is it only Israel who is called to sing? Is it not so now, while the church, the future grand choir of the courts above, is now below? Yea, “Rejoice in the Lord alway, again I say rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

In the presence of the assembled chiefs David encourages and warns his son: a word for him, but as in their hearing, for them also. Solomon was foremost among them, and the earthly link between Jehovah and the people. But this picture of the future glory and the kingdom will be soon dimmed; for the glory of its then appearance is to be committed to the hand of man. Will he maintain it? Solomon is warned that his present glory and magnificence, which was not of his own acquiring but a special gift from God, would soon pass away if he were not faithful. And with the glory of the king would pass away the happiness of the people. How intimately the king's glory, the kingdom's prosperity, the people's joys and obedience to the law of God are interwoven; and he, Solomon, would be responsible for all. How earnestly David exhorts him to be faithful and to take heed (28:1-10).

David in the presence of all the congregation blesses the Lord, ascribing all his glory to God. The people and he were but strangers and sojourners as all their fathers were. And of the gold and silver which they had so abundantly given, after all it was what God had already given them, and he acknowledges God's claim over it all; “for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.” How beautiful and acceptable to God this low but only right place of humility and thanksgiving; how different from the human boastful spirit that led him to number Israel (21.)! But now he has reached the end of his course, a point where for the display of the future glory of God's King he must give place to another. He has risen, step by step, through changing scenes, through sorrows and victories, and not without slips, personally to this point where Israel are now found worshipping God, and the joy is great, “And (they) did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness” (29:22).

In this joyful festive scene how apparently abrupt the transition appears from David to Solomon. The man of war makes room for the prince of peace. David vanishes, as it were, swallowed up in the glory (we may say that in the person of his son), clothed upon with immortality; not here in the

typical scene taken away by death, but, as the poets sing, like the star of the morning absorbed in the surpassing light of the rising sun. Surely a fitting close for him who was chosen to be a type of the Lord as a Man of war; and more by this divine silence was he honored than was Jacob when all the elders of Egypt, with the chariots and horsemen, followed him to his grave. Nor need we ask how, for it is not David nor yet Solomon that fills the eye of the Holy Spirit, but the Christ and His never ending and unbroken glories.

The last act of David is to call Israel to the feast, and his last words are “Now bless the Lord your God” (29:20). The congregation respond, and bless the Lord God of their fathers. But there is in this feast more than meets the natural eye. This was a feast of the Lord, and anticipative of a greater feast, and of a greater congregation, when the Son of David will say, “My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation” (Psa. 22:25). Though not many souls might then have been able to be glad in its prophetic light, yet nonetheless it does point to a future feast, never to be thrown into the shade by succeeding rebellion and shame. For then a new heart will be given to the people, and clean water will be sprinkled upon them, and all shall know Jehovah. David begins the feast, clothed with the renown of a mighty conqueror who was never defeated, but whose course was marked with power and victory from the time that he rescued the lamb from the mouth of the lion and the bear, until the sons of the giant, the last of his enemies, fall by his hand, or by the hand of his Servants (20: 8). But these warrior glories are mellowed in the golden splendor of Solomon, of peace and plenty and undisputed supremacy.

“And they [the people] made Solomon, the son of David, king the second time.” This marks a change. David disappears. Solomon sits upon the throne of the Lord. Looking for a moment at this scene apart from its typical aspect, what a coronation (to use an earthly term) had Solomon! In the annals of the world, of its triumphs and rejoicings, was there ever such a national rejoicing as this? Yet how short even this magnificence falls of the exceeding glory and gladness to come! And this future gladness is unmingled with woe of any kind, while there is not a scene of the world's glory and apparent joy but has beneath its surface in not a few hearts a feeling (it may be) of incurable sadness. Here is no masked grief, but joy unfeigned. Yet it is not the very image, but a shadow of that to come. For Israel, David, and Solomon, in this first book of Chronicles, are but the frame containing God's picture of His Son in His earthly glory. What if some of the colors in that picture are human and therefore dark? They only enhance the brightness of Him Who stands in the foreground, Who is the center of all; the sun illuminating not only Israel but the whole world.

The last verses (29:26, etc.) are an addendum; for the 25th verse is a fitting close to the announcement that Solomon “sat on the throne of the LORD.” What other in such a position could there be that “the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before hint in Israel.” The picture of the glory is rolled up. The following verses are but the notice of David's death, and where the records of his reign may be found—his death as a man, not in his typical aspect, (that has ceased,) and Solomon takes his father's place.

Chapter 3

Brief Thoughts on 1 Timothy 1:15 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8: Part 1

In these scriptures are the two termini of the Christian course here below. At the starting point the chief of sinners receives salvation, accepting that worthy saying; and at the end the same man anticipates a crown of righteousness, which he is assured is laid up for him. And let us mark well that He, Who gives salvation at the beginning as the Savior, gives the crown at the end as the righteous Judge to all that loved and do love His appearing.

If we did not know the converting power accompanying the grace that bringeth salvation, we might wonder how he who calls himself the chief of sinners, when he speaks of the beginning of his course, can at the close look forward to a crown. It was not self-confidence; for while the righteousness spoken of in the above scriptures is the practical righteousness of a saint, yet it is the language of one who rejoices in Christ, Who alone gives the assurance of salvation. And that blessed assurance is not because of the saint's own faithfulness, but through faith in Him Who has accomplished eternal redemption, Who thereby delivers the believer from all fear. For His perfect love casts out fear, and sets him free to devote himself with all his energy to the service of the Lord, that when he is arrived at the finishing of his course he may be able to say, I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.

This righteousness is not that which every believer is made. Believing in Christ he is made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5), and also his faith is imputed to him for righteousness (Rom. 5). But it is the practical righteousness of a faithful believer. Every believer may rejoice in the perfect righteousness with which he is clothed and in which he stands before God, even the righteousness of faith in Christ; but not every one can say, I have fought the good fight. It is well, by the sustaining and persevering grace of God Who never leaves him, if he may say, I have kept the faith, that is, if grace keeps him in the faith. Paul could say both.

Redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, through His blood we have, but conversion or change, turning from darkness to light, is the work of the Spirit of God, Who dwells in us because we are redeemed by the blood of Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit, important and indispensable as it is, in no way redeems us, or adds any value to the precious blood of Christ. This alone reconciles. Man thinks to add his own imperfect works to the infinite worth of His blood. Even God does not add the perfect and necessary work of the Holy Spirit as increasing the value and efficacy of His (Christ's) redeeming (and this eternally) death on the cross; but the Spirit dwells wherever that blood is applied. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. but works savingly on every soul that Christ's faithful saying. We are forgiven for Christ's sake, but that is not the being turned from darkness to light, from idols to serve the living and true God; if we are in Christ, we are a new creation.

Conversion and redemption are indissolubly joined in the grace that brings God's salvation to us; for he who is saved is converted, and he who is converted is also redeemed, and we so speak and understand. Nevertheless conversion and redemption are two things distinct from each other,

inasmuch as redemption is done for us, a work outside of us, on the cross, but the work of the Holy Spirit precedes and follows within us. The Spirit of God works in all believers because the blood of Christ has washed away all their sins, to be molded and fashioned according to the will and purpose of God. There is no difference in the relative standing of every believer before God, all are redeemed, all forgiven, all made the sons of God through faith in Christ. But in the actual condition, seen even in the sons, what lack of faith! What failure! What worldliness among those who profess separation from the world! But thanks be to God, the blood abides, and in spite of failures and hardness of heart, the Holy Spirit in us works till all is judged morally and we transformed according to the mind of God.

To receive the crown is not the special privilege of an apostle. There is a crown laid up for every believer to be given at the appearing. The word of God places it in view now, as an incentive to endurance and perseverance whatever may be the roughness and sorrow in the way between the two termini, and with it as an encircling scroll—let no man take it. For while the Lord Jesus as Savior gives salvation to the chief of sinners at the beginning of the course, He holds the crown, as the righteous Judge to be given in due time, and this in connection with the saint's responsibility.

But the saint, the believer, is converted and redeemed before his new responsibility. There is the responsibility of the unconverted man (a fearful account he will have to render), yet that is not here, but the believer's, now that he is a new creature. For the grace of God appears first bringing salvation to the lost and dead; then when alive again by the quickening voice of the Son of God, that grace teaches the believer to deny all ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, and to look for the appearing of His glory (Titus 2). To deny all ungodliness, to live soberly and righteously, is with many the sum-total of Christianity, reducing it to the level of duty. Not so. For here godliness is added, and no law or commandment ever made a man godly. It might make him apparently righteous (provided that temptation was not too strong) but never godly, and this is joined to the looking for (i e. waiting) His glorious appearing, that is, the appearing of His glory; when that comes, righteous retribution and judgment also come, There can be no completeness without looking for the appearing. This is not possible but for him who loves it—unless as a criminal condemned looks for the execution. To live godly, and in heart to love His appearing is the normal condition of every believer—to love it and live in the light of it. Is this our condition? Are we pressing onward with undeviating step, amidst sorrows and trials, hastening (as Peter says) the coming of the day of God?

(To be continued.)

Chapter 4

Brief Thoughts on 1 Timothy 1:15 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8: Part 2

What a difference between Saul of Tarsus as he left Jerusalem, and the same Saul as he entered Damascus! He left Jerusalem breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, he entered Damascus a blind helpless man, led by his companions, and his physical condition emblematical of his mental, his rage and his purpose completely overthrown. He was a changed—a converted man, though he might not have had any peace or joy till Ananias came three days after, during which he neither ate nor drank. Not until the scales fell from his eyes could he rejoice in full salvation. Then he arose and washed away his sins, and his baptism was just the symbol of his new standing before God.

The Lord Jesus met him on the way and takes him captive, he was the most jealous, and the fiercest, and the leader, of that band of persecutors; such is the one that the Lord takes, and the great enemy cannot prevent it. The chief of sinners, of persecutors, becomes the chief of disciples. The leader of the band, armed with authority to bind and slay all the disciples whom he could seize, becomes the leader of the band that bowed to the Name of Jesus. What an instance of the converting power of the grace of God as manifested in Christ! The glory of God appearing causes Saul to exclaim, Who art Thou, Lord? The voice out of the glory could be no other than the voice of Jehovah; yet that voice said, Why persecutest thou Me? Saul thought he was doing God service (John 16:2) and is astonished and confounded to find himself fighting against God; he finds himself as a criminal caught red-handed in his crime. He is overcome, fettered hand and foot, henceforth to be the Lord's bondman. The Lord Jesus appeared. Saul saw and heard, and at once says, Lord!

Who can tell the thoughts and feelings of Saul who, when cast to the earth, heard the words, “I am Jesus?” What was the visible effect on him? The discovery that he had been fighting against God prevented his taking food for three days. But afterward the revelation of the Son in him (Gal. 1:16) filled him with zeal and energy to announce the glad tidings, yea, far more than the zeal and energy he had shown in opposition to the disciples; for he had been as he says, exceedingly mad against them.

The words, “I am Jesus,” and the remembrance of the bright and heavenly vision, were always dominant in Paul's mind; as he said, he was no: disobedient to the heavenly vision; in his Epistle he takes his stand as an apostle upon this ground, a called apostle, by the will of God, not appointed by man. It was the Lord Who appointed him, He Who speaks and calls from heaven (Heb. 12:25). And it is from heaven that He has sent the Holy Spirit to call and form His church. So that now emphatically every sinner is called by the word of the Son of God, every saint is called to be a member of the church of God, and every servant is called, as it were, by a mandate from heaven, after the pattern of the call of Saul of Tarsus. not by the Lord appearing in the glory of heaven, but by His own voice to the heart. It was a similar display on the day of Pentecost, when the power of the Lord was made manifest in the cloven tongues of fire. Although there be not such visible manifestations now, the power and the reality is essentially the same and ever abides; and

He still calls and adds to the church and will until it is complete. The voice of one crying in the wilderness called Israel to repentance. It is the voice of the Son of God from heaven that quickens dead souls and calls them to sit in heavenly places. His voice from the glory Saul heard, and it changed him from a bitter enemy into a devoted and loving servant. If the called ones now are destined for heavenly glory, what more fitting or better way than the calling them out from among Jews and Gentiles by His own voice?

Here it is not Jesus saying, I am Jehovah. Impossible for Saul to doubt that it must be Jehovah's voice out of that vision of brightness. But is Jehovah saying, I am Jesus? Both essentially and divinely true; but the latter may be the wore emphatic form. Assuredly it was the exact and perfectly suited way to reach the conscience and heart of Saul. It was in this way that the Son was revealed in him, in this way was he prepared for becoming the great apostle of the church. That “God was manifest in flesh,” and that Jesus is the Son of the living God, are the two forms of truth as above, that is, Jesus saying, I am Jehovah, and Jehovah saying, I am Jesus. Upon this the church is built.

To Israel it was prophesied that to them a child should be born, a son given, and one of His glorious names should be the mighty God. This was their hope and expectation (i.e. of the righteous remnant) in the darkest time. And they spake often one to another, they feared Jehovah, they hoped and expected; and the Mighty God will come and make up His jewels, and these godly ones shall be numbered among them (Mal. 3:16). But Messiah on the earth is the hope of Israel. The hope of the church is to be with the Lord Jesus in the heavenly glory. When the Lord Jesus was here on the earth and presented to the Jew (to Israel) as their promised Messiah, His words and His works constantly asserted and proved that He was the Son foretold by the prophet, and that He was the Mighty God. What greater proof than the healing of the palsied man (Matt. 9:6)? No greater assertion of divine power, or of His Godhead during His life and ministry. It was the same power that healed the paralytic, as raised the dead Lazarus. His own resurrection is the greatest of all, and is declared by God as that which declares Him to be the Son of God. But this was after the Jew had rejected Him. The proof that He was the mighty God, had been sufficiently given before in His mighty works.

Moreover He said, “If ye believe not that I am” (the incommunicable name), “ye shall die in your sins.” The blind unbelief of the Jew is attested by the disciples, for when the Lord asked them, “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?” some said, John the Baptist, some Elias, some Jeremias, or one of the prophets: any name but the true one. None confessed Him to be the Son of the living God, but he to whom the Father had revealed it (Matt. 16:14-16). It is this truth which is the special foundation on which the church is built, which gives stability to it, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. That Messiah must be the Mighty God is as necessary for His Messianic glory, as that, for the calling and formation of the assembly of God, Jehovah should be Jesus. There could be no church, no restoration for Israel without Him. This was the proclaimed truth of both, during the Lord's life and ministry here below. He the Messiah, manifesting His Godhead, was the Jewish aspect of it. Met by unbelief then, but when He appears to them, they will shout, “this is our God, we have waited for Him” (Isa. 25:9). For the church, it was the Son of man delivered to earth, and then to rise again for heavenly glory, the Son of the living God withal.

For, now, we are not called to know Christ after the flesh (2 Cor. 5) but as the risen Lord in heaven. In the first three Gospels it is Jesus the Messiah presenting irrefragable proofs by His teaching and by His miracles that He was the promised Son, the Mighty God, Whom the chosen few heard and believed. To Saul and through him to the church, it is the Mighty God saying, I am Jesus. The special point for Israel is to believe their Messiah is God. For the church it is to know that God was in Him, that He Who in the beginning was with God and was God did also become flesh and dwell among men, the First-born of all creation, but yet more, as risen the First-born from the dead to be Head of the Church. The one truth is the converse of the other. Both together, what a Divine reality, both for the glory of God, and for the salvation of man!

How blessed, yet how divine and unsearchable the truth: on earth His humanity asserts His Deity; from heaven His Deity proclaims His humanity.

Saul was conscious, in measure, Who it was that appeared to him, and he refers to it when giving the Galatians the account of his call to the apostleship. It was neither from nor through man, but direct and immediate from the Lord. “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen” (Gal. 1:15, 16). It was truly the revelation of the Son in him, sudden, effectual, and eternal. From that moment every opposing thought was cast down, and there was the absolute and unconditional surrender of himself to the Lord for His service; and he says, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? He had been following his own will in going to Damascus; now if the Lord bid him return to Jerusalem, he is ready, but it must be what the Lord would have him do. Saul of Tarsus was slain, and there arose, soon to be developed, instead of him, the apostle Paul. The Lord no doubt tells him what he must do, but His word is (Acts 9:16) “suffer.” He both did (26:15-19), and suffered, beyond any other man.

(To be continued)

Chapter 5

Brief Thoughts on 1 Timothy 1:15 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8: Part 3

In many cases it is harder to suffer than to do; and therefore it may be that endurance is more prominent in New Test. writings than zealous activity; but both patience in suffering, and energy in doing, are characteristic of the faithful disciple. And the sphere for the exercise of faith, hope, and love, is measured by the suffering and the doing appointed by the Lord. This patience, yea pleasure, in suffering for the Lord's sake, this zeal in His service, marked and distinguished Paul all the way from 1 Tim. 1:15 to 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

How soon he felt the reproach of Christ! How soon he was tested as to the reality of the change! His former friends seek his life, and he escapes by being let down in a basket through a window over the city wall. Imagine proud Saul, avoiding his foes in this ignominious manner! But whether from friends (who if they become enemies are generally the most bitter) or from idolatrous mobs in heathen cities, or from fanatical and murderous persecutors in Jerusalem, always and everywhere he was content to bear all things for Christ's sake. None of these moved him. He had seen the Lord, and everything else was dross.

His companions with him had also fallen to the earth and were overpowered by the brightness of the light, and, for the time, could not either hear or see (Acts 9:7; 21:7; 27:14). They all fell, but the men with Saul soon recovered, rose and stood, and heard the sound, but not the words. Saul heard the words, but lay on the ground till the Lord bade him “Rise, and stand upon thy feet” (26:16). They heard the sound, but could not distinguish the words; it was not intended that they should. Saul both saw and heard (though the effect was to blind him for three days), as he says, “Have I not seen the Lord?” and “last of all He appeared to me also.” And when Ananias came, he says, “the Lord that appeared to thee.” Such was the effect of the heavenly vision that, not giving heed to any caution, the result of human prudence, he went straightway into the synagogues in that city, the very center and stronghold of Jewish enmity and pride, and there he preached that Christ is the Son of God—this to the Jew, and to the Gentile—that God was manifest in flesh, and has brought salvation for all.

As an apostle he was a prominent object for the shafts of the enemy; and tells Timothy in this same epistle, wherein he rejoices beholding the crown, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra.” But among these may be discerned some of those sufferings, yea, and graces too, which are or may be the common lot of all. There are patience and longsuffering for any with more or less of persecution in some shape. But there were trials and sufferings special to him as an apostle, and by which to the Corinthians he proves his call to the apostleship, that his doings and sufferings were so great that he came not a whit behind the very chief of them, that he was in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. He was nothing behind them in all these things. Then he adds to the list of sufferings, for he particularizes, “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned [Acts 14]. The three towns, Antioch, Iconium and Lystra,

have a prominence among Gentile cities in the persecutions of Paul], thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

All these things were the result of his having seen the heavenly vision on the road to Damascus. The word "I am Jesus" so filled his heart that to him to live was Christ; it not only dominated but x. eclipsed every other thought, The power of Rome made him think of Christ the power of God, the philosophizing Greek turned him to Christ the wisdom of God. The furious persecutors among his "own countrymen" only made Christ the more precious to him; for if they threatened his, life it was his to say not only to live is Christ, but to die is gain. How could death turn him aside? Whether as a believer simply, or as an apostle, it mattered not what obstruction lay in his course, he pressed onward to the mark set before him. There was the crown in view. It mattered not by what means he might attain the prize, "if by any means ": not that he was not assured of it, but that he was content to suffer now, certain of the crown in that day. Whether as an apostle, or as an ordinary Christian, the devoted bondman spending and being spent, or like a humble, unknown disciple, he pressed on toward the mark. Let the pressure from without be what it might, there was the endurance of faith and confidence. If there were no visible way of escape, he knew that he was not entirely shut up; he might be perplexed but not destroyed; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed. Nay, he was more than a conqueror, and was anticipating the overcomer's crown.

But if our pathway between the two termini is not so prominent as his, nor so rough and stony, our fight not so valiant, yet we set out from the same starting point, and reach on to the end to receive the crown appointed for us. Such as Paul can say that the crown is laid up for him, and to such as him, the Lord will say, Well done, good and faithful servant."

"And not for me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." Here is our portion, the crown is laid up for all that love His appearing. All such, more or less, fight the good fight, keep the faith, all will enter into the joy of the Lord. Can there be Christians who do not love His appearing? Nay, but their affections are too much occupied with the present world. May this mark of vital Christianity become more prominent, as we feel increasingly the contrariety of all things below, and as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The love of His appearing must be in the heart of every Christian. It may be for the time overshadowed by caring for the world—for who has not to watch against this?—yea, by the disappointments in the world—in each case occupying the mind to the exclusion of the thought and desire, the longing desire of His appearing. There are things here below which are good enough in themselves; but when they overshadow the heart so as to hide the characteristic mark of Christianity—the coming and then the appearing of our Lord—do they not become positively evil. The ordinary teaching of the present day seldom prevents the heaping up of worthless lumber where none ought to appear. The returned Jews could scarcely build the wall through much rubbish (Neh. 4:10); and it is a great hindrance (even insuperable save where the grace of God removes it) to the love of His appearing. We all know how prone we are to set our mind on things on the earth; yet it would be indeed anomalous—an impossible thing—for a saved man not to love the appearing of his Savior.

The Spirit of God dwells in every believer and leads him on in desire and love to the day when He who is our life shall appear. For when He appears, we shall appear with Him. May we be obedient to the Spirit's leading.

Yet the looking forward is not to the saints' appearing, but His; because when He will take His kingdom and reign, every enemy will be His footstool, the groans of creation will cease, all be delivered from the bondage of evil and corruption, wickedness no longer triumph, Satan no more enthrall, and from all the redeemed creation the shout will arise “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Surely the true believer in Christ loves to look forward to the day of His triumph and of glory.

The crowning of the saint is not when he departs this life; then he is present with the Lord, and truly far better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord; nor is it when the Lord comes and gathers up all that are alive and remain, but when He appears. This appearance is for the world, when we also shall be the trophies of the Lord, the victor over Satan, sin, and the world. Then is the time of judging the quick (not the great white throne judgment, but as in Matt. 25, Acts 17:31, &c.)

When the Lord was here, the world crucified Him and put Him into a grave; the world never saw Him come out. When next they see Him, it will be when He appears to take vengeance on His murderers, and His appearance will be as the lightning which shines from the east to the west. That is, all shall see Him then. Before that day comes, the Lord will descend and we shall ascend to meet Him in the air; so that when He appears, He will bring us with Him. This is what we wait for. The world did not see Him come out of the grave, but the testimony of it was given. It was the joy of the disciples, the utter discomfiture of the enemy, who to cover his defeat led the priests to tell the soldiers to say, “His disciples stole his body while we slept.”

The world will see Him come out of heaven. Then will be its judgment, then the saints' crowning to His glory, fruit of that complete salvation of which the apostle speaks, when he says that it is nearer than when we believed (Rom. 13:11).

R. B.

Chapter 6

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 1-5

The wars of the Lord are now ended, Solomon is on the throne of the Lord. Further glories appear, and a fresh page is turned in the book of God's counsels. The prince of peace is on the throne, and we have the building, and the numbering, the order, and the arrangement of the servants of the temple. Not now as when David ascended the throne, then the numbering was of mighty men of valor, ready armed for war “a great host like the host of God.” Now all enemies are subdued; even the internal disturbers, as Adonijah, Joab and their adherents are not even worthy of mention—the last but equally impotent effort of Satan against God's chosen man. In the joy and glory with which the second book of Chronicles opens all else is either annihilated or enshrined in its brightness. As when the feeble rays of a lamp are over-powered and lost in the light of the mid-day sun, but the precious gem shines in a splendor beyond its own; so the glory of Jehovah rests upon all. It filled the house; and Solomon on his knees before the altar shines more than when sitting on the throne.

The Gentile has the privilege of having a little share in the building of that house; he has the readiness and free-giving of an Israelite, but he has a place there, and we may say a blessed place. And a more blessed place is yet to come. For that house is to be a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17). And the presence of king Huram's laborers may have been the occasion of the psalmist's prophetic utterance. “And the daughter of Tire shall be there with a gift” (Psa. 45:12). And the Tyrian Gentile will shout then with more intelligence.” “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that made heaven and earth, Who hath given to David a wisdom endued with prudence and understanding that might build a house for the Lord and a house for His kingdom” (2:12). The Gentile's place was subordinate, but participating in Israel's blessedness.

This fact and the psalmist's prophecy must have been known to the scribes and Pharisees who boasted of their knowledge of their law, that in the days of the temple's pristine glory Gentiles were there. Why then raise such a tumult in Paul's day, saying that he had brought a Gentile—an Ephesian into the temple? There was more hatred of Paul than against the Gentile; not so much jealousy of the Gentile as dislike of the truth. No difference! and that salvation was as greatly needed by the Jew, as by the Gentile!

The abiding presence of Jehovah in His house was dependent upon the obedience and faithfulness of the king, and Solomon knowing his responsibility prays for wisdom to govern Israel aright. Doubtless David as a saint knew that he was responsible; but Solomon is presented here as responsible for the right exercise of his kingly functions, and he accordingly asks for wisdom. He asked because he needed. God uses him and sets him in a position, that we may, as it were, look through him as through a glass on to the glories of the Messiah; yet He meets him as a man in his necessities, which became all the greater because he was so highly exalted. The unwisdom of a mean man might pass unnoticed, but folly found in a king would be like dead flies in the apothecary's ointment.

But Messiah, the Lord Jesus, is wisdom, both the wisdom and the power of God (see 1 Cor. 1). and He will ask in that day, yet not for wisdom but for the accomplishment of God's decree. “Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psa. 2:8). Grace postpones that day, for it is the day of judgment. God forbears long with the wicked, and His long-suffering is salvation. When the Lord was about to suffer, He made a very different request to his Father from that which He will make in the day of vengeance. He was occupied with His disciples and said, “I ask for them, I ask not for the world,” (John 17:9).

The present time is characterized by divine patience, and He Who is the coming king reveals Himself now as the Savior. In that day He will ask and receive, and dash them—His enemies—in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The Lord exceedingly magnified Solomon in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him. Alas! no sooner has he reached the topmost glory, than he begins to use his high position, and riches, as a means for the gratifying of the flesh, and the pride of life. He multiplied chariots, sent to Egypt for horses, and multiplied wives and silver and gold (see Deut. 17:16,17). The Lord God had laid down a rule for the guidance of the king. and Solomon disobeys in all points. This could not fail to bring judgment. It was delayed for a little, for the accomplishment of the counsels of God concerning His Son must have the first place. The house of David began to feel the first strokes of judgment in the last days of Solomon. In the following reign the kingdom was rent in twain.

But God's purpose to give a picture of the future blessedness was not yet complete, and judgment must stand aside awhile. The temple must first be built, the glory must fill it. The priest must be sanctified, and the singers—not the least important in that joyful time—must be arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps. Then when the glorious future is presented, the whole panorama is rolled up, and the history of the kingdom is briefly given so as to mark each downward step unto the end.

We think of another white-robed company, whose robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb, whose voices will join in a sweeter song than that of the singers of Israel. It will be the shout of all, “For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.” But there is a specialty about the white-robed company in Rev. 7:13, &c., &c. The Lamb spreads His tabernacle over them, rather than dwells among these Gentiles. Jehovah, as it were, came down to receive the tribute of praise from Israel's singers, and filled the temple with the cloud of His presence. The picture would not be complete without it.

The foreshadowing of the glories of the millennial reign of Christ is close, for what more can he added, when His glory fills the house? It is the crown of Israel's blessing.

There are seemingly two occasions when the glory filled the house so that the priests could not minister. The first (5:11-14) is before Solomon's prayer, when the trumpeters, singers, and all join with one voice saying, or singing “For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever,” that then the house was filled with a cloud, the cloud appears as an answer to their shout of praise. Jehovah steps down from the heaven of heavens, His dwelling place, to His earthly throne, to receive the praise of His people and reveals His presence by a cloud. On the second occasion (7:3) after Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt

offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. Two facts are recorded, the same as on the former occasion. The priests could not enter the temple by reason of the glory, and the people worship and repeat the same words, “For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.” But when there were two occasions, the Holy Ghost is repeating the joyous record, returning to it after having given Solomon's prayer which gives more cause for grief than for joy, occupied with Israel's sin, and captivity in the end; this scene is the climax of their blessedness, the essence. of their glory. Henceforth the glory declines, the fine gold becomes dim. Not many years after that glorious display, the dark shades of night spread a funeral pall over the guilty city and captive people, which will not he removed, till the nation's moral resurrection, when “many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake” (see Dan. 12).

At this point—Solomon's prayer—there is a transition from the setting forth of the kingly glories and power of the Only-Begotten, in spite of man's failure and errors, to the committal of what was used by God as a vehicle to declare these glories, to the care and responsibilities of man; to a man who was made a king, and endowed with wisdom and honor beyond and other king, before or after, but who was not able to sustain the weight of it. The throne and the temple were entrusted to king Solomon's keeping, and the glory of each dependent upon one man. Solomon knows his position, and prays. He blesses the Lord God, blesses the congregation, then takes the attitude of supplication, and spreads forth his hands towards heaven. As David before the ark, so Solomon before the altar; but what a difference between David's psalm and Solomon's prayer! Though the ark be only in a tent, and the altar be in the gorgeous temple, yet David's view of the coming glory is not hidden by the intervening failure of Israel which limits the outlook of Solomon.

God said to David, “there shall not a man fail thee to sit upon my throne.” There was always a man whose birthright it was to sit upon David's throne. Unworthiness was found in each, but the line of descent continues till Christ came. He is the Man on Whom the Holy Spirit looks. In Him there was, and is, the divine right as well as the human title; for He is the Son of God as well as Son of David, and whatever may intervene between the promise and its fulfillment, He will assuredly sit there. Solomon, unlike David, looks not on to the bright future unless the last words of his prayer (v. 40, &c.) express his faith in God remembering. His mercies to David. The word that presses upon his mind is “Yet so that thy children [David's] take heed to their ways, to walk in my statutes, as thou [David] hast walked before Me.” This gives a supplicatory character to his prayer. David's psalm is rather thanksgiving and praise, for he contemplates Israel in the land, in the enjoyment of God's uninterrupted favor, Solomon sees them rebellious, suffering, and scattered. David calls upon the heavens to be glad, and on the nations to say “The Lord reigneth.” Solomon prays for mercy when Israel shall be dispersed among the nations. David calls on the God of salvation, rejoicing in that name. “Save us” he says, not in view of Israel's backsliding but that the heathen should he finally subdued, for the ark in the temple—the evidence of final victory—was not yet. He is full of the promise. Solomon thinks of his present responsibility, of Israel's sin, and deprecates the righteous anger of God, and, pleading, as it were, the pity and compassion of God in view of the broken covenant, explains, “What man is there that sinneth not?” In a word, David calls upon a happy people to praise the Lord, Solomon prays for mercy and forgiveness for a sinful people; the dominant note in David's song of praise, and with which he closes is “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel forever and ever;” the constantly recurring petition in Solomon's prayer is, Hear Thou from the heavens, and when Thou hearest, forgive.

The time when Messiah will sit upon His throne was then and is still future, but it was present to David's faith. Solomon's prayer is not prophetic of the coming happy time but of the near future when Israel would forsake the Lord, and the Lord forsake His house and dwell in the heaven of heavens. Even there would He hear the supplication and confessions of the repentant. The Holy Spirit through His inspired instrument gives this repeated cry, “Then hear Thou from the heavens, Thy dwelling place,” thus teaching the contrite and humble to look up through the surrounding gloom to God's eternal dwelling place. A gracious intimation that in the last and closing days of the people's long captivity, when in a far country, and no access to the temple, when every outward mark of their still being the chosen people of God is gone, let them only look up to the heaven of heavens, and He Who sits on the throne will hear, and will forgive.

Chapter 7

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 6

In Solomon's prayer there seemed to be two different grounds on which he stands to prefer his requests. The first he takes is the promise conditionally given to his father. David. In the second, it is the mercy of God that can forgive after sin is committed. For sin having appeared whether in any man, or in the nation at large even though Solomon himself personally be not guilty, the whole kingdom would be lost unless God in His mercy went beyond the terms of His covenant with David. Hence in the case of transgression there can be no cry but for forgiveness.

These essentially different standpoints appear, the first from vv. 14 to 20, and the second in ver. 21, and following. In the latter Solomon is no longer on covenant ground. Forgiveness would not be needed if he and the people had righteously fulfilled the conditions laid on them, for God's promise was made contingent upon their obedience. In the former part there appears no doubt or fear of his own, or the people's, taking heed to the law; and in this his request is “let thy word be verified.” It is calling on God not to forgive, but to fulfill His promise. There seems this confidence in himself, for though he speaks of any man sinning, or even of all the people, he never says, If we sin. The Lord does not fail to remind him that he was as liable to sin as any man (see 7:17), and that it is upon his failure, dragging all the people with him, the solemn judgment of God is pronounced.

He recognizes the infinite majesty of God. “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built.” The thought of the infinite greatness of God subdues him, and henceforth his prayer becomes more supplicatory in character. “Have respect therefore to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication; O Lord my God to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which Thy servant prayeth before thee that Thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof Thou hast said that Thou wouldest put Thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant prayeth toward this place. Hearken therefore unto the supplications of Thy servants and of thy people Israel which they shall make toward. this place; hear Thou from Thy dwelling-place, even from heaven, and when Thou hearest, forgive.”

Forgiveness is linked with God in His dwelling-place, the heaven of heavens, and not with the house. For grace is sovereign and has its source in God dwelling in the heavens. The temple and its magnificence were well suited for the law and the covenant, but forgiveness is with God in. His dwelling-place. Thither Solomon looks. Nothing could be hidden from the all-searching eye of God and as if the thought expressed in ver. 36— “there is no man which sinneth not” —were pressing upon his heart, he prays for forgiveness. For if God judged on the principle of law, and righteousness apart from grace, He would, yea must, forsake His house and leave Israel under the awful judgment of a broken covenant. Often does he say “hear and forgive.” And God did repeatedly hear and forgive (governmentally) till He was compelled to judge, and say “why should ye be stricken any more?” Solomon's prayer to this point is general; but he knows there is no man that sinneth not, and he is in presence of the holiness and righteousness of God, Who can only

meet man on the ground of infinite mercy and sovereign grace. He did not know, as we, how that mercy is secured, yea, abounds, through the cross of Christ.

“If any man sin against his neighbor.” Such a thing might happen as an exception to the general obedience of the people. Had the people never become idolators and externally at least maintained the righteousness of the law, there was still the possibility of an individual sinning against his neighbor. And Solomon's prayer in such a case is not, Hear and forgive, but “Hear thou from heaven [where he knew that forgiveness could only be found] and do, and judge Thy servants by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head, and by justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.” This is law. If the sinner had been immediately requited in judgment, neither land nor people would have been polluted. But when the whole nation are sinners, when those whose office it was to vindicate the law were equally guilty, who then could righteously take vengeance for a broken law? Such the whole had become in the time of the prophets, and for this reason the prophets were sent, and dark pictures are given of the chosen people's sin and guilt. It was even worse when the Lord was here; for in His presence they dared. to appear as vindicators of the law when their own conscience could and did bear witness against them. Their incompetency to act was made manifest (see John 8). Only the mercy that endureth forever could act for such a people. And he who at the first said “Verify Thy word” can only now say “Hear and forgive.”

What a mingling of law and grace is here, if the way of the wicked is recompensed upon his own head? where is forgiveness? The law never brought out the depths of sin in man. Nor, while the law obtained as a rule of life, could forgiveness be known as the gospel proclaims it. While the saint of old as under law knew that if the Lord marked iniquity none could stand, and has not the knowledge, nor could have of a perfect redemption—can only say, “But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared” (Psa. 130), he had not the knowledge of God's perfect love which casteth out all fear. By the unspeakable grace of God this knowledge is ours. The experience of these saints never rose to Christian experience. Looking to law as a rule of life, along with grace for forgiveness, was a condition that did not meet the mind and love of God (see Heb. 8:8). Now the believer in Christ has died to law, is separated from the whole order of things, which was suited for God's earthly people, and quite right then, but wrong now.

The believer now has a heavenly calling, being in a sphere which is beyond the reach of the law which pressed upon the saints of old so that they were in bondage all their life. Is then the believer lawless? Nay, but as risen with Christ, he is to live to God, and Christ is his law in the new resurrection sphere. The grace that came by Christ teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age; the law said, Thou shalt not covet, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, &c. But the grace goes farther, giving the impelling power to fulfill the righteousness of the law (which the law itself never could, and was never intended to do). The grace adds, to look for the appearing of the glory, and this is a chief part of Christianity, and is always accompanied (where it is not mere sentiment but a divine reality) with power so to live as the grace given teaches. Shall a forgiven man go to the law for the measure of his holiness and obedience? That same law which when in force by the authority of God could only stir up the flesh and excite its opposition?

There was a time when obedience to the law, or disobedience, was the dividing line between the saints of God, and all others. But it did not separate saints from the world. For there was then no cross. Now saints, believers, are crucified to the world, and the world to them. This is a complete and absolute severance not merely from its sins and condemnation, but from it as a system which may have good things (good naturally) as well as bad. We as believers in Christ belong to an entirely different sphere, as separate from the old system in which Solomon lived, as the Lord Jesus risen.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17).

The requests of Solomon go not beyond temporal evils and temporal judgments. For Israel is God's earthly people; but they are Jehovah's people and Solomon constantly says Thy people. And though the wickedness of the people seems to spread out before his eye, so does also the goodness of God, and for the worst sins he can beseech forgiveness. He had before said, “If any man sin,” as if such a thing would be an exception in Israel; but now in ver. 29, the exception to the general prevalence of iniquity would be if any man prayed or confessed his sin.

Still in this desperate condition of the people, he says, “and render unto every man according unto all his ways” (ver. 30). But forgiveness is blended with the law, which had no place in the law as given by Moses, though the forgiving character of God was revealed to him in the mount (Ex. 34:6, 7). It is now brought prominently out, and God's perfect absolute knowledge of the heart is, as it were, pleaded as a reason for forgiveness. Under the gospel it is not law alone, nor law and grace mixed, as under the intercession of Moses, but grace reigning through righteousness by Christ our Lord.

The stranger is prayed for, and comes in to share in Israel's blessings and privileges, even to pray in this house. The Lord said it was written “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17). The comparatively few strangers that worshipped in that temple cannot be the full answer to Solomon's request, He was led by the prophetic Spirit of God beyond the time then present to the time when all Israel shall know the Lord; and he goes on to say “that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name as doth Thy people Israel.” In that day Israel will be the greatest nation and bear rule over the gentiles, but will also be a model of obedience and worship.

But before the brightness of that millennial day bursts on the world, a greater sin and a heavier judgment than all before it shall be found with that people. Their sins and their judgments had been in the land; the outpouring of the wrath of Jehovah drove them out of their own land into one afar off. Captivity to the Gentiles was to succeed pestilence and famine and war. These which they suffered in the land were sufficient to teach them to be obedient to the law of God if they had had ears to hear and hearts to understand. But they were heedless to every call, their hearts were impervious to God's patient dealing, restoration after chastisement only gave them further opportunity for sin until the cup ran over. And God said, Why should ye be stricken (chastised) any more? and gave them up to the Gentile. Even the sorrows of the Babylonish captivity so deeply felt by Jeremiah were comparatively light before those under the power of the Romans, and the two tribes that represent Israel feel Gentile oppression much more now than when carried to Babylon. And greater woe awaits them before that day comes. But the prophetic prayer of Solomon comprehends a return and a gathering of all back again to their land. He reaches forward to the millennial day. “Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place. Thou, and the ark of Thy

strength; let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness” (41). It is in the form of a prayer, but it is not the less a prophetic description of their millennial gladness. And as it were recognizing that all this blessing is not because of Israel's repentance, but for His sake Who is appointed to reign over them, Solomon closes with the feeling that all rests with Him. “O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine Anointed; remember the mercies of David Thy servant.”

Sin and its judgment, a possible repentance, and forgiveness from God, occupy his mind and are the subject of his prayer. But the mercy of God is as prominent in Solomon's prayer, as was the inflexible righteousness of God in the law given by Moses; and it was on this mingled system of grace and righteousness that God dealt with Israel until, the Lord came, the fruit of mediatorial intercession really. God (to speak after the manner of men) accepts Solomon's modification of the old covenant. “And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer” (7:12), and takes up special cases of judgment; if the people repent, He will hear and forgive. But He did more; He did not wait for their repentance, but sent prophets to rebuke, warn, of the inevitable judgment that must follow sin; to invite, yea plead with, them to repent, and if they did repent, to say what grace would do for them.

God's gracious words to Solomon form a fresh starting point with Israel, and the message of the prophets is founded on it. Isaiah says, “Repent, and God will abundantly pardon.” The law visited the sins of the fathers upon the children. Ezekiel says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father,” nor his own, if he turn from his unrighteousness. And in view of this grace rising above law, both the people and their kings sank deeper in iniquity until God says, as if giving a reason for His judgment, “What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done?” The first words of Isaiah are that God had brought and nourished children that became rebellious, and that the ox and the ass were more faithful to their owners than Israel to God.

Nevertheless Solomon is reminded of his own responsibility. The continuation of the kingdom, as it was given to him, hung upon his own faithfulness. God says, “If thou,” &c., and adds, “if ye turn away,” for the people would assuredly follow their king. And the consequent judgment would (and did) fall upon all Israel. “I will root up them “: even the house called by His own name should become a reproach. But the nations, the Gentiles, would know why God so dealt with them.

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Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 7

Chapters 8-9

The Lord manifests His acceptance of the worship of Israel, and of Solomon's prayer, for fire descends from heaven and consumes the sacrifices, and His glory fills the house, and He also graciously grants the King's requests. He will hear and forgive if the people humble themselves and pray to Him. He will look on that house and be attentive to the prayer that is made in it. And the Lord is as minute and particular in His answer as was Solomon in his prayer. “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, if my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open and mine ears intent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there forever and mine eyes and mine ears shall be there perpetually” (7:13-16). Solomon prays for Israel as the Lord's people; he said in his prayer, Thy people. And the Lord owns them as His, and says, My people.

It was in the night the Lord appeared and answered his prayer. As the chief if not the sole responsibility rested on him, a private word is given, not in the hearing of the people but special to him. “And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments, then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.” This is a word for Solomon himself as to his own ways and obedience to which he made no reference in his prayer—unless it be contained in the words, “there is no man which sinneth not.” Yet are they remarkable words from one who was under law (for at that time the two tables that Moses wrote were in the ark, but not the budding rod, nor the manna), and therefore on the ground of establishing his own righteousness. The words are almost a confession that his righteousness at the best would only be as filthy rags. Be his thoughts what they might, the Lord reminds him of what he seemed forgetful. “And as for thee” must have awakened in him thoughts and feelings which perhaps had till that moment lain dormant; if faithful and obedient, the unbroken continuance of his throne is promised. But if he failed, though the forgiveness which the Lord had pledged Himself to would certainly be shown to him and to the people, yet persistent sin would ultimately bring upon them unfailing judgment. “But if ye turn away and forsake my statutes and my commander which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, then, will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them, and this house which I have sanctified for my name will I cast out of my sight and will make it a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house which is high shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it, so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done this unto the land and unto this house? and it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt; and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them and served them, therefore hath He brought all this evil upon them” (7:19 etc.).

Solomon was disobedient, and “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (1 Kings 11:6): all these evils fell upon them. Solomon's throne was overturned, the house was destroyed, and the people made captives; even the righteous remnant had to share in the national calamity. And it is Solomon himself who in the first years of his reign shadowed forth the peaceful glories of Messiah's rule and kingdom; in his later years he becomes the leader, the first link among the kings of Israel of the abominations which in the end brought on king and people the long-threatened judgment of God. Thus, the first idol, after the temple was built and the Lord's name called on, was found in the family of the king, of him who had so earnestly prayed that the Lord God would turn not away the face of His anointed. And the idol was not a secret thing worshipped by his servants, but by his wives in public, and he built altars for them. He who had led the people in the worship of Jehovah, is now and thus the leader in idolatry.

The typical character of Solomon's reign ceased when, or soon after, the temple was filled with glory, and the honored type gives place to failing man. In Solomon's greatness and his subsequent fall we have an answer to the all-important question:—Can man sustain himself in the position of the highest favor and dignity possible, the immediate gift of God (short of new and eternal life) by his own strength? Let Solomon's fall answer, and in the N. T. see Heb. 6. But was it upon Solomon's fidelity that the promise of God depended? Nay, the kingdom of God is not contingent upon Solomon's faithfulness, but rests on One greater than Solomon, Who at the right and appointed time will surely establish it.

Solomon said, “Verify Thy word.” Truly the word is verified in their judgment. But there is one promise that their sin and judgment do not touch. While every blessing which depended upon their obedience is lost, this one becomes more necessary (so to say) through their unfaithfulness. The Lord had said, there shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel; that God's king should sit upon His throne in Zion. It is His eternal purpose and declared in His word (Psa. 2), though kings and rulers take counsel against Him. This decree could not be annulled even if all Israel were forever destroyed. There is nothing in God's righteous judgment on the land, the people or the house, not even on the royal family of David of whom the promised king was to come, that could in any way set aside God's immutable decree concerning His Son. This promise shines with increased luster when all apparently is lost; for when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city, when Jeremiah was in prison for his testimony when their cup of iniquity was full, and the Gentile was to rule over them, then the word of the Lord came to the imprisoned prophet,

“David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel” (Jer. 33:17), and now joined to the priest and Levite (see whole chapter) there shall not want a man before the Lord to offer burnt-offerings—a sacrifice continually... Thus the throne and the temple shall be both on a foundation of God's laying. “Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation” etc. (Isa. 28:16).

There appears to be a delay to the setting up of this glorious kingdom, and, though Israel is under the appointed judgment during the delay, their judgment is not the sole reason of the delay (apparent), but that through Israel's fall salvation might come to the Gentile (Rom. 11:11), or, as Peter says, the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. The Man, Who is to reign, has appeared. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh to lay a righteous foundation for the bringing in of a greater glory than Solomon knew, yea, and much more. For as the prophet said, “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of

Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). It is now salvation to the Gentile. When He comes to restore the preserved of Israel, this present day of long-suffering will have closed, forever. He Who is coming—our Lord Jesus—is now sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Exalted to the highest, He is waiting there on God's throne till His enemies are made His footstool. Meanwhile, He has all power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. As the ark floated over the waters of the deluge (for God's word—The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head—was, contained in it) while the earth that then was perished, so does this decree of God, this promise to Israel, this blessing for the whole earth, the eternal decree, rise above the moral and judicial flood that now overwhelms Israel.

Solomon is still the connecting link between God and the people, and he is responsible to maintain it. And when he as it were broke that link, there was none but that sovereign "mercy endureth forever to keep the earth before the mind of God as an object of pity and compassion, till Christ came Who brought grace and truth, not to mend the old broken link which truth cast away forever as a useless thing, but that grace might establish a new and better link between God and (believing) man. And the Lord Jesus, God and man, brings the believer into relationship with God. "For ye are all sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26). A mere human link might, with the law, serve the purpose of God for the time. But now that eternal redemption is proclaimed, there must necessarily be One Who in accomplishing eternal redemption could bring not only God down in love to man, but believing man up to God. This is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man. "He hath done this" (Psa. 22). Now there is a link everlasting between God in heaven and men on the earth through faith in Him Whom God has highly exalted. And the Spirit is both unction and seal.

But Solomon is also responsible for the right use of the wisdom God gave him as befitting a man that is to be a type of God's king, and for all the accessories of power and riches and honor. For these things did not leave him when the typical aspect of his reign ceased; but he was surely responsible to God for them in the use he made of these great gifts and endowments. He asked for wisdom and knowledge that he might judge and rule God's people aright, and God approves of his request. And the Lord added riches and wealth and honor such as no other king had. He was wiser than all men; he spake three thousand proverbs, one thousand and five songs, he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, he spake also of beasts and of fowls, and of creeping things and of fishes (see 1 Kings 4:29-34). Amazing knowledge! Earth, air and water disclose the secrets of the vegetable and of the animal creation of God. But was this wealth of knowledge needed for the government of Israel according to the law? Was it a necessary part of that wisdom for which he prayed (2 Chron. 1:10)? Did he not waste that power, that wisdom with which he was so eminently endowed? And was there no misuse of the abundant riches, which the Lord added to him? Were they given that he might bring horses out of Egypt, possess chariots, and multiply wives, things expressly forbidden? Can we wonder that when he looked upon all his labor, his verdict is, Vanity and vexation of spirit. (Eccl. 1). He failed in nothing upon which he set his heart, and his word upon all is—no profit under the sun. We hear the words of our Lord Who said long after, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? We do not dare pronounce on his soul; but he gained much of the world's riches, and found—no profit. The conclusion he comes to is, "There is nothing better

for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor &c." (Eccl. 2:24); and that all this was nothing but vanity and vexation, he saw or had learned, was from the hand of God. The rich man in Luke 12 said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry;" but God said Thou fool. Treasure for self and not toward God must end in vanity and vexation of spirit; and this was Solomon's experience. And in it his responsibility lay.

Alas! man being in honor abideth not. Impossible that a mere man could maintain such a place as being the channel of God's word to man or of man's supplication to God. Only One could do that mighty work of connecting heaven with earth, and only One could bring the eye of God to be open on that house, and His ear attentive to the prayer that is made in it; only He everlasting. It is not now the old link of creation, as of God with a sinless creature, as with Adam before he sinned, or even with Israel under a modified law, but on the ground of redemption, a new and eternal link; through faith now, through the manifested glory in the coming time.

The consequences of disobedience are not limited to himself, yet all hangs upon him; his turning away involved that of the people. That vast outlook of glory and power and dominion was presented to Solomon as the reward of his obedience. But as resting on his faithfulness it was but a house built on the sand. The floods of idolatry overthrew it, and great was the fall thereof.

When the appointed time comes, all will hang on Him Who cannot fail. For He is the man of God's right hand, and to Him praise is ascribed by every creature. "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

Chapter 9

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 8-9

We are now on lower ground (ch. 8). Not here a foreshadowing of the peaceful reign of Messiah; but a man is presented who is in possession of glory and honor which was given that he might, as far as a mere man, display the glories of the coming kingdom; a man who used his excellent wisdom in searching out the things of nature and found no profit in them.

In his wisdom he utilizes the cities that Hiram refused (1 Kings 9:12, 13); he built store cities, secured his communications with outlying districts by fortifying the upper and the nether Beth-horon, fenced cities with walls and gates and bars. This is the display of prudence and strength in the presence of possible enemies. It is the evidence of that wisdom with which he was endowed, which, if he had not misused it, would not have been applied in accumulating horses and fortifying cities. This is not the aspect of Messiah's peaceful reign, when peace and safety is the portion of each Israelite; for the strength and impregnability of a kingdom may subsist under the oppressive power of a tyrant, and the showy splendor of the king may be only a veil to hide the oppression and tears of the subject.

As yet this was not the case with Israel. The Canaanites who were not consumed are made servants and pay tribute; the Israelites are captains and chiefs.

We are reminded of our Lord's words to Peter: they may allude to this period of Solomon's reign and throw a ray of light upon the future condition of the children of Israel. “Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute, of their own children or of strangers? Of strangers, said Peter. Then, said the Lord, are the children free.” Solomon had not yet so sunk in the slough of idolatry and forgetfulness of God as to deal with Israelites, the chosen people, as he did with Canaanites. His fall into idolatry, though rapid, was not as if proceeding at once from building the house of the Lord to the erection of an idol's temple. Even the heathen said “nemo fit repente turpissimus.” The cause of his fall is given in few but pregnant words. “But Solomon loved many strange women.” This was the steep incline.

The fame of Solomon's wisdom had brought the queen of Sheba to hear and prove it. She is astonished and overcome. But what will be the outshining of Him, of Whom the brightest days of Solomon were but a faint resemblance? She is only one of many, for “all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart.” But what are these kings of the earth compared with countless numbers that heaven and earth and sea will send forth to sing the praise of Him that liveth forever and ever?

Solomon passes away, and a brief resume is given of his riches and power (ch. ix). Pagans speak of the golden age of the world. This was surely the golden age for Israel. (apart from their glorious future); the world's richest and most prized are but common things. Yet this is only the image of good things to come, when righteousness shall characterize Israel, as gold did the throne and the temple.

All this magnificence soon vanished. The display of glory rested upon the presence of the Lord in His house, and His abiding presence there depended upon Israel's obedience. From Chronicles we should not learn that the old enemy of idolatry, older than the calf at the foot of Mount Sinai, was secretly sapping the foundation of that visible display of glory. For while the outward service and worship of the temple were doubtless duly observed, idolatry was taking root and spreading in the king's own family. This evil is not recorded here; for the Holy Spirit in Chronicles is foreshadowing the glories and the kingdom of Christ, and not giving the history of Solomon's failures. All here is in intimate touch with the future, and the failures are recorded elsewhere. Those here mentioned are with the view of showing not so, much what man is as of Satan's subtle attempts to prevent the establishment of the kingdom in God's appointed way. Every sin or failure which the Spirit records is always overtaken by judgment, not unmingled with mercy, proving that grace alone can meet man's sins and fulfill the counsels of God.

When the glory of the Lord filled the temple, the typical aspect of Solomon's reign ceased, for what more was needed to fill up the picture? Afterward we have the doings of a wise man who uses human means to strengthen his kingdom. This is not the character of Messiah's peaceful reign, for His glory and rule shall be over the whole earth. The Spirit of God is not occupied with the doings of either David or Solomon, save subordinately as a frame fitted for the picture of Christ and His glory. The genealogy in the first book attests it. There was no need to begin with Adam to prove David's call to the throne, nor that Jesus of Nazareth was the son of David and the true heir to David's throne. But as Man having the right and title to reign over all, besides His special rights over Israel, His genealogy is traced from Adam leading through Abraham and David, and by Matthew carried on till He appears. So it is manifestly up to Adam in Luke.

Many events are omitted in Chronicles which were needed to show what manner of men these favored types were, but not necessary to the Holy Spirit's design in Chronicles. For instance, there is not the sad story of Bathsheba. No mention of the rebellious attempts of Adonijah and his associates, who are, as historical excrescences, swept aside out of the path of the Holy Spirit occupied as He is with the kingly glories of Christ. We have the sure establishment of the kingdom, the subjugation of the nations (of all who are in contact with Israel), and the worship of God. This glory is committed to man with every advantage, but alas! proved to be utterly incompetent to retain it. And none but the Man Whom God made strong for Himself could uphold it, and He is both able and worthy, yea to exalt the glory of God.

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 10-11

Now all apparently depends on man's faithfulness, and necessarily the brightness is increasingly overshadowed until completely extinguished. The distant, as yet, black cloud had its beginning in Rehoboam's reign, morally its dark shadow began when Solomon multiplied his wives; it was the penumbra of the coming eclipse. In such a crowd of heathen women is it a wonder that Rehoboam proves to be a foolish son and constrained Solomon to say, “A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her that bare him.” His first act was one of extreme folly more like the cruel despotism of an oriental tyrant than of wisdom that should have characterized the son of Solomon. But this folly, the immediate cause and occasion of the revolt of the ten tribes, is the consequence and fruit of Solomon's sin, and the beginning of the public manifestation of divine wrath. Solomon in his later years made Israel's yoke heavy, he chastised them with whips, but Rehoboam's foolish resolve brought their discontent to a head and the slumbering tribal jealousy now blazes forth with increased virulence and a leader appears who gives form and cohesion to the rebellious spirit of the ten tribes. A prophet had told Jeroboam that he should rule over them. This man is the appointed executor of God's judgment, and a breach is made in Israel which will only be healed when the true and wise King shall come and sit on the throne.

When Rehoboam gathered an army to punish the revolted tribes he is forbidden by the Lord. “Ye shall not go up to fight against your brethren: return every man to his own house: for this thing is done of me” (11: 4). They obeyed. This seems like bowing to God's judgment; and for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon. The priests and the Levites leave their possessions and come to Jerusalem; for Jeroboam's policy would I not permit them to execute the priest's office unto the Lord. And so they strengthened the kingdom of Judah. For three years this foolish son acted wisely. Yet that the glory of Solomon's earlier years was gone, what greater proof than Rehoboam building and fortifying cities in Judah? Against whom? Against Israel, as against others. While he dealt wisely, he prospered. But the same snare which caused Solomon's fall brings Rehoboam into more open guilt. And the people follow him, true then as the prophet said later, “My people love to have it so.” When he had strengthened himself he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him. Why is it said here, “all Israel with him” when the ten tribes had forsaken the law and the temple led by Jeroboam's priests? May it not be that Judah is called Israel as remaining true to David's house, and so far on covenant ground when the ten tribes had forsaken it and morally were no longer Israel, which name is here limited to the two tribes which slave to the house of David and to the temple? The priests and the Levites, who had before left their possessions for the sake of the temple, now follow the king in his departure from the Lord; and thus it is “all Israel with him.”

“This thing is done of me.” This explains how it was that ten tribes as with one mind so suddenly shook off allegiance to the house of David. A fugitive servant no sooner blows his trumpet than they follow him. It was the judgment of the Lord, pronounced in Solomon's day, executed in the days of his son. “But I will take the kingdom out of his son's [Rehoboam's] hand and will give it unto thee [Jeroboam] even ten tribes” (1 Kings 11:35).

There were two great tribes, Ephraim and Judah, and there was exhibited on more than one occasion a spirit of rivalry and jealousy by Ephraim, if not by Judah. God allowed this old rivalry to reappear. It had been repressed under the splendor of the reigns of David and Solomon, but not extinguished; and Rehoboam's folly brought it to the surface as bitter as in times of old. Ephraim, as the representative of Joseph, was always jealous of his birthright privileges and importance, and claimed pre-eminence. For did not all his brethren bow to Joseph? The past history seemed to confirm his claims. He was in the first rank in their march through the wilderness. Manasseh, though the elder, was officially and prophetically placed second by Jacob (Gen. 48:19). Ephraim resented the prominence of Judah. Was not Joshua an Ephraimite? and he was their great leader after Moses. Samuel was born within the borders of their lot. Shechem and Shiloh were places of renown and of resort for all Israel, and these places were in their territory. All these, if not advantages, were circumstances which would lead the other tribes to give Ephraim the most prominent place, which he was not slow to take.

Hence Ephraim had preponderating influence; so much so that in the prophecies the ten tribes are often called Ephraim. See their jealousy in not being foremost in Gideon's victory over, the Midianites (Judg. 8). His meek answer mollified their wrath. The same spirit was seen when Jephthah had overcome the Ammonites. In this case they were called, and refused. Nevertheless they resented his victory. Who was Jephthah, the child of a concubine? Should Ephraim follow him? But the man they despise is victorious; and this they resent. It was resenting the mercy of God Who had wrought a great deliverance for them. Their jealousy rose to the extent of civil war, in which they were defeated. This defeat apparently kept them quiet even when Saul the Benjamite was made king. And there was no pretext for manifesting it (save in the case of Sheba, 2 Sam. 20) during the lives of David and Solomon. It was the folly of Rehoboam that gave occasion for its reappearance, never to depart till the true and wise King comes, Who will unite in His own Person the power of the Ruler, and the privileges and glory pertaining to the birthright.

Judah may have taunted Ephraim that the Ruler came not from Ephraim, and then what was the advantage of having the birthright? Ephraim envied Judah the privilege and honor of giving the Ruler which naturally belonged to him who held the birthright. In the coming day Ephraim will acknowledge that the birthright is His Who fulfills in His own Person the original promise when He appears to reign over all Israel. “The envy also of Ephraim shall depart and the adversaries [? Ephraim] of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” (Isa. 11).

As we read that Solomon loved many strange (foreign) women, and then of the establishment of idolatry; so here is the turning point in Rehoboam's prosperity: “he desired many wives” and then when he was strengthened in his kingdom, he forsook the law of the Lord. The next recorded event is the invasion by Shishak king of Egypt, the Holy Spirit expressly adding, “because they had transgressed against the Lord” (ch. 12).

Chapter 11

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 12-16

Now for a season Israel's glory is gone. Satan had succeeded in causing it to depart, but could not annul God's purpose concerning Christ. Therefore is Judah preserved, and prophets are sent if they have ears to hear. Ephraim rebelled against David's house, Judah rejected Christ, the greater Son of David; they hated Him without a cause. Cæsar, even Barabbas, was preferred to Him.

In revolting against Rehoboam Israel cut themselves off from the governmental channel of blessing, and as if to close up every means of communication from God one of the first acts of Jeroboam was to set up calves for Israel's worship. We know how the mercy and patience of God rose above even this insult. He sent them prophets, notably Elijah and Elisha. Did not some of the kings of Judah do as bad, or worse; setting up the idols of the Gentiles, and shutting up the temple of the Lord? Yet guilty as they were, even exceeding Israel in their abominations, they are kept and watched over by God, and Judah never rebelled against the house of David—not till Christ came; and then all their sin culminated in this, We have no king but Cæsar.

Until the captivity there were transient glimpses of light in their dark downward course. For in the longsuffering of God, a king who did right in the sight of the Lord sometimes sat upon the throne of Judah, and after the return of the remnant from Babylon, prophets were sent both to cheer the godly, and warn the wicked. But God was working for His name's sake. And the key to His forbearance is that Christ was to come of the tribe of Judah, and if this is the key to God's infinite patience and longsuffering, the key to Judah's persistent and increasing sin is that Satan was trying to make Judah's sin, if possible, exceed the forbearance of God. And apparently, he succeeded, for we do read— “until there was no remedy.” God did indeed send His last, His best: what other remedy could there be? Only we know that Satan's apparent triumph at the cross is God's real victory. “Now is the prince of the world judged.”

The rest of Chronicles is but the record of Judah's rapid descent from the sin of Solomon to the exceeding wickedness of the sons of Josiah, all which called forth the denunciation of the prophets and caused the misery which made Jeremiah weep.

How short-lived is the glory that depends upon the faithfulness of man! The temple that Solomon built is spoiled and robbed in the days of his son. For gold there is brass. When He comes and brings back glory to Israel, this will be reversed, “For brass I will bring gold” (Isa. 60:17). God takes pleasure in undoing the work of sin, symbolically expressed by the prophet, though doubtless true literally, for the gold and the silver are His.

But God was beginning to pour out His wrath, and He brings them under that same power from which He with a mighty and outstretched arm had at the beginning delivered them. Their sin and rebellion against God had been the fruitful cause of internal division (ten tribes gone) and external disaster (Shishak the Egyptian). But the God of all grace says that, if they cry to Him and own His righteousness, He will give them deliverance. “I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak” (12: 6-8). Mercy lingered over the

already doomed city; and while it waited, sin increased. Rehoboam's life is summed up in the words, “he did evil.” But is it not said that he walked wisely during the first three years of his reign? Yea, but the prophet says, “When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die” (Ezek. 18:24). The days of his wisdom are not mentioned, and the judgment of God upon him is “he did evil.” Was it not a very special act of disobedience to make constant war against Jeroboam when the Lord had expressly forbidden him to fight?

The Levites showed their fidelity by leaving their possessions and going to Jerusalem, but it was equally a proof that the whole system established under David, and instituted by the Lord, was broken and gone. For they had their appointed possessions in all the coasts of Israel. It was one of the external marks of God's order in Israel; to forsake them would be disobedience to God's command. But when that order was broken by the nation's sin, it was according to God's mind to leave their possessions which had become now defiled, and to assemble at the place where the Lord's name was still recorded. So now, when we find defilement and sin sanctioned in that which pretends to the Lord's name, absolute and complete separation from evil, whatever its appearance, is the true path for every Christ-honoring believer.

Abijah comes, and follows in his father's steps as to war with Israel. His battle with Jeroboam, and God's deliverance of Judah and judgment upon Israel, is all that is recorded under his rule, unless it be summed up in ver. 21 (ch. 13.). Abijah reasons with the revolted tribes. Was this mere human policy, an attempt to win back Israel to himself, or real concern as to their condition before God? Be his motive what it may, it was no less a call to Israel to return to the Lord God of their fathers. Israel heeded not, but even sought to destroy this testimony and set an ambush against Judah. Judah cries, and God delivers. Is not this deliverance equally a call to Judah? A reminder of God's faithfulness “if they cry to me I will hear;” if we may so speak, it is God redeeming His pledge, His mercy and truth rising infinitely above their transgression, however low and fallen they might be; if they called, God would hear. So Solomon prayed.

In the beginning of Asa's reign the deepening gloom is stayed for a brief moment. A gleam of light shoots across the dark scene, and reveals how great the darkness. The idols that were in Judah and Benjamin he puts away. How evident the spread of idolatry, how greatly increased, to require a law to put it down! In his zeal he decrees that “whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death.” Did you ever know idolatry, or any sin, put away by commandment? It may hide its head: idolaters may seem to throw their idols to the moles and the bats, but it exists and is rather strengthened by repressive laws. Its seat is in the heart and the idol is only the outward symbol, the visible index of the heart's enmity against God. And so in Judah when a good king would uproot it out of the land, it always burst forth with increased power when an evil king succeeded. (Chap. 15:17). The heart of Asa was perfect all his days, perfect outwardly in zeal against idolatry. But a more searching test awaits him, and this exposes the state of his heart; for while things that look well, and have a fair appearance, may win a good name among those that cannot look beneath the surface, He Who searches the heart, and knows what man is, brings out to view sufficient at least that saints and godly men may have a true judgment of things in their reality. Perhaps not now every hidden evil, but in the great coming day every secret thing will be

revealed. When the believers' hidden, perhaps unsuspected, evil is made known before the judgment seat of Christ, all will be to the glory of His grace. But when the books are opened, and the sin and hidden evils of those who live and die in the rejection of the Savior, it will be for their everlasting condemnation.

The attempt of Baasha against the kingdom of Judah, brings out the want of faith in Asa's heart, that he had no confidence in God. His unceasing activity in zeal against idolatry had no reality in his soul. The sun arose in the form of Baasha's invasion, and this outward piety withers away, because there was no depth of earth. He goes to the king of Syria for help, there is not even the appearance of going to God. Asa has brought silver and gold into the house of God; now he gives these treasures to Benhadad, and adds thereto treasures from his own house. All this is glory of the kingdom departing from the house of David; it may be a Jeroboam, a Shishak, or a Benhadad, but God is accomplishing His own will, though every succeeding stroke of His judgment had its immediate occasion in the king's increasing sin. And now we see Asa outwardly zealous against idols, inwardly no faith in God, (and without faith it is impossible to please Him); and when reproved by the prophet Hanani, he puts him in prison, and at the same time oppresses some of the people. How evidently the king and the people are departing from God, for those that remain faithful to Him, are oppressed and imprisoned. These were some of that remnant which God always, even in the darkest times, reserved for Himself. God, Who waits patiently until the measure of iniquity is filled, applies another test to the unfaithful king, a bodily personal trial. The result is the same, and his want of faith appears in another aspect. Not God's merciful interposition, but man's aid; first the Syrian, Gentile help against Israel, now he goes to the physicians. Two years before he died he was diseased in his feet and it became exceeding great. Yet he sought not the. Lord but went to the physicians (xvi. 12): pregnant words. His unbelief is not in simply applying to the physicians, in using providential means, but looking only to man, and in forgetting God. But the physicians could not help him. “And Asa slept with his fathers.” How solemn and graphic the words of scripture! He is diseased, goes to a physician, and dies! Yea, now, as well as then, if God be forgotten, vain is the help of man!

So far we mark the descending steps of Judah. First, idolatry creeping into the king's house, then becoming general among the people insomuch that Asa in the early years of his reign makes a law against it. What a change in a comparatively short time from the bright early days of Solomon! Yea, what a change from Asa first to last, from the time when he did not spare even his own mother (xv. 16) to the time when he put Hanani in prison and oppressed some of the people. So forgetful of God, of His mercy and of His promise, and His claims upon them, that he seeks aid from the Syrian, and we have this wonderful, even monstrous thing, Judah seeking and purchasing with Jehovah's treasures Gentile help against Israel. This tells their evil condition before God. Well, if they would worship the Gentiles' God, why not seek the Gentiles' aid? How different all is from the time when the Gentile brought tribute and presents, and kings came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Hitherto how manifest the longsuffering and patient waiting of God. His partial judgment on the kings and nation, as well as His great mercies are His gracious calls to them to turn from their idols. And these calls ceased not till the hardness and perversity of their heart was shown to be evidently indomitable. “Why should ye be stricken any more?” So the whole nation after Jonah's death, took a deeper, we may say headlong, plunge into the darkest abyss of iniquity that an

Israelite at that time could. I say at that time, for now apostate Christendom is sinking deeper than apostate-Israel did or could. And the rebellion of Israel against Jehovah their king is succeeded by Christendom practically denying the Lord that bought them while pretending to honor Him.

Yet let us remember, while we may be astonished at Israel's folly and wickedness, as the prophet calls upon the heavens &c. (Isa. 1:2), that Jehovah was working all through for His name's sake, controlling their wickedness that His great name, as declared to Moses—longsuffering and gracious—might in the end shine forth in all the splendor of His majesty and in all the boundlessness of His love. And where are these two seen? In the cross where mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, met together, never to be seen apart forever.

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 17-20

Although the last days of Asa were evil, and the cloud hanging over Judah was darkening, yet there is a gleam of brightness during his son's reign. Under Jehoshaphat rule the fear of the Lord fell on the surrounding nations, for the Lord established his kingdom. Judah brings presents, and he has riches and honor in abundance. He sends instructors with the book of the law of the Lord, and they go throughout all the cities of Judah, and teach the people. Moreover some of the Philistines and Arabians bring presents and flocks. Jehoshaphat waxed exceedingly great and had mighty men of war and of valor in Jerusalem. It might have seemed to the few godly ones a return of the golden days of Solomon.

Alas! Jehoshaphat is no exception to the universal frailty and ingratitude of man. When he had riches and honor in abundance, he joined affinity with Ahab. This is a still lower step than Asa's seeking help from Benhadad. For it ignores the sin of Israel's rebellion against the house of David, and against the Lord God of Israel. Jehoshaphat seemed indifferent to Israel's worship of Jeroboam's calves, and of their forsaking of the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. Jeroboam dared to disestablish and heathenize the national religion, the worship of Jehovah, and it is distinctively called his sin.

Christians now may view unperturbed “legal disestablishment “; for we are called to separation from the world and from its things, earthly establishments among them. For it was the religious establishment of the world that rejected Christ. In that day worshippers were not called to separation from the world, although from its sins and evil then as now, but now much more, are we called to separation from the world, as a system. For we are transformed into another sphere, a sphere of light and life, anew creation, separated from the old which God is going to destroy, though He bear long with it. No nation could commit a deadlier sin than to disestablish by human law, what God had set up by divine law. “Legal disestablishment” is now agitating men's minds: how does Jeroboam's sin bear upon what may be in this country? God often, if not constantly, judges man upon his own ground, it may be a man or it may be a nation. Take as an instance the man who had one pound given to him. Out of his own mouth he is condemned.

Ahab walked in the steps of Jeroboam; now to join affinity, with such is, if possible, more offensive to Jehovah, than to forget God and seek help from the Syrian. Besides, Asa was evidently afraid of Baasha. On a former occasion God had delivered him and sent His prophet to encourage him; why should he fear? This fear in no way condones or excuses his sin which was a practical denial of the Lord God of Israel. But however great the sin of Asa, that of Jehoshaphat is much greater. Not fear of a Gentile enemy led him to join with Ahab, for at that time he was rich, powerful and prosperous. Perhaps it was all these that led him to forget God, and to seek alliance with Judah's former enemy and with the haters of God. Jehoshaphat is called a good king, yet in this he is leading Judah away from God. But what will not good men do when they forget God?

He may have reasoned that although. Israel had forsaken the Lord and His temple, they were as much the children of Abraham as themselves, and where then the evil of affinity with them?

Possibly kindness and friendship might win some of them back to the temple in Jerusalem, whereas to avoid and shun them would only strengthen their hatred. Something like this kind of plea is used now by those who, having professedly forsaken the world, look with a lingering eye upon the things they had seemed. to condemn. Jehoshaphat condemned idolatry yet made affinity with it. But how did the prophet rebuke him on returning to his house, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord” (19:2)?

This was a phase of sin not contemplated in Solomon's prayer; for that supposes the people, though sinful and therefore suffering, yet acknowledging outwardly the authority and rule of Jehovah, to Whom if they cried, He would grant deliverance. But how could that be when allied to the haters of the Lord? In how short a time after the responsibility of maintaining the worship of Jehovah was laid upon man, how quickly all seems forgotten! beginning with Solomon's idolatry and Rehoboam's consequent folly; and now Asa seeking help from the Gentile, and Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab, with an apostate. But he did not worship the calves. No, but he sought the friendship of one who did, and so became a partaker of his sin.

The Corinthians are warned not to mingle the Lord's table with the table of demons. Was not Jehoshaphat, as it were, mingling the temple worship with that of the calves of Jeroboam i.e. with demons? as far as possible in that day, doing what the Corinthians were warned against.

It was no extenuation, but rather an aggravation of the sin of the ten tribes that they were Abraham's seed, and they were far worse than the heathen around them. But what is Judah's condition before the Lord at this moment? They were cleaving professedly to the house of David and to the temple of the Lord, but practically allied with a rebel and an idolater. This was to be deeper sunk in iniquity than even Israel; and yet there are depths lower.

Does this bear no very distant analogy to something nearer our own time? Do Christians now in this day join themselves to idols? Certainly not to Jeroboam’s calves; but everything which takes precedence of the Person of Christ is an idol. Even the church of God, beloved as it is, if its blessedness, if the “one body and one Spirit,” become a shibboleth and displace in ever so small a measure and occupy in our heart that supreme place which belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ, then the church becomes an idol. If an evangelist thinks and aims more at popularity, i.e. preaching himself and not the Lord, his preaching, blessed work as that is and God's means for the saving of souls, that too becomes an idol. In fact every soul, believing or not, that has not Christ as the supreme Object of his affections, is to that extent an idolater. So that idolatry is not limited to the bowing to an image of gold, or of wood; the idol may be only, but really, in the imagination. There is constant but pressing need of our remembering the apostle's words “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

Jehoshaphat's connection with Ahab was not to his honor, and how disastrous to his son, who married Ahab's daughter! the consequence doubtless of the friendship between the two kings. Jehoshaphat is entangled in Ahab's quarrels; still in his heart there is a feeling of what is due to the Lord, and he will not join Ahab against Ramoth Gilead without consulting a prophet of the Lord. Micaiah said enough to have dissuaded him from joining Ahab in that enterprise. Evidently he had determined his own course, and wanted the Lord to sanction it. Micaiah's solemn word did not deter him; besides, he had pledged his kingly words, “I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war” (the people are linked with the king for good or evil),

and he would not withdraw from it. A false notion of their word of honor has led others since then into the path of evil, sometimes irreparably; but the merciful Lord interposes for His own, notwithstanding their perverseness. Unmingled justice would have allowed Jehoshaphat to feel the full effect of his folly, but mercy triumphed; in his danger he cried to the Lord, and he is delivered and returns to his house in peace. But the Lord's reproof comes after His mercy. The prophet armed with the sword—the word—of the Lord meets him, and with the words as of indignant surprise, says “Shouldst thou help the ungodly? &c.” And here is a solemn word, important teaching, that Israel though truly of the seed of Abraham, were yet haters of the Lord. And this read in the light of the New Test, tells us that, whatever our privilege—the greater, the more responsible—if Christ be not supreme in our affections, we are so far haters of God. This may seem harsh to some, but we must bow to the truth of God. If Christ is exalted above every name in heaven, and He is worthy, so He must have the highest place in our heart. And to reign there is neither to give nor to seek friendship with the world, nor with those who bring not the doctrine of Christ i.e. the Christ of God. This is the only true measure of separation from the world and the world's religions.

A different scene now opens, and Jehoshaphat becomes another man. Moab, Ammon, and others come against him: he is afraid but seeks not Benhadad's aid nor yet to strengthen himself by an unholy alliance, but in the midst of the congregation he stood and prayed (his true place) and pleads the promise of God, and touches the right chord when he says, “Thy possession which Thou hast given us to inherit.” The answer is immediate. The Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the sons of Asaph, and they are told not to fear; that the Lord would fight for them, that it was His battle, not theirs. “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle, set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you” (20: 17). It was a wondrous battle, truly the Lord's. The Lord set ambushments; who or what these were, we are not told. Judah was to stand still and see how wondrously the Lord would fight for them. Judah goes forth with songs and then stands still while the Ammonites destroy the inhabitants of (those who came from) Mount Seir, and after that, “every one helped to destroy another.” So that, when Judah came to the field, not of battle, but of slaughter, they found only dead bodies.

Compare this battle and the destruction of the enemy with the battle fought by the side of Ahab where Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped, where his ally was slain. He was brought home in peace, but not with honor. Nor in this is there any honor for Jehoshaphat; the honor is the Lord's. The king and Judah stand still. It was the same mighty arm that overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea; then, Israel was told to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Israel was thee a helpless multitude, a crowd of men, women and children; now it is the soldiers that are told to stand still, “ye shall not need to fight.” And why are they not allowed to fight? Ah, he who had not long before joined affinity with Ahab was not in a condition to enjoy the honors of a victory. The Lord must do it all Himself, for the king cannot be used as an instrument of deliverance.

How many saints now through past unwatchfulness and failure are in a somewhat like position! Safely preserved from the foe according to the sovereign grace and purpose of God, but there is no contending manfully with enemies. This privilege and honor is for the faithful, for the strong and valiant. For the righteous government and discipline of God must be maintained in the church now as in Judah then; and this as well as His grace found in every time of need. The weak and even

the failing are kept safely, while the faithful engage in the battle. But when all fail in steadfastness, what then? The Lord Himself fights His people's battles, and they stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, but they have no honor in overcoming. What mercy! what shame to us! and what part can we have in the many promises to the overcomer? (Rev. 2; 3)

Chapter 13

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 20-22:9

Even Jehoshaphat is no exception to the universal deceitfulness and ingratitude of the human heart. The people were sinking deeper in sin notwithstanding the wonderful interpositions of God's mercy, His patient longsuffering; they had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers (20:33). The prophet had told the king, “There are some good things found in thee.” When did the Lord ever forget what was acceptable to Him? Yet here is but another instance of the inconstancy and instability of man. For after the gracious rebuke of his unholy alliance with Ahab, after his wondrous deliverance from the united armies of Moab, of Ammon, and others, a great multitude, after God had given him rest, after all this did he join himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel who did very wickedly. This alliance was for commercial purposes, to make ships to go to Tarshish. The prophet reproved him for joining with the father, and he repeats it with the son. Again the Lord rebukes him, and the ships are broken. There is to be no alliance with Israel, with the haters of the Lord, neither for war nor for commerce. Ahaziah solicits a renewal of the attempt, but Jehoshaphat would not (1 Kings 22:49). No doubt he felt the reproof given by Eliezer, and that the destruction of his ships was Jehovah's judgment.

A brief notice of Jehoram follows; we see the cruel policy of a tyrant: he slew all his brethren and some of the princes. Is he a son of the house of David? Yes; but he is married to Ahab's daughter, and was better pleased with Ahab's court than with his father's. See what Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab led to. For the first time we read of Judah's king following and bringing in Ahab's wickedness into the court of Judah; and not only worse idolatries, but his wife when old (Athaliah) develops into a murderess and slays even her own grand-children, save Joash who is preserved from her fury. In a remarkable way a prophetic writing comes to the king from Elijah, which was kept back by the over-ruling hand of God till the right moment, after the prophet's death, when the threatening contained in it might (humanly speaking) have greater effect upon him. But it does not appear to have wrought any change on him. A murderer of his brethren, an idolater, of the worst type, he died just as Elijah's writing predicted. In judgment his was a miserable, dishonored and unregretted end, no reign hitherto so disastrous, if we except Rehoboam's, when the ten tribes revolted: the Philistines and the Arabians, who brought presents to his father, rise up against him. And again we may ask; Is he a scion of the house of David? Yea, and therefore he and his are not irreparably destroyed. “Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that He had made with David, and as He promised to give a light to him and to his sons forever” (21:7). Judgment yet delays, but it soon comes, and is pronounced by divine authority upon the guilty people and land. As each evil king appears, Judah's guilt deepens; and idolatry, the root—sin of all, bears abundant fruit. Judah had already become Aholibah.

Enough is given to show the accelerating descent of Judah into the depths of idolatry and the judgments of God becoming more severe. Think of the chosen nation dwindled down to two tribes; of the royal family of David, the chosen of the chosen, whose representative now is a fratricide, an idolater dying a most awful and terrible death, the immediate infliction and judgment of the righteous God; and of the enemy triumphant! What a condition morally and governmentally for the

people! Were the surrounding heathen nations worse than this? How great the compassion and longsuffering of God! how His mercy flowed on like a river that deepens and widens as it rolls onward, as it were, side by side with the flood of iniquity, and keeping pace with it, until that deed was done which brought upon them the heavy judgment under which they are still lying. That deed which truly was the doing of the combined power of the darkness of hell and of earth, of Satan and the haters of the Lord, but which was fore-ordained of God as indeed the means and reason of the only foundation of Israel's past mercies, of God's present longsuffering, of their ultimate restoration, and of eternal salvation known now and forever, both for the Jew and the Gentile. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out (Rom. 11:33)!

The greater their provocation, the greater does the mercy of God appear. But underneath their provocation is the power and cunning of Satan. For he is to them the unknown and hidden enemy of their Messiah, ever seeking to break that kingly chain whose first link is David, and the last Jesus the great Son of David. The idolatries, rebellions, and alliances with the Gentile, or with apostate Israel, are so many attempts of Satan against Christ. His enmity is more against the COMING KING than against the people of the kingdom. He is permitted so far as to bring judgment upon the chosen people, but this only shows how glorious is the victory of grace over the most desperate wickedness of man, and of God's power over the utmost malignity of the devil.

Israel as a shadow of the future kingdom was ruined when the ten tribes revolted. But God's purpose stood fast, and for its accomplishment two tribes continued steadfast to the house of David: a fact due only to the faithfulness and purpose of God. When that purpose is accomplished, it is the bringing in His First Begotten into the world; but before He takes the kingdom, judgment falls upon Judah, and with heavier strokes than upon Israel, and heavier still they are to bear before the King appears in glory. Their cup of iniquity overflowed when they crucified their own Messiah. God lingered in mercy till then, yea after; for Peter proclaimed the restitution of all things if they would only repent. But even as they rejected Jesus on earth as their Messiah, so they would not have Him as the risen Lord of all, and killed Stephen. He was as a messenger from the dead, and their language is the same as when the Lord was living on the earth, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Of necessity judgment followed.

Either by the enemy's sword, or by internal treachery, Satan had apparently almost succeeded in destroying the house of David; against that house he was continually plotting. If he could but destroy that family (by this time he knew that the Bruiser of his head would come thence), then all Israel would be his prey, the two tribes as well as the ten, besides the world at large where he reigned. Jehoram, Cain-like, had slain all his brethren, and the Philistines and Arabians come to complete the destruction of the chosen family, so that there was never a son left him [Jehoram] save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons (21:17) called also Ahaziah, who reigned but one year. How marked the judgment of God upon these two kings! The former (Jehoram) dying of a dreadful disease, buried ingloriously, the latter slain by the sword, a poor runaway fugitive. But it was the vengeance of God (22:7).

Chapter 14

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 22-24

Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, grand-daughter of Omri a wicked king of Israel and of a heathen king—Etlibaal king of the Zidonians—the wife of Jehorana, the idolatrous mother and wicked counselor of her son Ahaziah, when she saw that her son was dead, arose and destroyed all the seed-royal and seized the throne, all but one infant whom his aunt Jehoshabeath hid from the demoniacal policy of his grandmother. What a picture! Where is David's son? What now of the promise that David should never want a man to sit upon his throne? Has Satan in very deed almost caused that race of kings to be cut off? Has he rendered null the word of God? How the great arch-foe would have boasted, if he had thus proved himself able to bring an everlasting curse, where God was controlling all things for better blessing! “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.” Though the line from David to Messiah is at this time attenuated to a mere feeble thread, and the promised glory (the future blessing of Israel, of the whole earth, and the immutability of God's counsels, then seemed to hang upon the precarious life and safe hiding of an infant), yet the promise of God is as sure and His counsels as firm while the infant Joash is in hiding, all unconscious of the momentous results hinging upon his life, and that his unnaturally wicked grandmother, a mere tool in the hands of a greater enemy, would seek his life; the purpose of God was as sure, and His decree as immutable, as when Solomon in all his might and glory sat on the throne. Apparently all seems contingent on the life of a babe; in reality all rests upon the firm foundation of God's word.

We think of our own blessings, those which are peculiar to saints of the heavenly calling; but God had promised that all nations of the earth should be blessed in Abraham's Seed (Gen. 12:3; 22:16, 17); and God not only gave a promise but confirmed it with an oath, so that the certainty of the word of God is under two aspects, the promise and the oath. All our blessings are wrapped up in the Seed, and are more (can we say more?) than confirmed to us by the promise and the oath; for we have the fact of Christ's death. The cross accomplishes God's word and fulfills His promises; and we know that all of them in Him are yea and amen.

Joash at the right time appears, the rightful heir to the throne of David. And the stranger and usurper, Athaliah, is slain. The genealogical line to Messiah is unbroken, and as yet each one sits upon his throne. The time will come, nay, is come, when the line, still unbroken, has not that throne; and so will continue, hidden and without that throne, till the great Son of David comes to sit thereon. How busy and indefatigable the enemy was to destroy the family of David, even to stir up a woman to slay her grand-children! Ordinarily affection, or tenderness, seems to increase toward the succeeding generation; but Satan deprives his slaves of natural affection, and substitutes bitter cruelty, in order to work out his purposes. How suddenly his plans are overthrown! All at once Joash appears, the people shout, the priests and Levites appear in arms, Athaliah is slain, and the kingdom is restored to the rightful king. The genealogical line from David to Messiah is preserved, and kept by the controlling power of God, notwithstanding Satan's persistent attempts to destroy it. Nay, he began as soon as men were born to make the advent of the promised Seed impossible. It was to prevent His coming that he tempted Cain to kill his brother, to corrupt the antediluvian world

so that God in mercy as well as judgment destroyed that demoniacal race in the deluge. And when he knew in what line the promised seed was deposited, all his malignity and cunning were directed against it from the heathen down to the high priest who said it was expedient that one man should die for the people. This selected line is placed on the chosen earthly throne, for a time, to show how God can exalt, and then because of sin cast down, trampled upon, and to human eyes stamped out of being, to show His judgment; and for a while seated upon God's earthly throne, we find rebels, idolaters, murderers. What a throne that of Israel and Judah had become! And still it is Jehovah's throne, and the appointed KING is coming, to reign in righteousness.

All the days of Jehoiada the priest, Joash did right in the sight of the Lord; yea, seems to take the lead and gives commandment to repair the mischief that Athaliah had done (24:6-11). But external influence, however holy, can never change the heart, which like a constrained bow springs back to its normal bent the moment that pressure ceases. How often this solemn fact is seen in Christian families! How often a son leaving the godly restraints of his father's house plunges with greater zest into the sinful pleasures of the world!

This was the case with Joash who sank into the depths of crime and ingratitude. While Jehoiada, his uncle, lived, Joash did what was right; but Jehoiada dies, after which “came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance [flattered him]: then the king hearkened unto them.” Their evil influence led Joash to his ruin, as princes had before led Rehoboam. Yielding to their flattery and no doubt solicitation also, “they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers and served groves and idols” (24:17, 18, &c.) How short the step from seeming outward piety to unblushing evil! Was there no conscience in Joash? No feeling of gratitude toward Jehoiada or his family? He remembered not the kindness of the father but slew the son.

Chapter 15

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 24-25

The reign of Joash is summarized in chap. 24:18, and his life is condensed into three facts. (1) He left the house of the Lord, (2) he served idols, (3) wrath came. The nation follows the king. But God is still patient with Joash and with his people. He sends prophets to them, for though the judgment is so near, and as certain as their iniquity, He remembers His covenant with them. His mercy and long-suffering is most manifest toward Joash; for a special messenger is sent to him, one who naturally has some considerable claim on him, and who would be heard and attentively listened to beyond all others. The All-wise God knows how to use natural feelings for His purposes of mercy, and when these feelings are outraged, so much the greater evidence of the power of Satan over man. Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, and a cousin of the king, is the bearer of God's message and reproof. The life of the king, humanly speaking, is due to Jehoshabeath, and the king will (if from no other feeling than gratitude) listen to her son, though he heed not Him Who sent the words. And how then was God's message received? Just as the most hardened sinners receive it. “And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord.” Joash forgat Jehoiada's kindness; and when Zechariah was dying he said “The Lord look upon it and require it.” A righteous cry, that which the Lord did look upon and require; but if we look for a gracious cry, which agrees with Christianity, hear it in the last words of Stephen, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Little did Jehoshabeath think that she was hiding and preserving the murderer of her own children. Divine retribution is sometimes slow but always sure. About a year after the death of Zechariah, he is himself slain on his bed; his slayers did not commiserate him in his great diseases.

But while retribution is an essential element in the government of God, and plainly appears in ver. 25, there is something more important still than any such requital. The line of kings, of the sons of David, though for the time being so iniquitous (their position increasing their guilt), must be preserved until He, the great Son, comes Who shall reign in righteousness.

Amaziah succeeds his father, in mercy to the people, but in faithfulness to His covenant with Israel. The stream of iniquity from Solomon to Zedekiah is frequently turned aside, but not uninterruptedly as in the case of the revolted apostate tribes, where, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, all did evil. And we see in this how the Lord Jehovah rises above the provocation of the sins of Judah. The great end which God has purposed within Himself is ever before Him, and to this He makes everything here below to tend, not the irresponsible creation only, but responsible and accountable man. Joash was righteously requited for the killing of Zechariah; the Lord required it of him, so that man is individually responsible and righteously judged, while every, the minutest, event is in His hand to control and direct as He shall please. How can man dare to pronounce upon such wisdom as this? Rather let us bow our heads and adore.

That an evil-doing son should succeed a righteous father is a proof that an evil nature is not made good by righteous example or precept, though that evil nature may become apparently worse through unrighteousness being constantly presented and enforced by example and precept. But

that a son even in such circumstances should do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, when a righteous son succeeds a wicked father, is a proof of the interposition of God in the power of His grace. So in this case Amaziah, who did right, succeeds Joash his father who at last did wickedly. It was a little brightness for Judah, but only a short time; for “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.” And before he died, the little brightness passed away, and domestic treachery deals with him as with his father.

Notwithstanding the exceeding wickedness found among the sons of David, imperatively calling for divine vengeance, the true Heir, the promised Son, must sit on David's throne, and the kingdom must be established in righteousness. For much more than that kingdom hangs upon the coming of the Son. The world waits for His coming to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and for the display of the glory of God; for not only Israel and Judah are to be one kingdom then, but the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Hab. 2:14). And more than these, there is His glory as the head of the church, as the great Firstborn from the dead. We speak not of His coming with grace, bringing salvation; but of His coming in glory completing our salvation. There was a due time for the former, there is also for the latter. If, as the prophet says, it was but a little thing to gather Israel compared to the being God's salvation to the ends of the earth, so we may with the utmost reverence say, that His glory filling the whole earth is but a little thing compared with the glory of redeeming the church, giving Himself for it and cleansing it from every spot and stain and blemish, and then presenting it to Himself, and making it the vehicle of His glory to the delivered world.

As the evil of man, and the persistent malignity of Satan become increasingly prominent, we also see how both are used of God to show forth the richness of His grace toward man and the Almightiness of His power and control of all the attempts of Satan; and that in spite of all these, yea, and sometimes by using them, God is bringing to pass His own immutable purpose. In this history in the Chronicles, we learn the patient long-suffering of God, His constant rising in goodness and mercy over all the evil in Judah till—in crucifying the Lord—it reached and touched the throne of God. Then there was no remedy, no more patience (save for the few disciple's whom the Lord would gather out of Jerusalem, and hide them during the storm of wrath and vengeance, as He did, in old time, save Lot from the overthrow of Sodom), no reason why the threatened judgment should any longer be delayed. In pursuing this history we see—perhaps plainer than elsewhere—not only how vain, but also how untiring, Satan was in all his attempts to destroy the family of David, or to make it so vile that God in His righteous anger might destroy it. See his attempts in Solomon's declension, Jeroboam's rebellion, and Rehoboam's folly. The checkered history of Judah since Rehoboam; the forsakings of the temple, the consequent invasions of the land by enemies, then outward repentance; the stupid iniquity of conquering a people and then worshipping the gods of the vanquished nation;—is not Satan's hand discernible in all this? But there is worse to come.

Notwithstanding, the wisdom of God knew how to combine His purpose of grace with His righteous government. Each evil king as a responsible man is judged in righteousness; in which all the unsaved will be judged. But the decree founded on grace is eternal and unchangeable. The Son of David shall, must, reign. The government shall be upon His shoulders, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Amaziah begins well. He did well in not slaying the children of his father's murderers, in appointing captains over thousands, over hundreds throughout all Judah and Benjamin; but when he hired soldiers out of Israel, it was not well. Jehoshaphat was rebuked for giving aid to Ahab, to Israel; Amaziah seeks aid from Israel, and hires apostates. In the former, there was the appearance of Judah's superiority; now under Amaziah there is more marked indifference to the name of God, and to the associations of His people. As a nation they were in a weaker condition, for Jehoshaphat giving help to Ahab is certainly greater than Amaziah receiving soldiers from Israel. Later, the king of Israel in his conscious superiority compared himself to a cedar in Lebanon, while he contemptuously likened Amaziah to a thistle, that a boar out of the wood could trample on. Amaziah felt the truth of this afterward (ver. 22).

Jehoshaphat made friendship with the enemies of God; as the professing church has joined affinity with the world in many things. We know who has said “The friendship of the world is enmity with God.” And when the professing church helped Constantine to the throne of the world, it was not the church overcoming the world, but yielding herself (i.e. the professing mass) as a stepping stone to the world's power and grandeur. The world and the church shook hands over the cross, and thus cemented their friendship (unfaithfulness with hypocrisy) which has continued ever since. This was surely high treason against our Lord and Master. The world smiles upon the professing mass—Christendom—and they love to have it so. Christendom sleeps in the arms of the world and rests there, subsisting by the world's power.

So Amaziah, professing right, and indeed doing right at first, seeks to strengthen himself by means of the haters of God; and the nominal church has followed in the wake of Amaziah and Judah. In all this history we see the rapid sinking of Judah into the mire of idolatry; but we see also that Christendom has plunged as deeply into worldliness. When the body calling itself Christian gave up its place of separation from the world and took that of affinity with it, prostituting its power and influence to the service of the world, and receiving in return the world's smiles and riches (as was really the case when the famous edict of Milan in A.D. 319 or 313 was published, which places Christianity and paganism on the same level, i.e. an “act of toleration,” the world in its wisdom began to tolerate the name of Christ), the so-called Christian church was like the ten tribes that followed Jeroboam. They no sooner left the temple than they worshipped golden calves. Christendom has forsaken the place of pilgrims and sojourners, assigned to them by the rejected Lord, and made obeisance to the world.

Upon being rebuked by the prophet, Amaziah thinks of the hundred talents; must he lose them in sending away the Israelitish soldiers? The prophet removes his anxiety. “The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.” God rewards his obedience, imperfect as it is, and gives him victory over Edom; and he takes many captives. His treatment of them was barbarous; the Holy Spirit does not sanction it, but relates the fact (25:12). But if his obedience to the divine command was due partly to the assurance that he should not lose his hundred talents, his obedience was not with a perfect heart. And he has to feel the consequences of his error. The dismissed soldiers soon showed their true character; they were mere mercenaries. Whether for or against Judah it mattered not, it was plunder they wanted; therefore no wonder that they were angry, for they expected abundant booty. They had their revenge on the cities of Judah.

But there is a higher stand-point whence to look at the hiring of these Israelites. The Lord was not with them, and the incorporating of them with the army of Judah was obliterating the mark of distinction which had been made by God (as worshippers in the temple at Jerusalem, and as worshippers of the two calves), save as He mercifully remembered them, and sent prophets unto them, notably Elijah and Elisha. Would it not be a triumph for Satan, if he could not join all the tribes in a general apostasy, to amalgamate their armies? For then whatever victory the Lord would give to Judah must be shared by apostate Israel. This the Lord would not permit, and His word is, Send them home. If we give occasion to the enemy to mix himself up with the affairs of the church in ever so small a matter, under whatever pretext, we are sure to suffer. In the righteous government of God, the evil consequences of previous folly may appear, even though that folly, or sin be repented of and forgiveness received. David repented and was forgiven; the Lord put away his sin, but the consequences were felt all through his life. He felt the sword in his bitter wail for Absalom (2 Sam. 18:33), in the insurrection of Sheba the Ephraimite, and in his last days the futile attempt of Adonijah to usurp the crown which God had given to Solomon. All these were but the accomplishment of the Lord's word by Nathan. “The sword shall never depart from thine house” (2 Sam. 12:10).

Now comes (ver. 14) the most amazing folly. He returns victorious over the Edomites, and with extreme brutishness worships the gods of the people he had vanquished. One could perhaps better understand how a heathen would bow down to the gods of his conquerors. But that Amaziah who began his reign well though not with a perfect heart, should worship the idols of those that he had conquered, is an act of folly and stupidity; which can only be accounted for by the fact that Satan was behind it all, hurrying king and people to their ruin, and that God in judgment permitted blindness to fall upon them, which in a succeeding reign was judicially decreed (Isa. 6).

Chapter 16

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 25

A prophet is sent and reproves Amaziah for his amazing folly. “Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?” The infatuated king had no answer to this stinging reproof, which in effect was saying that he was worshipping the gods he had vanquished. But if the king cannot answer he can threaten—the resource of the world to stop the mouths of God's witnesses. “Art thou made of the king's counsel? Forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten?” Have you authority to speak, have you been duly appointed as one of the king's counselors? And thus it is that the merciful message from God to show him his sin and folly is met with threatenings; “forbear” said the king, and the prophet ceased, and the message of the merciful reproof was thrust away. He could refuse the mercy and shut the mouth of the prophet; but he must hear God's judgment without any mingling of mercy. “I know that God hath determined to destroy thee because thou hast done this and hast not hearkened to my counsel” (25:16). And when God determines to destroy, can man escape? Amaziah is but a sample of man. There is a message of mercy from God now, and the spirit of the world is still saying “Forbear,” or giving hearing only to some humanly appointed authority, an authority which is constituted and upheld by law. And all such do forbear rather than offend the world. The awful judgment of God on those who do not obey the truth is not announced as God gives, but is toned down so as not to be self-applied. Nay, a mere human authority will preach smooth things; and man will sleep on in his sins, or, if perchance a word alarms the burdened conscience, he turns himself on his yet unthorny bed, folds his hands saying “a little more sleep,” takes his accustomed draft of the devil's anodyne, and after a while wakes—where? “Thou hast done this” i.e., his seeking after the gods of Edom, and afterward not hearkening to the prophet's counsel, which perhaps was frequently given before that time. Indeed the stern impatient word “forbear” seems to imply that this was not the first time that the prophet had reproved the king. But this was the occasion for uttering God's determination. “I know that God hath determined to destroy thee.” To sin is to be worthy of condemnation, but to refuse mercy and reproof brings out God's determination to destroy (Prov. 1:24-31). His own pride and folly becomes the immediate occasion of his ruin. He was lifted up because of his victory over Edom and challenges the king of Israel. How contemptuously Joash treats him! Amaziah impelled by his own vanity would not hear; it was the first step in the path which led to his downfall, and his defeat was the first public stroke of God's judgment which was now inevitable, for this came of God (ver. 20). Man's pride and folly when persisted in become the precursor of God's judgment. Yet for this act of foolish pride he took advice—whose advice? Like Rehoboam he sought the mind of flatterers.

If a lying spirit was permitted to persuade Ahab. whose determination was it to destroy Amaziah? The king of Israel made good his parable. It was the thistle against the cedar, and the result was a complete rout. The thistle was trampled on, and was trodden down by a wild beast. “Judah was put to the worse before Israel and they fled every man to his tent” (ver. 22). Amaziah is a captive, the walls of Jerusalem are broken down for the space of 400 cubits, the treasures of gold and silver both of the temple and palace were taken, and hostages also. This was an effectual stop to

Judah's boasting against Israel. Whatever glory Amaziah won by his victory over Edom is irretrievably over shadowed. Fifteen years afterward, like his father, he is slain by conspirators. But mark the closing words of the inspired writer, “Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem” &c. (ver. 14-27.) He turned away from the Lord on his return from the victory over Edom. Then the conspiracy was formed. He returned in triumph and thought his throne was secure; but unknown and unapprehended, as when Jonah rejoiced under the shadow of the gourd which a worm at the root was destroying, a conspiracy was formed against him in the hour of his boasting. It was the judgment of God. “I know that God hath determined to destroy thee,” said the prophet, and whether vain-gloriously boasting against Israel, or humiliated under his defeat by the man that he wantonly challenged, or fleeing to Lachish from conspirators, this determination of God still followed him: God was overruling the wickedness of the conspirators to accomplish His determination. He might flee to Lachish from them, but he could not flee from the judgment of God.

No conspiracy would have succeeded had he not turned away from the Lord. Though he showed little or no faith when he hired soldiers from Israel, and a very selfish and interested obedience to the Lord's word when he sent them away, it was when he publicly set up Edom's idols that the Lord permitted these evils to come on him. “Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah first and last” (ver. 26). “First and last” —Is there not a division here between the former and the later part of his reign? and is the dividing line when he turned from the Lord? Though the former part was not with a perfect heart, it was when Jehovah was publicly dishonored that the prophet announced God's determination to destroy him.

How low, in a comparatively short time since the magnificence of Solomon's reign, has Judah fallen! How debased in their own eyes they must have appeared when their own city wall, even of Jerusalem, was broken down by an enemy! Calamities from within and without fall on the people, as the family of David, dragging the nation after them, sink deeper and deeper in the mire of idolatry and corruption. How marked has been the downward course since the death of Jehoshaphat and how swiftly and surely the judgments of God followed! Jehoram dies of a terrible disease, Ahaziah by the sword, Joash and Amaziah by domestic treachery. What a history that of Judah is becoming! The last days of pagan Rome are scarce blacker. In Rome we see the cruelty, the ambition, and the lawlessness of men without the knowledge of God; but in Judah with equal wickedness there is the knowledge of God, as far as could be known under the Mosaic economy. But if God winked at the time of ignorance among the Gentiles (Acts 17:30), not so with Judah; there judgment followed more or less swiftly in the track of sin, God using earthly instruments but not the less His judgment.

Not so now; this present is pre-eminently the day of grace. God is longsuffering and man is heaping up sin. But the day is coming when Christ will take the immediate rule of this world; for when His judgments will be seen in the earth, then also the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9). R. B.

Chapter 17

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 26: Part 1

Uzziah succeeds and does that which is right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father did; that is, not with a perfect heart in the first part, and manifest failure in the last. The same evil was in Uzziah, as in Amaziah; only it was manifested in a different way. It was after Amaziah was lifted up in heart that he marched straight into defeat and captivity; and when Uzziah was strong, he transgressed in going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar. How often does prosperity, far more than adversity, try the saints of God! The pretentious and the hypocritical are snared and taken. The true if carnal are laid low. The spiritual and true are kept by our faithful God Who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, &c. (1 Cor. 10:13.) If then we ask why the saints of God are for the most part poor, we may answer with another query (looking merely at the weakness of man, not at the power of God), Who has strength to overcome the power of riches?

“He transgressed.” So had previous kings; and man might estimate the sin of worshipping idols to be worse than that of assuming the function of a priest. But especial note is made of it, and this alone should arrest man's estimation; God's mention of it, and the judgment that follows show. God's estimate of his transgression. In usurping the office of the priest, he was rebelling against Jehovah. The world's history gives many instances where the chief of the civil power assumed the functions and duties of the high priest. And for idolatry or a worldly religion no arrangement could be better. Indeed the two functions (the kingly and the priestly) naturally gravitate towards each other, affording mutual support; the temporal clothing itself with spiritual dignity, the spiritual expressing the power of the temporal. And for the material prosperity of a nation, a church upheld by the state consolidates the nation's power, while dissent tends to weaken unless other things counteract. So the ancient kings of Rome from Numa, and afterward the emperor, even Constantine and several of the Christian (so called) emperors that succeeded him took the title of “pontifex maximus “; until, after being declined by Gratian, it was entirely dropped by Theodosius. But when the emperor dropped the title, the priest eagerly yet gradually grasped it; and he who assumed the title of “pontifex maximus for the whole of Christendom” was not slow to avail himself of every opportunity of claiming and expressing the civil power.

The Christian's path is above the secular and the spiritual power of this world. The saint's path of the former time was connected with the things from which the Christian is now separated. It was then God's will in the old dispensation that the regal and sacerdotal offices should be distinct and separate. Even David, the honored type of the coming king (and, as such, appointing the temple service and the twenty-four courses of the priests), assumed not in his kingly office the duties of the high priest. Solomon does take the lead at the dedication of the temple, but he is scarcely the high priest on that occasion. “Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord” (7:4). But it was right for the king and all the people without naming the priests or the Levites; for he was then foreshadowing the kingly and priestly glories combined in Christ. It is of Christ the prophet speaks, “He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon the throne, and He shall be a Priest upon His throne” (Zech. 6:13). It was but a transient

glimpse, but it was the union of the kingly and priestly glories of the millennial day in the Person of Christ. And what was the splendor and magnificence of that typical day to the coming day of Christ! We wait and long for His appearing.

But we may humbly inquire wherein was the exceeding greatness of Uzziah's transgression. “He transgressed,” the inspired historian says; so did Solomon; and ten tribes revolted as the Lord's judgment on the people. Rehoboam's idolatry brought Shishak the king of Egypt on Judah, and the despoiling of its treasures. Abijah (Abijam) walked in all the sins of his father (1 Kings 15:3). Asa sought help of the king of Syria, and when diseased sought not the Lord but the physicians. Even the good king Jehoshaphat joined affinity with those that hated the Lord. And from Jehoram's accession to the death of Amaziah, what fills the page of Judah's history but murder and usurpation and idolatry increasing all through the land? If these sins should cause the Lord to drive the people to a far-off land, Solomon prayed that, if they repented, God would hear their cry and forgive. But a more subtle evil is here than those for, which Solomon prays for forgiveness, and a more terrible judgment than any that Solomon thinks might happen. A judgment which prevents the cry for mercy and God's interposition “lest they should convert and be healed.”

Such a sin as Uzziah's and such a judgment were unthought of by Solomon. If idolatry evidences man's baseness, ingratitude, and corruption, Uzziah's entering into the temple to burn incense on the golden altar evidences proud presumption and defiance of the Lord's authority. For he was not ignorant that to burn incense was the office of the priests alone—a duty and privilege for the sons of Aaron and no other. In Uzziah was the appearance or pretense of worship, but real disobedience and profanation of the holy things; it was sacrilege on the king's part and faithfulness on the priest's part that drove the king out of the temple: yea God Himself showed His displeasure by smiting him with leprosy. The judgment is in accordance with his transgression. He dared to take the office of the priest, to do what the law forbad him. Now as a leper, he cannot come into the temple, he loses the privilege of a common Israelite, he is cut off from the congregation, and must henceforth live in a separate house. Nor can he exercise his kingly functions, but, in modern language, a regency is appointed. Jotham was “over the house and judged the people.”

If the gravamen of Uzziah’s transgression was his presumption in entering into the temple, and, instigated by his own will nor fearing to interfere with the priests in their service to Jehovah, according to His commandment, daring to burn incense on the golden altar, what is the difference between his transgression and the doings in Christendom? Do we not see man’s will and order, and authority exercised in the great house, which professing Christendom has become? Does the Lord is any way sanction this? (1 Cor. 3:12). Alas! Man is seen intruding into the things of God, but what true-hearted priest has faith to drive him out?

Chapter 18

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 26: Part 2

The governmental connecting link between God and Israel was broken when the ten tribes rebelled against David's house. Grace then established a temporary link, having a governmental character with the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It could not be otherwise than temporary; for two tribes in the place of twelve would be an impeachment of the wisdom and power of God, a sort of compromise of God's original purpose. It is not temporary alone historically, i.e. Judah broke it, but it was so intentionally, and necessarily as resting on human instability. It was a condition of human evil, a grave circumstance which divine wisdom made to fit in and be subservient to His counsels of redemption, and also for immediate display of His forbearance and mercy, His wisdom, power, and patience shining in all as nowhere else (the cross excepted). But two tribes only never could inherit the promise originally made to twelve. God's promise was made to the fathers, and though the fulfillment necessitates the raising of the dead, is this incredible (Acts 26:6, 7)? All the twelve tribes are spoken of as hoping to come to the inheritance. To ask how it could be established in the future for all Israel if Christ had not been rejected, and after His death raised again the third day (though in human and Satanic wisdom to crucify the King must forever have prevented the setting up of the kingdom in Him, the only divine and stable foundation), is presumptuous if not sinful on the creature's part. The unerring word declares that this temporary link is broken, and that the government of the world in and by Israel is for the time in abeyance, but to be manifested when God will have established them as the first nation in the world. All turns on Christ dead and risen.

Their rebellion against Rehoboam formed a crisis in Israel's history. Ten tribes willfully forsook the covenant—perhaps not intending to forsake it; but this was Satan's object, and he, as far as permitted, led them to it. Did he know that the rebellion was permitted and overruled by God, and was to be used as part of the plan of divine counsel, in the carrying out of which the wisdom and the grace of God was to be infinitely exalted, and he himself defeated and all his aims eventually brought to naught? Though carried away and almost overwhelmed by Satanic craft, having followed his leading at first and powerless afterward to overcome, the ten tribes are distinctly responsible to God for breaking away; and the promises pledged to them under the covenant were absolutely forfeited, and every act of forbearance and loving-kindness on God's part towards them was pure and sovereign mercy, quite above, yea infinitely above the character of covenant blessing. They had forsaken the covenant; but God did not forsake them till justice and truth compelled Him. There seems a crisis in Judah's history in Uzziah's presumptuous attempt on the functions of the priest. The former was rebellion against Rehoboam, and the occasion for it was found in his unwisdom. The latter was direct rebellion against God. How much greater than Rehoboam's folly is Uzziah's presumption and disobedience to God's word, that the anointed priest alone should burn incense! Diminished power and dominion, and subjects changed to enemies were the fruits of that arrogance; but Uzziah could still enter into the temple, not yet shut up in a separate house till he died (26:21). It is the leprosy of Uzziah which hinders his being the channel of God's power and government in the earth, as it was his profane disobedience that

occasioned the leprosy. The king's exclusion from the house of God formed the second and irreparable crisis—irreparable till Christ the Son of David restores all things.

The exclusion of the king shadows the cutting off of the whole nation. Their idolatry for a long time was pointing to and preparing the way for this judicial act of God. No sooner had God’s picture of the coming glory passed away than idolatry appeared. Even Solomon, who in his estate dimply mirrored the glories and universality of the millennial reign of Christ, fell into idolatry before he died and shamelessly built places for his wives’ idols. And soon it spread among hearts that naturally are enmity against God, and though its public growth was somewhat checked by each good king that occupied the throne, it was never wholly eradicated; nay, with an evil king it burst forth with increased vigour. No affliction, no judgment, could free the land from it before the Babylonish captivity. It began possibly with Solomon’s weak desire to please his idolatrous wives, who like Rachel brought their images with their household stuff. A weak desire on Solomon’s part, but sinful and foolish where obedience and faithfulness to the Lord were involved. He as a wise man perhaps looked with contempt upon his wives’ folly, but he did not forbid it. And, beginning with winking at it, he ended with being a willing supporter. A dreadful end it was to a small beginning. “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth”!

Chapter 19

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 26: Part 3

How inveterate the love of idols in Amaziah when he worships his captive gods, for he had brought them to Jerusalem! To what did Ahaz sink, and Manasseh yet lower (if that be possible); for to the idolatries and cruelties of Ahaz, he added witchcraft? To the practice of the worst abominations among the heathen, like Balaam he had dealings with a familiar spirit. But notwithstanding this constant and increasing evil until the decree of unsparing judgment, as spoken by Isaiah, and the sign, as well as the occasion seen in the king's leprosy, Judah was accounted, and God dwelt with king and people, as on the ground of covenant responsibility.

But though sovereign grace abounded, and infinite mercy seemed to linger, Judah had now forfeited that place, and they were Lo-ammi. God would have reinstated them and built up their kingdom in more than Solomon splendor and riches if they could have repented, but they would not. Their eyes were blinded lest they should see &c. However mysterious it may appear to us, it is no less true, that God had judicially done to them as He had in judgment done in ages past to Pharaoh; He hardened their heart. But compare the different position and responsibility of the king and people now with what it was under Solomon, for then covenant blessing and privilege depended on the faithfulness and righteousness of the king. If he walked before God (see 2 Chron. 7:17-22), the responsibility of the national prosperity rested on the king—thou—but his turning away would surely draw the people after him, and the consequent judgment would be on him and the people—if ye turn away. The turning away was consummated in Uzziah, the measure of iniquity was filled by him (it overflowed under the following evil kings) and the decree of judgment was issued. Their ears made deaf, their eyes blind, heart fat until the appointed time.

If, as the prophet says, the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron (Jer. 17:1), so also is their judgment. Uzziah was a type of that nation which, leprous as he, must endure the deprivation of being cut off from the Lord's house, and be confined in a separate one until the judgment be overpast. The Jews now have no temple and are separate, as a rule, from all Gentiles. But while the mercy of God lingered over the doomed city and nation, it gave a season of joy and gladness to the righteous. There was still the temple for them, and they would find His presence in His house. It would be empty and desolate for the wicked who might crowd to it, and boast of it, as did the Jews when our Lord was here, but there would always be a line of demarcation between them, the house would be full of God's mercy for the righteous, it would be desolate for the wicked (Isa. 1:10-15).

The judgment of God upon this guilty nation takes the form of a delusion. There had been wars, pestilences, and famines, but now something that blunts their feelings. They might have wept and cried to the Lord under the former, as often they did in the times of the Judges; but now they shall simply be deluded. What more terrible judgment, save the eternal one, than “I also will choose their delusions,” and this because when God called, there was none to answer.

A more fearful delusion followed by a heavier judgment will come on Christendom, and for the same reason, because they will not hear. In the past time God called by judgment and by mercy.

Now He calls by mercy alone; the message sent is God's love and free salvation. Still men will not hear, “for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie” (2 Thess. 2:11 &c.) On Israel the expression is rather negative (though equally fatal); their heart is made fat lest they convert and be healed. On Christendom it is more positive: not only inability to perceive the truth; but the positive acceptance of a lie, “that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned:” their eternal doom is foretold.

God forebore long with Ephraim, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?” He bore with greater longsuffering the greater provocations of Judah. For His house was in Jerusalem, and His name was recorded there. When (see Hos. 11:12) the covenant was broken which afterward subsisted with Judah after Ephraim (Israel), and judgment was inevitable, there was still, as i t were, the lingering of divine commiseration; for we know Who wept with human tears over Jerusalem.

The interval between the judgment on the ling, and the destruction of the city by the Babylonians, is filled up with the solemn calls to repentance by God through the prophets,—calls to the nation; but words of comfort to the righteous, and the certainty of final deliverance for them. But from the time of Uzziah's leprosy governmental responsibility is set aside, or modified, it becomes more of an individual character. They were to be no longer as a nation the people of God. Lo-ammi was writ large when they were carried to Babylon.

But it is then when the individual in contrast with the nation is addressed that the sovereign grace of God shines forth, and mercy to the transgressor which the law could not hold out, and which indeed ought not, or it would cease to be a, righteous law. But grace is higher than law, and bids it stand aside till the great propitiation is set, forth, which shall proclaim and establish its inflexible righteousness. But God, shall we say? waits not for that supreme moment to declare His mercy but proclaims aloud “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” And so the repentant Israelite returning to the Lord would have all the blessings named in Isa. 55. But these blessings are not merely given as the happy portion of the then repentant Israelite (had repentance been possible) but have a prophetic character. He declares what Israel will be when they turn to the Lord, and the veil is taken away; then all these blessings, will be made good to them both literally and symbolically.

But the proclaiming grace and pardon to the contrite individual in no way condoned the national sin. Judgment on the nation must fall on the righteous as on the wicked. The difference between the righteous and the wicked will definitively and eternally appear in the next life. In this they are mingled together, and the suffering, brought upon themselves by the wicked, the righteous are involved in. Nationally the wicked and righteous are one, and both endure the national judgment. Saints of God now feel the temporal judgments falling on the world, but this is made a blessing and becomes a means of knowing God, and the wonders of redemption in a deeper way. For it enlarges the sphere of faith and trust, and the Christian may take the language of Job, and with a Christian's confidence and submission (which Job had not) say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15). The Lord knoweth them that are His and is able to preserve in the midst of the fiercest judgment those that trust in Him. How did He preserve His own that were cast into the fiery furnace, the intense flame of which destroyed their executioners while on the three Hebrews there

was not even the smell of fire! In the splendor and amid the riches of their Babylonian palaces not so happy or so honored as when walking in the midst of the fire; for they were in company with One Who was like the Son of God! And so with that remnant which God has ever kept for Himself, out of that people, whether the righteous in the past, or the believing portion now joined to the church, the righteous judgment that overtook the guilty nations did not, could not, remove the special care that God takes of the godly. To human eyes they suffer in the same circumstances, and no difference is seen. So it might have been said of Daniel and his three friends. They were captives like the wicked princes, bound with similar chains, carried to the same city, all of them known as captives of Judah. But how they rose to honor in an alien city! True God was carrying out His own purpose, foreordained and immutable; at the same time it was God's reward for their faithfulness. We turn to the earlier words of Isaiah— “say ye to the righteous that it is [shall be] well with him.” If “well” here below in the midst of the fruits and consequences of sin, what must “well” mean in eternity?

Chapter 20

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 26: Part 4

The law excluded the leper not only from the tabernacle but from the camp, yea from his own family; “he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall be his habitation.” Driven out with rent garments and bare head, but with his upper lip covered (the sign of mourning and woe) and from his own lips the confession of his shame, and the reason of his exclusion, he had to cry, Unclean, unclean (Lev. 13:44-46, Num. 5:2).

In the government of Israel, the king was Chosen to stand for God before the people, and before God for the people to enforce righteousness both by precept and example, and the temple as the tabernacle of old was the meeting place (Ex. 29:43 and 2 Chron. 7:12). Now that the king is driven out of the temple, and compelled to dwell in a separate house, thus interrupting the legal communication between God and the people, what a feeling of woe must have passed through the few righteous that were in Judah! What unknown terror in their minds when compelled to say of the king—he is a leper! The place of chief of the godly was the king's, as well as chief of the people. And when he had to take the place of a leper and say, Unclean, what wonder that Isaiah (Isa. 6) as the most prominent of the godly remnant should give sad expression to the tears and feelings of the righteous! “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;” and this he would the more deeply feel, for as he adds “mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts.” There is no word in scripture to express a worse condition than “unclean “; for this is applied to the leper who is thrust out of the camp, but this is the word that the prophet applies to himself. Why should he be so vile in his own eyes? Because he had seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. The posts of the door moved, and the house was filled with smoke at His presence, what else could Isaiah—holy as he might be—say of himself, but that he was unclean? Not that the righteous were cut off from God; nay, there was a resource, a little city, always provided for them; as now God says by the apostle that with every temptation (trial) there is a way of escape. And the prophet had already given God's word, “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him” (Isa. 3:10). It is while threatening the wicked that the Lord pauses (shall we say?) in the midst of His denunciations to give this assurance to the righteous. How cheering this must have been to those who, conscious that in the righteous government of God, every covenant, blessing, and privilege was forfeited! Nothing remained for them but sovereign mercy, and this is just what God delights in, for He is the Father of mercies. And in the vision when Nadal sees Jehovah of hosts, when the almost despairing cry bursts from him “Woe is me,” it is then that mercy, yea, more than mercy is shown him, and the angel with the live coal takes away his uncleanness.

This purging of the prophet is not quite the same as the cleansing of a sinner when he receives the forgiveness of his sins, and is cleansed from guilt, for it is the precious blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin. Fire, which is symbolical of the judgment of God, would consume a sinner not purged. In the vision it is qualifying a saint to carry Jehovah's message when every visible means was gone—a message to a people who were never in such a position before. And now that this priestly and kingly link had utterly broken, a new link is formed with the righteous: not that

there had not been prophets before, but a new one under the circumstances. The nation was cut off and Lo-ammi written on Judah, as indelible as Belshazzar's doom upon the walls of his palace. Only Christ can say Ammi again.

The corporate position of the whole nation also the prophet bewails, when he confesses that he is a man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips. His association with them (for he was an Israelite) aggravated the uncleanness: a truth that has its importance now, and that needs the live coal now as then. Not only is seen the individual condition of the righteous, but their national position. The righteous and the wicked as both forming the nation must, at least outwardly, suffer the national judgment. But through all, the righteous are kept and brought, and the prophet becomes the visible link of communication between God and His witnesses, until Christ came, and with Him not a mere temporary link of prophecy with the righteous remnant but the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. But righteousness which is by faith is that which therefore comprehends Gentiles as well as Jews. How wondrously and mercifully God is presented as meeting His own disconsolate ones! The word too records the mercy and the power that kept them together in spite of the influences of surrounding idolatry and indifference. Malachi speaks of those that feared the Lord, and that they spake together; and though they dwindled to a small number, the Lord found some in the temple that then stood, and called others to follow Him, until the hour came when they would no more be correctively smitten, but chastisement gives place to judgments and exhortations, yea, entreaties, to the expectation of threatenings.

Chapter 21

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 26: Part 5

The purging qualities of fire are often used symbolically to foretell Israel's cleansing in the latter day. God's judgments are a fire that will consume the wicked and purge the righteous. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call upon my Name, and I will hear them, I will say it is my people and they shall say Jehovah is my God" (Zech. 13:9). "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto Jehovah an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3). The prophet's vision of the angel cleansing his lips with a live coal, and the righteous remnant refined like silver and gold over the furnace, are correlative. Isaiah represents the righteous remnant, and they are symbolically purged with a flaming coal from the altar; in the future God will refine and purge the remnant of Israel.

Looking at the historical fact, the prophet is lifted out of his "undone," "unclean," condition, and sent with Jehovah's message to the guilty men of Judah— "Go tell this people." Even Moses at the burning bush shrank from being sent to Pharoah.

Here Isaiah, who had just bewailed his uncleanness, no sooner hears Jehovah saying "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" than he answers in the power of the Spirit, "Here am I: send me." Cleansed from his iniquity, purged from his sin, he is empowered to bear Jehovah's words. What efficacy in that live coal!

But the time is coming when not merely a cleansed individual, though a prophet and representative withal, shall be the Lord's messenger, but a chosen remnant who are also called His brethren (Matt. 25:31 &c.), not to Judah who hearing shall not hear, and seeing shall not perceive, nor understand, but also on whom God's heavy judgment must fall. These future messengers carry a different message to a different people; they preach the King and invite to the kingdom. Then it will be good news of the kingdom and blessing for those that receive it. But the message by the prophet is a decree of judgment, the shutting, for a time, of the door of mercy. The people, as a nation, are set aside. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Judah, like Ephraim, is given up.

Seasons of merciful interposition may yet be given after the judgment is decreed. And though the judgment is pronounced, this does not prevent God's promise of His Son even to "that king Ahaz," not for the sake of the guilty people, but for the sake of the righteous. They thought that if king Uzziah was a leper, then all was ruined; but the promise reveals the King that is coming, of Whose kingdom there should be no end. The glory and magnificence of this promise may have been but dimly seen and felt, but there was strength and cheer for them. God knew how to comfort, and reveal His own purpose; and He has ever known how to provide and care for His own individual sheep while carrying on His great purpose of redemption, or taking vengeance on His enemies. With Him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning; for when Sodom was destroyed, not having ten righteous men within its gates, God did provide for the safety of one, and Zoar, a little city, was spared for his sake. And the Lord Jesus says that the days of great tribulation shall be

shortened for the elect's sake. God controls and guides the storm for their sake. Worse and fiercer the storm of sin during the first of Manasseh's reign, and mingled with the predicted judgment under the sons of Josiah; yet what a merciful and blessed season the righteous had in the times of Hezekiah, and of Josiah! God provided an ark for Noah, spared Zoar for Lot's sake, and now calls upon His people, His elect, to enter into their chambers until the indignation be overpast (Isa. 26:20).

The bright seasons in the reign of Hezekiah and of Josiah were to sustain the faith and cheer the hearts of the righteous, not to set aside or annul the judgment. Even Josiah's tender heart and piety could do no more than bring him peace in his own day. But the judgment would surely come in his son's day. If the people could and would have heard and seen and understood, who is to say that it could not then have been, as it will be when the words of the psalmist are made good to Israel in the coming day? “And He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies” (Psa. 106:45). But the prophet enters into the mind of God and does not pray that the judgment may be averted, nor for forgiveness as Solomon did, that God would hear from the heaven of heavens, and, when He heard, forgive. The people were to be deprived of contrite hearts and broken spirits (to which God pledged Himself to look), lest they should be converted. The prophet recognizes the righteous judgment, and merely asks “How long” this unparalleled judgment is to last. And the irrevocable answer is “Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and Jehovah have removed men far away and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land” (Isa. 6:11). But the judgment is not yet past; the land is desolate, for Israel's blindness is not yet removed. When the veil is taken away, they will turn to the Lord (2 Cor. 3), their enemies shall be destroyed, and the waste cities shall be inhabited (Isa. 54:1-10).

But all through this time of wrath the line is preserved among them, even as the seed remains in an oak or a teil tree that is stripped of its leaves, cut down, and only a stump remaining; through the scent of water it will yet bear boughs like a plant (cf. Job 14:7). How small the remnant at the time of the Babylonish captivity! If the oak tree was shorn of its leaves then, nothing but the stump is left now.

“High-minded” Christendom, looking at the scattered people, exclaims in unbelief akin to derision, “Can these dry bones live”? Yea, whether looked at as dry bones, there will be the shaking and the breath from the four winds, and they will stand up an exceeding great army; or whether as the stump of the tree but whose substance (life) is in it, the scent of water will cause it again to bear boughs. Among the stricken mass of captives that Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon, there were Daniel and his three friends, and others doubtless; and they were kept from Babylon's idolatry. And in due time Ezra and Nehemiah appear, and bring back to Judea the “tenth” that the prophet speaks of. For this “tenth” is by no means significative of the godly remnant, but of the portion of Judah that should historically bear the name of Jews; “tenth” used indefinitely as a small portion compared with the nation. The “tenth” it was that crucified the Lord and so more guilty than those of Manasseh's day, or in the days of Josiah's sons. But they shall be eaten, consumed, or devoured a second time. God's righteous remnant were in their midst but really the life was in the godly ones. The holy seed was in them, but they had dwindled down to a very small number when the Lord Jesus came, such as Zacharias, Elizabeth, Anna, Mary and others that followed Him. But the grace and truth that came by Him was like the scent of water that Job speaks of. There were

goodly boughs from the stump of Judah, shooting over the wall. But Judah, the returned “tenth,” rejected Him, and the leprosy of (Uzziah seemed evermore fixed on them, and so it would be but for the wisdom and power of God. For the leprosy that smote the people typically in Uzziah will be cleansed by Him Who had but to touch and say “I will: be thou clean;” and in the future, as in the past, the leprosy will immediately depart.

Chapter 22

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 26: Part 6

But the national sin calls for national judgment, which would have been eternal, but that God provided a Man made strong for Himself, Who should be their Messiah, and also our Savior, even the Lord Jesus. He healed them by His stripes, He was bruised for their iniquities. But it was a light thing to be a substitute for Israel merely, His soul was made an offering for sin. Reconciliation was made by His blood for the sin of the whole world; for the shedding of His blood could not be limited to its atoning value for Israel.

As the king was cut off by his leprosy from the temple, so was the nation governmentally cut off from God. Uzziah's exclusion is symbolical of Judah's. But the nation shall be restored, and the sin, the moral leprosy, shall be washed away. And the house of David which led the way into sin and idolatry is first named as cleansed by the waters of the fountain that shall be opened in that day, a day joyfully anticipated by the prophet. “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. 13:1). But who can tell its brightness? When the then nation is sprinkled with clean water, when all are taught of God, when the name, the real name, of the chief city, the once idolatrous Jerusalem, will be JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, then the story of the glory of Solomon and of his golden city (chap. 9:20) will lose its place of wonder and boast, in presence of the greater millennial glory which the Lord will surely bring to Israel; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are His. The Lord will turn Israel's sorrow to joy, their captivity into conquest. He Who in their stead once suffered, and was afflicted for their sakes has blotted out the handwriting that was against them, all the broken ordinances that called aloud for judgment; and He will reinstate in all the blessedness of the original promise.

That Israel's guilt was borne by Him, as well as atonement made for every believer, in His death and bloodshedding on the cross, is a truth that shines through the words unwittingly spoken by Caiaphas when he said to the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in council, “Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (John 11:49, 50). How contrary to God, how devilish, was the thought of Caiaphas? How blessed and divine the truth of God contained in it! Yet the high priest was quite unconscious of any feeling but his own hatred and jealousy of Christ; but he is compelled by the Holy Spirit to use words which unfold God's love to Israel, and His purpose of redemption in Christ; and then God gives His commentary on them, and that such was not the meaning of Caiaphas. But this shows how God controls all things for the furtherance of His truth, and of His glory. And Caiaphas was not the only one, nor indeed the first to utter words, the fullness of which he could not comprehend. Balaam, while desiring the last end of the righteous, could scarcely grasp the extent of his despairing cry, “I shall see Him but not nigh.” It was wrung from him: he felt himself powerless in the hand of his Almighty Conqueror.

Again, we may reverently and adoringly say, how wise, divinely and graciously wise, that the words of the high priest were not of himself as was his thought, but were controlled by the Holy

Spirit, that they might bear His meaning; “And not for that nation only but that He should gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” In these words of meaning is the nation (Israel) as such, and also the children of God, each one in his individual position, rather gathered out from it, and all made one in Him It is for Israel restored; and believers made one in Christ by His cross.

Henceforward from Isaiah's prophecy there is no semblance of repentance in Judah; for although Jotham, the son of Uzziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, it is expressly said, “And the people did yet corruptly” (chap. 2). Even the bright moments in the reign of Hezekiah and of Josiah were only an outward reformation, a veil drawn over the evil of idolatry, so that it was compelled to hide its hydra head. And the Lord said by the mouth of His prophet, “For as much as this people draw near Me with their mouth and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me; and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men” (Isa. 29:13). It was by the command of Hezekiah that the people pretended to draw near, but He Who searches the heart knew that it was far removed. This was God's word in the prophet's day; and the word is confirmed by our Lord Jesus Who applies the same word to the Jews in His day (Matt. 15:7-9). Hypocrisy was characteristic of them, and was dominant in the time of the prophet. “Every one is a hypocrite” (Isa. 9:17). “I will send him against a hypocritical nation” (chap. 9:6). The people would please Hezekiah, but they followed their own evil; and the natural effect of a good example on an evil nature is to make persecutors, or, if the good example be that of a man in authority, it very probably will make hypocrites. This the nation became and were so when our Lord was here below. Not but what some also became persecutors (Heb. 11:36-38), but hypocrisy perhaps the more prevalent. And what more hateful than hypocrisy? While to the publicans and harlots the Lord said Come, to the hypocrites He said Woe.

And yet the Lord had His own chosen ones among the nation of hypocrites and idolaters, and while the prophets came armed with God's judgments against the wicked, they were also the messengers of peace to the afflicted few. The prophets were laden with assurances of God's mercy, and His remembrance of them. The godly might have had desponding moments when Ahaz reigned, yet what a distinct and definite promise is given, and given too to “that king Ahaz!” Not for his sake is it given, but to tell the nation what God will do for them, and to cheer and brighten the lives of the oppressed remnant. There is the destruction of their enemies (Pekah and Rezin), and afterward the advent of the Son, of Whose government there should be no end. “For unto us a child is born &c.” (Isa. 9:6, 7). How evident that two classes in Judah are before the mind of the prophet, the righteous and the wicked! To the former is given the glorious promise; to the latter although their calamities are great, and will be greater, yet the words of the prophet, the knell of their utter ruin, are “For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!” Even the great prophecy, the promise of a Son, could not turn away the Lord's anger, nor was it intended so, but to give a sure word of prophecy where the righteous might rest their hope, laying a foundation on which the righteous could build all through the time of judgment.

We may here notice a change in the manner of communication from the Lord to the people. In the wilderness it came through Moses, and all his power and authority enforced it. But now, through sin, the leader or king of the nation can no longer be the channel of the Lord's messages. A special man must be raised up for the purpose; who, through the wickedness of him that occupies the place of the first channel, may be put in prison as was Jeremiah. But he was strengthened of

the Lord (Jer. 1:17-19) to overcome the anticipated opposition. And not only so; for the Lord in old time commanded Moses to speak to the people, as if, in putting honor on Moses, He would use his authority. Now the Lord speaks more directly to the people. Certainly the prophet speaks to the people, but it is the Lord's authority; the servant may be ill-treated and despised, and the authority and power of the king be against the authority of the Lord. In mercy now the words come direct from the Lord to the poor and despised. “To that man will I look &c.” That is, the Lord spoke through Moses and the ruler spoke with the Lord; now when the Lord speaks, it is outside and often against the king, but ever to the humble and contrite. God's communications will again come through the Ruler, when the Son of David comes and takes the kingdom. All will be in due order in that day. He that rules was “the Servant,” and serves even while He rules. In all things He has the pre-eminence.

Chapter 23

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 27-28

Very brief is the notice of Jotham, no event does the Spirit of God dwell on. In a general way he did right in the sight of the Lord, but, it appears, manifested no energy, for while he did right, the people still did corruptly. Nevertheless, outward prosperity marks a righteous king, his enemies pay tribute, and “Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God” (27:6). But if the people acting corruptly is evidence of the want of energy in the king, how much greater the corruption in his son Ahaz, who soon exceeded and led the people in their corruption? If Jotham could not put down the idolatry of his own family, and restrain the tendencies of the heir of his throne, much less the same tendencies in the nation. Two things mark his reign, the king personally righteous but without zeal, while the people doing corruptly were fitting themselves to follow Ahaz in all his abominations.

Rather longer is the account of Ahaz, or of what happened during his reign, than of Jotham, a righteous king. But it was the iniquity of Ahaz that made him prominent; and there were two events in connection with Israel which were brought out at that time, viz., Judah's decadence, “For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.” Ahaz is called king of Israel, his position before God, for the ten tribes were apostate. Judah was the Israel of God, but Judah was made naked, never so low as now, even lower than apostate Israel. It is this that we see; and secondly, that Israel, who had taken an apostate place before God, had yet some righteous men, who felt their position, men of weight and influence who would not allow their trespass to be added to by retaining the captives from Judah. “Our trespass” was no doubt their great trespass in rebelling against the house of David. The rebuke of Oded and the remonstrance of the four princes cause the captives to be sent home. Israel seemed to be more amenable than Judah to correction. At least; with some, the remembrances of what they had been under David, and how they had sinned and forfeited every covenanted mercy in their rebellion against Rehoboam, extorted the confession “for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.”

The return of the captives and the cause of it could have been no secret to Judah and Aliaz; but it had no effect on the besotted hearts of the men of Judah, who were already feeling the judgment of God. Unconscious of it they might be; but no less visible was the judgment; for while the LORD was calling them to the remembrance of His goodness, by causing the Israelites to restore the captives of Judah fed and clothed, and the remembrance too of His just wrath in permitting the Edomites and the Philistines to smite and invade Judah, yet “At that time did king Ahaz send to the kings of Assyria to help him,” and purchased it with the gold of the temple, and of his palace. And though the Assyrian king did not help, but distressed him more, yet did Ahaz sin more, for he sacrificed to the gods that smote him; and the sacred writer, even the Holy Spirit, as in the utmost human contempt says “This is that king Ahaz.” Yet to him the prophet speaks of the glory of the Son to be born, and Hezekiah gives a dim shadow of the coming glory. Dim, for though wonderful in itself, as coming after the abominations of Ahaz, what can it be but partial and dim when taken as a picture of the future millennial glory of the Son? “For now we see through a dim window

obscurely.”

The power and goodness of the Lord is manifest in the fact that Hezekiah was a good king, his father was the worst that yet sat on the throne. Where was the youth Hezekiah trained, was it in his father's palace or in the city? Ahaz had sill rounded him with idolatry, he had idols in every separate city, in every grove, on every high hill, he had shut the doors of the LORD'S house. Wherever Hezekiah looked, an idol met his eye. And yet in the first year of his reign, the first month (!) he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. It is not only remarkable, and astonishingly so, in Hezekiah personally as being an evidence of the power of God over surrounding influences, but also in that Hezekiah was used governmentally (for God still waited for Israel though the judgment was pronounced). He was giving a sample (shall we say?) of what the fulfillment of the promise would be, the promise of the Son just made to Ahaz. There is no excuse for the rationalistic pretension that the virgin's Son, Immanuel, was to be a child either of the king or of the prophet. Compare Isa. 9:6, 7.

Chapter 24

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 29-30

This chapter may be called the account of the re-consecration of the temple and of the priests and Levites; the trumpets and the instruments of David were there (ver. 31). Nor did Hezekiah fail to remember all Israel (ver. 24), and accordingly, in the following chap. 30., he sends to all Israel and Judah, and wrote to Ephraim and Manasseh, to the remainder of the ten tribes that were not carried into captivity by the King of Assyria (2 Kings 17:6 ver.). Some scorned the invitation; but many came (vers. 10, 11). When the antitypical day comes, the scorners will have perished; for then all the tribes in various ways will come to the house of the Lord and to Jerusalem (see Psa. 107 which is a grateful remembrance and thanksgiving for the lovingkindness of the Lord: a song of praise from Israel restored). So in these chapters we have the re-opening of the doors of the temple, its re-consecration, and the recall of all Israel. What can these be but pledges from God of what is yet future, for the temple then standing was soon to be burnt by the Chaldeans, and the tribe of Judah to be scattered, as Israel was? why then such a great change, if it were not symbolical of a greater yet to come? The temple service was certainly restored because Hezekiah was good. But a deeper truth, I think, is to be apprehended—that Hezekiah was made a good king, because the Lord was going to give a little sample of His grace and power to be fully manifested in His time. Is this not intimated in the sudden preparation of the people's hearts, which humanly would require many years? “And Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people that God had prepared the people, for the thing was done suddenly” (chap. 29-36). Looking at the circumstances, their most universal idolatry and the national and truly quick response to Hezekiah's call, apparent in all the chapter (30.), are we not compelled to acknowledge the constraining hand of God, and while acknowledging, stand aside and humbly inquire what new act of grace and love is now to bring out more of God of which this rebellious and idolatrous people are to be the platform? Soon is the grace displayed. A sample, shall we say? of that eternal love that never changes and of that power before which all enemies are as chaff, is presented and each while prophetically it points to the future, historically it is the voice of a call. He Who can do this, can do much more. Repent for why will ye die? for God hath spoken and evil is determined against this nation, but if you turn from your evil, He will repent of the evil He thought to do (Jer. 18:8). But the earnest call of the prophet and the gracious interpositions of God in delivering power were alike unheeded. “Make the heart of this people fat.” How true of the last days of the kingdom! How patiently God waited to be gracious!

All that were invited could not keep the passover of the appointed time, the 14th day of the first month; for the priests were not sufficiently sanctified, nor the people gathered. The king and princes had taken counsel to keep the passover in the second month. This was a provision made by the Lord for unavoidable failure. (See Num. 9) But even in the second month a multitude of the people, chiefly of the ten tribes, had not cleansed themselves; yet did they eat otherwise than it was written.

Hezekiah prayed for them; not that he was indifferent to their condition, but his only resource under the circumstances was to pray for them saying, “the good Lord pardon every one.” There

might have been much ignorance in the people which were left of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun. These tribes had forsaken the temple for many years; the sins of ignorance were forgiven: if not ignorance, it was presumption—no forgiveness for that (see Num. 15). This does not intimate that he knew of the uncleansed condition of some while at the feast; for the purport of his letters (ver. 1) was to come according to the law, and waiting for the second month was affording time to be cleansed. Rather, when he knew it after, and it could not humanly be remedied, and that some had eaten the passover otherwise than it was written, he had no resource but in prayer.

Chapter 25

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 31-33

What of old was the consequence to Judah of the unnatural alliance of Jehoshaphat and Ahab? The marriage of Jehoshaphat's son with Ahab's daughter. Jehoram slays all his brethren and some of the princes. The dark times of Ahaziah, and Athaliah succeed. Jehoram killed his brothers, Athaliah slew her grandchildren (chap. 22:10-12). Such the effect of his affinity with Ahab. God suffered long: only one thing more to fill up the measure of their iniquity; and then judgment was pronounced. They had forsaken the Lord, followed idols, sought the aid of man, and made alliance with apostates. It was in Uzziah's reign that an attempt was made to upset the order of the temple. Departure from the Lord would bring judgment. Not giving heed to God's calls to return, would confirm it, but to interfere with God's order in His own house and seek to introduce man's order called forth the immediate sentence. The nation, symbolized by Uzziah's leprosy, is cut off from the house which they had defiled. But the judgment on the king did not change the people. The sentence was “make the heart of this people fat,” and the fulfillment was, “and the people did yet corruptly” (chap. 27:2).

Another effect of the then affinity with Ahab is that Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. This expression seems to denote the greatest guilt of the kings of Judah, and is used after affinity with Ahab. Ahaz burnt his children in the fire. Manasseh dealt with a familiar spirit and with wizards. Could the chosen nation sink lower? The sons of Josiah make the cup of iniquity to overflow, and the beginning of judgment overtakes them. But before that, the patience and goodness of God provides two bright presentations of the future, when in His time, not in Uzziah's, the priest and the king shall be one; not to avert the doom of Judah, but for the encouragement of the righteous yet found there. They are given under Hezekiah and Josiah. This was unmingled mercy. But they passed away and wickedness prevailed from the king to the lowest. Hezekiah had it in his heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce anger might turn away, but the sentence was decreed and the piety neither of Hezekiah, nor of Josiah, could turn aside the judgment about to fall on Judah and Jerusalem. The utmost was a delay (chaps. 29:10; 34:23-28).

How the many interpositions of God in mercy during the whole of their history, which were so many calls to repentance, remind us of our Lord's words, as He wept over Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13 &c.) Asa in his later days oppressed some, who seem by being named together to belong to the same company as the seer (chap. xvi. 10); but persecution raged after Uzziah. Perhaps the bitterest times were during the reigns of Ahaz and of Manasseh. But the Holy Spirit refers to them and their sufferings (Heb. 11:33-38), and declares the world not worthy of them. Idolatrous Jerusalem has its army of martyrs as well as pagan Rome, and so-called Christian Rome not less but more.

But mark that He Who wept said, I would have gathered! God speaks in Him with human tears. Who will dare to attempt to draw the line between His deity and humanity? Where is reverence for the person of Christ our Lord? It is far from shining in this present evil age, when the only Worthy One was rejected for a robber, and which will close with the vilest of men exalted and exalting Himself as God.

Chapter 26

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 34-35

In Hezekiah's life there are two events which foreshadow the restoration of Jehovah's worship and the destruction of the enemy; that is, the passover and the overthrow of the Assyrian have each a prophetic bearing. But again what closer illustration of the history of Israel than in the life of Manasseh, wickedness and rebellion against God, then captivity in a Gentile's dungeon, and lastly restoration, not merely deliverance from a foreign land, but restored to his kingdom! As to all Israel, their national iniquity is ended, and they are eating the fruit of their doings. Their restoration is yet to come. And come it will as surely as Manasseh was restored to his kingdom.

Manasseh has fearful prominence among the wicked kings of Judah, even the fierceness of Jehovah's wrath is attributed to the sins and provocations of Manasseh (2 Kings 23:26; 24:3, Jer. 5:4). He is singled out for his sins, and as the object of God's mercy, as no other, before or since.

The passover kept by Josiah seems more extensively observed by the people than that of Hezekiah, at whose invitation some mocked (chap. 30:10). There was no passover before or after like that of Josiah, and none like him that turned to the Lord with all his heart “according to all the law of Moses” (2 Kings 23:25). Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from His fierce anger. But Hezekiah's soul has a deeper thought of the mercy of God; for to him the first thing was to receive the pardon of all sin, and then the service of God. Both begin by cleansing the house of the Lord. This was imperative, for in vain would Hezekiah draw nigh to God while the temple was defiled. The difference is that Josiah did it as preparing himself for the eating of the passover; Hezekiah, as that which was imperatively due to God. It is the “passover” which fills the heart of Hezekiah, and in the first year, in the first month, having put the temple in order and the priests and Levites in their places, he sent to all Israel to come to the passover. This is more than “according to all the law of Moses” which characterized Josiah.

The holding this feast so filled Hezekiah's heart, that if he could not keep it on the day which was regularly appointed, he would on that which was graciously permitted, and all Israel were in that condition to which this permission is granted by God. And when the passover is finished, then all present went out to the cities of Judah and brake the images, and then returned to their own cities. But it was in the eighteenth year that Josiah kept the passover. He would have them all first prepared, as he said to the priests: “So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves and prepare., &c.” It was due preparation “according to the law of Moses” moved Josiah, not the mercy of God beyond law, which seemingly occupied and filled Hezekiah, insomuch that when he was told that some had taken the passover without having cleansed themselves, i.e., without legal preparation, which was a sin in the eye of the law, he looks higher than the law, to the sovereign mercy of God, and prays, “the good Lord pardon every one.” Josiah cleaves to the law, and acts righteously in cleaving, but it did not bring him joy and gladness as to Hezekiah and the people with him (chap. 30:26). The book of the law is found (not that he searched for it); and he reads. What is the effect of the law upon his soul? He rends his clothes: it brings distress. The Lord answers to his weeping and promises mercy beyond the provisions of the law (chap. 34:24-28). The reading the law may

have quickened him in his work of purging the land, but it did not make him, joyful; on the contrary he rends his clothes. When Moses went up the second time on mount Sinai to meet the Lord, He proclaimed His name as the merciful, gracious, and longsuffering Lord, and yet as visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children—wondrous mingling of law and grace which only He Who gave the law could do. Josiah slave to the law, as a good Jew. Hezekiah, in spirit, rested on the mercy which was in store for thousands. Hezekiah prepares himself to purge the land by eating the passover. Josiah prepares himself to eat the passover by breaking the images. In eating the passover, there is confession of sin and helplessness; there is the profession of faith in Him, Who said, “When I see the blood I will pass over,” and still more emphatically, though symbolically, given by the Lord Himself, “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, &c.” Man prefers and follows in the path marked by Josiah. It is not God's way. His way is to eat the passover first, and thus to get eternal life. How else could we break down images? It would be Satan casting out Satan.

But, as yet, the law could not be set aside: where there was faith, the individual could rise above it, and God responds to the faith He gives. Josiah as a good king, under law, prepares himself, and because he is good, he bows under the law in deep distress. His purging of the land, and his repairing of the temple could not prevent his tears. Nor was the law given to wipe away tears, rather to cause them to flow. Both kings are noted for zeal, but it is manifested differently. Hezekiah sends to Ephraim and to Manasseh (tribe) and to others to come and keep the passover. Josiah sends to destroy all the visible traces of idolatry both in Judah and in the cities of Manasseh (tribe). That is the land of the tribe of Manasseh, for at that time Israel was carried into captivity by the Assyrian. Why need Josiah interfere with those who are aliens to Israel? It was sufficient for Josiah to know that these aliens were dwelling in God's land, and the land must be purged.

Evidently Hezekiah is on higher ground than Josiah, and it is said of him that none before or after were like him (Hezekiah). He is noted for his trust in the Lord (2 Kings 18:5), that is, he took the ground of grace. Josiah took rather the ground of law. Hezekiah was sick nigh to death and was tried, that he might know all that was in his heart. Just the way of God with His saints who live by faith. Josiah was not so put to the proof and tested. Hezekiah's path was like the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; and he passes away in peace, after knowing the increasing brightness of the power of God Who healed him of his disease and restored him so as to go again to the house of the Lord, and gave deliverance and victory over his enemy. Josiah passes onward, having the blessings of a faithful Jewish servant under the law, but fails to discern the will of God at the close of his life. Perhaps a little elated with his prosperity, and with the reform that he had effected in his kingdom, he endeavors to withstand the king of Egypt and is slain, and his dead body brought to Jerusalem. The difference of the deaths of these two kings is worthy of our notice. May the Holy Spirit lead us to apprehend His teaching in it.

Now in sending to destroy all trace of idolatry, before keeping the passover, is just the way that religious man (the religion of the world) approves. Many Christians even follow in the same path, and believe it to be the right way. And if it were law without grace under which we were placed, it would be quite right. Many attempt to approach God in this path, not considering, what may seem a paradox, that the farther they advance in this path, the farther is God from them. And if they could approach God by this path, and receive His pardon and justification, it would not be God

justifying the ungodly, but the purged. But purged from what? From sin? But the nature is sinful: if any could purge himself from the sin that dwells in him, he must purge himself from his nature, without having any other—for he is supposed on his way to God to receive the new nature—where then would he be? The gospel speaks differently. The unpurged, the lost, are called, are invited in the gospel; for even Christ, our passover, was slain for us. We are keeping the feast that followed it, the feast of unleavened bread.

How Satan must deride the attempt of any man to make himself clean, and fit for the presence of God. The Lord said of Job that he had no equal in the earth, not excepting his three friends, that he was perfect and upright; and when his calamity suddenly burst on him and overwhelmed him in body as in circumstance, he not knowing God's love and inscrutable wisdom uttered intemperate words; yet even then he knew enough of himself to say, “If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” He did not know the utter vileness of his nature: this can be learned only in the presence of God Whose divine light makes the heart bare. When brought to that light, he says, “Behold, I am vile.”

A man sometimes speaks of finding his way to God! He never will. He may be brought to God, but he will never find the way to Him. Why the Lord Himself only brings us to God by the shedding of His own precious blood, and will man pretend to come in the name and strength of his own works, after the truth is declared in the cross of Christ? That cross which proves the vileness of man as well as proclaims the infinite love of God?

It was the object in giving the law, that man might know his own vileness and impotency, but he, full of conceit of himself, accepted the law as the means of life, and sought to establish his own righteousness by that which could only be for himself, the ministration of death. But we have seen that the best man in the earth says, Behold, I am vile. Truly the nature is vile, and man, to cleanse himself, must destroy his own nature. Then where is he? There is one, only one, way of being cleansed and fit for the presence of a holy God, and that is not by our endeavors which, were it possible, would take a long time (and death might supervene) but by the Holy Spirit's application of the blood of Christ. There is a perfect, immediate, and eternal cleansing. His blood cleanseth from all sin.

Chapter 27

Thoughts on 2 Chronicles 36

With the death of Josiah the forbearance of God ceased and judgment soon came upon the city. It had been hitherto restrained; for the calamities that befell the kingdom of Judah partook of the character of chastisement. The reformation effected by Josiah was the last interposition of mercy from God, while Judah remained as a nation. The next national interposition of God will not be a mere temporary reform but eternal, under their king Messiah, our Lord Jesus. But now the sky was black with impending judgment. And the first droppings of the storm of the judgment proved the removal of the last stay of David's house. Alas! this was followed by the maddest infatuation of their kings, the sons of Josiah,

The dominion of the Gentile soon began, and will only terminate when the Lord appears. But Josiah, in this matter, inquired not of the Lord: it was his own ardor that led him to withstand Pharaoh-neco. And as if he had a presentiment of his death, he disguised himself (chap. 35:22), of which there was no need with faith in God. He had not even the faith of Jehoshaphat, who, though abetting and helping Ahab, would not go to battle without inquiring of the prophet of the Lord, and went with his kingly robes on. Jehoshaphat was preserved; Josiah was slain. The God of battles, Who guided the arrow that gave Ahab his death-wound, controlled the archers that slew Josiah. Mercy took him away from the evil to come (Isa. 57:1); but there was judgment in the manner of it, which fell on the guilty city unmixed. The people of the land placed his son Jehoahaz on the throne. The Egyptian monarch, however, would not permit him to be king, but carried him into Egypt where he died a captive: the same land and power, from which, in ages past, the Lord with mighty arm and wondrous signs had delivered His people Israel.

All Israel as a nation now was cut off, and the way made for accomplishing in due time His purpose, that mercy should come to the Gentiles (Rom. 11). And we may observe here that, as one Gentile is used for the execution of Jehovah's anger on Israel, so another (Cyrus) is used as the instrument of His mercy in giving permission, and help to all that wished to return. “Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up” (chap. 36:23). True, that restoration was partial; for only a remnant returned, a little one compared with the nation. A full restoration of all Israel, after the judgment is ended, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south (Psa. 107:3), is reserved for the great Son of David; Who will not only restore them to greater glory than they had under Solomon, but also take vengeance on those Gentiles that, while executing Jehovah's wrath on His own guilty people, sought to gratify their hatred and boasted against the Lord God of Israel. It was truly the ax lifting up itself against Him Who used it.

But if the king of Egypt is God's rod for Josiah, not he is for the guilty city. The king of Babylon executes Jehovah's wrath upon Jerusalem, and Egypt must submit to him now whom God had appointed to rule over the world. Nebuchadnezzar set up whom he would, and whom he would he cast down. We see this power exercised in regard to the sons of Josiah. Egypt's subjugation is seen in that Eliakim, the nominee of Pharaoh-neco, becomes the servant of the king of Babylon

(chap. 36:6). How completely is Judah under the power of Nebuchadnezzar when he binds this king in fetters, and puts a child of eight years on the throne, and after three months places his uncle Mattaniah (Zedekiah) there! Even the changing of his name was evidence of the supreme authority of Nebuchadnezzar, who did the same to Daniel and his three friends.

But Zedekiah rebelled against his lord, and the rebellion was through the anger of the Lord (2 Kings 24:20); it was a part of the judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, and it brought special judgment upon himself. For the terrible vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar on his helpless captive was due perhaps not so much to the rebellion of a vassal king as to the guilt, the enormity, of breaking the oath that he took in the name of Jehovah to be obedient to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 17:11-21). This iniquity filled up his cup. He made a covenant with the king of Babylon, and took an oath in the name of Jehovah to obey Nebuchadnezzar, insomuch that Jehovah said “my oath,” and “my covenant.” Afterward he rebelled against the king that Jehovah had set over him, and sent to Egypt for horses and men. He despised the covenant and oath so solemnly taken and thus presented the name of the Holy One of Israel to the heathen king as nothing. This brought things to a climax: there was “no remedy.” The Babylonish captivity terminated the existence of Judah as a nation, as the king of Assyria did that of Israel.

In all their past history the long-suffering of God rises above their sin. Nevertheless they turned a deaf ear and would none of His reproofs. Jehovah “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 His messengers, despised His words, and misused the prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah rose against His people till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans (chap. 36:15, &c.) until Cyrus arose—type of their Messiah, Who will accomplish a greater and a final restoration.

But though the captives might weep by the rivers of Babylon, the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 6) was not fulfilled; the removal of men far away, and the great forsaking in the, midst of the land yet remained to be exhausted. The children of the returned captives had yet another opportunity (humanly speaking) of turning aside the wrath of God; according as He said, “I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them” (Jer. 18:7-10). How wonderful and full of grace and truth are these words! Yet they rejected and crucified the Lord of glory. The time of “Jacob's trouble” is at hand; and so is their Deliverer. Then there will be no need for one to say to his neighbor, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know from the least to the greatest. Once the city was forsaken; but the irrevocable name of it soon will be “Jehovah is there.” R. B.

Psalm 45

The theme of Psalm 45 is the King; yet not viewed as in Psalm 21, when He has experienced a great salvation, but shown as coming forth with His sword girded upon His though for the establishment of His kingdom. This psalm is the divine answer to the cry of the distressed remnant in the preceding: they own Him as “King” (Psalm 44:4), imploring Him to arise and “command deliverances for Jacob” (verses 23-26), and to show favour as of old. The experience of the remnant meanwhile is (in language quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:36), “For Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter” (Psalm 44:22).

The Spirit of God is at His accustomed work in the Psalm. He is our ready writer when it is a question of the glories of Christ. The departing Lord said of Him, “He shall glorify Me.” And herein is a test for our souls: —anything that tends to the dishonor of the One at God’s right hand is not of the Spirit; and the glory of Christ is His great theme and sacred charge.

But though the Spirit is inspiring here (as in all other scripture), the Psalmist’s own affections are engaged: he tells us that his heart is overflowing with a good matter, and to him it is a source of delight that the Spirit should use his tongue as His pen. And so full is he of his theme that in ver. 2, &c., he seems to see the Blessed One before him and bursts out rapturously, “Thou art fairer than he children of men, grace is poured into Thy lips: Therefore God hath blessed Thee forever.” (See Isa. 33:17.) The grace of His lips came out throughout His wondrous path here: He was full of grace and truth; and even enemies had to confess, “Never man spake like this man “; while others marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.

It is a question here of the Kingdom and of putting down foes; and that is by power and by judgment. Therefore is He seen coming forth, as in Rev. 19, the girded One; not indeed with the towel as now to serve His saints, but with His sword upon His thigh that His right hand may teach Him terrible things. Strange that any should suppose that His kingdom will be introduced by the quiet means of His gospel: the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (and surely the N.T. also) render their united testimony of judgment, and judgment only, as His path to His throne. Israel were not willing in the days of His flesh that He should reign over them; man was not willing; nor will they be willing until His power is established in the earth as in the heavens. He will not wait for a message from men such as the trees in Jotham's parable said to the bramble, “Come thou and reign over us” (Judg. 9): man's heart is such, He would wait in vain for that.

David sets Him forth as the warrior King. David's day was one of warfare and subjugation of enemies; as Solomon's day, on the other hand, was one of peace and joy for Israel, the throne being firmly established. The Davidic type is seen in our Psalm in verses 3-5; the Solomonic in ver. 6., &c. (the latter phase being more fully declared in Psa. 72) Having established His kingdom by judgment, He takes His seat upon this throne; not then His Father's throne as now, but His own throne as King in Zion. The Spirit uses this in Heb. 1 to demonstrate His divine glory, showing there that the One through whom God has now spoken is “Son,” “God,” “Jehovah.” I suppose “thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity” would refer particularly to the days of His flesh. He

was ever this in the midst of a godless and God-hating world. He obeyed then; in Psa. 45 He rules.

He has “companions” in His kingdom; but He exceeds them all. Grace may raise high its objects, whether heavenly or earthly: but in all things He must have the pre-eminence. We do well to remind our hearts of this. His grace may bring us into a wondrous place of relationship and association with Himself, but reverence and godly fear become us in the presence of it. Some such thought seems implied in verse 11, “He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.” Whatever grace may do, still He is the Lord. (Compare John 10:23, 24, and note the Lord's important transition from “Father” to “God”).

The Queen is here seen by his side, sharing His earthly glories; and such will Jerusalem be in the day that is approaching. “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” For that day He will “make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:5-7.) We must not confound the Queen here with the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in Rev. 19. There are heavenly things, and there are earthly: the vision of John sets us in the heavens; our Psalm directs us to Judea.

The Queen stands at His right hand “in gold of Ophir.” Gold is typically expressive of divine righteousness, and Israel shall yet know the blessing of this. The apostle's sorrow of heart concerning God's people after the flesh was that they were going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. But in the coming day of glory all will be changed; the filthy rags of human righteousness shall be abandoned; and she shall say, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed use with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10). Zech. 3 gives us a picture of this: Joshua the high priest is seen standing before the angel of Jehovah clothed in filthy garments, picture of Israel's condition before God. The filthy garments are removed, a change of raiment is given; and a fair miter is put upon his head. Now Joshua and his fellows are distinctly said to be men of sign (Zech. 3:8.); and here we have a picture of how (after the glory) Israel shall be given to know the blessing of full justification—standing before God, not in human righteousness, but in that which is of God by faith. In Jer. 23:6 the King is called “the Lord our righteousness” (Jehovah Tsidkenu); and in Jer. 33:16, Jerusalem is called by the same name. Does not the wife bear the husband's name?

On that day she shall forget her own people and her father's house; all that in which flesh might glory in no more. One in Phil. 3 had much in which he might glory after the flesh. It was no mean thing to be a circumcised man of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; but he had learned to count all things but Christ “loss” and “dung.” Verse 16 seems to show the same thing—the fathers and all fleshly advantages gloried in no more; but grace and its work for them the alone subject of boast. “Mercy” will be their glad theme in that day (Rom. 11:32). Then shall down-trodden Jerusalem be an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations, and sought after by all the ends of the earth. “The daughter of Tire shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favor? “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.” “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces or wealth of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.” “They shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth

wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen." (Isa. 60:11, 14. Psa. 72:18, 19). W. W. F.

Chapter 29

Psalm 63: Continued

God wants every thought and desire of our hearts. This is the effect of His coming down to us, and is very blessed. There is another thing, and even a better: that is His lifting us up to Him where He is. When God meets our thoughts, wants, and feelings, it is His answering according to the measure of our need; in the other He surpasses all the desires of our hearts and minds. See it in Psa. 132, where certain blessings are asked, and each desire is surpassed (see verses 8 and 13; ver. 9, answered in ver. 16; ver. 10 in ver. 17). There is trial of faith He suffers His people to hunger, &c., that they may know the value of being fed by Him, as He will. There is personal relationship between the saint and God. “Mine and Thine” in John 17 goes further, and connects itself with what He is, and we are made in Him.

To Abram God said (Gen. 15), “I am Thy shield,” because he wanted protection, “Thine exceeding great reward.” It did not go beyond Abram's want—he wished an heir. This is different from his delighting in God. What God is bringing us to is to delight in Himself. See Abraham in Gen. 17:1: “I am the Almighty God.” This is quite another thing. It was God's revelation of Himself to Abraham. True, all kinds of blessing are connected with it; but it is a higher thing, because it revealed God, and led him up to communion with Him, while the other threw him back on his own need and wishes, which God met.

It is a different thing to have the joy of the relationship, and to have the fruits of it. “O My God, early will I seek Thee.” There is activity of soul in thus seeking God. The soul athirst for God seeks. There is diligence in seeking God for Himself; the mouth is open for everything. The psalm does not speak of seeking for water: when a man is thirsty, he seeks for water; but here it is more thirsting for Him Who gives the water.

The conscious relationship was founded. “O God, thou art my God.” The more he enjoyed God, the more it was felt to be a dry and thirsty land—not dry because of the weariness of the way. What does it matter the dry and thirsty land, if I have the living water in my soul? I do not think about the dryness then. It is not being at home yet either. It is the wilderness in Rom. 8. If I know I am to be in the same glory with Christ, what will affect me here? What! people going to be with the Lord in glory; and yet the slightest thing can upset them now I feel the wretchedness because I have got the glory; I am not acquiring it, but seeking it because I have it. Think of a person who had seen it, and knew all the blessedness of it, going through such a world as this! This is what it was to Christ. What made Him feel it was “the joy?” “Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life,” this world is a wilderness.

“Thy loving-kindness is better than life “; but it brings death upon me. No matter: “in everything give thanks.” What in sorrow? Yes, to be sure, we have the King to our joy in having Himself. “Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, therefore will I praise thee while I live.” “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.” What! in the desert? Yes, this is the very place, because God Himself is his portion. “My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.” Now we often praise when we are not very joyful [there is a certain pressure on the heart], and it is right to do it

at all times; but here the heart is so full of the blessing that it burst forth out of him. We learn from Psa. 42 that “the health of my countenance” is the effect of “the light of Thy countenance.” The heart is lifted up above the sorrow because occupied with God Himself.

In Psa. 63 the soul is in the state in which Psa. 42, ends. It is not an oppressed heart looking out for what would make him joyful, but rejoicing because the spring is there. “Therefore I will bless thee while I live.” Help is in God (see ver. 7) for the difficulties of the way. It is not here the enjoyment of God Himself, but His protection. Do I look forward to my life to come? I defy anyone to know anything, but that this window is open. God, then, is the only certain thing. I have no certainty that there will be a to-morrow, but God is my God Because the heart is in heaven, we can rejoice in the truth itself we have got for all times. “Jehovah is my Shepherd: I shall not want.” It is not—, He has put me in certain circumstances, and I shall be happy there; but to know He is my Shepherd is something to depend on. Then there is earnestness of purpose in following after (ver. 8). So Paul (“I press toward the mark”) was following hard after Him in a “dry and thirsty land.” Paul in prison was pressing on toward Christ, and rejoicing in the Lord; he had nothing else to rejoice in. In nothing too should we be terrified by adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition (vers. 9, 10); as on the other hand Christ and they that are His shall alone be exalted forever (ver. 11).

Chapter 30

Adam

In Rom. 5:14 Adam is said to be a figure or type of Him that was to come. Such he is strikingly, and, as with Aaron in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in contrast even more than resemblance.

Made in God's image, after His likeness, Adam had from God, dominion over bird of the heavens, and fish of the sea, over cattle, over all the earth, and over every living thing that moveth upon it. He, the only one of all here below, became living soul by Jehovah Elohim (the LORD God) breathing into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Therefore was his soul alone immortal; and his spirit, instead of going downward to the earth like a beast's, went upward to God that gave it (Eccl. 3:21, 12:7). Therefore shall each one give account of himself to God, and all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done through the body according to what he did, whether good or bad (Rom. 14:12, 2 Cor. 5:10).

For Adam, not only responsible as he could not but be, soon became an object of judgment. Surrounded by every natural good, he was subjected to the simplest and least irksome of divine commands—to abstain from the fruit of a single tree, the test of his obedience. This he violated at the first temptation of the enemy, following his wife into evil instead of guiding her in good. Hence, as disobedient, he was driven out of Paradise under sentence of death, and when thus fallen became father of the race.

But the good, holy, and righteous LORD God sought Adam the very day he sinned, drew the guilty pair from their hiding-place, and, after bringing home their guilt respectively, in His judgment of the serpent revealed the triumph of His grace in the woman's Seed, the Second Man, and Last Adam (Gen. 3:15).

And how blessed the contrast of Him Who was thus set forth from that early day, the one Object of faith and hope! For the Son of God is come and hath given us who believe understanding, that we may know Him that is true. Old Testament, no less than New, bears witness to His glory and His humiliation, His pouring out His soul unto death and His exaltation at God's right hand, as eventually and visibly over (not Israel only but) all peoples, nations, and languages, yea, all creation.

Meanwhile, as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned, so the grace of Christ brought in transcendent blessing, presented unto all men in the gracious appeal of the gospel, and taking effect “upon all that believe” (Rom. 3.). For as through one offense the bearing was unto all men for condemnation, so through one righteousness the bearing is unto all men for justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of One shall the many be constituted righteous (Rom. 5:12-19), Even the incredulous Jew could not consistently resist the truth of the gospel, if he held to the authority of the law. For he could not deny that Adam's trespass involved the race in sin and condemnation. Was it not then worthy of God to bring in for the race a still better, richer, and more enduring good through the one Man, His

own Son? And as the blessing is of God's grace unto all, so it is by faith and is preached to all, instead of depending on the law given to Israel. The gospel is universal in its appeal, yet takes effect only in those that believe, but equally in all believers be they Gentiles or Jews.

Adam, innocent, stood only on his obedience; but, swayed by his wife who was deceived by the tempter, he too disobeyed. He sought to be as God, knowing good and evil, and fell. Christ, on the contrary, Who was God, came in flesh to glorify God and save sinners, carrying out His obedience, as Adam his disobedience, unto death. And this He did perfectly and suffering to the utmost in the difficulties and ruin which man's sin had made, as Adam fell tried in the least degree with all circumstances in his favor. Wherefore also God highly exalted Christ, and sends out the glad tidings to all creation. And thus did Christ vindicate God's love, while Adam acted upon Satan's lie which defamed it, as if He kept back a little thing which would do His creatures great good. For that little thing, the forbidden fruit of the tree, Adam gave up God; Who so loved the world as to give His best, His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

Further, if Adam believed the enemy that gainsaid God's warning of death, Christ went down under the death of the cross, and (what was infinitely more) under the judgment of our iniquities, which Jehovah laid on His holy head as a sacrifice (Isa. 53). Thus was God's truth vindicated in a way worthy of Himself and of His Son. That He is light was thereby proved; that He is love, no less; both beyond dispute in the gift of His Son to die for the guilty according to His word. All the cost was God's, all the suffering was His Son's: when Man, on behalf of men, with all the value of a divine Person and, for those that believe, its infinite transferable efficacy with God.

And thus as Adam only became a father when fallen, Jesus stands risen from the dead, after having once suffered for sins, Just for unjust, the life-giving Spirit. He comes, as He said Himself, that His disciples might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. It is the life of Him Who bore their sins in His own body on the tree; it is now the life of Him risen when the debt was paid, and the judgment borne. Thus the believer has eternal life, and comes not into judgment, but has passed as his settled state from death into life.

Is it thus with you, whoever you may be, as you read these lines? If you hear His word and believe Him Who sent His Son Jesus, you are entitled to this as the portion which God's grace is now giving to the believer in His name. Beware of the tempter, a liar and murderer from the beginning. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And the Holy Spirit is now bearing witness to Him. The church is responsibly, and ought to be, the pillar and basement of the truth; the Jew is not, nor still less the philosopher; but that assembly of a living God which owes its being and blessing to His grace, and is bound to confess Him Lord and Savior. “Hear Him.” Moses cannot save, nor Elijah; Jesus only. Believing in Jesus is of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father. “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father who sent Him” (John v. 23). “Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:23). For indeed Jesus is the Good Shepherd that laid down His life for the sheep, and this in a way beyond all creature thought, after suffering all that man could do unrighteously in His faithfulness to God, suffering atoningly,—He alone; from God in His love to lost man.

“Be it known unto you therefore, [men-] brethren, that through Him is preached unto you remission of sins. And in virtue of Him, everyone that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could

not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though one declare it unto you" (Acts 13:38-41).

Advertisement

col. 2,1.9. read, Prophecy, however fit the historic occasion may be &c.,

Chapter 32

Professor Drummond's Ascent of Man

MY DEAR MR. EDITOR,

The author of “Natural Law in the Spiritual World” could scarcely be expected to deliver anything but a eulogy on the theory of evolution. This anticipation has been realized in his American lectures, the first of which is characteristically entitled the “Ascent of Man.” The Professor is nothing if not enthusiastic; accordingly the author of “the Greatest Thing in the World” tells us that evolution is “the last and most splendid contribution of science to the faith of the world.”

We beg leave however in a brief manner to present to your readers two out of many serious indictments that must be made against this theory.

1.—Evolution does not rest upon facts, but upon assumptions.

2.—Its tendencies are to destroy faith in God and His word.

In the first place then, one listening to the confident asseverations of the upholders of evolution might reasonably suppose that every care was taken to observe the phenomena they thus profess to account for; and that, before the theory was formulated, a full investigation and a complete induction were made of the whole series of biological and other facts falling within its province. Indeed this much might almost be implied from the Professor's own words. “Each worker toiled in his own little place, the geologist in his quarry... Suddenly these workers looked up; they spoke to one another; they had each discovered a law; they whispered its name. It was the same word that went round. They had each discovered evolution.”

We find however that the alleged discovery was after all only a guess, the “swift induction of an adventurous mind from a momentary glimpse of a (supposed) natural law;” and that this development theory which asserts man to be “lineally descended from a sponge,” and which sees “no more in a beautiful maiden than a cross between a dodo and a daddylong-legs,” is in point of fact a mere scientific dream, fascinating no doubt as some dreams are, but a “baseless fabric” like them all.

In support of this we produce testimony, which the Professor himself will be sure to respect, viz: his own, as given in these very lectures. For the Lowell lecturer assures his audience that “Evolution is after all a Vision.” Now although “Vision” is spelled with a capital V, it can mean no more than a phantasm, a creature of the imagination. And when we are told our remote ancestors were blobs of jelly in some primeval slime, it is really a kindness to be informed at the same time, that the theory has after all no more foundation than a dream.

But if the interpretation is one, the dreams of the aforesaid “workers” are not one; for it seems the eminent scientists themselves do not by any means agree as to the “Visions” they see. Mr. D. himself supplies us with this information. He confesses “there is everywhere at this moment the most disturbing uncertainty as to how the ascent even of species has been brought about. The attacks on the Darwinian theory from the outside were never so keen as are the controversies,

now raging in scientific circles, over the fundamental principles of Darwinism itself." Again, "the whole field of science is hot with controversies and discussions;" "at present there is not a chapter of the record (i.e., of evolution) that is not incomplete, not a page that is wholly finished." Since therefore Mr. D. admits that even the fundamental principles of Darwinism are the subject of controversy among men of science themselves, we, have the evidence of the evolutionist himself in support of our thesis;—that evolution does not rest upon established facts, but upon debatable assumptions. And after such concessions as these have been made, we are somewhat astounded to read farther on— "it is certain that the materials for his (man's) body have been brought together from an unknown multitude of lowlier forms of life." Taking the Professor's own hint as to the uncertainty of science we feel constrained to ask him for a few indubitable facts just to establish satisfactorily this little point. There are none however forthcoming. We ask for proof, and he gives us a metaphor about the Cathedral of St. Mark's. In sooth, we did not expect a demonstration, for it is well-known that no passage from a lower species to the human has ever come under the observation of any one; neither has the same been brought about by experiments of any kind. As therefore the statement in question does not rest upon either observation or experiment, the Jachin and Boaz of science, we submit that it would be more correct to say "it is assumed &c." than "it is certain, &c." And if it is only an assumption that we are descendants of the apes, surely we may be allowed to throw such a theory to the dogs. But though the Professor does not prove his theory, he sufficiently establishes his own powers of imagination and graphic description in the entertaining account he gives of the supposed ascent of man. In the growth of the human embryo, the scientific Seer discerns "a condensed zoology, a recapitulation and epitome of the main chapters in the natural history of the world. The same processes of development which once took thousands of years for their consummation are here condensed, foreshortened, concentrated into the space of months." Then the aspiring efforts of past animal organisms through incalculable ages are traced from the single cell upwards, as on a "moving panorama:" worms, fish, amphibian, reptile. "At last the true mammalian form emerges from the crowd." Then come the apes, and after one last superhuman or perhaps we ought to say supersimian struggle, man appears. However, as soon as the Professor has thus introduced us to our long-lost relatives, he politely informs us that the relationship between us is "all but proved." One almost hears his tones of apology and regret, as he explains that after all, you know, evolution is only a Vision. Things are not yet very definite; at present man can really choose whatever early relatives he pleases. For embryology is such a very young science; and between ourselves this embryological argument is at present, founded on analogy! As to this last sentence, Mr. D.'s actual words are "Our ideas of the probable history of the human ovum, for the first few days, are mainly taken from our knowledge of the development of other mammals and of birds and reptiles." So that the embryological argument for evolution in another form is as follows:.—Certain things are found true of the embryos of the rabbit, of the pigeon, of the frog, &c. and it is assumed that the very same things are true of the human embryo.

We therefore repeat that, upon the Professor's own showing, evolution is not grounded upon observed facts, but upon guesses and suppositions.

It is admitted on all hands that embryology is the most obscure branch of biology. The very highest magnifying power of the best microscopes reveals no essential differences between the ova of man, ape, dog, &c. But undeniably there is the most radical difference; and this touch is clear, that

in the earliest embryonic stage similarity is no proof of identity. These facts might have taught caution to our Professor and others, who have rashly concluded that, because the growing embryo in its various transformations resembles other forms of life, it must therefore be identical with them. There is indisputably a radical difference in the unicellular stage despite the close resemblance, and essential difference abides throughout all subsequent changes. Analogy is ever a precarious argument; it is the favorite logic of the imagination when one sees lions' heads and smugglers' caves in the glowing embers. We are here insensibly reminded of the foolish man, who called his neighbors one evening to help him reach a large cheese out of the pond. They, wiser than he, found he had been observing the reflection of the moon in the water. The poor man's reasoning was doubtless founded on analogy; but the analogy must have been at fault somewhere. Let evolutionists beware, lest the analogy between the embryos of a man and a monkey be even less than between the moon's image and a submerged cheese. A wiser than they said “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

Some years ago, a useful lesson was read to the scientific world on the folly of assuming theories to be true without actual proof. Professor Huxley announced in a leading scientific paper in 1869, that a vast sheet of living matter enveloped the earth beneath the seas. This deep-sea slime, designated by him Bathybius Haeckelii, was alleged to be protoplasm. And he maintained that this gelatinous jelly-like substance was the “physical basis of life.” Strauss and its German god-father Haeckel, carried away by enthusiasm, triumphantly declared it to be the bridge between the living and the non-living, the organic and the inorganic. But oh, the pity of it! the bubble soon burst. In 1876 “Bathybius” was publicly interred; for during the voyage of the ship Challenger, it was discovered that “Bathybius” was quite inorganic, being made up mostly of sulphate of lime. Huxley himself confessed on a subsequent occasion that “Biogenesis is victorious along the whole line.”

It is not our present intention to do more than thus point out for the sake of simple folk that the groundwork on which is built the popular notion of evolution or the “development theory” is entirely of a visionary nature. And seeing it is purely a “working hypothesis,” and unsatisfactory to men of science themselves into the bargain, the less said about it, as we wait for proof, the better; especially since its tendencies are of a pronounced infidel nature, as we hope to show in another letter. (D. V.)

Yours faithfully in Christ,

“YOD.”

NOTE—The quotations of Prof. D. in these letters are taken from the reports of his lectures in the “British Weekly” of April 20th, and subsequent dates.

Chapter 33

Aspects of the Cross

As a believer I had absolutely nothing to do with my sin's judgment on the cross, nor with the bearing of my sins there. The only begotten Son of God was there alone for me. “God made Him sin for us,” not us with Him; “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” not we bare our sins with Him. “For Christ hath also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,” &c. Here we have purely substitution. His alone was the judgment, just as surely as the sin and sins were ours alone; i.e., not His. in any part (I speak the language of believers); no thought of association here, but purely substitution.

But does not Paul as a believer say “I am (more correctly, have been) crucified with Christ,” (Gal. 2:20)? Is not that association? Yes, truly; but who crucified Christ? Was it God? Nay; we do not so read God's word. It was man (in the expression of his hatred for God, and for that which is good) that crucified Him. See the uniform testimony of God's word. We read e.g. in Acts 2:23 (a comment on what we read in the Gospels), that the Jews by the hand of lawless men crucified and slew Christ. Christ also Himself recognized His crucifixion as their wicked deed by praying His Father to forgive those who put Him on the cross. This was not the judgment of sin. God did not transfer the judgment of sin into man's wicked hands. It was in fact just the reverse; it was man's judgment of righteousness: an altogether different thing. Man did not carry out the judgment of God on sin, although in his awful wickedness he put Jesus the Son of God in the place, where He in infinite grace to man bowed to the righteous judgment of God on man's sin.

Here then are the two great aspects of Christ on the cross. The cross was devised and prepared by man. The sufferings imposed on Jesus there by man were man's estimate of what he deserved Who is the Righteous One. They hated Him without a cause. The penitent robber said truly “This man hath done nothing amiss.” On the other hand, on the very cross where the lawless hands of man had put Him, there God's grace met man's need, by judging sin in the person of Christ, instead of in wicked man. Where man's enmity against God was most clearly proved, there was the love of God to guilty man perfectly declared, for it met him in the crowning act of his wickedness; and man was most emphatically shown to deserve what the Son of God there suffered in his stead at God's hand. But the thought is not to be entertained that the cross pure and simple, with the intense bodily suffering resulting from it, was in any part the bearing of sin's judgment, although on the cross of Christ sin was judged not by man but by God. The suffering of Christ imposed by man was man unrighteously judging Him. It is well therefore to have it clear before us that this therefore could not in any part be God's righteous judgment of sin.

Now, as suffering the unrighteous judgment of man, every believer has necessarily fellowship with Christ. This is the believer's cross. What! has the believer a cross? Was not Christ crucified in my stead? No, it is not so written, for that would mean that Christ bore the reproach of men, that you and I as believers might bear none of it. We have been crucified with Him. The cross of shame whereon the world nailed the Son of God, expressed the world's hatred, not only of Him, but of all who are His (John 15:18-20). The Lord Jesus was, in His walk before men just as He is ever

before God, i.e., perfect. He was therefore hated to the uttermost. And so, in the measure the believer manifests His life, in that measure shall he suffer His reproach. Every disciple of Christ bears a cross. It is his (the disciple's) cross. Without it he cannot be a disciple i.e., Jesus' disciple (Luke 14:27). It is the reproach of Christ i.e., as reproached by man. Christ did not say “And whosoever doth not bear my cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” This would mean perfection of reproach, and would imply perfection of walk. But every believer, in his measure, suffers reproach. It is the same character as was Christ's, and therefore it is called a cross; but it is his cross and not Christ's. Although every disciple bears his cross, God forbid that he should glory in it, but only “in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

It may not be out of place here to say a few words about a prevalent and erroneous usage of the word “cross.” It is used often indiscriminately as applying to every variety of trial and suffering, commonly even by and of unbelievers. It is clear that, wing the language of scripture, no unbeliever bears a cross. The world loves, not hates, its own (John 15:19). Again we hear of “crosses,” meaning adverse turns of circumstances or something of the kind. Now, how wrong this is! for, although every believer bears a cross, there is but one for him, and he should bear it not only as an occasional thing but “daily.” It is the reproach of Christ, and no suffering or reproach can be called a cross, but that which flows from the unrighteous judgment of man on that which is like Christ in us. And surely if this is my cross, ought I to allude to it mournfully, and not rather as something to be highly esteemed (Heb. 11:26)? It is a most blessed privilege (Phil. 3:8, 9, 10), and cause of rejoicing (Luke 6:22, 23). It is to be remarked that before Christ suffered on the cross, He even then spoke of each disciple necessarily bearing his cross. Christ Himself was really even during His ministry on earth bearing His cross. If you read such portions as Luke 14:27; 9:23, Matt. 10:38; 16:24, Mark 8:34, where it speaks of any one taking up his cross and following Christ, I think it is plain that the idea brought out there was not that the disciple, bearing a cross, was following Christ without a cross. Man hated Christ none the less before He was on the cross; but the cross perfectly expressed that hatred. The reason why they did not lay hands on Him sooner was “because His hour had not yet come.” John 7:30; 8:20. O the infinite depth of grace displayed on the cross! Hear the words of, Jesus:—

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). If you hate Me so much that you say, “Away with Him, away with Him,” and lift Me up from you and from the earth, I will there and then manifest My love to you, and will not say, “Away with them, away with them,” but I will draw all unto me.”

Marvelous triumph of grace! Here, where grace shines perfectly (in Christ on the cross), may we behold Him, the despised and rejected of men, and seek to know the fellowship of His sufferings at man's hand, while His mission to man was saving grace. D. T.

Chapter 34

Be Careful for Nothing

What shall I do then? Go to God. “In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Then, in the midst of all the care, you can give thanks. And we see the exceeding grace of God in this. It is not that you are to wait till you find out if what you want is the will of God. No. “Let your requests be made known.” Have you a burden on your heart? At once go with your request to God: it is not said that you will get it. Paul, when he prayed, had for answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

His “peace will keep your hearts and minds” not, you will keep His peace. Is He ever troubled by the little things that trouble us? Do they shake His throne? He thinks of us, we know, but He is not troubled; and the peace that is in God's heart is to keep ours. I go and carry it all to Him, and I find Him all quiet about it. It is all settled. He knows quite well what He is going to do. I have laid the burden on the throne that never shakes, with the perfect certainty that God takes an interest in me; and the peace He is in keeps my heart; and I can thank Him even before the trouble has passed. I can say, Thank God, He takes an interest in me. It is a blessed thing that I can have His peace, and thus go and make my request—perhaps a very foolish one—and, instead of brooding over trials, that I can be with God about them.

Is it not sweet to see that, while He carries us up to heaven, He comes down and occupies Himself with everything of ours here? While our affections are occupied with heavenly things, we can trust God for earthly things. He condescends to everything. As Paul says, “without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us.” It was worth being cast down to get that kind of comfort. Is He a God afar off, and not a God nigh at hand? He does not give us to see before us, for then the heart would not be exercised; but, though we see not Him, He sees us, and is at hand to give us all that kind of comfort in the trouble. J. N. D.

Chapter 35

Beginning of Recent Testimony

DEAR SIR,

In a recent number of the interesting papers on The Gospel and the Church, I notice this paragraph:—

“The eminent servant of Christ referred to already, who was God's instrument in the marvelous movement, wrote of those days at the request of a French religious journalist: “We were Only four men, who came together for the breaking of bread and prayer, on the authority of the word, 'Where two or three are gathered unto my Name, there am I in the midst of them.’”

One of these “four men” told me that the meetings had gone on for some time before this period was reached. The first meeting consisted (in 1825 I believe) of himself and the Misses D—y in Dublin; and it was a considerable time after this that “the eminent servant” referred to above joined them. [Before these ladies, E. C. and E. T. broke bread together. En. B.T.]

I asked him why he had not communicated these facts; and he replied that Mr. A. Miller, when writing his Short Papers on Church History, had sent him a paper with a number of questions on these subjects, desiring him to answer them; but that he had at the time doubted the advisability of publishing that portion of the book and had therefore refrained from giving the particulars asked for.

—Yours sincerely. J. C. B.

Chapter 36

Christ Crucified

If God be righteous, and judges sin, can He exercise love to us in all its fullness—toward us who are sinners? Now here it is the death and atonement of Christ come in. The blessed Lord willingly undertook this task, to glorify God perfectly, and prove infinite love to us, and yet maintain God's perfect righteousness. He bore our sins, He was made sin for us. He drank the bitter cup of death and judgment which our sins had filled. He gave Himself for us, He was bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions. Was not this love? Oh! reader, was it not? Yet there God's righteous judgment against sin was fully maintained, so that what I see there was not the least allowance of it. What could show it like the death of the Son of God when He was made sin for us? Could He not be spared? How then can any persevere in rejecting mercy through Him? Was it possible this cup could pass unless He drank it? It could not. For whom then shall it, if not drunk by Him?

And see how the notion of mere dying under the hands of wicked men destroys all the glory of the cross. I read, Christ gave Himself, offered up Himself. Here I find the holy perfectness of His own soul in a way that nothing else shows. What love! What devotedness! What giving Himself up to the Father's glory! “No man taketh it from me,” says He, “but I lay it down of myself” (John 10:18). “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do” (John 14:30, 31). You will say, How could this glorify His Father—to give Himself up to a cruel death and wrath? Because of your sins: they made it necessary. If love was to be shown to you, it must be in this way; God's holiness must be maintained—the impossibility of allowing sin. You (if indeed through grace you believe) are not to be taken away from before Him, because of your sins and defilement. Instead of that, as they could not be allowed, they were taken away, that you might be in peace before Him and know this God of love. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

And see how the cross glorifies God in everything. If I look at it as a sacrifice for sin, as Christ giving Himself up, that God may be fully glorified. And how glorious Christ Himself is there, by His doing it! For, remember, if it was indeed a bitter cup, yet Christ never was so glorified as there. Never was His glorious perfection so shown out; so that, though it may seem a hard task to impose on Him, yet it really was, as to His work, His greatest glory: as He says, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31). For it was a glorious thing to Him Who accomplished it, that, so to speak, God should be debtor for His glory to Him Who thus gave Himself. For indeed it was a common counsel between the Father and the Son. God's will was He should come, and His will was to come. “Lo, I come to do thy will O God.”

But see how He was glorified in it. Is God righteous in judgment against sin? The cross has fully shown it forth. Is God perfect love to the poor sinner? The cross has shown it forth. Did the majesty of God require that it should be vindicated against rebellious sin? The cross has done it; yet the sinner is spared. Is God true, and has He said, that death should follow sin, the devil

saying, as he yet does, it should not? Where such a witness that it must, as when the blessed Son of God died as man on the cross? Yet He has obtained for us life by it, beyond all the power of death and judgment. Were our sins pressing upon us, so that we did not dare to look up? They are gone. I can see God in the light without fear: He has proved His love, and I can enjoy His love. And just when man showed his hatred to God in slaying His Son, God has shown His love to man in giving Him to put away the sin shown in slaying Him. Where was obedience shown as on the cross? He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Where love to us? Where the desire to glorify His Father? Thus the Son of man was glorified, and God, in every part of His nature, glorified in Him: His love, His righteousness, His truth, His majesty, all displayed.

And what is the consequence? The power and fear of death are gone for the believer. It is for him but the entrance into paradise. The sins that he feared, as bringing judgment, are taken away and blotted out. He knows God loves him—so loves him that He has not spared His own Son to save him; he knows that He has nothing to impute to him, for Christ has borne all. God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins.

And yet is sin a light thing to one who has this perfect peace with the God of love? It has cost the death of the Son of God. True, it is condemned; he is justified, and has perfect peace with God. But how? By that which makes sin to his soul the most frightful thing that possibly could be; and knits his heart to Jesus, Who was willing to suffer thus to put it away.

Whether we think of God's glory, or Christ's glory, or the practical effect on our hearts, it is Christ's cross, as being a real sacrifice for sin, that is really efficacious. It glorifies God infinitely, it honors Christ, and perfectly blesses man; telling him he is the object of God's infinite love, and yet maintaining righteousness in his heart. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh; and, as to His person, supremely glorious in dignity. This indeed enabled Him to do such a work; but never, as to His work and service, was He so glorious as He was upon the cross. I speak to you feebly, dear reader; but is it not the truth—words, as Paul says, of truth and soberness? And this thing was not done in a corner.

And now mark too the blessed efficacy of it for me, a poor sinner. There stood sin, death, judgment, just wrath, in my way. My conscience told me it was so, and God's word plainly declares it. Satan's power bound it down, so to speak, upon my soul; while his temptations encouraged me to go on in what led to it. God's law, even, did but make the matter worse for me, if I pretended to meddle with it; for its holiness condemned my transgressions. And now, for him that believes, all is taken out of the way. Sin gone, and death too as the terrible thing I awaited (Christ has turned it into a gain)—I shall be with Christ; judgment, Christ has borne it; wrath, there is none for me: I am assured of perfect love. Christ, in making me partaker of the efficacy of His death, has set me beyond all these things in the light, as God is in the light and loving me (having washed me from my sins in His own blood, and made me a king and priest to God and His Father). In rising, He has shown me this new place into which He has brought me; though as yet, of course, I have it only by faith and participation in that life, in the power of which He has risen. Yes, dear reader, the believer is saved, he has eternal life, he is justified; he waits, no doubt, to be glorified, but he knows Him Who has obtained it all for him, and that He is able to keep that which he has committed unto Him until that day.

There is a judgment (terrible it will be to them that have despised mercy and have rejected the Savior); but to those who, as poor sinners, have submitted to God's righteousness, believing in His love, “Christ shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). That is, having quite put sin away for them the first time, He will come the second time, without having anything to say to it as to them, for their full possession of the glorious result. As He said Himself, “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”. (John 14:2, 3). That is a judgment, if such you will call it, which shall be the everlasting and infinite joy of those that share in it.

Weigh that passage I quoted just now. Christ has appeared “once in the end of the world.... to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment” —there is the natural portion of the sinner— “so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:26-28). The first time He came, He bore the sins; the second, He comes apart from that for the full salvation of them that look for Him.

Reader, are you prepared to give up all this for the notion that He fell a victim to self-seeking men who put Him to a violent death? Did He not offer Himself up as a sacrifice to put away sin? Did not the Lord bruise Him? Did He not say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46)? Does not your soul need to have sin put away? Is not the love of God shown in the way you need it, by Christ's being thus given? Has He not glorified God in it? Has He not been glorified in it and by it, bitter as it was? Is it not peace to know He has done it, and put away sin for us by it? Does not the word so present it to us? The Lord give you to believe it in truth. It has given me peace, perfect yet increasing peace, these fifty years and more, while He has all the glory; and I know God is love, Who has purged my conscience from sins. May you, dear reader, be enabled so to know it, and with as much joy! If you do, you know what

I say is true. May the grace of God make Him, Who has wrought it for us, more precious to us both! It is a blessing and a joy to think we shall have an eternity in which to praise Him for it.

Even if I think of the way good and evil were brought out by it, there is nothing like the cross. Everything moral is there brought to a glorious center, from which it flows down on every poor believing heart, in the proof that evil has been met and put away, and that good has triumphed. Where has death been shown in its terrible power as in the cross? Where has sin in all its terrible character and effects? Where do I see man's hatred against goodness itself, and the Son of God bearing sin before God? yet where was eternal life obtained for us, such as death can never touch? Where were goodness and love displayed as there? Where were righteousness and obedience accomplished in spite of all? Where was sin brought so immediately under God's eye and punished as there? Yet where was it put away, and His perfect delight in absolute obedience at all costs so drawn out? Where was the bowing in weakness under death shown as in Him whose soul was melted like wax in the midst of His bowels? yet where the divine strength which carried Him through all that weakness, death, man's hatred, Satan's power, and God's wrath, could accumulate on His head who drank that bitter cup? All this is told us in scripture. “He was crucified through weakness” (2 Cor. 13:4). “This is your hour and the power of darkness,” said the Lord (Luke 22:53). “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46)?

In a word, would I know what sin is? look there. Righteousness? I look there. Hatred without a cause? I look there. Love without bounds? I look there. Judgment and condemnation of sin? I look there. Deliverance and peace? I look there. Divine wrath against evil? I look there. Perfect divine favor and delight in what infinitely glorified God? I look there. Weakness and death, though willingly bowing under it? it is there. Strength, divine, which has met and removed evil? it is there. Peace and wrath? it is there also: the world under Satan's power rising up, to get finally rid of a God of love; and God, by this very act, delivering the world and making peace by the blood of His own Son. As it is said, “That through death he might destroy him that had the over of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” 2:14, 15). As I have said, good and evil in all their extremes and forms meet there for the triumph of love in once suffering the evil, that good may have its full force.

Do you ask, reader, Why then are we in such a world still? I will tell you. Scripture tells us, God in grace is still leading souls to profit by and enjoy this. It is a world of misery, and sorrow, and oppression. Did God interfere to change it, He must come in judgment and close the time of mercy; and that He does not do, while yet any have ears to hear. Therefore He allows the evil which He will judge to go on meanwhile. And we, though we may thus have to suffer awhile in the world, ought in this sense to rejoice that it is yet allowed; because it is still a time of mercy extended to others. The end will be everlasting joy in a much better world. Christ is gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come again and take us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Thus Peter says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Finally, my reader, you may not have, in peace of soul, been able to contemplate all the glory of the cross. You have a blessed portion yet before you; but remember, it is presented to you, just as you are, for your need in all the grace of it toward a poor sinner. It meets you in your sins, if it infinitely glorifies God. A Jesus dying on the cross for the vilest meets the wants and burdens of the vilest—comes home through grace to his heart. If His sins are a burden to him, he may see Christ bearing them, that he may be free and have peace. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “And by him, all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39). “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa. 1:18). If you are heavy laden, come to Him Who came in love to give you rest, and has died in love for you.

The Lord's peace be with you, dear reader—be with you, whoever you may be. May you be washed in that blood which cleanses from all sin; and the Lord will preserve you for His heavenly kingdom.

J. N. D.

Chapter 37

Christ Died for the Ungodly

When the love of God shed abroad in the heart is a question, men habitually look into themselves for an answer. But they can find no satisfaction from within; and it is well that they do not, for the Holy Spirit will never help a soul to find rest in himself or his affections. There is no real rest for conscience or for heart in one's own internal state. Call it trusting to the Spirit of God, it will not deceive Him or even an upright soul. For to stand good against every strain and challenge, rest must be on the ground of perfection; and the only work that perfects the sinner in God's sight is the sacrifice of Christ. The Holy Spirit accordingly bears witness to Christ and His work on the cross (Heb. 10), as the only satisfactory answer to the sense of need He awakens in the soul, whatever the testimony He may afterward bear with our spirits as believers (Rom. 8:16).

Therefore it is that the apostle immediately turns in our, verse to the proof of God's love on our behalf, entirely outside ourselves, in the death of Christ. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Here indeed is a righteous resting-place for one ever so guilty, burdened, and exercised before God. His love provided it. The sinner contributed nothing to it save his sins. Divine goodness rose above all human evil, and all Satan's malice. One, and but One, was capable of the infinite enterprise; One Who from the beginning, when there was no creature, was with God, and was God; One Who in due time came from God, and was sent in His love as a propitiation for our sins. Love in the Father, love in the Son,—divine love—undertook a work beyond all thought of man or angel till God revealed it. And Christ was just the One to give it effect to the glory of God the Father (without which nothing had been right), to the efficacious justifying of the most defiled who bows to God and believes on Jesus.

For He was God's only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, His delight evermore, expressly so when He deigned to become man on earth, for the accomplishment of that most worthy and gracious purpose, and for the glories which should follow His sufferings. For as He could meet the Father on co-equal ground, so He had come down to man in the deepest reality, Son of man as the first Adam was not: born of woman, born under law, made sin on the cross, that the vindication of God might be as absolute as the righteousness of God which justifies the believer and flows out to meet every sinner.

Such is the Savior God has sent; such is the standing proof of His love when the soul is sorely tried, and needs a clear, sure, and irrefragable object. It is not a promise, but an accomplished fact, and a fact of immeasurable and unending value, with which nothing can compare in time past or future, on earth or in heaven.

And it was “in due time.” God had tried man innocent; and a brief space sufficed—man fell. God bore with man an outcast, left to himself though not without a blessed and blessing revelation; and man became so corrupt and violent that He sent a deluge to take all away, save a few in the ark who began the world as it is. And then He gave promises to Abraham, and to his seed; after that, His law to Israel, who forsook Him for false gods “till there was no remedy.” “He had yet one (as the parable says), a beloved son; he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.”

Him they crucified and slew. It is the measure of the world's sin: not transgression only, or idolatry, but the ignominious rejection of God's Son. Yet that worst sin of man met the love of God which rose above all his enmity, making Christ on the cross a propitiation for sins; as He sent the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel, the glad tidings of His grace, to the whole creation. Is not this love worthy of God and of His Son? Is not this the love which alone can, alone ought to, reassure your troubled spirit? Was it not exactly in due time that Christ died for ungodly persons? If you know that you are so, make this your plea—that Christ died for ungodly ones. Be assured that God, Who honors His word above all His name, will accept it and you in the name of Jesus.

Do you plead your powerlessness? God has anticipated this also in His grace, as you may see for yourself in this very verse. “When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.” Were you making efforts first to reform yourself and to please Him, the Holy Spirit would in no way help, save to convince you of utter weakness and sinfulness. In such a condition He treats such efforts as self-righteous and Satan's substitute for genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him only look as you are, and because you are both weak and ungodly: He can and will save every one that calls on His name.

It is a denial of grace and truth to allege that you are not trusting to yourself but to the Holy Spirit working in you what is good and acceptable to God. Till you have given up yourself as both ungodly and without strength, till you give up unwittingly seeking to establish your own righteousness and are subject to the righteousness of God, the real work of the Holy Spirit is to overwhelm you with such a sense of your sins as compels you to look only to Christ and His redemption. Without knowing it, you are striving to be a saint in order to win, not to say deserve, the remission of sins; and the blood of Jesus would come in thus as the reward and crown of your efforts. But the Holy Spirit never lends Himself to such a disguise of your true condition; He lays bare to your own soul that you are powerless and ungodly, but also that Christ died for such. This alone maintains God's grace and man's sinfulness. For souls in your condition He is a witness to Christ's blood-shedding; by which received in faith there is remission, without which there is none. Practical holiness follows, and does not precede, faith in the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. When you rest on Christ and His death, the Holy Spirit works as a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind; yea, He joins His help to our weakness, but in no way till we abandon self, and we rest, where God rests for us, in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 38

Christ's Life and Death

God hath sent His Son that we might live through Him; but He sent Him also as tWopitiation for our sins by His death. For having life does not change our place; which is by His dying and entering as man risen into a new place according to His work. And baptism is the sign, not of quickening as Christendom says, but of our burial with Him unto death (Rom. 6) as well as of washing away our sins (Acts 22:16).

Chapter 39

Christ's Obedience and Ours

The obedience of Christ was marked by the unvarying character of perfect uniformity with the Father's will; and the manner of His compliance with that will was always unhesitating and unquestioning. So that His obedience was of the very highest order. There is an obedience among men which is the result of persuasion or even fear, as when an adverse will is overcome by tender entreaties or powerful reasons or a superior will. But the Lord's obedience was not of any such nature. It was His very meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. “I delight to do Thy will, O My God.” His own will never asserted or exercised itself but in one direction alone; and that, in faultless unison with the Father's. In connection with this thought, it will be observed that the Spirit of God, in witnessing of the obedience of Christ, uses a term highly expressive of its character. The word employed is always ■πακο■, or its cognate forms, indicating how completely He was governed by what He heard from God. So the prophet had testified beforehand, “He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa. 1:4). This position of continual dependence the Lord never left. “I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge.” “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do “(John 5:19-30). In contrast with the men around Him, self as a ruling motive was obliterated and the spring of His actions lay without Himself in the Divine Will. “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself. He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory” (John 7:17, 18, R. V.)

Never had there been or could have been such obedience on earth, nor even in heaven. For although the will of God was and is perfectly done above, the angels only fulfill the purpose of their creation in “hearkening to the voice of His word.” But this obedient Man, scorned for that very reason by all the disobedient, was the beloved Son of God in Whom He was well pleased. It was the transcendent dignity of His Person that elevated the obedience beyond compare, to say nothing of the adverse and afflicting circumstances in which it was rendered up to death, and what a death! As the eternal Son, He was the ruler over all. From the meanest creature on earth to the archangel on high nothing stirred but at His bidding. Yet “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). What a marvel was this, that the divine Son should become a bondman and “learn” (subjection being foreign to the Lord of all) “obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). And the lesson was learned perfectly. From first to last not a single exhortation was needed; for, without exception, He invariably did those things that pleased His Father.

This obedience was unparalleled, and gave infinite satisfaction to God. By so much as He was displeased by the disobedience of Adam, by that much, and far more, was He pleased by the obedience of the Second Man. Not, however, that the obedience was primarily on man's account, nor in any proper way, or strict sense, vicarious; but therein God found a perfect answer upon earth to the divine mind in heaven. Christ alone, as being ever the dependent and subservient One up to the death of the cross, was worthy to be Head of the new creation. In the very particular wherein Adam failed, Christ perfectly glorified His Father and His God upon the earth. Therefore

all that are Christ's are bound to exhibit the same moral attitude toward Him Who has called them. For as surely as we are elect, sanctified, and sprinkled, so surely are we called unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1:2). This not only refers to outward action but we are to bring into captivity every thought even to “the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). And the significance of this phrase is not so much that we are to obey Christ as our Master—which, of course, is in itself true—but rather that the peculiar kind of obedience which characterized Christ should characterize us. There had been obedience of old. “By faith Abraham obeyed” both in leaving his father's country and in offering his son (Heb. 11:8, Gen. 22:18). Again, the allusion seems to be to Israel's obedience of the law under the sanction of death set forth in the victim's blood sprinkled on all concerned. But the obedience of the Son transcended all and afforded an example beyond all. He lived upon every word proceeding out of the mouth of God, His life, as a Man, being the prompt and joyful response below to the divine will above. He obeyed as a Son; while we also are privileged to obey as children. This is in entire contrast with legal obedience in view of a threat or a reward.

And no less than this is what God looks for in His saints.

When the Spirit portrays in detail the incomparable stoop of grace, He precedes it by the exhortation “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Conformity to Christ commences in the heart and mind. So that the mind of the saint, like that of his Exemplar, should ever be open for directions from above. Obedience is implicit subjection to that which is heard. This principle marks even the initial stage of the believer's life. The ■παικο■ of faith, was the aim of Paul's preaching (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), for faith cometh by hearing, “■κο■” (Rom. 10:17). And no saint, however advanced, gets beyond dependence on the word of God. The most obedient child is the one whose words and ways are most influenced by the scriptures. Not the dull, wearisome, legal-minded, external conformity tp His word, because such and such is known to be His will, and, therefore, must be obeyed; but a running in the way of His commandments a saintly alacrity in divine things, a holy anxiety to know His will and to do it. Such a cheerful obedience to His revelation will be a savor of Christ in His people, well pleasing before Him. And is not this worth seeking? Thank God, He has made us “partakers of the divine nature” and given us of His Spirit, in order that the task may not be in vain. W. J. H.

Chapter 40

The Coming and the Day of the Lord

2 Thessalonians

The apostle, in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, had cleared up some difficulties respecting those saints who had fallen asleep. He had made known to the church at Thessalonica, by the word of the Lord, how the saints are to come with Him by being gathered to Him in the air at His coming. Those who had fallen asleep, instead of losing any privilege, would have a momentary priority; not these who are alive and remain till that moment. Their difficulty had been that the saints meanwhile fallen asleep would not be present to meet the Lord, when he came.

On the contrary he here shows them that the sleeping saints would have the precedence of the living, not that the living would anticipate them. This is the meaning of the word “prevent” in chap. iv. 15. “The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vers. 16, 17).

The Lord's coming again was their constant daily hope. They were waiting for Him from heaven ever since their conversion, as is clearly seen in chapter 1.

This was not the same thing as His appearing and day. He was coming for His own, to take them to the Father's house, as He had promised in John 14. When He appears, it is to judge the world; which is the “day of the Lord,” so often spoken of in the O.T. scriptures and alluded to in 1 Thess. 5:2. “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” So in verse 4, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” The day would come upon those in darkness, and asleep—i.e., upon the world of unbelievers. Saints were children of light and day, not of darkness.

The day of the Lord would begin when He was revealed, or appeared to all. First, His own would hear His voice, and go up to meet Him in the air, at His coming for them; as He had said “I will come again and receive you to myself.”

The world has no part in this; of its portion he speaks in 2 Thess. 1:7-10. “When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believed (because our testimony among you was believed) at that day.” How can children of God confound so very different a thing with His coming to fetch His own to heaven, who shall be forever with Him? The two actions are for objects and aims contrasted in character. No wonder that they do not take place at the same time, For when “He is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel,” His own will be with Him in glory, and will appear together with Him at that day. He comes then not to change them, and receive them to Himself, but to be “glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believed... “in that day.”

Then the Lord is rendering tribulation to those who had troubled His saints, while the saints will be at rest with Him in glory; and so will they then be seen, and Himself be glorified and marveled at in them (ver. 10). The world, thus seeing them in the same glory with Christ, will know by this manifested proof, that the Father loved them, as He loved Christ (John 17:23).

Some false teachers were troubling them, by the assertion that “the day” was then present, and that they had spirit, or word, or letter as if from the apostle, giving them a warrant for this teaching. The apostle assures the saints to the contrary, adjuring them by their hope of being gathered up by the Lord at His coming. Further, he lays down that the day will not come, till the last great development of the Antichrist. The Lord would come for them, and bring them with Him in that day. The gathering of His own was the first thing to be done. So he beseeches them “by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, not to be shaken in mind or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present (R. V.).” (2 Thess. 2:1, 2.) Our authorized version does not give the apostle's true exposure; which is not future at all, as “at hand” signifies, but that it had then actually set in. This could not be whilst the saints were here, for the day of the Lord would be judgment upon the wicked, His enemies; and that by His personal appearing. No, He would come first to take them away to Himself on high before “the day.” This he had clearly taught them in his First Epistle; and now he begs of them to rest assured that they were to be gathered to the Lord in the air, and to be forever with Him, before the day come upon the wicked. That hope was a motive to save them from the false apprehension of misleaders. When He is revealed to deal with the wicked, the heavenly saints would he glorified with Him and would follow Him out of heaven for His appearing and day (Rev. 19) So other scriptures clearly show also. Here the lines are defined enough. First, the Lord was coming to receive them to Himself; and this was their blessed and habitual hope. Secondly, He would judge the world in His day. “For God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world (the habitable earth) in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” This was the apostle's message to the men of Athens (Acts 17:31).

In reference to “the day,” the apostle next states that there were events which should take place before it; yet such events were not said to be before His coming to receive His saints. On the contrary His coming in ver. 1 stands in a distinct connection and design from His day in ver. 2, &c. The apostacy must first come, and prepare the way for “the man of sin” — “the lawless one “; whom the Lord Jesus would consume with the spirit of His mouth, and (not by His coming but) the appearing or manifestation of His coming.” Compare ver. 1, with ver. 8, and consider the marked difference of phrase. The mystery of iniquity was already working, when Paul wrote to them; and this would go on under restraint; and when the one restraining was out of the way, the “lawless one” would be revealed. First, the “mystery of lawlessness “was then at work; after that the apostacy would come; then the man of sin, or lawless one, would crown the evil, who is destroyed by the Lord, not by the coming of the Lord merely, but by the manifestation of His coming. This of course is His day, which then and there begins; it will be present then truly. Clearly therefore there is nothing in all this to hinder the Lord coming for His saints at any time. The necessary hindrance is before He appears in judgment. The mystery of lawlessness was then begun in the apostle's day; and, for anything there was to hinder, the Lord might have come and taken away His saints and the apostle amongst them. So he says, “We who are alive.” Lawlessness was then secretly at

work among the baptized and there would follow even an apostacy; after which the man of sin should come.

There was One who hindered the manifestation of that wicked one. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be (taken) out of the way, and then shall that wicked (or lawless) one be revealed.” (2 Thess. 2)

He who still hinders the lawless one did not hinder the mystery of lawlessness; for this was working in the apostle's day, and would continue to work until the lawless one was revealed. It is of great moment to notice this. The apostacy too must come before the day; but it is not said here or elsewhere that the apostacy had then come, as he affirms of the mystery of lawlessness.

To see this helps much to clear our thoughts and let us view these events in their proper order. “He who now letteth” [or restraineth] is, I believe, the Holy Spirit. He was then and is still gathering out the saints who compose the church, from Jew and Gentile, for her heavenly place as the bride of Christ. When that heavenly body is complete, the Lord will come into the air, and call us away to the Father's house. Thus would the restraint be “out of the way” (“taken” is not really said), and the man of sin be revealed. There is and will continue to be “One that restraineth” the manifestation of the lawless one. How long is not said; but we may gather somewhat from general principles of scripture. There is a sequence of events spoken of, viz., the mystery of lawlessness, the apostasy, and the revelation of the lawless one. The first of these events existed, and there was One who restrained until he was taken out of the way. The restrainer, being the Holy Spirit, gathers out from the world the church for heavenly glory. When the church is completed and called up to meet her Lord in the air, the restrainer would cease to act in that way, and there would be no hindrance to the revelation of the man of sin.

The taking away of the church and the Holy Spirit's personal presence in it would be at the same moment. This makes all clear that the church would be taken away before the day of the Lord. As the hope was to be constant, God took care to give no date for the taking away of the church. Nor are events said necessarily to take place, before the church is called away. The expectation of the Lord was to be immediate and abiding. Hence nothing was revealed to make that hope unreal or distant. Even the apostle writing under inspiration did not know during life, that it would not be until just at the close. How blessed the position for the believer! What a daily hope, precisely the same as in those early days!

The day of the Lord is not for those that believe, but for unbelievers, for the world, who receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved. Solemn, awful, day it will be for such as mock. May they be warned, before it comes upon them like a thief in the night, when escape is impossible

My object in this paper is to distinguish between the coming of the Lord to gather His own to Himself, and the day of the Lord when He will appear to judge the living wicked; and this mainly by what the apostle writes to his beloved Thessalonians in his Second Epistle.

Other scriptures, which speak of the day of the Lord, may be looked at, if the Lord will, at another time. But may He keep us looking for Himself day by day. G. R.

Chapter 41

Correspondence on Mark 13:32

DEAR BROTHER,

A tract has just been handed me, the title of which is, “A few remarks on a paper recently published in the Botschafter,” and the author, J. S. A.

I have no thought of entering into a controversy to which, thank God, we are no party, but which, as it has already been lasting for some years, may last indefinitely for this simple reason that the subject under discussion is, in its main part, beyond the competency of any man.

But truth, and principally truth that bears upon the person of Christ, has its requirements, on the ground of which it becomes a duty to any and every Christian to confess his faith. Now, in the above mentioned tract, I read the following sentence: “Personally He (Christ) ever was God.; but without ceasing to be that, He has taken a place as the second man, and as He is in that position, so shall we be. As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. “As to omniscience, which is one of the attributes of a divine person, see what the Lord says of the position He was occupying” (Mark 13:32). The italics are mine, for it is upon this latter part that I would draw the attention of your readers.

If these words have a meaning, they make our blessed Lord to say that in Him the divine nature and the human were so separate, that one part of Himself knew and the other part did not; in other words, that, as second man, He had not omniscience. Is there any such lowering thought in Mark 13:32? First of all the text does not speak of Him specifically as man or Son of man, but as “the Son,” and this alone destroys the argument. Secondly, it is admirably in keeping with the whole Gospel (in which alone it is found), where the Son is characteristically presented as the perfect SERVANT. Now, it was part of His perfection, as servant, not to know “of that day and hour” wherein the Father would exalt Him commensurately with His own voluntary humiliation. To humble Himself and to obey unto death, yea, death of the cross, was His whole concern. The result, as regarded Himself, He would leave absolutely and unreservedly with His Father; “wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him,” &c. This is full of beauty and comeliness, truly heart-winning; but if you use the “no man knoweth” to infer that manhood in Christ had no part in omniscience, you disunite the two natures which now, i.e. since the Word became flesh, compose His person forever, and you cast a slur upon Him. It is a fresh wound inflicted upon Him in the house of His friends.

As we have the perfect servant in Mark, so have we God manifest in the flesh in John, that is characteristically the Son Whom “no man knoweth but the Father.” And in this Gospel what do we read? “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.” Is not this omniscience? Mark too, it is attributed to JESUS, the God-Man. Again, as to omnipresence, which is no less a divine attribute than is omniscience, we read, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, THE SON OF MAN which is in heaven.” Who can fathom these mysteries? We are called upon to believe, not to explain them.

The former leads to adoration; the latter is soul-withering and God-dishonoring work. O that we knew more of our littleness in order to see more of His greatness! Ever yours in Him,

C.

Chapter 42

David: 1

“The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart,” (1 Sam. 13:14).

This testimony concerning David has proved a hard saying to many. The taunts of unbelievers trouble them because of his sins. Yet it should be borne in mind that he did not spare himself by any attempt to extenuate them (Psa. 51), and as he used no argument, and brought forward no plea in his own defense, we are not called to do so for him. It is clear that the Lord never made light of his fall. The thing that David had done displeased Him, and he had to reap, before all Israel and before the sun, what he had sown in secret. Blow after blow fell upon him, the chastening of love; for before he suffered a single stroke, he is assured that his sin, as before God, is put away. The range of his experiences was for extent and depth without a parallel among men; yet, what he learned of the heart of God in the worst of them broke his own; and this, the only acceptable offering he could bring, he brought in all humility. “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Was he not even then a man after God's own heart? When in the hour of his deepest trouble, broken in heart and crushed in spirit with the weight of his guilt, he cast himself unreservedly on the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God, against Whom he had so grievously sinned, was he not on a higher level than any self-righteous moralist ever reached? He was nearer God; and what is there higher than that?

Bold then as the language of scripture concerning David confessedly is, the most exhaustive examination of his history will only prove its truthfulness. That he was an instrument in the hand of the Lord, to render the most important service to His people, will hardly be questioned. Saul had brought them to the, verge of ruin. Through his self will and wickedness their existence as a nation was at stake; but David left them a great, united, and settled kingdom, to enjoy, at least for a time, the blessings of prosperity and peace under Solomon. It is not, however, in these results, great as they were, that we discover the man after God's own heart. The record of the experiences of his soul must be studied for this—how in spite of failure upon failure he never let go the link of grace between God and His people.

He himself lifts the veil of obscurity, so far as it is lifted, that covers his early life. Left alone with his father's sheep, while his brothers enjoyed the comforts of home society, he was content to fulfill the lowly duties of a shepherd lad. It was his first school, and he learned in it his first lessons of self-devotion in the path of duty, and of confidence in the Lord for the hour of peril. His modest account of himself at this time affords us an exquisite picture of both. “Thy servant,” he said to Saul, “kept his father's sheep; and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him and slew him.” (1 Sam. 17) What tender sympathy for the sufferings of even a lamb, and what courage to be friend it! Where had he learned this self-sacrificing devotedness in the cause of the oppressed? Was it natural to him? Was it found in the least degree in his family? Let the total unconcern of his father and brothers

answer for them. Did they know that lions and bears prowled in that wilderness? Why leave such a lad there, and wholly unprotected? Even when Samuel came to sacrifice and his sons were called to the feast, they came but not he. Not a thought apparently was bestowed on him by those on whom, as the youngest of the family, he had special claims. Is he then cast down because of their neglect, or indifferent even to a lamb entrusted to his care? Alas! for it if he were, for there was not another to defend it. And he himself was as helpless, yet omnipotence was on his side. Psa. 23, whenever written, is surely his, and full of reference to his experiences of shepherd life. Even in those early days what changes he went through, from the sheep-folds to the court of Saul, then back to the flock and away again to the camp! Yet a survey of life, whatever its vicissitudes, awakened no anxiety (whatever its dangers), produced no fear. “Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want.” The attack of the lion and the bear, however sudden, found him prepared. “I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” When all Israel were in terror because of Goliath, he was unmoved. “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” “Let no man's heart fail because of him.” Thus he endeavored to comfort others by the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God. And is not this after the Lord's own heart, so ready at all times to encourage the faint-hearted?

We can but remark too what self-renunciation characterized David when enabled thus to minister to the relief of suffering and to rescue the oppressed. When he had refreshed Saul by his skill in playing, and the evil spirit had departed from him, he carried his harp back to the plains of Bethlehem, happy to enjoy in solitude communion with the Lord in a way which he scarcely could have done amidst the distractions of the court. And after the overthrow of Goliath and the Philistines, he sought none of the honors of which he heard so much before, and made no complaint of the failure of royal promises, but with quiet simplicity again resumed the care of his father's sheep. Can we question that such childlike submission and gentleness was after God's own heart? Was it not fulfilling His will? (Acts 13:22.)

Again, the scornful conduct of his brother Eliab, when he publicly charged him with pride and naughtiness of heart as his motives for coming to the camp, awakened no resentment. He simply said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?” and turned away. Such calmness of spirit, when wantonly insulted, was far from natural to him. He was a man subject to like passions as we are. We see this when Nabal provoked him. His fiery temperament showed itself at once. He blazed forth in anger and would have taken terrible vengeance, had he not been restrained by the timely remonstrance of Abigail (ch. 25.). We may gather from Psa. 19:13, that he was conscious of this infirmity. “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins (lit. of pride); let them not have dominion over me.” He knew how soon they get the mastery. We shall see too in Psa. 131 that it was with real exercise of soul his passions were subdued. It was like the process of weaning, painful but necessary, yet carried through by grace till his soul was as a weaned child. “Lord, my heart is not haughty nor mine eyes lofty.” This is after God's own heart; “a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price.” Lovely as are these traits of divine life, they afford no ground for boasting. Few realized more than he the deep and constant need of delivering grace, and none has had richer experiences of it. “The Lord was with him,” is the key to his whole history.

If we turn to consider him now as the consciously anointed king of Israel, Saul being alive, we shall see how all must he of grace to bring him to the throne. The wisdom and prudence he needed, and that continually, were beyond nature. Then his unwearied devotion to their interests as the people

of God is in marked contrast with the unbelief and self-seeking of Saul who counted them as Hebrews merely (ch. xiii. 3.). The outlook, when for the first time he was brought face to face with their actual condition, was dark enough. One man had for forty days struck terror in all their hearts. Saul drew out their armies in battle array, but they were dismayed whenever this man defied them. How could he count on one of them? Yet jealous for the name of the Lord of hosts, and feeling intensely for the humiliation of the people, David at once undertook, stripling as he was, to go forth in that Name and overthrow this foe, with the supreme desire that all the earth might know THERE WAS A GOD IN ISRAEL, and that they should be victorious, not he alone. As he said to Goliath." The Lord will give you into our hands." It was the first dawn of hope since the glory had departed, and it was the birth-time in David's soul of a zeal that never died. Though he was "often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck, yet he began anew."

No one pleads for personal perfection in David. This is seen alone in Jesus, David's Son and David's Lord, and with what all-surpassing glory and beauty in Him! But gleams of this beauteous light s. line out in His people by His Spirit, and thus we speak of David. His fervent desire to find a place for Jehovah in the midst of His chosen people was one of these bright rays. Psa. 132 discloses to us the all-absorbing desire of his heart, which, as it neared accomplishment, glowed the more fervently. The ark, the symbol of divine presence had been entirely disregarded by Saul. Not a thought of its restoration appeared to cross his mind. David could not rest until it was brought to Zion, and the happiest moment in his life was when the Levites bore it into the tent which he had prepared for it. Was he not then a man after God's own heart? Here, however, we reach the threshold of his teal life. Shall we be permitted to go farther? The will of the Lord be done. It is a history of profoundest interest, anticipating, as it does in many of its incidents and exercises, the deeper experiences of the Lord Jesus when rejected of Israel as their Messiah.

Chapter 43

David: 2. His Escape From Saul, Flight to Samuel and Thence to Ahimelech

HIS ESCAPE FROM SAUL, FLIGHT TO SAMUEL

AND THENCE TO AHIMELECH.

The life of David, illustrated by true expressions of his inmost feelings and experiences, is of peculiar interest; and this we have by inspiration of God. One of a nation whose existence was the fruit of the unmerited love of the Lord, he was almost alone among his contemporaries in the open confession of that love. Difference there was in him from the mass, especially from Saul who in earthly things, a mark of blessing to an earthly people, was richer than he. The mind seeks in vain to discover what made him to differ. Had he not his faults as other men? At times the gravest. A study of his life changes the question. The heart, touched by it—and it is a life to move the heart—asks rather, who made him to differ? No merit of congruity can be found in him. He defined his own condition clearly when he, said, “I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.” A study of his life thus becomes a study of the mercy of God; and here cold reasoning is out of place. There is a divine congruity between the God of mercy and an object of mercy; between Him Who, with every provocation to anger, delighteth in mercy, and the broken and contrite heart whose only hope is in His mercy. But then, this confiding trust in the mercy, of God is marvelously sustained in the soul under every strain. Whence comes it then? He who sustains, implanted it: the whole is the work of His hand. Election, the doctrine most repugnant to the natural mind, becomes more and more intelligible to the lowly heart by the story of this life, a most eventful life in a most eventful period of Israel's history. May our study of it strengthen our faith, not in the mercy of God only, but in the God of mercy, or, as David would say, “the God of my mercy!”

His wrongs at the hand of Saul began before he was driven out to be hunted, as he said, like a partridge in the mountains. More than once, as he sought to soothe the king's troubled spirit by the melody of his harp, he had to avoid the spear which was hurled at him. Plot after plot to bring about his destruction failed; and at length Saul openly proposed, not only to his servants, but to Jonathan, to kill him. David was thus driven from the court and sought shelter in his house. At once “messengers were sent by Saul to watch him and to slay him in the morning.” Informed by his wife, Saul's daughter, of his danger he escaped, and from that night he never again had a settled abode while Saul lived. This is history (1 Sam. 18; 21). Psa. 59 gives us much more. According to the title it was composed on the discovery of Saul's plot, and with a knowledge of his emissaries. He describes them: men without fear of God— “for who, say they, doth hear?” —men of blood, heartless and unscrupulous, with whom his innocence would avail nothing. It was a moment of supreme danger; but no expression of alarm or anxiety escapes him.

A remark however is called for as to some parts of the Psalm. While the source of David's piety is the same as that of the Christian, the character and expression of it differ in some respects. This will force itself on the mind in reading the passages in which he pleads with God to intervene in

judgment on his adversaries, not as opposed to him personally so much as enemies of the kingdom and rejecters of the counsel of God concerning its true king. Such passages look on to the final conflict of Israel with the apostate nations and their allies. The Christian's blessings are not here, but in heaven: there he is to lay up treasure, while in present expectation of the Lord Jesus to come and receive him to Himself to be with Him forever.

Some knowledge of the ways of God is thus most desirable, nay more, most important; but it is by the knowledge of Himself, now in Christ perfectly manifest, that rest in the changing scene is given to the spirit. The wonderful thing is that, in the time of the law dispensationally and of Israel's degradation historically, one so young as David (he was only thirty when he came to the throne) should be so deeply, that is, experimentally, taught. While Saul's messengers were prowling round the house, like dogs greedy for their prey, he, far from being afraid, scornfully anticipated their defeat and disappointment, and rejoicing in the power of the Lord and His mercy, prepared a song for the morning appointed by Saul for his death—

“But I will sing of thy power,

Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning,

Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing:

For God is my defense, and the God of my mercy.”

We pursue the history. David first sought refuge with Samuel. We can understand this. In the day of adversity fellowship with a kindred spirit is doubly sweet. Moreover, at Naioth, whither they withdrew for greater safety, there was a company of prophets and the power of the Spirit was manifest among them. What a little sanctuary it might have proved but for the cruel jealousy of Saul who did not hesitate to seek his victim there, notwithstanding the presence of Samuel and the mighty influence of the Spirit of which for the time neither he nor his messengers could resist! How evident it was that he was fighting against God! David had again to flee, an outcast now let him turn where he may. He was however comforted by meeting with Jonathan and by receiving from him a signal proof of his unchanging affection; but learned that not even his influence with his father could change his determination. He then fled to Nob, the place where the tabernacle was and the priesthood, and where he might inquire of the Lord from Ahimelech the high priest. Doeg, an Edomite, an official in Saul's service, was there at the time, who told his master of the help given to David, but so wickedly misrepresented it that Saul suspected all the priests were in league against him. Terrible was his vengeance. Eighty-five were slaughtered at his command, by Doeg, and Nob was devoted to destruction, every living thing in it, man and beast, put to the sword. Abiathar the son of Ahimelech alone escaped and told David all (1 Sam. 21; 22). Some incidents are here omitted for the present to maintain the connection of this visit to Nob with its results.

Doeg is of bad pre-eminence in this history. In Saul we may learn the powerlessness of the flesh, whatever external advantages it may possess, to overcome its evil passions. Prophecy he despised, the priesthood he destroyed, and, notwithstanding moments of softening and compunction, he pursued the downward tendency of a godless course to the bitterest end. But Doeg is a treacherous foe: one who has learned that there is not a more potent weapon for the destruction of the innocent than the tongue. He is a type no doubt, of a terrible enemy of the remnant in Israel in the latter day. To learn the Holy Spirit's estimate of him, and David's by the

Spirit, we must turn to Psa. 52 He was a proud boaster, magnifying himself because of his position and resources, and “he made not God his strength.” He was a lover of evil and of falsehood. In the tabernacle and before the Lord he was contriving the work of destruction, preparing his tongue, like a sharp razor, to slay the guiltless, a grievous wolf, not sparing the flock.

The sudden turn in the first verse from “the mighty man” to “the goodness of God” is a beautiful touch in the picture. The word translated “goodness” in the A. V., is rendered “mercy” in the R. V. Another has said— “It is not the goodness of Jehovah in His relationship with Israel but what is in the nature of God.” And here we may venture a question. Is it altogether a fault in the A. V. of the Psalms that so many words are given as renderings of one in Hebrew? Thus we have “mercy,” “loving kindness,” “merciful kindness,” “kindness,” “goodness,” “favor,” as translations of one word. May it not be a confession on the part of the translators of the difficulty of conveying to the English reader the exceeding wealth and fullness of meaning of that one word? Anyway, we are no losers by it. We learn more of “what is in the nature of God,” what He is as revealed and known in O. T. times, and what was the ground of the confidence that we find in men of faith like David. With the perfect revelation of God in Christ, the bright light of the N. T. on our nearer relationships to Him in Christ, and with the power of the Holy Ghost given, how we fall short of even their attainment!

We cannot pass over the closing words of this Psalm. It would appear to be David's conviction by the Spirit that the only effectual answer to the false tongue is practical life and godliness. The possession of grace, its silent growth and practical fruits, will affect others for good more than words however eloquent. He speaks of himself in contrast with Doeg, not as merit, but as the result of divine discipline:—

I am like a green olive tree in the house of God,

I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever,

I will praise thee forever, because thou hast

done it.”

These words— “because thou hast done it” refer, we think, primarily to what he suffered from a false, because faithless, step when he left Ahimelech. He was restored before the coming of Abiathar who told him of Doeg; but of this in our next, the Lord willing.

Chapter 44

David: 3. From Nob to Gath and Thence to Adullam

FROM NOB TO OATH AND THENCE TO ADULLAM.

The sword of Goliath came into David's hands a second time, but under very different circumstances from the first, When he took it from Goliath, his absolute confidence in the Lord and his self-devotion to the interests of His people distinguished him above all; and it was a time of blessing for Israel though of brief duration. Saul became jealous of him, and no means were left untried to bring about his destruction. His perils, his escapes, and the exercises of his soul because of them we have traced up to his flight to Nob, to the tabernacle, where he hoped to get help. In this he was not disappointed, though Ahimelech, the high priest, was troubled at his coming and by the manner of it. David's wants were now very pressing. Persecuted, defenseless, hungry, and weary, he turned to the minister of the sanctuary for supplies. Who more suited to meet his need and to afford him comfort in this moment of extreme difficulty and peril? Yes, fair in appearance as this flight to the tabernacle for help was, it was not a true seeking of the Lord, for David stooped to artifice to gain his end. He deceived Ahimelech by specious answers to his inquiries; and though his wants were met, his guile, indirectly at least, brought destruction on the innocent, and bitter anguish to his own soul (1 Sam. 22:22).

In the house of God, however, he found nothing but grace. The order of that house was set aside in his favor; he ate the shewbread which it was not lawful for him to eat but only for the priests, and he received from behind the ephod the sword of Goliath. He was fed, he was armed, and he would have been directed; but even this ministry failed, as we shall see, to impart confidence in the Lord. From Matt. 12:3, 4, we learn that David's circumstances at this time were typical of the deeper sorrows of the rejected Messiah and of the remnant attached to Him; and hence we think that the shewbread and the sword of Goliath may have a typical meaning also, pointing to the all-important ministry, so needed by the soul, of the true bread to nourish and the sword of death, no longer our dread, but for us, when used unsparingly against all within and around that hinders obedience to the will of God (Rom. 6:11, Col. 3:5). As David said, “There is none like it; give it me.”

Yet, instructive as the ministry of Ahimelech might have proved, the fact remains that David learned more of God when in the hands of the Philistines than when in the tabernacle; and how true it is now, that saints often learn more of Christ in suffering and distress than from the pulpit. Yet thanks be to God for true ministry. Can we however shut our eyes to the truth that when David was simply depending on the Lord and in confident assurance of his favor, the lion, the bear, and even Goliath, presented no difficulty to him? Young as he was, he met them all as the common work of the life of faith, and he did the greatest service when, in appearance, he was most defenseless. Now, after being ministered to abundantly, through fear of Saul he fled at once to Achish the Philistine, the king of Gath.

What a challenge this ought to be to us! Upon what is our soul really depending? Ordinances and ministry, the best provisions of the sanctuary, can be no substitute for personal trust in God. They may even draw off the spirit from the consciousness of its own inherent weakness, and thus hinder

the good they ought to prove. There is no deception more subtle. The Corinthians had the best ministry, they came behind in no gifts; yet for them even more than for others was the warning needed, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

What can David do with Goliath's sword in Gath? Would he even dare to show it? Association with the world and looking to it for protection too often lead to subjection to it. The title of Psa. 56 implies that this was his case, “The Philistines took him in Gath.” Thus, after all that Ahimelech had risked for him and had ministered to him, his unbelief brought him into greater difficulties than those from which he fled. He confesses this in the Psalm:—

“Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; All the day long he fighting oppresseth me.”

His distress, more effectual than ministry, cast him upon the mercy of God, and not in vain. Brought into His presence, his faith revived: he became like the David of early days. What now was the estimate of his troubles? He saw at once the utter impotency of man, of whom he had lately been in such abject fear.

“What can flesh do unto me"?

“What can man do unto me”?

“What time I am afraid

I will trust in thee.”

If such was man, what had he learned of the Lord? That He was most compassionate, most merciful, entering into all his sorrows and with a perfect knowledge of them. Rarely was David's harp attuned to a sweeter note than is found here.

“Thou tellest my wanderings:

Put thou my tears into thy bottle:

Are they not in thy book”?

And it is to be noted, that it is when in distress the soul values the word of God. The bed of suffering is very different from the study chair. There the heart has but little sympathy with questions as to the credit of the holy scriptures. Surely David had but little when he sung

“In God will I praise his word,

In the LORD will I praise his word.”

The time of his deliverance drew near, but the way of it must he the entire withering of the flesh. The conqueror in the valley of Elah now “scrabbled on the door of the gate and let his spittle fall down on his beard,” feigning madness to save his life.; yet even in this low estate his faith failed not

“When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back;

THIS I KNOW; for God is for me.”

The closing prayer of the psalm is very expressive of the need of a soul who, running his own course, has had a fall and fears another.

“Thou hast delivered my soul from death;

Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling,

That I may walk before God

In the light of the living?”

It has been said, “Oh! the luxury of prayer.” This history may tell us that nothing can deprive a believer of it.

Returning to the land, of which even the Philistines owned he was the king, David's heart is again drawn to the people of the land, whatever treatment he may receive at the hand of their leader. Because of Saul he is still a fugitive and we find him after leaving Gath in the cave of Adullam. There his own family come to him for protection, being no longer safe in Bethlehem: and others, to the number of four hundred, men of no reputation— “in distress,” “in debt” and “bitter of soul” (1 Sam. 22) it is a change in his position. The Lord had been leading him into greater confidence in Himself, and would now train him for future rule in Israel and for delivering the people from their enemies. We must turn to 1 Chron. 11:10-47, to understand the true worth of this little band gathered to David in the cave, and to Psa. 34, to learn his state of soul at the time he received it. Saul evidently knew that he now had followers and openly sneered at his abject condition. “Will the son of Jesse,” he said to his courtiers, “give everyone of you fields and vineyards?” David truly had none, but it would be difficult to find a happier man than he, then or now. The first words of his song are

“I will bless the LORD at all times,

His praise shall be continually in my mouth.”

The Spirit of Christ, Who in Gath had drawn out his desires after God when in tears (Psa. 56.) now that he is delivered from all his fears completes his joy. Saul's nature craved for fields and vineyards; David's, by grace, for the Lord Himself. He had learned more of Him in his affliction than he had ever learned before; and full of praise he would teach others the secret of his joy, His own heart when sorely distressed had found rest, and he could therefore tell others where to find it also. “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.” It is a beautiful Psalm. If in affliction we have turned to it, we can readily picture its effects on the outcasts in the cave of Adullam. David surely shared his joy with them, as in the overruling goodness of God, he has done with many since. Verse 6 is the experience of one poorer than David. Concerning such portions we may well adopt the words of the beloved author of “Meditations on the Psalms.” “The strings of David's harp are the strings of Christ's heart; and when they are touched, we should be still. There should be something of the deep silence of those who listen to distant music; for the melodies of that heart are far enough away from this coarse and noisy world.”

Chapter 45

David: 4. From Adullam to Moab and Return to the Land of Israel

There is great force in the entreaty of the apostle to the Corinthians— “We beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” —based, as it is, on the fullest presentation of the gospel in the three preceding chapters (2 Cor. 6:1). To the upright in heart such pleading for practical godliness will not be disregarded, neither will instruction by example be unwelcome. In this way a true biography is often helpful, but to be true it must be inspired. In the scriptures the saints of God are not screened, and the brightest may serve as a warning as well as an example.

David was rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord and celebrating his praise in the happy strains of Psa. 34, when a question of every-day life brought to light that he was not, as to it, guided by the will of God. Let us not on this account question his sincerity. It is possible to receive and enjoy truth and sing to the Lord with a heart filled with a sense of His love, and yet to discover soon after that faith is not up to the requirements of the truth enjoyed. While this should humble us, it affords an opportunity for the display of the unwearied grace of God and leads to prayer for a truer condition before Him. The question that came before David in Adullam was one of duty. His aged father and mother sought his protection. Could they bear the dangers and hardships which were before him? Should he, to spare them, seek a quieter sphere than could be found in the land of Israel? He was not ignorant of the purpose of God in taking him from the sheep-cot and from following the sheep; and, since he could sing so heartily of His grace, why not also ask to be shown His way? Called, as he was, to occupy in due time the throne of Israel, every step he took was either for or against his calling. No principle is more simple or more insisted on than this for Christians (2 Peter 1:10). Let their confession of the grace of God be ever so full, clear, and joyous, they will miss their way in the midst of the pressing claims and perplexing questions of this life if they lose sight of their high destiny, of their calling of God to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus. This is the declared end and purpose of God in bestowing His love upon them. He has made them His children, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We need to remind ourselves of this; for wisdom, as well as strength, is needed that we may live for this end, and against everything, whether in the church or out of it, inconsistent with it.

Saul had abandoned the responsibilities of his calling for self-gratification: shall David his for the sake of his parents? The importance of the question is our plea for dwelling on it; for duties and cares may lead a true soul astray when mere self-seeking would alarm it. Now the claims of natural affection are not to be refused: scripture maintains them (Ex. 20:12, 1 Tim. 5:8). They must, however, be subordinate to the higher claims of Him Who created all things for His pleasure. Neither the dead nor the living, however dear, must be allowed to interfere (Luke 9:59-61). He must be first, and all needed things will be added.

David, in the joy of his heart, had said in this psalm,

“Come, ye children, hearken unto me:

I will teach you the fear of the LORD;”

and again,

“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous,

And his ears are open to their cry;”

yet he turned away from what he knew was “the inheritance of the LORD” (compare 1 Sam. 26:19) and sought help in his difficulty from idolatrous Moab. This was neither the fear nor the way of the LORD. It was the way of nature. Jesse was the grandson of Ruth the Moabitess; how natural then, and convenient also, for his son to seek an asylum there, and this he did. “He said to the king of Moab, Let my father and mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you till I know what God will do for me.” Having got thus into Moab, he and his followers are next found “in hold” there; for to leave the path of God is easier than to return to it, and how many have left it for the sake of their families, who would not for their own.

From 2 Sam. 8:2 we learn that, when upon the throne of Israel, friendship could no longer be maintained between David and the Moabites. They were the enemies of Jehovah and of His people. Even Saul knew it (1 Sam. 14:47), wiser in this than the children of light. How painfully inconsistent therefore was this seeking their good offices in the time of trouble whereas he must deal in judgment with them, when in power! Serious thought! And what can be more inconsistent than for the saints of God, who will assuredly be assessors with Christ when in righteousness He shall judge the world, to seek its friendship now in order to secure its momentary patronage and protection! And when this is done by those who say “Hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord” the inconsistency is greater still. That the saints will judge the world is distinctly stated in 1 Cor. 6:2. It is the subject of the earliest prophecy, and is found with much minuteness of detail in the latest (Jude 14, 15, Rev. 19:2 to 20:4). It cheered Israel in captivity (Dan. 7:27), and is set before the churches by the Lord Himself for the encouragement of the faithful in the time of apostacy (Rev. 2:26, 27).

There is, however, more than inconsistency. Jehovah of hosts was the God of Israel. “Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by Jehovah, the shield of my help, and Who is the sword of thy excellency!” Moab had another god and magnified himself against Jehovah (Jer. 48). In the expressive language of the prophet, “his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.” What could there be in common between David and the king of Moab? And what can there be in common between the world and the servants of Christ, when its friendship is enmity with God? Is not the gospel a witness that, notwithstanding the fullest display of the love of God in Christ, the world is still opposed? Why beseech men to be reconciled to God if they are so? Moab for its own ends may smile on David, but it is Moab still. And the world may bestow its favors, its patronage, and protection on Christians, if they sink so low as to solicit them; but it is the world still, with its own god, its own aims, objects, and interests, and alas! to add, its own doom.

There was a difference truly, between David's flight to Gath in thorough distrust of God, and his turning to Moab for the sake of his aged parents. To deliver him from Gath, he was humiliated before the Philistines. To restore him from Moab, the Lord, in sovereign grace, intervened by the prophet Gad, that is, by his word. He said to him, “Abide not in the hold, depart and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed and came into the forest of Hareth.” At this time Saul was giving way to frightful excesses. Hearing that David was in Judah, he at once held a council with

his servants to take him! and this led to the horrible slaughter of the priests through the treachery of Doeg. David seemed to be putting himself in his power, but the authority of God's word was supreme. He knew well that obedience meant his giving up a position of apparent quietness and facing persecution, danger, and distress; yet he obeyed, and in the wilderness of Judah and its caves, he composed some of the most instructive and beautiful of his psalms. He has thus strengthened the faith of those who have taken the path of God in this evil world, a path so clearly enjoined in His word (2 Cor. 6:2, 14-18; 2 Tim. 2:19, 2 John 10, 11, Rev. 18:4).

Psa. 57, 63, and 142. from their titles date from about this time, a time of intense peril, yet of unequaled blessing, for David. Saul's forces were greatly increased, and he was more determined than ever to seek out his prey and destroy him. David felt it keenly——

“Refuge hath failed me; no man careth for my soul.

I cried unto thee, O Lord;

I said, Thou art my refuge,

My portion in the land of the living” (142).

yet, let his enemies rage as they may, he was never more sensible of the boundless range of the power of the Most High God, or more simply dependent on Him for protection.

“I will cry unto God Most High,

Unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me

From the reproach of him that would swallow me up” (57.).

There was also the testimony of his conscience as to his path. He had followed no human judgment. He had obeyed the Lord, and to Him he could appeal as to that path—

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Thou knewest my path” (142.).

He could thus walk with God where there was nothing to ensnare. How unlike the path of nature! Before Goliath he was bold in “the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel,” for then it was a question of power, and before many. Now, in the desert, it is one of love, of personal love, known and enjoyed in the soul when alone. “O God, thou art my God.” His song in the wilderness of Judah (Psa. 63) is thus full of beauty, but a beauty that only those will appreciate whose separation to God is a divine reality.

“Because thy loving kindness is better than life, My lips shall praise thee,

Thus will I bless thee while I live:

I will lift up my hands in thy name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;

And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips”

David had no such experiences in Moab. Christians may have much truth, profess much truth, and circulate much truth; but to live before God in the power and holy joy of the truth, they must be in a

true path.

Chapter 46

David: 5. Treachery in Israel, Regard for Saul

When David left the land of Judah for the sake of his parents, though the motive abstractedly was innocent, the first of all duties was neglected. When God has His rightful place, everything is referred to Him. “In all thy was acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” This necessarily stands at the head of all obedience, and this was the lesson which David was taught by his failure. Immediately on his reaching the forest of Hareth he heard that the Philistines had attacked Keilah and were plundering the threshing-floors. With the desire not to repeat his fault he inquired of the Lord. “shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said, Go, and smite the Philistines and save Keilah.” But why the sword? Why does he say:—

“Blessed be the Lord my strength,

Who teacheth my hands to war

And my fingers to fight.” (Ps. 144.)

Why is the desire so often expressed by Israel for judgment on their enemies, and why was it counted an honor to execute it upon them? The answer is this. “The earth is the Lord's,” the ordering of it is His also. In His sovereignty He has apportioned to Israel the chief and central place among the nations (Deut. 32:7-9). In them divine government has been displayed on the earth, and. will be again. With a high arm He brought them out of Egypt to Himself to be their King and their God; and the idolatrous nations that opposed and mocked at His power were His enemies, Israel being used by Him to execute judgment on them. Under the first and legal covenant the chosen people so grievously failed that “they are scattered among all peoples from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deut. 28:64); but “He that scattered Israel will gather him” (Jer. 31:10). Now, sinners reached by God's grace through the gospel, whether Jew or Gentile, are brought into one body, the church, a people for heaven, who while on earth should be manifestly a heavenly people. The ceaseless efforts of the god of this world have been directed to make the church a “mock Israel,” and with much success. Happy are they who have been able to stand against hiss wiles (Eph. 6:10-18). The Gentiles, placed in authority on the overthrow of the house of David, have never had any care for the divine plan for ordering the earth, but eagerly strive for the possession of it. We have now reached that period in their history when the question is, how to mingle the iron of the image in Dan. 2 with the clay, for they will not cleave one to another, and further revolutions are anticipated. The Christian, not sharing the fears of the world, reads in this the near approach of the day of deliverance (Dan. 2:44, 45). THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, and He will take it Whose right it is. Then shall Israel be restored and take their true and glorious place among the nations; Jehovah shall be manifestly their King and their God, and the earth shall rest from war. The Psalms, while full of instruction for us, concern Judah and Israel. David's desires and actings were thus in strict accordance with the ways of God on behalf of an earthly people.\

To save the men of Keilah, their enemies must be smitten, but they brought the judgment on themselves. Those with David however were not ready to follow him now. To go with him to Moab presented no difficulty; but to go to Keilah was a challenge to their faith, and what was the answer? “Behold,” they said, “we be afraid here in Judah how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” David refused to put his personal influence in the place of the word of God. He neither reasoned with them nor rebuked them, but inquired of the LORD yet again. “And the LORD answered Arise, go down to Keilah for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.” This assurance of divine power overcame their fears; they went with David, smote the Philistines with great slaughter, and Keilah was saved.

Saul on hearing that David was now “in a town that had gates and bars” at once prepared to besiege him, and at this time Abiathar, fleeing from Nob, came to him with the ephod in his hand. It was indeed a token for good. The breastplate, inseparable from the ephod, bore the names of all the tribes of Jacob; and, as he was about to learn by bitter experience the character of the people whom he was to serve, he by it was reminded of the unchanged compassion of the Lord for them, changed as were their circumstances. To view them in the light of their conduct might have estranged him from them; but to see them according to the thoughts of the Lord, expressed in this type, would deepen his interest in them, while by the Urim and Thuminim he could have the guidance he needed. Hence he said to Abiathar, “Bring hither the ephod.” Most solemn, most reverent, most earnest was his cry. Appealing again and again to the LORD as the LORD God of Israel, he inquired. “Will Saul come down? And the LORD said, He will come down. Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul. And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.” He made no complaint. He cannot wage war with Israel, with the people whose names were on the breastplate. He can strike no blow at his master, the LORD'S anointed. He will not fight, but “he and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whither they could go.”

Many of his Psalms bear witness to the strong emotion under which they were composed; few more so than those which were written on the discovery of the ingratitude and treachery of the people he served.

“For my love they are my adversaries: But I give myself unto prayer.

And they have rewarded me evil for good, And hatred for my love.” (Psa. 109)

See also Psa. 35:12-16; 38:20; 69:4, and others.

God has thus used his afflictions by the Spirit “to express the feelings not only of the people of God, but often of the Lord Himself.”

We find him next in the wilderness of Ziph, where Jonathan with affectionate sympathy and noble courage and devotion came to him, and “strengthened his hand in God.” How he needed it, for the Ziphites, more treacherous than the men of Keilah, volunteered to betray him to Saul, who actually blessed them in the name of the LORD for having compassion on him! Guided by them he led his forces in pursuit and reached the mountain near Maon on the other side of which were David and his men. The peril was extreme. In a very short time they would be surrounded and all hope gone. Nothing but the direct interposition of God could save them; and it is beautiful to see how, led by the Spirit, he cast himself and those with him on God as known, or in the language of scripture on

“His name” — “Save me, O Gol, by thy name, and judge (vindicate) me by thy strength.” (Psa. 54) His cry was heard. “A messenger came to Saul saying, Haste thee and come for the Philistines have invaded the land.” Thus pressed he was obliged to return and David was saved. So marked was this deliverance that the place where it occurred was called “The cliff of Escape.”

We have now to see this servant of the Lord under very different circumstances. Twice Saul was in his power: once when he retired alone into the cave where David and his men were hiding; and a second time when he and his guards were “in a deep sleep from the LORD.” On the former occasion David cut off the skirt of his robe as a proof of the danger to which he had exposed himself. On the latter, David and Abishai noiselessly approached him and took the spear and cruse of water from his bolster; “and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked.” Urged by his followers to take the opportunity, which to them seemed to be of the Lord, to rid himself of so relentless an enemy, he firmly refused. Indeed his magnanimity of spirit, his loyalty and obeisance to the king, as his master, his earnest and even affectionate appeal to him, as in the presence of the Lord, when he said, “My father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand,” the witness that he had not sinned against him, though Saul was hunting his soul to destroy it, display a character of no ordinary kind. Whence was it? There can be but one reply. In his recent afflictions he had sought the Lord more diligently than ever, and in communion with Him had learned much of the ineffable goodness of His nature. He was certainly born of God, and had thus the capacity of enjoying and valuing the favor, the lovingkindness, of God. Light as to the flesh and the new creation did not shine out then as since the cross, but he could not be much in the presence of God without a real moral change, and this in an interesting way is discovered in the Psalms. If our translators found it difficult to render into English the one word in Hebrew that expresses the nature of God, and have employed six English words to convey its meaning, they have in like manner used five to express the moral character of the faithful remnant in Israel of whom David was certainly one (see Psa. 86).

“Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me:

For I am poor and needy.

Preserve my soul, for I am holy:

O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.”

The word “holy” is, in the margin, “one whom thou favourest;” in the R. V., “godly.” The same word is also rendered “saint,” “the merciful” and in Mic. 7:2, “the good man.” How intimate and beautiful is the connection between the graciousness of God and the graciousness of the heart that by faith knows and delights in Him; but alas! how different is the result in those who do not. The same sun, that perfects the beauty of the rooted living flower, withers the rootless one. So was it seen in David and in Saul, in the remnant and in the nation of Israel, and so is it now in the true receiver of Christ and in the mere professor. Oh! for more faith in the quiet power of communion with God.

Chapter 47

David: 6. Life in Ziklag and Its Experiences

LIFE IN ZIKLAG AND ITS EXPERIENCES.

David's last meeting with Saul evidently affected him greatly; and it is probable that, as he set before him in feeling terms his condition as a partridge hunted on the mountains, and his insignificance, compared with the strength and resources of the king, as a flea, that he realized his danger in a way he had never done before, and felt that his enemies would eventually hunt him to death. The exceeding peril of yielding to anxious thoughts lie at one time pressed in language which many since have adopted for their blessing, but which at this moment he failed to realize. In Psa. 139, which brings the soul in all its internal workings under the eye of the Lord, he expresses the fervent desire to be delivered from every thought which would discourage his heart and lead to departure from God.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my thoughts:.

And see if there be any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting.”

Thoughts have tempted many to forsake their own mercies, as Jonah, and observe lying vanities. Here David failed. Self-preservation was a suggestion of Satan, and he yielded to it so fully that past experiences, deliverances, joys, and testimonies were all forgotten. What discord a single distrustful thought may stir up in a truly godly soul! He loved Israel: he loved the Lord, and in this same Psalm he declares that the enemies of the Lord were his enemies.

“Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?

And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

I hate them with perfect hatred;

I count them mine enemies.”

As the appointed ruler over Israel this was right. For the display of the righteous government of Jehovah in the earth and the deliverance of His people, it was the truth that he was called to maintain; but truth to be of any avail must be held in communion with God. There is no power in truth of itself, and knowledge is not faith. Of this, David at this time was a striking example. “He said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines: and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in the coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.” There was now with him a band of brave men who, under his leadership, would prove a valuable contingent to the forces of the Philistines. On this he reckoned for favor in their eyes and not in vain. Thus temptation and opportunity combined to draw him away from his known duty. Achish welcomed him, and at his

request gave him the city, Ziklag, to dwell in.

This suggests the thought that another motive was at work. Every man with him had his household, and David his two wives, Ahinoani and Abigail: was there not heart longing for rest as well as safety, for a home as well as a refuge, and this, if it could not be in the land of Judah, with the enemies of God?

This sudden spiritual change in a man of exemplary faith should be a solemn warning against giving way at any time to the suggestions of “a dark brooding heart.” From the time of his return from Moab to the land of Judah, he had been going on happily, seeking and obtaining counsel and help of the Lord in every difficulty, and giving expression to the joy of his soul again and again in Psalms of praise; yet at once his guilty weakness and fears betrayed him into a course of disobedience, of self-will, of open departure from the Lord, and of conduct, shameful and cruel in the extreme. We all need the lesson, or it would not have been written for us. As another has said, in writing of Job, “There is a wonderful scene going on in the heart of man. God does not always let us see it, it would not be good for us: we could not bear it. Sometimes the veil is drawn aside and the heart is exposed to itself. It is a serious thing when God thus lifts the veil and shows what is going on for good and evil in a poor little heart like ours.”

Under no circumstances hitherto would David strike a blow against Israel, yet what advantage was it to Achish to receive him if he did not: therefore to meet his searching inquiries as to the raids he made, he must deceive him. This he did, and so effectually that Achish said, “David hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him, therefore he shall be my servant forever.” But artifice and falsehood alone could not secure him from discovery. Therefore of those against whom he made war, “he left neither man or woman alive lest they should tell saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.” And this was his course for sixteen months! Surely in the flesh dwelleth no good thing, sin only is found there. Explicit statements of this are abundant in scripture, especially in the New Testament; but these are confirmed by narrative after narrative which discovers it where we should least expect to find it. Deliverance from it can only be by the Cross of the Lord Jesus and to this the Christian emphatically puts his seal (Gal. 5:24)—is taught to do so. About the close of the sixteen months the allied princes of the Philistines resolved upon engaging in a combined attack upon the forces of Saul at Gilboa, and Achish said to David, “Know thou assuredly that thou shalt go out with me to battle”? and David said, “Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do “: and he and his men passed over in the rereward of the Philistines army with Achish. The time of deceit was over. Israel's champion, in alliance with their bitterest foes, is in arms, not against the people of God only, or against Saul whose life he twice spared because he was anointed, but against Jehovah of Hosts whom he had confessed before Goliath to be the God of the armies of Israel. This then raised the question as to His rights, for David was his servant; and if he were powerless to break the yoke under which he had placed himself, it should be broken for him. As the rivers of water, the Lord turneth the hearts of men, and He turned the hearts of the other lords of the Philistines against David. They insist on his immediate dismissal. “Make this fellow return that he may go again to his place which thou past appointed him, and let him not go down with us to the battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us.” Achish had to yield, and David returned to Ziklag to find it in flames. The Amalekites had invaded it, and taken captive the women, the children, and the cattle—everything. It was a terrible blow, but a self-earned one. Though God forgives His people,

He takes vengeance on their inventions. The distress of all the men, their weeping, their despair, their almost hatred of David, for they spoke of stoning him, though he was a partner with them in. all their sorrow, added inconceivably to the anguish of his soul; but he knew the hand that smote him, and appalling as were his circumstances, “encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” Such is the simple record (1 Sam. 30:6) and such is faith; if for a season eclipsed, it shines out the more intensely when the darkness of distrust is, by grace, removed. Even the splendid triumph over Goliath cannot be compared with the victory over himself. He is David again as we knew him before his fall. He turned to Abiathar for the ephod, inquired of the Lord, and at His word pursued the Amalekites, came upon them, smote them and recovered all. Now, when his condition was right before God, his spirit was changed, his heart was enlarged. An Amalekite could leave his servant who had fallen sick to die in the field. Though rich with the spoils of Ziklag, his niggardly heart refused even the little that might give back strength to the poor exhausted Egyptian. Will David yield to the selfish suggestion of some that those of his men who were too faint to go with him to the fight should not share in the spoils? Far be the thought. His faith had taken hold of God, and the mercy which he himself received he must display. It was an opportunity for good, and he seized it: as the Christian loves, because God first loved him. In royal grace David saluted the feeble ones, inquired as to their welfare, rebuked the hard-hearted, and made a statute and an ordinance for Israel from that day forward: “As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike.”

Chapter 48

David: 7. From the Ruins of Ziklag to the Throne of Hebron

FROM THE RUINS OF ZIKLAG TO THE THRONE IN

HEBRON.

Solomon records a deeply interesting and suggestive fact concerning David. “The Lord said to my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son who shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name” (2 Chron. 6:8, 9). From Psalm 132 we learn how fervent the desire became in David's heart that the departed glory should return to Israel; that the Lord should again dwell, and be worshipped there. As to the accomplishment of this, he had to be put in his proper place, but that which was in his heart was approved. Of which of his deeds is it said, “thou didst well?” We cannot recall one, and if it be so, we have that, in his case, which is full of encouragement for others, for it places all the saints of God on one footing, however much they differ as to ability for service. The counsels of the heart are before God, and this realized will make them regardless of the praise of men (1 Cor. 4:5). Even Samuel when he was sent to anoint David needed the word, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” A remark by Adolphe Monod is much to the point: “‘Give me thy observances,’ says the God of Pharisaism. ‘Give me thy personality,’ says the God of Hegel. ‘Give me thy reason,’ says the God of Kant. The living and true God says, ‘Give me thy heart '.” Yes, the desire for God Himself must precede all service. This David learned—we can appeal to all his Psalms in proof of it; and great was the mercy, and patient was the grace of God in teaching him.

It was at Ziklag and on the third day after his victory over the Amalekites that the news of Saul's death was brought to David (2 Sam. 1). What place so suitable for him to hear it? Everything around would remind him of his own sinful weakness and failure, and of the abounding mercies of the Lord. He and his men had recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, but the flames spared nothing which they received from Achish. The moral of this, for us, may be learned in 1 Cor. 3:13-18. His self-will had plunged him into great distress, but the grace of the Lord was wonderful. He strengthened him with strength in his soul, so that he received the tidings which assured him that the way was at length open for him to the throne without a selfish thought. He wept when he heard of Saul's death.

Poor Saul! Israel had given up everything for him. Samuel thought that they had rejected him for the sake of the king. No, said the Lord, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them.” Saul was a gifted man, and attractive to the flesh in many ways, yet never a man of faith though in a position that called for continuous faith. His own soul had no link with God, and he succeeded in reducing Israel practically to the same state. By giving to his followers fields and vineyards, rank and titles, and by clothing the daughters of Israel in scarlet with other delights, and putting ornaments of gold upon their apparel, he maintained for them a fair outward appearance of prosperity, while he was leading them farther and farther from God. But the end came. He and his three sons were slain. What then was the condition of Israel? To whom

shall they turn when their reproach was in the mouth of the heathen, in the house of their idols, and among the people? Abner's attempt to set up Ish-bosheth, a younger son of Saul, proclaimed their degradation. He was not anointed, not gifted, a mere tool in the hands of Abner for his purpose, and eventually murdered by two of his captains. His right name, Esh-Baal, had been dropped, and he was popularly Galled Ish-bosheth, that is, “man of shame.”

To rightly estimate all this, and the cause of David's exercises and yearnings of heart, we must go back to their origin as a people saved by Jehovah. On the Canaan side of the Red Sea Moses himself was but as one of them. The presence of the Lord was the great, joy-inspiring truth. He had brought them not only forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, but to Himself. Their hearts were united, they sung as one man— “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” Though the wilderness was before them, in the love of their espousals they followed the Lord in a land not sown. But how was it with them now? For forty years they had followed a man. They had seen the prophet of God ignored, His priests slaughtered, and David persecuted. Still they followed him He led them to lean upon him, and there was a sacredness attached to his authority which quieted conscience: they must either acknowledge him or be outcasts with David: the will and pleasure of God were not thought of. There was a charm, too, about the man himself. As David said in his touching elegy:

“The beauty (the gazelle) of Israel is slain upon the high places:

How are the mighty fallen!

Ye mountains of Gilboa,

Let there be no dew, neither rain upon you, nor fields of offering;

For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,

The shield of Saul, as of one not anointed.”

Is it possible that Christians can be indifferent to these lessons? Christendom, like Israel, under its self-chosen leaders, has degenerated into an organized system in which the presence of the Lord, whose name it professes, is neither necessary nor desired; but are there none in it like David? None who have learned, it may be by sore discipline, to find their only blessing in His presence?

“Whom have I in heaven but thee?

And there is none on earth I desire beside thee.”

Dr. Octavius Winslow, in his memoir of his mother, quotes the following from her correspondence: “One word as to the blessed manifestation to the soul of Christ Himself (John 14:21). Let us never be satisfied without this. I meet with many professing Christians who appear to know nothing about it.” (This lady had exceptional opportunities of meeting with Christians.) How far her witness is true as to others, must not be our first concern. Is it true of ourselves? This was the order in David's experience. He first proved the blessedness of the manifested presence of the Lord in his own soul, and then he sought it for all Israel.

Now that Saul was dead the way was opened for his establishment on the throne. Though he had not left Ziklag, he at once acted royally, sending presents to the elders of Judah, to his friends, and

order in, the execution of the Amalekite who charged himself with the death and plundering the person of “the Lord's anointed.” What shall be his next step? Here again we have distinct evidence how real was the presence of the Lord to his soul. With the simplicity of a child, and in few words, he inquired of Him— “Shall I go up unto any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said, to him—Go up. And David said, whither shall I go up? And He said, unto Hebron.” This holy liberty and simplicity is seen in the church at first, as in Ananias (Acts 9) and others. If unknown to any now, how great their loss! David obeyed at once. He went to Hebron with his two wives, and the men were with him, every man with his household: “and the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.” He had yet to wait seven years and a half before all Israel submitted to his rule. The typical application of this (see Ezek. 37:15-28) has been pointed out by many, but there is a secret of blessing also in this life—history, which every Christian, however lacking in acquaintance with its typical significance, may learn to profit. He was a man subject to like passions as we are. A man that saw much affliction, and needed to see it. A man whose heart was exposed to the intrusion of evil thoughts and suggestions, which, when acted on, led to the bitterest consequences. Yet a man who, by the patient grace of God, came to find His presence the very gladness of joy (Psa. 43:4 margin). And after his own experiences how could he limit the mercy of God. Shall not all Israel, as the people of the Lord, be led back to their first love, to exult that His habitation was again in their midst? It was his most fervent desire, and though Solomon built the house, he was at all sacrifice and cost for it. And the Lord said, “Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.” What a reward!

Chapter 49

The Daysman

This book is wonderful in more respects than one; not merely as exhibiting the ways of God, but in another aspect which is very remarkable. It is independent of law, and before the gospel, as we have it, founded on accomplished redemption.

The question here is, how a soul can stand before God. Where is righteousness to be found? There is a great deal of bitterness in the chapter: Job says it is of no use to contend. He had the conviction that God hates iniquity, and loves holiness; while his friends had got on the ground of saying that, as things were with Job, he must be a hypocrite, and must have done something very bad, for God was against him, prosperity being the mark of God's favor. But Job insisted that this is no adequate test. His friends showed that they knew not at all God's nature nor His ways; whereas Job had a sense of what God is in goodness, but did not know how to reconcile it with man. He clung to God: “though he slay me, I will trust in Him.”

The great debate raised is this, how a man can be just before God. Who can have to do with God, and be just? That is the question. If one had only the wretched object of making a character to stand fair before man, he might do it; but we cannot do so with God. How should a man be just with God? Yet there must be righteousness with God. Our ways may appear as fair as possible with man, but not with God. What then is to become of us? Even Job would talk of an he had done; but with it all the question still remained, How can a man be just with God? When the sifting came to Job, there was a great deal too much of self in his heart to enable him to be just with God. To stand, man must have a righteousness before God. It is not the question of being righteous before man. One might find a judge hanging a thief, yet really worse than the thief in God's sight. It is a question of what the heart is in the sight of God. Our character before man is altogether a different thing. A person that lives on having a good character before man never has a conscience before God. He that thus thinks of his own character is always wrong, because he is simply acting to please self and the world, and not God. He is only keeping fair with a system where all is going on without God; and where, if God be let in, it will all go to pieces. Only let the truth into this world, and all is shipwrecked in a moment; for it is altogether false and hollow.

Job did not know what was in his heart till he was put to the test. When God lets the light in, it will not do for the character; it is gone. The effect of all these tests was, not only to bring Job into the light, but to bring out what was inside of his heart. Job was a gracious character, high in station, of great wealth and many possessions. Being graciously received amongst men, he ends with graciously receiving himself. God. must break all this down. Trials come, and then self breaks out, because it was inside. God sent all sorts of outward calamities; and all blessings are withdrawn. Suppose it were to be so with any of us, all outward blessings withdrawn and Satan hedging up our way, what should we see in our own and a hundred hearts? Things would just come out, because of being within. Men are going on in prosperous outward circumstances, smiling and being smiled upon, and thinking themselves delightful characters. But how would it be with them if all were gone?

The question is, How can a man be just before God? God was good to Job; how could Job be just with Him? How can any man be just before God? If God were to begin to look into the motives of all respectable people in the world, what would He find? God must and does see things as they are, because He is light. If God were to look into all my motives, could I bear it? See men contending with God; what. can they do? Even Job contends with God, though knowing it is of no use to do so. But what is in Job is brought out; he does not know himself till then. What is brought out is alas! a sinful and rebellious spirit; it lurked underneath the things he vaunted himself about. There was in him an undetected principle of sin. It is a terrible lesson which one has to learn about one's self; and all must learn it. We have had plenty of opportunities, if honest, of learning ourselves; we may have slurred over a great deal of evil, till God in mercy has squeezed the flesh and brought it out; just as He sent trials till He got into Job's conscience to bring everything out.

God does this with each individual in different ways. He lets it all come out; and when it is so, He says, Well, what do you think of yourself now? Isaiah this the Job you thought so well of?—the delightful character so esteemed by men and by self? What do you think of it now? In various ways God proves that, whatever sin is in a believer, it must be brought into the conscience to show you what you are before God. Are those people who have kept a mass of unjudged evil in their hearts fit for heaven? No! Before they get there, it must all be brought out in the conscience and judged Man is always attempting to excuse himself; but if we justify ourselves, our own mouth shall condemn us. You know that you are not perfect; would you lower the standard of holiness to make your conscience easy? Suppose I look into the world to learn about righteousness, where can I find it? There may be certain acts, where I see the judgment of God executed on the sinner; but it is seldom. The wicked prosper, so long as they keep their character with the world; but it is thorough selfishness. For if a man loses his character, he cannot get on; that gone, he is lost; and he is led by no other motive but selfishness in keeping it. Such is man, and the world.

It is a happy thing to see that when the arrow of God has got deep into the heart, no efforts can draw it out. A man may be keeping up the forms of happiness before men; but the wound is ever rankling in his heart. Here he may strive to be religious with an earthly mind; there it may be trying only to be more miserable; or again he may be running a course of pleasure, because he is unhappy. If I am wicked, I may ask to be let alone. Such are the strugglings of a soul under conviction, and a hard struggle it is; next it is “wash me with snow water.” But this will not do: God's eye sees too far, He sees motives. Snow water is of no use; I am so filthy that my own clothes abhor me. When the light of God comes in, we see what a dreadful thing the heart is; when thus we look at all passing within, what a mass of evil! The effect of a man being born of God is that he sees he has no innocence. In many a person there may be a he has learned that none is there, and this is the Only effect of looking within. What is Job looking at Job to find out? Why, that a man cannot be just with God. It is a terrible lesson: all his snow water is vain; his hands are washed for no purpose. Is that the ground you are going on?

How many say, Do you mean to tell me a man ought not to be righteous?—ought not to have a right rule of life? To be sure he ought; but let me apply the right rule to you and your good works. Oh no, you exclaim; this is too personal a way. It just shows that there is no such thing as a just man. If you wait till the day of judgment, what will it be? You will stand before the just God an unjust man; you will have a righteous God dealing in judgment with an unrighteous man.

Do you ask, what then can I do? how can I be just? What then of Christ? I answer. Ah! this is what man really leaves out altogether. Yet there is Christ before the day of judgment. You gain the place of the just by another man and another work altogether. A Daysman is between you and judgment. But this is the very thing you as a man have not yet got, and you can only get it by the faith of Christ. What Job said he had not got is exactly what we Christians have; a days-man is between us and God. Did Christ ever terrify any poor sinner weeping at His feet? There is no terror to the very chiefest of sinners in the Gospels. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; He was in grace not imputing their offenses. Christ walked up and down this world to show poor sinners He did not despise the most revolted. He is a Day swan between you, the unjust, and a just God. What does He say to you, poor sinners? “Ye must be born again.” This nature of yours will not do for God's kingdom. He cannot accept the flesh. The tree must be made good; a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. You are utterly bad, and must be born again.

Christ lays His hand upon the sinner, having been made sin for him. How could a man as he is be made righteous? Impossible; but Christ could be made sin with God for man, that the believer might be made righteous with God, yea, God's righteousness, in Him. See Him at the well of Samaria, and a guilty soul coming out at such an hour of day, because ashamed to go with other women. He brings divine grace and love as a key to open the heart that wants Him. Now we find in the gospel, not the righteousness of man with God, but God's righteousness for man. For Christ has glorified God about sin, He has suffered once for sins, Just for unjust; and He has done it perfectly. If God receives a sinner as such, it is because Christ has paid the penalty due to my sins, and borne

Chapter 50

Divine Facts and Human Theories

It was well pointed out in a recent number of this periodical (in a fragment bearing honored initials) that “Christianity is a religion of persons and facts.” This can be asserted of no other religious system. These may indeed be linked with the name, or give particulars of the history, of some celebrated individual, be it Confucius, Mahomet, or Gautama Buddha. But it is evident that the name is a mere label to differentiate them from other systems; they would be just as true, or rather as false (I speak of them as systems, and not of any fragments of morality contained in them), if some other name were appended to them, whether mythical as in the case of Buddha, historical as in that of Confucius or of Mahomet. In short, they are a tissue of theories with a residuum of sound moral precepts perhaps, though these, at all events in the Koran, notoriously stolen from the Bible. Here then is the high vantage-ground of Holy Scripture, that it presents realities and not surmises. For it is logical to meet facts with facts, as it is altogether Godlike to meet dismal facts such as sin and sorrow, pain and death, with divine facts, even redemption through a divine Person become Man. I contend therefore that on the comparatively low ground of mere reasonableness Christianity can show gain de cause over merely human systems. For how fatuous to essay to remedy facts by mere theories! It may be urged indeed that philosophy is content to explain them, or at least to make the attempt.

Be it so. Yet surely the facts of human life remain none the less dismal for the explanation. Nay, sin, sorrow, and death are not thus to be conjured. Theorizing about evil has never appreciably lessened the sum total of wickedness in the world; and it were hardly too much to say that the philosophers profited as little as any by their own polished periods, wherein they expatiated on virtue and goodness. Take bereavement again. Eloquent essays have been penned on the duty of stoical recognition of it on the ground of the universality of its sway. More truly sings the poet, “That loss is common would not make my own less bitter—rather more.” Moreover that the explanations are not very satisfactory, even to their framers, is evident. For are they not ever modifying them, as they are contradicted by opposing philosophies? So much then by way of a brief appraisement of the relative value of facts and theories.

In the next place it is clear that, if these blessed facts of revelation are duly attested, the whole question is settled. It is vain for me to reject them because they do not square with my theories, which very likely have no securer foundation than an interested will, if not a perverted mind, and a sinful heart. If the evidence be, as it is, overwhelming, what avails impotent theorizing? Alas, the evidences of Christianity are deemed inadequate only by such as refuse to behold them in what Bacon called a “dry light,” free from the mists of prejudice and dislike. It has been pertinently said by a well-known divine that “the world has never refused its assent to any other facts supported by evidence so cogent as are those of the Gospel History; it has given unhesitating assent to many a strange fact which rests on infinitely less.” This witness is true.

On the other hand, it is indisputable that no mere intellectual accrediting of God's word will save the soul or bring to God, however legitimate it be to urge the cogency of the evidence as leaving

no excuse for unbelief. No doubt conscience must be reached by the action of the Holy Spirit in order to saving acceptance of the truth. The soul, thus illuminated, humbly and gratefully bows to God's word, and grows into an appreciation of its marvelous adaptation to human necessities, of its infinite loving-kindness and its illimitable grandeur. “He that believeth hath the witness in himself” (1 John 5:10). Of this indeed the unbeliever knows nothing, though to the renewed heart, as one has said, “Christ may be as near and real as the man who touches your elbow “—and, I would add, infinitely more so. But the point here pressed is (1) the facts, and (2) the evidence for the facts, which is, as has been said, so exceeding. To sum up the contention of this little paper, without taking the high ground of spiritual evidence to which we are entitled, it is manifest that Christianity is not only a “religion of facts,” but of facts irrefragably authenticated.

One word more as to theories. Such may be excellent, or at least plausible in their own sphere. Take the fashionable philosophy of the day—Evolution. None but a foolish person would deny that there is such a principle in operation. But is it the only one? Can it account for everything? Emphatically not. Yet the majority of the scientists of the age are overmastered by it, like men so immediately under the shadow of a great building that they are unable to grasp its relative position to other buildings. Yet if this attempt at unification were limited to material things, it would be of less consequence. But now we have men like Professor Drummond trying to embrace all things spiritual and temporal in one sweeping generalization. It is plain therefore that the danger of theorizing is not merely in clinging to suppositions instead of to divine facts, but that the force of the facts themselves is weakened by speculating as to their origin. For, applying their favorite idea of development, the Bible is looked at as merely the record of a partial and rather precarious inspiration, and not as the absolute and exclusive word of God. The fatal doctrine is abroad that the Holy Spirit in the church inspires apart from that word, and that He enables men to judge what is and what is not of permanent value. I believe, I do no wrong to the new teachers; but, if not, on what a perilously inclined plane are they moving! “To the law and to the testimony” (Isa. 8:20) has ever been the divine criterion. “It is written” is the constant reminder of the blessed Lord. Truly God is jealous both of adding to and taking from that word.

Finally, to prevent misconception, it is well to say that development, in the sense that God did not reveal everything at once, is of course most true, for it was part of His purpose. Hence the saying of Augustine, “In the O.T the New is latent; in the N. T. the Old is patent.” But development of this kind is not what is meant by the new school.

R. B. JUNR.

Chapter 51

Effectual Power and Imitative Effort

Divine spiritual power is said in scripture to operate in three spheres, viz; (1) in the individual believer's life, (2) in the assemblies of the saints and (3) in the proclamation of the gospel. And in each of these relations there is found counterfeit action to which is may be profitable briefly to refer by way of warning.

First then, it is plainly declared that God gives to believers the Spirit of power (Acts 1:8) in order that even the feeblest may boldly partake of the afflictions of the gospel in testimony for Him (2 Tim. 1:7, 8). And in proof of its divine origin, this power has the peculiar property of becoming more abundant and more easily available in proportion as it is needed and drawn upon, contrary to mere human power which must of necessity lessen the more it is used. This blessed fact the apostle learned from the Lord's words, “My strength is made perfect in weakness “; and on that account he gloried in his infirmities, so that the power of Christ might rest upon him (2 Cor. 12:9). Not only, however, in times of difficulty but constantly, the power of God keeps (1 Peter 1:5), strengthens (Col. 1:11), establishes (Rom. 16:25) and works in us (Eph. 3:20), bringing our self-willed hearts into the obedience of Christ, and, instead of anger, lust and malice, producing love, joy and peace. Indeed it is only as God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13) that we can live acceptably before Him.

But it is by no means impossible to imitate the more manifest fruit of the Spirit; indeed hypocrisy is recognized and most severely denounced throughout the word of God. But however good the counterfeit, it must be empty and vain, being the product of human and not divine power. For instance, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availed to shut and to open the very heavens above. James 5:16-18. But the street prayer, despite its punctiliousness and though accompanied by a disheveled beard and unwashed face, was of no value before God (Matt. 6). Although it counted much among men, it was neither heard in heaven nor answered on earth. For external imitations of love, zeal, beneficence to the poor, and the like, never deceive God Who views the motive in the heart. When the glory of God, however, is before the soul, His power works to the accomplishment of that end. But if self-glorification be the motive, the divine power ceases to act and human energy has to take its place. And often when there is a loss of real power, it is sought to remedy the defect by an increase of outward zealousness and devotion.

As Samson, though shorn by Delilah, went out and shook himself even as at other times; but his strength had departed and would not return with a shake. It is always easier to pretend to power than to confess to failure; though, for all that, the latter is the real source of strength. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” And as it is characteristic of these days to have a form of godliness denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5), may sincerity of motive and humility of heart be cultivated by those who desire to be faithful amid such unreality.

In the second place, the power of God operates among the saints in their corporate capacity. All that believe are united by intimate and indissoluble bonds (1 Cor. 12:11-13); and an indwelling energy is ever acting “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making

increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). Thus at the beginning, the whole body of saints, led on by the power of the Spirit, was filled with the reciprocating desire for the well-being of the members, to such an extent that they sold their possessions and had all things common (Acts 4:32 -37). These beautiful acts of self-denial for one another's benefit were counterfeited by Ananias and Sapphira, who laid down at the apostles' feet a part of the price of their possessions as if it were the whole. This intended deception was immediately judged by the Holy Ghost as abominable in His sight; and they were both cut off as a solemn warning to all such hypocrites.

Again, the assembly from the beginning was empowered to remit sins in a governmental way (Matt. 18:18, John 20:23). This is exemplified in every case of reception at the Lord's table, wherein the saints formally declare their belief that the Lord has forgiven the sins of such and such a one; and, accordingly, they welcome him or her to a place of fellowship among those who have also been forgiven. Compare the case of Saul (Acts 9:26, 27). In like manner, the assembly has the power of retaining sins. Thus if a believer persists in unrepentant sin, the assembly gathered together "with the power of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5) are capable of casting that one without the pale of the church in order that the honor of the Lord's name and the holiness of His table may be maintained, and also that the offender himself may be thereby brought to repentance.

A misuse of this power is seen in 3 John 8, 9. There we find that malicious self-will worked in Diotrephes to such a degree that he, usurping lordship over the flock of God, forbade the assembly to receive the apostle and moreover cast out any who would. This was mere groundless pretense to the power of excommunication. And the history of the church abounds in similar examples; and even our own times are by no means destitute of instances of such unwarranted assumption. And therefore it is by no means needless to point out with what supreme care these powers of exclusion and inclusions, vested in the church, should he exercised so that the action in every case may be of God and not a human sham.

Referring to another phase of the same fact, we find 1 Cor. 12 and 14, show in detail that power has been bestowed in the assembly for worship and ministry. Now man supposes that, unless a plan or system of worship is devised and adhered to, the result will be confusion, On the contrary confusion has a human origin (1 Cor. 14:33) and springs from a want of faith in the Spirit of God to conduct the exercises of the saints in prayer and praise and in dispensing the word of life for the nourishment of His people. Everything, in fact, apart from the divine order is confusion; and examples of this are not far to seek. In place of the unhindered movements of the Spirit of God in supplication or thanksgiving, a petrified liturgy may be seen, as unmerciful to the desires of the people as ever was Procrustes to his victims. And instead of allowing the Spirit to energize the various gifts in the assembly, "dividing to every man severally as He will," the saints themselves in other cases undertake the management of their "minister," prescribing his collegiate course, his special qualifications and his mode of ministry to their own satisfaction, expecting the poor man to be pastor, teacher, evangelist and what-not with equal facility and success. These and all other set ecclesiastical arrangements of a similar nature can only be but bad imitations of the real thing, differing one from another, and all from the truth, and therefore (despite outward appearances) a source of permanent weakness to the saints of God.

In the third place, the power of God is made manifest in the proclamation of the gospel; for it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21). Naturally the Acts, which narrates the founding of the church is very full of this subject. From the sermon of Peter at Pentecost to the preaching of Paul the prisoner at Rome, we have a practical exposition of the words, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). Far and near the gospel went forth, “not in word only but in power” (Acts 4:33; 1 Thess. 1:5). Unlike the lifeless philosophy of the day, it laid hold of men of all ranks and classes, and won them to its embrace. For though philosophy had refined eloquence, a certain knowledge of the human mind and character, a personal devotion to principle and a code of morality beyond its times, it possessed not the power of God like the gospel. And since that power has not yet departed, it is obviously of the very highest importance that it should be allowed to operate in the preaching of Christ's cross.

And like all God's gifts this power seems to be readily accessible. It would appear from the Acts that it is to be had for the asking, always remembering that prayer in scripture implies a thorough sense of inability to act without God. When the apostles had prayed, we are told, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.... And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:31, 33). And we know what mighty results followed.

When the power of the apostles to cast out demons was sought to be imitated by the sons of Sceva, they signally failed. Though there were seven of them altogether, and though they used the name of Jesus as the apostle had done, the demons exposed their deceit, and they had to flee in confusion (Acts 19:13-16). Is it not possible for preachers to-day to fall into the error of these “vagabond Jews” and think that a mere recital, rhetorical or otherwise, of the facts of the gospel are sufficient to save the soul? The failure of such will be a striking parallel to that of the exorcists.

And none will deny how easy it is to allow care for external appearance to minimize, if not obliterate, the conscious need for internal power, or even to suppose, like Jacob who planned first and prayed next, that the perfection of human arrangements is after all the best recommendation for divine aid. It may be well therefore to remind one another that the divine power does not reside either in logical analysis or vivid imagination, in the apt illustration or the striking simile, in the appropriate gesture or the rotund voice, in the novel subject or the odd treatment, in humorous remarks or in graveyard solemnity. For that which commands human attention cannot be said of necessity to command the blessing of heaven. And if God deign to use one or the other of the more worthy characteristics just named in an honored servant of His, it is not that the rest should imitate him in this particular and thereby pretend to that which they do not possess. But as the secret of success lies in the co-operation of divine power, let that be earnestly sought above all things. Let the closet be occupied more than the study. Let the prayer-meeting be looked to as the source of blessing. For it is useless to have everything else if there is no power; it becomes in such a case no more than the affectation of a grand display.

The difference between real power and outward pretense was seen on Mount Carmel ages ago (1 Kings 18). There at the outset the cause of Baal appeared to the best advantage. He had his choice of the sacrifice, the sympathy of the court, and numerous priesthood, zealous for his (i.e. their own) interests. Throughout the day they rent their throats, if not the heavens, with their cries,

“O Baal, hear us.” They madly gesticulated, leaping frantically upon the altar, and cutting themselves with knives till the blood gushed out upon them. But the very exuberance of their efforts showed how ineffectual were their endeavors. There was no reply. The mountain of zeal brought forth not even a mouse-like result. But it was not so with Elijah. He, though alone, was supremely confident in Jehovah. He even took elaborate precautions to exclude every suspicion of human collaboration. The altar and sacrifice were repeatedly drenched with volumes of water. Then, in answer to his prayer, the sacred fire fell from the cloudless sky and consumed everything. God acted humanly speaking, under, the most unfavorable conditions for the glory of His name.

This great lesson of God's sovereignty is repeated in the Epistles to the Corinthians. Paul speaks of his being with them “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling:” yet, as they well knew, his preaching was “with power")1 Cor. 2:3,4). That weakness and power should thus coalesce seems most paradoxical to man but was a most blessed fact to the servant of God. For he could and did rejoice when the excellency of the power was thus seen to be of God and not of man.

However, leaving this subject to be pursued farther to greater advantage, the following points in connection therewith seem of sufficient importance to be briefly summarized:

(1) That since the power of God is the only efficient power in the proclamation of the gospel, this fact deserves most serious consideration; (2) That the glory of God as our object and the sense of humble dependence in the souls of His servants seem connected with the exercise of this power; (3) That a formal routine of gospel work denies the power of God as much as a system of worship; (4) That the imitation of a successful evangelist ascribes the power to him and not to God; (5) That weakness in point of numbers or the like is no bar to the working of this power, provided there is real faith and earnestness. W.J.H.

Chapter 52

Eliab and David

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

1 Sam. 16

In refusing his own thoughts and receiving the thoughts of God a man is blessed. The parents of our race were quick to feel the ruin in which their sin had plunged them, and they became absorbed with their thoughts of a remedy. The abundance of Eden was then of less value to them than a few fig leaves to hide their shame. Had they called on the mountains to cover them and the rocks to hide them, it would have availed them as little as the work of their hands. Then the Lord God, the Creator of all things, stooped to make for them coats of skin and clothed them. Notwithstanding their changed circumstances they had greater cause for joy out of Eden than when in it, for they knew the Lord better; they knew that His thoughts were thoughts of peace and not of evil, while their own were vain.

In the period we are considering, Saul was man's remedy for Israel's shame and sorrow. He was to unite the twelve tribes under one head, to judge them and lead them to victory; and the joy in Israel when he was made king was greater, doubtless, than when the self-invented coverings were completed. Both failed; and shame and grief, trouble and confusion, followed. Nothing of man was left in either case to trust in. A second apron, or a second Saul, would prove as disappointing as the first. It was not the thought of God that they should try. He, Who in His mercy made a covering for Adam, raised up David for Israel.

We enter upon his history in chap. 16., and at once we learn how little in harmony with the mind of God are the natural feelings and thoughts of the best of men. Samuel, after all his ministry as a prophet and a judge, and his experience of men, had yet important lessons to learn. He was still in trouble about Saul. He had left him, but had not in heart done with him. There was that about him that detained his thoughts, and the Lord in his grace would deliver him from all this. He said to Samuel, “How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a, king among his sons.”

Was it not natural for Samuel's thoughts to linger over Saul? Had he not kissed him, honored him, served him, and hoped in him? It was quite natural, but not divine. The Lord had rejected him, and Samuel must yield up his own thoughts and accept those, now clearly revealed, of God. “I have rejected” — “I have provided” —were words of unspeakable mercy to Israel, the way of the Lord's intervention, the only way of their deliverance and blessing. And Samuel accepted them, though he faltered through the fear of man. “How can I go?” he said, “If Saul hear it, he will kill me.” This unhappy interruption has given occasion to cavilers to suggest that, in directing him to take a heifer and to offer sacrifice, there was something like prevarication, a covering of his real errand by an ostensible one. There is not the slightest ground for this unhallowed thought. The Lord was about to instruct His servant as to an indispensable prerequisite to David's anointing when He thus

broke in with his fears. In Saul's case there were no such instructions; but for David all was ordered of God, even to so small a matter as a horn full of oil instead of a vial of oil, “scanty and brittle,” as used for Saul.

The Lord God is now looking beyond Israel. His words to Samuel, “How long wilt thou mourn?” are addressed, we may say, with far deeper meaning to all who are weary and heartsore because of sin. It is no question now of Israel's need, of Saul and of David; but of soul need, of self, and of Christ. We may have done the best for self we could, have served it, honored it, loved it (for who so dear as self?), hoped in it, and yet been disappointed. As Samuel mourned for Saul, we may mourn over ourselves. Is this wrong? Far from it. The deeper our abhorrence of ourselves (Job 42:6), the better. The question is not “Why dost thou mourn? “, but “How long wilt thou mourn?” “I have rejected” — “I have provided” —rejected the flesh and all its efforts and doings, and provided Christ. God looks at the heart, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to tell us what He sees there, its desperate wickedness. But the same Spirit testifies of Jesus—the Lamb of God's providing —taking our place in judgment and giving Himself a ransom for us. We need both. Not only “I have rejected,” but “I have provided.” Christ is provided. Salvation is secured; and when Christ is received by faith, “He is all.” The Spirit of God, unless grieved, occupies us with Him and not with ourselves. Souls under law invariably make “I” predominant; under grace “Not I, but Christ.”

To return to the history. Samuel, as instructed of the Lord, sanctified Jesse and his sons and called them to the sacrifice. “And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

This, we must remember, was the age of the law. The Jewish system, as we read in Heb. 9:13, provided for the purification, ceremonially, of the flesh; so that Samuel (without seeking to know the real state of Jesse and his sons, the state of the heart) could sanctify them according to the ordinances of the law; and he did so. But he was tempted to go beyond this, as are many who take Jewish ground, and rest much on ordinances. If all be fair to the sight, if the conduct be well regulated, and religious duties and services be diligently and devoutly fulfilled, what more will the Lord require? The simple but momentous answer is—the heart. Eliab's heart was separated from God. We see it in the next chapter (ver. 28). He was a scorner, the first to openly resent the operations of divine grace in David—as the flesh, in spite of its religion, always does; yet the prophet, deceived by appearances, thought him suited for the service of the Lord, the chosen ruler over His inheritance. Happily, however, Samuel had been long trained in subjection to the word of God. “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,” was the formative principle of his character from childhood. He at once left Eliab—where the Lord left him— “refused” as also the rest of the sons of Jesse who were brought before him; until David, evidently little thought of or cared for in his own family, and not even called to the sacrifice, was by commandment brought from the sheepfolds into his presence. Then “the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he.”

It is most helpful to souls to have such living examples of dependence and subjection, as here in Samuel, and of electing grace, as in David. Eliab was more attractive to sight than his youngest brother, who was left in the retirement and obscurity which doubtless he preferred. He stood higher in position, and, as the first-born, evidently desired pre-eminence. He was, moreover,

devout and honorable, as is said even of enemies of the truth (Acts 13:50). We cannot question that Satan has pressed such men forward in the church, and they have got into the place of rule and authority, and “have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked.” It would have been so at this time in Israel, had Samuel acted on his own thoughts; and where would the nation have sunken if Eliab had succeeded Saul? God must be sovereign, or ruin, universal and without remedy, would be inevitable. God refuses, and God chooses, and there is no unrighteousness with Him (Rom. 9). This was Samuel's lesson, as it is ours. The purpose of God, according to election, stands; so

“He chose David also his servant,

And took him from the sheepfolds;

From following the ewes great with young he brought him

To feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.” (Psa. 78)

Every incident in the history of this distinguished example of electing grace must be of deep and abiding interest, and the inspired records are ample. We not only have his doings fully and faithfully disclosed, but the secret exercises of his soul are revealed. We know more of him by his Psalms than from the narrative of his life. We learn from the latter how he served his generation by the will of God, but from the former how he has served all succeeding generations by his inspired delineations of the ways of God, of the sufferings of Christ, and of the inward experiences of the righteous remnant in Israel, of whom he was a conspicuous example. The most afflicted have received consolation through him, the most despairing, hope, and the most timid, courage. As “a companion of all them that fear the Lord and keep His precepts,” he is unequaled among the saints of old.

Chapter 53

Drummond on Evolution

(SECOND LETTER.) DEAR MR. EDITOR,

Having shown that evolution after all is only a “working hypothesis” which remains to be proved, I desire in a few words to point out to your readers that evolution as expounded by Professor Drummond and others, by impugning the power and wisdom of God, tends to destroy faith in Him and His word.

It is intended to refer to two points only, but these are of the highest importance, viz.—that evolution denies (1) the Biblical account of creation (2) the Biblical doctrine of sin.

In the first place, then, we are taught in the Scripture that God, after the chaotic state described in Gen. 1:2, in six days made the world fit for the habitation of man, creating him and placing him at its head as His vicegerent. And we are specially told that the same power, that in the beginning called all things into being when they were not, made “every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew,” and that, too, without the aid of rain and tillage; “for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground” (Gen. 2:5).

But this account is a flat contradiction of the theory of evolution. The passage quoted makes it clear that vegetation was created in a state of perfection and maturity; and the same appears from Gen. 1:11: “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so.” Thus the tree preceded the seed, and not vice versa; but evolution insists upon the universal law of progression from “low to high,” from immaturity to maturity, from the structureless cell to the perfect organization. So that we are called to accept either an unproved theory or an inspired history; and in this the believer has no choice.

In the Biblical account of creation we learn that the being of man, as indeed everything organic and inorganic sprang into life and perfection and beauty at the divine word. And we are thus given to see that God is not One such as ourselves, but One Who could and did act at the beginning in a way, beyond human analogy, without the aid or use of “natural laws” or intermediate causes of any kind. But evolution seeks to overthrow this conception, giving us the picture of a Being, called Nature, struggling through “incalculable ages” to make a man. Just as the mighty steam engines of the present day have been gradually evolved, by means of a long series of experiments which began with a boy playing with his mother's tea-kettle; so man, the head and crown of the animal kingdom, was similarly evolved from a formless cell, millions of which could find accommodation in a raindrop. Nature, the God of evolution, was apparently unable to see the end from the beginning, had no ideal plan before it, was hindered by its own laws, learned wisdom (with uncommon slowness) by its mistakes and failures, and finally, after astonishing perseverance, with a supreme effort produced the genus homo, one of whom is now able to scientifically review the methods of his Maker and explain them with much assurance to a delighted American audience.

Thus do the blind leaders of the blind fall into the ditch for who does not see that this “Nature” is but a “graven image,” the fruit of men's vain imaginings and utterly opposed to the God of the Bible? It is a man-made idol as much as Baal or Astarte, and, whatever its pretensions, is no more from heaven than was Diana of the Ephesians. Let believers beware of this studied attempt to supplant the living God by a plastic deity which is forced to accommodate itself to every scientific guess. It is not now said for the first time that the Darwinian theory turns the Creator out of doors and leaves not the smallest room for such a Being. This is bold work for an unfledged hypothesis that was hatched in a dream, and has no more basis in real science than in scripture.

It is plain the latter utterly refuses to countenance the fairy tale of evolution, that Adam was an Anthropoid ape, who managed to cross the great gulf now fixed between apehood and manhood. The Holy Ghost records the creation of man in these words, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). It is useless to object that this is only a metaphorical way of describing the ascent of the human species through “incalculable ages” from the alleged primal monad. For the very opposite is confirmed by Gen. 3:19: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Nothing is clearer than that Adam was not simply a lower organism raised to a higher form, but a subject of special creatorial power. For it is stated to be one of the sad results of his fall that his body must return to the dust of the ground from whence he was taken. He was therefore a true creation, and moreover created for life, and not for death; seeing that death came in by sin.

Moreover, the position which man was created to occupy in regard to the brutes is irreconcilable with the evolutionary theory. Thus, having received the inbreathing of the Almighty, he was thereby fitted to represent God here below, and to have rule and dominion over the works of His hands. In consonance with this, man appeared the sixth day. But the Darwinian theory will have it that he was unknown ages coming. So that for immense periods the earth was without any fitted for the place of sovereignty that man even now occupies. The truth is that man was specially prepared for his post by special intervention of the Most High.

It is usual for scientists to seek to throw a stigma on the teaching of Gen 1. and 2. by high-sounding phrases intended to throw people off the track. Listen to Professor Geddes:— “Evolution supersedes those cruder anthropomorphism of arbitrary creation and of mechanical contrivance which present the universe as an aggregate of finished products." But long words prove no arguments, and here like the discolorations of the cuttlefish only serve to cover a retreat. Anthropomorphism literally means the imputation of the form of man to God; though it is sometimes applied to scriptural expressions such as “And God said,” &c. But what the skeptic insinuates is that such terms are less illustrative of the majesty and power of God than the formulas of evolution. In other words, for man to be created in immediate response to the words “Let us make man in our image” is too crudely anthropomorphic, too human a way of doing it. We submit, however, that it is much more after the manner of men, to represent the Deity experimenting on various forms of life from the amæba upwards, “trusting to the chapter of accidents for variation,” only to arrive at the ideal after untold millenaries. This smacks more of human weakness than of infinite power. We might learn from the Gospels that, when the deed followed the word without the medium of ordinary causes, it was not a “crude anthropomorphism” but a Divine act. This expression therefore, as well as others in the above quotation, is loose,

inaccurate, and misleading; yet it is a fair sample of the shifts evolutionists resort to in order to obtain a hearing for their theory of creation.

But, in the second place, evolution is not less opposed to the Biblical account of the entrance of sin into the world. The Holy Spirit distinctly says “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “By one man's disobedience the mass were constituted sinners” (Rom. 5:12-19). So that the rebellion of Adam in the garden of Eden, against the authority of God, is stated to be the mark of time and circumstances when sin made its appearance. Evolution however denies this in Coto, saying we inherit our evil habits from the brute beast. Sin, we are told, is a “vestigial structure” —in other words, “the residuum of the animal in man.” The “mal-formations of the moral nature” are simply remnants of the lower forms of organic life through which man has passed. “If man inherits the gill-slits of a shark” (which, by-the-bye, is an assumption without the shadow of a proof), “is it unscientific to expect that he will inherit the spirit of a shark “—&c., &c.? We answer that the analogy is false, and therefore it is most unscientific to expect anything of the sort. Supposing a man had the “gill-slits of a shark” (which we repeat has to be proved), they would be atrophied and useless; but if he had the spirit of a shark, it could only be known by the performance of its functions. We therefore deny that any real analogy can be maintained between an effete physical organ and a ferocious propensity only apparent in a high state of development. With a little exercise of the imagination we might find scores of such arguments, all equally worthless. For instance, is not the fondness of children for lollipops indicative that bears or hummingbirds were among their ancestors? Is not their inclination to play in the gutter and make mud-pies, strong proof that they are directly descended from ducks or eels? Is not the prevalence of the game of hide-and-seek in the nursery, conclusive evidence that they are not far removed from squirrels and monkeys? In short, the whole argument might be treated as highly ridiculous, were it not such a serious design to attenuate, if not to destroy, the responsibility of man and the heinousness of sin.

To show, however, that the extent to which this baseless theorizing is carried is not mis-represented, the following extract, professing to account for the origin of the mental and moral emotions, is given. “In creatures very far down the scale of life, the Annelids, Mr. Romanes distinguished what appeared to him to be one of the earliest emotions—Fear. Somewhat higher up, among the Insects, he met with the social feelings, as well as Industry, Pugnacity, and Curiosity. Jealousy seems to have been born into the world with Fishes; Sympathy with Birds. The Carnivora are responsible for Cruelty, Hate, and Grief; the Anthropoid Apes for Remorse, Shame, the Sense of the Ludicrous, and Deceit.” “These emotions, appear in the mind of the growing child in the same order as they appear on the animal scale.” We add to this Professor Drummond's confession in the former part of this lecture that “Evolution of Mind is an open question;” which is itself a sufficient warning to leave this quagmire of uncertain and unfounded speculation for the solid facts of revelation.

“In Thy light shall we see light “; but this theory is a return to pagan darkness. For after all, evolution is but a modification of the heathen doctrine of metempsychosis. What Pythagoras and others taught of the individual soul migrating to and from the brutes, Haeckel, Darwin, &c., taught, and Drummond echoes, of the race.

The lecturer on the “Ascent of Man” spoke of our derivation from lower organisms as an “unspeakable exaltation “ and sought with much fervor to bring his audience to the same mind. But

we are not so enamored of the “gospel of dirt.” The poet's notion was much more respectable, though equally unfounded in the main, who said “Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting..... Trailing clouds of glory do we come From God, Who is our home.”

In reference, however, to this second point also, we must choose between the word of God and the word of evolutionists. According to God, sin is lawlessness, a life without Him in the world, a mind at enmity with Him; but according to so-called science, sin is merely the exercise of undesirable propensities, inherited from ancient animal ancestors, letting loose the blood of the tiger in family life, as Professor Drummond puts it. The Bible says, God made man upright, and that sin is the result of his fall from the upright state he had at the beginning; but evolution declares sin to be the remnant of an imperfect and undeveloped state from which he has now advanced and trusts that these “vestigial structures” will entirely disappear as he makes further progress. Scripture denounces sin as being committed against God; but evolution considers sin as that which opposes the social well-being of mankind. And we may be sure that whatever makes light of sin, as the theory in question does, can never be of God Who gave none other than His own Son to be His Lamb, the Remover of the sin of the world.

In conclusion, the sum of what these two letters have sought to show concerning evolution is:—

1.—That it is not founded upon facts, but is a theory unprovided with a proof.

2.—It denies the Biblical account of creation.

3. Denies the Scriptural revelation concerning the origin and nature of sin.

And we believe, in spite of the religious professions of its champion, that this development theory is dishonoring to God and defiling to the conscience. We pray, therefore, that the children of God may be preserved from its contaminations.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

“YOD.”

Chapter 54

To an Exercised Soul

It gave me pleasure to find real interest in the welfare of your soul. From your own statements there had evidently been some change wrought in you: the fear of God, with reverence, if not love, for God's own word; desire to know the Lord Jesus, and salvation through His finished work, &c. I gather that you do not know, that your sins are forgiven, so as to take the place of the “blessed man” of Psa. 32:1, 2. In other words, you do not know the way of peace, so as to have nothing unsettled between your soul and a holy God, against Whom you have sinned. Whether you think this happy state either unattainable or only to be known after a deeper experience, I am unable to say. Through mercy I am able, on the authority of His word Who cannot lie, to declare to every believer in Christ and His work present absolute forgiveness of sins. I trust you are in earnest about the truth and will not stop short of its known possession for your soul. “For this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

We have to remember that the gospel of God has, so to speak, two sides to it, one about the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone perfect Savior, and the other about ourselves. We need for heaven the new life, to be had only in and through Christ. One must be born anew in order to see or enter the kingdom of God. You are conscious of your need in both respects, not forgiveness only but divine nature. Therefore do not (as many thousands) rest in any uncertainty with activity of good intentions and desires, but only in a right start with God, as a lost sinner to be saved. Have the question of your sins settled in His sight by His word; and then serve Him Who saved you, not allowing anything you do to hide in the smallest degree the work of Christ, or to take its place.

The first all-important point for an awakened soul, desiring peace with God, is to learn that our sins and the righteous judgment of sin have been not only raised but forever settled by Himself. The cross of Christ solemnly shows this: then God and Jesus were alone, and the judgment due to sin fell upon the spotless person of Jesus. The One Who knew no sin was made sin, enduring the terrible consequences when He cried from the depths, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Then was the mighty sacrifice offered. “It is finished,” said He. The blessed proof is, that He Who suffered for sins is not only raised from the dead, but, as Hebrews declares, forever set down at God's right hand. Hence it will never be in question again. The gospel goes forth founded upon this “one offering” of which the Holy Spirit witnesses to us. It is for you to believe in the work already done in order to peace with God.

When this is not understood, how often are souls exhorted to make their peace with God! The truth is that peace has been made by Christ; and God has been proclaiming it in the gospel for more than 1800 years. The poor sinner has only to believe. What good news to the anxious soul desiring it! I trust, dear friend, you may learn and receive it for yourself on the sure testimony of God's unerring word. Turning to Col. 1, you read that the One in Whom all fullness dwelt made peace through the blood of His cross. The fact is once and forever established, both as to the person and the means by which it was done. Nothing but the blood of Christ, the Son of God's love, could make peace with a holy and righteous God. But this having been done and accepted,

God Himself proclaims it, and surely would have you to receive it. “Preaching peace by Jesus Christ” said the apostle Peter in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:36). “For God is no respecter of persons “; and “whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

Thus it is written for the simplest believer. “Whosoever” leaves no question on the part of God that you are included if you believe. Solid peace is founded upon the precious blood of Christ dead and risen. Believing on Him is the revealed means of possessing it. God freely justifies. “It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?” The very righteousness of God is manifested thereby. Blessed reality, to be justified freely from all things by Him, as every believer is! May you believe what is written and rest in the peace Christ Himself made then! Peace with God will be yours assuredly. G. G.

Chapter 55

Exodus 6

Exodus 6 is the beginning of God's proper relationship with Israel. He gives Himself a covenant name What goes before is preparatory, as in ch. 3. a personal name (Eh' yeh) not repeated here, where He gives the name (Jehovah) by which He was to be known by them. It is in no way said that Elohim had not that name, His nature and character. Yet He did not appear to the fathers by it, but as Shaddai. He was making Himself known to the children of Israel by His name Jehovah. J. N. D.

Chapter 56

Facts and Persons: Not a Myth

I look upon it as a divine mercy, and great goodness, that Christianity is a religion of persons and facts. It is more real, more simple, more divine, deeper yet more accessible. God became a man! I have not ideas in man's mind about Him, but Himself. It is not what love is in my mind, but God Who is love. So even atonement: it is not a questionable reconciliation in abstract possibilities, but expiation wrought by love. Yet the principles, in relationship with God by these facts, are so deep and immense that they absorb, especially when He is not really known, the facts in which they are verified. J. N. D.

By J.N.D.

Figurative Language of the Bible

It is not pleasant but a duty to question and even condemn a few of the author's positions. There is always a danger of exaggeration when a point is made of style (and indeed of other things less weighty), and an unconscious effort to justify a new work by multiplying technical manner and distinctions. It is true that Mr. N. spares his readers J. Holmes' 252 figures! and Mr. G. W. Harvey's systematic discussion, giving them a quantity of chatty remarks. But it is too much to say that no branch of Bible study is more important, and none so utterly neglected. Figures belong to rhetoric for the most part rather than to grammar, but far more generally common sense; for Christians a spiritual mind is the best guide. The general outline is set out in any ordinarily full grammar. For scripture, Glassius' Phil. Sacra is well known, whence Keach drew largely for English readers; also W. Jones, J. Brown, T. Home, and others. Dr. Alex. Carson in our day wrote still more ably and with less prolixity; as also Drs. T. Leland, Blair, Campbell, Lord Kames, and many more since Quintilian.

No doubt the author meant a short, cheap popular treatment. But he greatly over-estimates the value of knowing eastern habits. The true wonder of the Bible is its superiority to age, clime, or race in the main; and there is a real danger, especially in our day, of losing the kernel in excessive attention to the husk of local and temporal surroundings, and the like. Even we, English, talk figures incalculably more than most perceive; and though it might furnish matter for ingenious lectures and interesting papers to analyze this character of every day intercourse, it would be little better than pastime and might readily turn away the mind from the really important. Origen was a greater scholar than any man who ever wrote on figures of speech, and could scientifically explain the simile, metaphor, and every other figure beyond most; yet he fell a victim to a glaring misconception of our Lord's words in Matt. 19:12, and wasted a life of study in windy allegories. It was assuredly no lack of learning that exposed him so greatly to misapply the third case, nor lack of zeal to act at all cost on the supposed meaning.

Now the temptation to which Mr. N. has yielded is not anything corporeal as befell the Alexandrian divine, but divorcing scripture from its spirit. He must be singularly preoccupied to set the ascension of Christ to heaven, and His having a risen body, against the reality of His presence in the midst of those gathered to His name The presence of the Holy Spirit sent here below is an absolute truth; that of Christ, whatever the mode which we pretend not to define, is contingent on gathering to His name collectively, and on obedience individually (Matt. 18, John 14). To confound truths so distinct is to lose one of them, perhaps both.

So his treatment of Hendiadys is precarious. “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory” is an ecclesiastical gloss, and not scripture. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” he emasculates into “the true and living way.” Nor does Peter mean apostolic ministry in Acts 1:25, but service generally and apostleship in particular; hence he speaks of himself as an “elder” as well as “apostle.” So Paul's “hope and resurrection” is curtailed into “the hope of the resurrection,” though it signifies far more. Nor does “kingdom and glory” import “glorious kingdom,” any more

than “life and incorruptibility” “incorruptible life.” And “a kingdom and priests,” is debased to “a great priestly kingdom,” which is refuted by Rev. 1:5; 20:6. Still more serious is the misapplication of John 3:5; 4:24.

But passing over lesser matters, John 3:13 is an instance of the daring to which the hobby exposes the author. It is of the essence of the truth of Christ's person that “■ ■ν here as in John 1:18 means “who is,” not “who was;” and so the Revised no less than the Authorized Version. So even Winer and other Germans, poor as they are, and all men taught of God. It is true that the present participle, combined with a past tense or qualified by an adverb of time, may have an imperfect force, as in i. 29, v.13, &c. But here nothing enters to weaken its simple, special, and emphatic force. The words are only difficult to unbelief. The late Dean Alford was bold enough in free thought; yet he expressly affirms that in both texts the present participle is used to signify essential truth without any particular regard to time. The figurative truth here as elsewhere; and here it is fundamental. A little knowledge is indeed a dangerous thing. To read this “Who was” may be natural perhaps, but is certainly neither spiritual nor accurate, but downright, though of course ignorant, perversion from an inveterate hunt after figurative language.

Just before, the beautiful truth of Luke 2:14 is lost through similar vagueness. It is not “toward man, goodwill,” but “goodwill (or rather good pleasure) in men,” as evinced by the incarnation of the Son of God. It would appear that it is borrowed from the American Mac Beth, who published not many years ago a treatise on Figurative Language. But this should have given the author time to weigh. Again, what can be feebler or more nugatory than the remarks on Acts 15, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us”? How does it help the reader's better understanding to remark that “the words doubtless are a strong form of the figure of Omission” etc..? I should have thought that no reverent mind could have lowered it to “us [as a church and people acting under His influence and teaching to whom He has revealed it],” but must recall the sense they had of the Spirit's action, as well as the weight of the apostles present, however they might associate not only the elders but the assembly with the decision to which the words, of the prophets had given an inspired basis.

The rest of the work calls for no notice in particular, save the illusion of counting what is really trivial and often erroneous to be a “vast and important subject.” No intelligent reader will be surprised to see misapprehension of prophecy here, and so inadequate a notion as “a princely people!” in Dan. 9:26, in the Romans, as almost all admit. He is just as far from the truth as the writer who makes “a coming prince” to be Antichrist. It is really the chief of the Roman empire in its last form (not the willful king, the Antichrist that reigns in Jerusalem over the land, Dan. 11:36-39), who confirms covenant for a week, or seven years, with the many or mass of apostate Jews. These are the personages symbolically presented in Rev. 13 as the two beasts rising out of the sea and out of the earth, the beast and the false prophet of Rev. 19. The close of Dan. 11 shows us the king of the north, the Assyrian of many prophets, whose course is antagonistic to both the Latin Beast and the Jewish Antichrist; but he too, as we see in Dan. 11:40-45, shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

Chapter 58

For or in Remembrance of Me

FOR (OR IN) REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

Of the three evangelists who narrate the institution of the supper of the Lord, only one records the words of the departing Redeemer with regard to the object of that feast. Luke it is, who, after writing “This is My body which is given for you “, adds the further words “This do in remembrance of Me “, thereby imparting a holy and solemn character to that which otherwise might possibly appear so trivial in their eyes as to be despised.

That this phrase should only appear in the third Gospel is but one of the numerous illustrations of the symmetry and true “harmony” of these inspired memoirs of our Lord. For in Luke His divine humanity is portrayed in all its matchless fullness and perfection, unexampled as it was and is in the eyes of God as well as men. In this Gospel only, therefore, the Spirit of God with unerring consistency gives the sentence before us. Amid the most affecting circumstances, He is shown as the lowly Man, Jesus of Nazareth, appealing to the love and loyalty of those who had continued with Him in His temptations. As the lonely and despised One, as the One Who had wept over the blind forgetfulness and ignorance of Jerusalem, the favored city of God, He expresses this desire to His own, “This do in remembrance of Me.” May not we who know Him ask ourselves, Which of us could resist such an appeal from such an One?

Yet it should be remembered that not only as the humbled Man, but also as the glorified Man, not only as Jesus, but also as the Lord Jesus Christ, He has so spoken. For at a later day, the apostle of the Gentiles received from Him when on high that they were to drink the cup as well as eat the loaf in remembrance of Him (1 Cor. 11:23-25). And if we may infer that in Luke the Lord's words take the form of an appeal, way we not say that in Paul we have the same words in the form of a command? For in the one, He seems to claim the love and in the other the heart-obedience of His saints. In the one He speaks as being in their midst and in the other as being exalted above the heavens. Each scripture is perfect in its connection, and we shall profit much as we ponder both the love of His heart as He sat at the table and the authority of His word as given from the glory above.

It is however also instructive to remark that this remembrance is indissolubly connected with eating the bread and drinking the cup. “This do for the recalling Me to mind” (ε■ς τ■ν ■μ■ν ■ν■μνησιν) indicates plainly enough that the “remembrance” is the result of the “doing,” and implies that it. cannot arise apart from the “doing.” Not that saints in private cannot or do not remember the Lord. This they may do continually. His Person surely should never be absent from the thoughts of His own. We are even exhorted to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus for practical everyday purposes (2 Cor. 4:10). But while this is so true, it ought not to be forgotten that no child of God can privately, as an individual, eat the bread and drink the cup for a remembrance. It is essentially an act in the assembly, the very loaf setting forth the unity of the body of Christ, as the eating of it sets forth fellowship (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). And the Lord has foreseen all difficulties with regard to this and graciously provided that its character should not be

lost in a day of confusion and failure like the present. He has been pleased to guarantee His own presence, which is sufficient, even among two or three gathered to His Name (Matt. 18:20). Thus the simple words which are engaging our attention closely guard against all transcendental notions of remembering Him without the bread and the wine as well as against that culpable indifference which pleads an ability (though it be never put in practice) to remember the Lord as well in the closet and in solitude as at His table and among those who call on Him out of a pure heart. The words “This do” are a sufficient rebuke to both the one and the other. Willful negligence and virtual disobedience, though they be cloaked in a garb of superior piety, are altogether repugnant to the simple realities of scripture.

This remembrance also bears an aspect towards the world. For in establishing the supper the Lord did more than afford simple means which were to be mightily used by the Spirit to concentrate the thoughts of His people upon His own blessed Person in especial relation to His work of redemption. The feast of remembrance is to announce His death till He come. So that while partaking of the emblems is full of the most sacred significance to the saints, it is moreover a public memorial to all if they will but see and believe. For thus has the Lord reared in the world a monument to His memory more imperishable than marble. His cenotaph is in the loving hearts of His obedient saints who eat bread and drink wine for a remembrance of Him. Just as the sacrifices of old, besides being types of Christ, were remembrances of un-expiated sins (Heb. 10:3), so the Lord's Supper, besides its sacred import to believers, is a solemn though silent testimony to the world of the Lord's death, of which it is guilty, and for which it must answer.

W. J. H.

Chapter 59

Forgiveness of Sins

All forgiveness is founded on the blessed work of the Lord Jesus. Without the work of Christ, a holy and just God (yea, a God of truth) must have held man to be what he really is—a guilty sinner, who must be judged according to his works. And we know beforehand from His word that there is none righteous, no, not one. The love of God, great as it is (so great that for us He did not spare His Son), could not say that sin was not sin, or that He was indifferent to good and evil; for He is not, and in His own nature cannot be. And if He judges, and makes man himself answer for what he has done, He must judge him righteously.

Besides, we are alienated from God in heart and mind, and so really lost already. It is not now meant finally, nor that we cannot be saved out of that state; but if we can, it is because Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. If we come unrepentant and unbelieving before the judgment-seat of Christ, judgment will be according to our works, and therefore condemnation; for all have sinned.

But God is love: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God in grace has thus anticipated that day of judgment. The same blessed Son of God, (who will as Son of man sit on the judgment-seat, and judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom), has already, before that day, come as a Savior, and died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and “he that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned.” The statement is plain enough and solemn enough without adding anything to it. They die in their sins, and are doubly guilty; they have not only sinned against His holiness, but despised His mercy.

Do we now really in heart believe in the Son of God, with a faith wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and a conscience which feels the need of grace and forgiveness? For that is the great point—a faith which has wrought true repentance, that godly sorrow and sense that we have deserved to be condemned which make Christ and His grace and His work precious to us. We may have been all brought up to believe in the blessed Lord Jesus as a divine history; but that is very different from believing in Him as meeting the need of an awakened conscience.

But supposing I have this true faith in Him, then it behooves me to be able to say what He has done for me. “He died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3); “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24); “He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

So that here is our question: Supposing I have true heart-faith in Him (Christ having thus died for me), what is the efficacy of His death for me? I have a perfect and eternal forgiveness and redemption according to the glory of God. Those who neglect this great salvation are doubly guilty; but what is the value of His work for those who have really a part in it? “Be it known unto you, therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the

law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39). "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7); "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 4:25; 5:1, 2). "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). "Whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). And its effect is complete— "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (ver. 14).

But is this valid forever?

We have seen that it is eternal redemption, that it purges the conscience from dead works, and gives peace with God; but scripture is more explicit. Christ is always at the right hand of God, and has presented His precious blood to God. It is always before His eyes; but scripture is very distinct on this point— "But This [Man], having offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down at the right hand of God." He is not, like the Jewish priests, standing continually at the altar, offering sacrifices which could never take away sins (Heb. 10:11); He sat down because, for redemption and forgiveness, He had done already the whole work; for (Heb. 10:14) "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." He sits there at the right hand of God till His enemies be made His footstool; then He will come to deal with them in judgment. But all is done for His friends (that is, true believers); and He has sat down, having finished the work, so that those who come by it have no more conscience of sins (ver. 2). "Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah will impute no sin." "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom. 4:7, 8). And is it only some of them? No, that were useless. The Holy Ghost testifies of it clearly in the same Heb. 10 from which we have quoted, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (ver 17). And so plainly does He put it that He even declares "where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (ver. 18). So that, if all were not completely pardoned and effaced, there could be no remedy.

The more we consider it, the plainer it is. Christ is the Judge. But if now I can say by faith, He loves me and washed me from my sins in His own blood, how can He, when I stand before the judgment-seat, impute to me the sins He Himself bore away? He would be denying the value of His own work, which is impossible.

Again, if we are believers, we are then raised in glory (1 Cor. 15:43); nay, Christ shall Himself come to present us to Himself, "Who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory." If Christ comes to fetch us, and puts us in glory, where is the place for raising any question then about our sins? And this is clearly said in John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment], but is passed from death unto life."

Is it because God is indifferent to the sins? Impossible! But, He having given His Son for us, Christ has borne them already, and cannot impute them to those who believe in Him and in the Father Who sent Him in love. We know that the Lord says, "If ye do not believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). But if we believe in Him, we have the forgiveness of our sins (not of

some, to be condemned for the rest). “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” because “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” And we possess the blessedness of this word, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom Jehovah will not impute sin.” Hence repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in Jesus' name. The Christian has a new life from Christ, and this will show itself in his walk. He is born of the Spirit; and the faith in Christ by which he has forgiveness makes Christ everything to him, (as it is written in Col. 3, “Christ is all, and in all” —the “everything,” that is, of our hearts); and He is our life. But I now confine myself to redemption and forgiveness.

There is, then, a forgiveness identified with redemption and the abiding value of Christ's blood, so that our sins are none of them imputed to us: God remembers them no more. We have part in this through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the door by which we enter is repentance toward God, which faith in the word of Christ always produces. We have our eyes opened, we are turned from darkness to light—from the power of Satan unto God, and we receive remission of our sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus (Acts 26:18).

Under the Old Testament, among the Jews this full forgiveness was not known. They got a kind of absolution for each sin they committed; they were shut out from entering into the holiest by the veil, which hung before the place where God revealed Himself. Thus in Heb. 9 it is written, “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” But, when the real work (of which all these things were figures) was accomplished in the death of the Savior, we learn that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51). And we are exhorted (Heb. 10:19), in virtue of the work of Christ and the remission of our sins (ver. 17,18), having “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh,” to “draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” That one work done once for all, never to be repeated and effectual to give peace to the conscience, is the ground on which we have eternal redemption, and full forgiveness (so that God remembers our sins and iniquities no more); an entrance into God's presence; and a part in the everlasting inheritance of God's children in glory.

This great difference in the state of believers before and after the death of the blessed Lord is celebrated by Zacharias at the birth of John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner:— “To give knowledge of salvation unto His people, by the remission of their sins” (Luke 1:77). So the repentant thief went straight into paradise with Christ; so to the repentant woman in the city that was a sinner the Lord said, not only, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” but “Thy faith hath saved thee” (Luke 7:48-50).

There is then for faith a present but eternal forgiveness, founded on Christ's bearing our sins in a work which can never be repeated, its value never diminished, nor anything added to it. God has proved His value of its worth in setting Him Who did it at His right hand in the glory, where He was with Him as Son of God before the world was. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” This cannot be repeated. “Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet to offer Himself often... otherwise He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the consummation of the ages He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of

Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation." Those whose sins were put away the first time He comes to take into glory; as to them He will have no more to do with sin, which He was made for them the first time. J. N. D.

Chapter 60

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:4

A manifestly new section begins with chap. 2:4, though with unmistakable reference to the chapter before, which it summarizes as an introduction to a fresh point of view that looks on to the end of chapter 3. The opening words here and elsewhere are supposed by some who deny neither Moses nor inspiration to indicate that Moses thus interwove separate documents preserved by the heads of the Semitic race, and that this fact is one of the strongest internal testimonies that we have to do with genuine historical records. No believer need deny the principle if God's inspiration be truly maintained. Moses truly have been inspired to incorporate ancient records where authentic, as Luke gives us the confidential letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix. Only it is hard if not quite impossible to conciliate some eleven such documents with the perfect unity that pervades Genesis, especially as a divinely ordered type, i.e., prophetically of the future. But the grand truth overlooked is the reality of divine inspiration and its incomparable character and depth. Documents or not, this is certain. And what document could there have been of the creation? God alone could have given that. Take also this first of “the generations “; how could even Adam have furnished anything of the sort?

“These [are; the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah Elohim made earth and heavens.”

The change in the divine designation harmonizes with no less change in the subject matter and calls out phraseology in keeping with it. It is no longer as in chap. 1. “God” (Elohim) only, but “the LORD God” (Jehovah Elohim). We may see, not only here but everywhere, how wise is the design, and how worthy of God; for the instrument employed may not even have understood the full force of what was given him to write. On the one hand difference there is, though not discrepancy; on the other, call for the exercise of faith and spiritual intelligence. “By faith we understand.”

Of all attempts to solve the questions that arise, none so weak or crude as the fancy of distinct remains of independent authors here put together, not to say slashed or mangled. There is no account of creation but that which we have already had. Now we are told of the relations established, which bring in the specific title of divine government, Jehovah, and identify it with Him Who created all. Can aught be conceived more in place, right, and seasonable? It is impossible fairly to call the new section Jehovistic; for throughout Jehovah never occurs without Elohim, though on a few exceptional occasions easily explicable Elohim occurs without Jehovah. How in the least degree does a different writer account for the usage? It is at best a child's guess and can only mislead. See its absurdity in 1 Kings 18:36, 39, and in Jonah 1; 3; 4, &c.

Jean Astruc in 1753 seems to have first suggested the chimera in his “Conjectures sur les memoires originaux, dont ii parait que Moise s'etait servi pour composer le livre de Genese,” which appeared simultaneously at Brussels and Paris. He was a medical man of strong memory, wide reading, and mental activity, but totally devoid of depth or large views even in the science of his own profession. Yet a supposition equally shallow and easy of refutation, inadequate to meet the

facts of the case, and barren of a spiritual thought or a godly feeling, drew after it not a few ingenious and learned Germans with their British and American admirers. For this but one circumstance accounts—the skeptical spirit that preceded and accompanied the last century of revolution. Astruc conceived a double set of longer documents by authors respectively Elohistic and Jehovistic, with nine or ten others of lesser extent, all independent. Even to give unity to such various materials was no small task. This some would assign to Moses: others are keen to bring down the unknown “redactor” or digester as late as is plausible by specious arguments. Of truth and divine design these daring speculators have no notion: God is in none of their thoughts. It is a trifle in their eyes to give the lie virtually to the Lord or any of the Twelve or Paul the apostle. To this their “higher criticism” speedily drags them down. It is a snare of the enemy.

As for scriptural usage, the facts are simple, and the principle plain. Elohim expresses the divine Being, the Originator of all other beings, with fullness of power displayed in wisdom and goodness, and so in contrast with man and creature weakness. Hence “God” is used generally where no specific manifestation is intended, or required; and the term is applicable to judges who represent God in delegated authority on earth, and to angels that execute His will from heaven, or even to the “gods many,” as the apostle speaks of heathen worship. The singular form, Eloah, occurs not only in Deut. 32:15, 17, &c., but with frequency from Job 3 to chap. 40, yet rarely in the Psalms and in the Prophets. Still more common is the kindred El, the Mighty One, not only in the Pentateuch (save Leviticus most appropriately) but in Job pre-eminently, as well as in the Psalms and the Prophets, often qualified and even compounded.

Jehovah is His personal name, “The Name,” and this in relationship with man on earth, especially with His people; the Self-existent and Eternal, always the proper name of the true God for those on earth, and in due time that by which He made Himself known as the covenant God of Israel, in Whose presence they were to walk—not El Shaddai, the Almighty God of their fathers, but the LORD God of their sons, His people. Ehyeh (I AM, Ex. 3:14) and Jah (Lord, Ex. 15:2; 17; 10, &c.) are akin to Jehovah, but each used distinctively where a different author is untenable and sheer delusion. Neither is quite Jehovah God, the Governor of man; but as Jah is the absolutely existing One, so Ehyeh expresses His existence as the Everlasting Now consciously felt and asserted, therefore subjective, as Jah is objective.

Hence, in describing creation from first to last as in Gen. 1-2:3, God (Elohim) is the sole suited designation, as giving existence to everything that is, heavens, earth, and all in them. With no less propriety Jehovah Elohim at once appears when He establishes moral relations here below. Hence in chap. ii. alone man is seen (not simply as a creature, whatever his singular honor as head and lord of all on earth) but formed in immediate association with Himself, though his body be of dust. In chap. 2. only do we hear of the garden of delights, with its two mysterious trees, the scene of his trial. Here the lower creatures are “called” as man saw fit, having title from the Eternal God to name them. Here only we learn of the woman taken out of Adam and builded up divinely—she likewise “called” by her husband, yet as part of himself. Here have we no cosmogony as men say, but God, and the creature, in due relations. There is clear recognition of all in chap. 1, but new and special information of the most important kind morally, peculiar to chap. 2 and preparatory to chap. 3. Inconsistency there is none: only prejudiced ignorance can talk so. Still less is there contradiction, save in the mind and mouth of an enemy of God's revelation. The solemn facts of the fall are the continuation, and the same name follows regularly.

This is exactly what ought to be, were one writer inspired to write all three chapters. It was of all moment to know that the One true God, the Creator, is the living Judge of all the earth; and this is simply and impressively conveyed by the combined title. How much better as well as more dignified than by a labored human argument to prove it! In due time (chap. 17.) Jehovah appeared to Abram, the depositary of promise and chief patriarch of Israel, I am El-Shaddai (God Almighty) he. And God (Elohim) talked with him—not man nor angel, but the true God, Whose name is Jehovah. Yet not this but “God Almighty" was the revealed title of Him before Whom the patriarch and his sons were to walk. All the force and beauty of the truth is lost by the low and irreverent conjecture which dreams of so many authors using different names of God, with other points equally misunderstood. “Higher criticism,” indeed! It is really the criticism of the scissors and fit only for the dust-bin of learning without sense. Later still Israel were to have Jehovah given as their God, their national object of worship, and revealed ground of dependence; but He was none other than the God Who created the universe. What a shield against idolatry, had not man been a rebel, a weak and perverse sinner! “He that Was and that is and that is to come” will yet make good His promises in the kingdom. This of course failed under the first man and the old covenant, as everything does; but it will stand forever under the Second Man, the Messiah, and the new covenant when He appears in His glory.

In the chapters that follow it was enough in general to use one or other name alone; and they are invariably employed with purpose, not only throughout Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch, but in the later historical books, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. In no instance can they be shown to be confounded; in every case where the generic “God” is not used, special motive calls for “Jehovah “; yet these two by no means exhaust the designations we find. In Gen. 14 El-Elyon (the Most High God) dawns on us, reappearing also in the Psalms and the Prophets wherever it was most appropriate. It is that name of God which upholds His title as “possessor of heavens and earth,” to put down all rivals above or below, when the true Melchisedec appears in the exercise of His royal priesthood on the final defeat of the enemy, even before the last and eternal judgment. See Psa. 92:1, as well as Num. 24 and Dan. 4.

Thus Jehovah had been familiar enough from the first; but it was never before revealed to Israel, still less to others, as the specific ground of assurance to them and so of their appeal to Him. God Almighty was the assigned name on which their fathers relied as heirs of promise; and they never found it to fail. Henceforward the sons of Israel (in their greater circle of change than any other people) were to prove Him true, according to the perpetuity of His being, Who is sure to effect His promises in due time; for He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. Alas! they became false witnesses to Jehovah, and even rejected the Object of all promise, Jehovah Messiah. Therefore God has hid His face from Israel for a while, and is now, by the Spirit, making Himself known under the gospel to all who believe, Jew or Greek, as “Father” (2 Cor. 6:18), a still higher and nearer name than that of Jehovah, which was for earth as Father is in and for heaven. The word “Father,” like Jehovah, had been long known, but never all the given name of recognized relationship till the Lord Jesus Who eternally knew it as the Son in His bosom, after declaring it through His living ministry, sent it definitely to His brethren when He rose from the dead, having accomplished redemption (John 20:17); and the Holy Spirit was given them subsequently, crying, Abba, Father.

Clearly therefore the same principle runs through the N. T. as well as the Old. The special name of God, definitely given, is expressive of the relationship in which He is pleased to be known: yet there is also not less but more enjoyment of “God” Himself as such. “The hour cometh and now is,” said our Lord, “when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth".. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23, 24). Both statements are profoundly true and weighty, but they are far from being the same. No key is so false and foolish as imputing the difference to different authors. But this is modern theology.

Nor is it otherwise with those titles disputed in Genesis, where the Spirit led Moses to employ each in accordance with the subject in hand. Even what might seem exceptional is susceptible of ready solution. The serpent is represented as saying (Gen. 3:1), “Yea, hath God said,” and the woman replies, “God hath said” (3), and the serpent rejoins, “God doth know” (5), never in the temptation saying, on either side, Jehovah Elohim. The claims of the divine Governor were in abeyance through the wiles of the evil one. Jehovah Elohim was no longer before the deceived woman. Otherwise the chapter invariably proclaims the two-fold name most appropriately. Now had it been a, composition made up by many successive hands, or the uninspired writing of even Moses or any other man, is it credible that a difference of such delicacy and expressiveness when duly considered could have appeared, to say nothing of the moral wisdom shown in the Elohim of chap. 1 and the Jehovah Elohim of chaps. 2, 3? The suggestion of independent authorship has no basis and therefore no real evidence to commend it; and were it conceded for the moment, it proves quite unequal to explain the single name or the compound, still less the intervening exception. The intention on His part Who inspired the writer renders all simple, especially when the reader learns to understand the propriety in each case.

In a general sense it will be seen that Elohim would have sufficed, and in some cases is most forcible and becoming; but the addition of Jehovah gives special relation and contextual beauty, especially on the supposition of the same hand. It was not nature or evolution that generated the heavens and the earth with their host. Elohim created all to make it as it was for man; as Jehovah Elohim tested man who fails in the face of every advantage. It would have been incongruous to have said Jehovah in describing the creation; and equally so to have said Elohim in laying down relationships. But the creation being attributed to Elohim, it was of all consequence to identify the Creator with the One Who orders all morally and governs man; and this is best expressed by the actually combined terms, Jehovah Elohim, and not casually but consistently till the sad end of the exiled pair, not without a blessed outlook left them on His part Who pronounced judgment on the serpent.

The self-vaunting “higher criticism” means the destruction of the deep interest and profit spiritually derivable from the inspired use of divine titles, as of all else in scripture. The truth is that there never was a drearier nullity, or a more palpable nuisance of learning falsely so called. Who can wonder, since God thereby is divorced from the scriptures? which they cut, apart from all fear of God, as a profane king of Judah the roll that he dreaded. In modern times as in ancient a vain and wicked illusion! God is not mocked. Other opportunities may occur in detail for laying bare the fragment hypothesis, as well as for clearing alleged inconsistencies and disproving what ill will claims to be corroborative evidence. But the main original plea is already shown to be as shadowy as it is unintelligent, as far as could be expected within a short paper such as the present. There is divine design in every change of God's name, as indeed in every other word which the Holy Spirit

gave to be written by the chosen instruments.

Chapter 61

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:5-7

Following up the summary of ver. 4, the peculiar condition of the vegetable kingdom is brought before us just before Adam comes from the hand of God. There is no warrant hence to predicate it of previous ages, even though a similar principle may apply. But all that the text states is that so it was at this time for the abode in immediate preparation for Adam, when Jehovah Elohim made earth and heavens.

“And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for Jehovah Elohim had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground, but a mist went up from the earth and moistened all the surface of the ground. And Jehovah Elohim formed Man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils breath of life [lit., lives]; and Man became a living soul” (ver. 5-7).

It seems clear that it is the description of plants and herbs of the third day's production, before man, the head of creation, appeared. Like man they were of full growth, and not from seed as ever since. It is not a repetition of the general fact of their origin as in chap. 1., but, like all else in chap. 2. from its true beginning, a presentation of special circumstances is here added in the only right place. On the one hand, it is not denied on geological evidence that rain can be proved to have fallen at least as far back as the carboniferous period, however immense the lapse of ages before man. On the other hand, it has been contended that it was a circumstance quite unworthy of notice that the inspired historian should notice these explanatory particulars of vegetation now existing for a few natural days without rain or culture. Evidently this is merely a difficulty and an effort on behalf of the theory of periodistic days. The admirable condescension and interest of Him Who is here shown entering into gracious relations with man are manifested by the intimation, which, in the vast geologic ages, would seem not only unmeaning but untrue. Whatever may have been the divine method before such relations could be, it was of importance for man to know authoritatively that Jehovah Elohim made not only earth and heavens, (changing for similar reason the actual order,) but “every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew.” These productions are specified as needful for the food of the living creatures when called into existence on earth; and there they were by God's ordering in suitable maturity, in contrast with subsequent experience. Two reasons are annexed: one that rain had not yet been caused to fall on the earth as it was now constituted; the other that man was not yet there to till the ground. Nobody could mistake, one might think, so plain a hint, but for the blinding influence of a previously conceived theory. He Who made all, even in His every arrangement, considered man and acted in view of him, now especially revealing it when He made man to know Himself in any measure and to enjoy His goodness. Hence also He would have man to know the especial provision even for that brief and peculiar while, “but there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.” This would be strange for scientific men to predicate of the vast geologic periods since vegetation first began. We may see that it is the simple truth for the few days after the third of the first week; and the naming of it here is not only in keeping with the design of the new section, but most worthy of the special place in which man is now set as

recorded.

Next, we come to a revelation of transcendent moment, the formation of man, not merely as chief of the earth's denizens (chap. 1.), but for living relationship with Him Who made all. Here, not in the previous chapter, we learn the particulars of man's constitution. “And Jehovah Elohim formed Man [ha-Adam] of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils breath of life; and Man became a living soul.” To this, the apostle refers in his sublime comparison of the first man with the Second in 1 Cor. 15, which every believer should weigh well and make his own. Here it is simply the first man; but what is said is great indeed: dust from the ground the outer man; the inner animated by the breath of Jehovah Elohim. Certainly it was not everlasting life, but none the less an immortal soul. The immediate in-breathing of the Creator is the ground of its immortality. Other animals of the waters or of the earth are called souls,” and justly so; but man alone from God's in-breathing.

In Eccl. 3:21 we hear also of the “spirit of the beast,” for the beast has soul and spirit suited to its nature. The soul is the seat of will for every living creature; the spirit is its capacity. But for the beast all goes “downward to the earth,” not body only, but soul and spirit, having not only a will but also a faculty of its own. But as to man, his spirit (and so of course soul) “goeth upward;” the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” Other animals when produced breathed the breath of life; man was formed externally, as clay by the potter, but did not breathe, till God gave him distinctly and immediately His own breath. Thus did he alone on earth become a living soul, the body mortal, the soul never said so to be, but what is said implying the contrary. Hence is man alone of earthly beings responsible to God. Thus the seat of his individuality and responsibility is in his soul, though the spirit, his inner capacity, goes along with it, greatly enhancing that responsibility; and the body is the outer man, a vessel for serving God or Satan, as the inner man directs.

It will be seen therefore how far they err from the truth who think that Christians only have “spirit” as well as soul and body. Even beasts have, though in them it may be but instinct, in man an incomparably higher and larger faculty, rising with the immensely higher character of man's immortal soul; whereas beasts, however wonderfully endowed according to God's will, are creatures without reason, mere animals to be taken and destroyed (2 Peter 2:12). Consciousness of “I” is in the soul, and on its real existence hangs personal identity; but capacity of reflex reasoning on that consciousness, as on every other object, is in the spirit of man; as capacity for the things of God is with “I” quickened, the power of which is in the Holy Spirit given to the Christian. It is wholly false therefore to confound mind, still more knowledge, with the soul, though the soul has a kindred spirit capable of reflection, discrimination, and all other mental operations within the order of its being. Reflective self-consciousness distinguishes man; still more does God-consciousness. “There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8).

It makes the separate and superior position of man the more impressive, compared with all the subjects of his realm, that he adapts himself to every climate, and to all variety of food, in marked contrast with the brutes whose superficial resemblance is closest. Thus it is plain that the Chimpanzee and Orangutan (or “Hutan” probably) are of small number, limited to a few spots in Asia and Africa, and can live elsewhere, spite of the utmost care, for a short while only.

Yet, of all creatures infant man is the most helpless and dependent on care and shelter during his slow growth; yet he attains in all lands and tribes a longevity thrice as great as his nearest mythical connections. But it is the inner man that differentiates him most truly and essentially from every other earthly being, and enables him (through the family bond that is appointed him) to live above his feeble and defenseless beginning, to make good the dominion given him over fish of the sea and bird of the heavens, and every animal that moves on the earth. Let the waters swarm as they in particular do, let birds multiply on the earth ever so, men were to fill the earth and subdue it as no other being does. Nevertheless, living as he alone does by the in-breathing of God, (he only having his soul thus) is an incomparably higher privilege than all his other natural advantages put together; though in this privilege he perishes everlastingly if he defiantly repent not nor believe in the Savior, instead of submitting to Him, the Lord of all, Who is also full of grace and truth. If by faith subject to the Son, how blessed his portion now and forever, even though his human lot were “most miserable!” Eternal life, eternal redemption, eternal salvation, eternal inheritance, eternal glory: such is the Christian's roll of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord; and he is now sealed of the Spirit accordingly.

Chapter 62

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:8-9

In chapter 1 we saw that God allotted to the human race dominion over fish, fowl, cattle, and every living thing that creeps or moves upon the earth, as well as over all the earth. That was all general. Here we have, as regularly, a special portion, a domain peculiarly assigned to the first man in his innocence. The deep moral question of the first man was about to be tried.

“And Jehovah Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put Man whom He had formed. And out of the ground Jehovah Elohim made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowing good and evil” (verses 8, 9).

As for Israel long afterward, there was full preparation now. Nothing was lacking on Jehovah's part. “My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes” (Isa. 5:1, 2). So at the beginning Jehovah Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden. However fair all the earth might be before ruin came through sin, and everything that God had made “very good,” the garden was distinctly superior, and the object of peculiar care to God in His moral government. Man had to be tried; and no excuse was possible, no flaw could be alleged. If He planted the garden, all was there for use and beauty suitable to creation's unfallen estate. If He loves a cheerful giver, He is Himself the pattern of all bountifulness. He had “formed” Man exceptionally; and so did He “plant” the garden into which He put him; “and out of the ground Jehovah Elohim made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowing good and evil.”

In the last clause we have the elements peculiar to the case, and to that epoch, which as they then were for a little moment did not exist for man at any other time, nor can they be so again. Innocence lost is irrecoverable. God may and does bring in for faith a better condition through the Second man at His first coming, as in manifest power at His second; but there is no restoration of the first estate. The continual tendency is to forget this, even among those otherwise taught of God. They exalt unduly the pristine condition of Adam. They fail to see the completeness of the ruin caused by sin. They lower or ignore the new creation in Christ. And the singular fact is that these errors are confined to no school of theology, though more prominent and glaring in some quarters than in others. Andover, Geneva, Leipzic, Leyden, Montauban, and Oxford differ considerably; but they fairly chime together in assigning too much to the first man, too little to the Last.

Thus it is by almost all men affirmed that Adam was created in righteousness and in holiness of the truth. Not so. This is how the apostle describes the new man exclusively. In no way can it apply to man as originally created for he was simply untainted and upright, but in no real sense cognizant of “the truth” any more than “righteous” and “holy.” He was innocent; he had not what scripture here calls “the knowledge of good and evil.” Man only gained it by the fall. He had, of

course, the consciousness of responsibility. He knew that he was bound to obey God, though the test of his obedience lay solely in his not eating, as we shall see in ver. 17, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now holiness implies that, having this knowledge, we are separate from the evil to good. Adam had no such knowledge. Unfallen, he had no lust. He could not have understood the Ten Commandments, still less the Sermon on the Mount. He had neither father nor mother to honor. Nor was there a neighbor to traduce or aught to covet, to say nothing of theft, murder, and adultery. When neighbors began to be, man had been long an outcast from the garden, and the one prohibition in it applied no more. Henceforth as a fallen being he knew good and evil, but he had that knowledge with a bad conscience. As a heathen wrote of himself, we may say of fallen Adam and his race, that they saw the better and followed the worse. Such became the state of man till God intervened with fresh dealings which involved other responsibility.

But there is revealed in ver. 9 another fact of the deepest interest. The tree of life was distinct from that of knowing good and evil. The test of responsible obedience was one thing, quite another the means of life. They are thus from the first shown to be separate; and, in fact, as we know, when man disobeyed by eating of the one tree, he was driven out lest he should take also of the other (ch. 3:22, 23), and thus make his fallen sinful estate everlasting. The tree of life was for one who did not eat of the forbidden tree. Be clearly was it here marked that responsibility and life are wholly separate.

In due time (as the apostle shows, 430 years before the law) came promise, like a tree of life alone. And the fathers clung to it by faith, and were blessed. This, however, was not a complete blessing, but provisional. It was important and necessary that the question of righteousness should be raised; and that of man's righteousness was raised in Israel by the law. But man, Israel, was sinful, and could not answer save to condemnation.

For the law as given by Moses made life contingent on obedience. “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them” (Lev. 18:5). Nor did the failure lie in the law but in man; “for if there had been a law which could have given life, truly righteousness had been by the law.” But man was guilty, without strength, and, in short, lost. “As many (men) as are of the works of the law (or on that principle) are under the curse.” The just shall live by quite another principle—by faith. “And the law is not of faith.” They are given for quite different ends, and so (and only so) consistent: the law, to convince the sinner that he cannot thus be justified; faith, to assure the believer that he is thus justified. “By grace are ye saved through faith.” For it is by faith in Christ; Who accepted the responsibility, bearing the consequences of our disobedience and evil state generally on the cross, and is now risen from the dead, manifestly the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. Thus has He, He only, conciliated the two trees, which the law had proposed only to prove that to man as such it is impossible. Our new responsibility as believers is grounded on the relation to God and our brethren, which we enter as having eternal life, along with redemption, in Christ. God is glorified even as to sin in the cross; and we who believe have life eternal and are made God's righteousness in Christ.

It is blessed to see how beautifully the last book of the N. T. answers to the first book of the Old. In the New Jerusalem, fruit of divine grace and of heavenly counsel, when all is accomplished and pilgrim days are over, there is found only the tree of life, with the richest and most varied fruits for those within, and even the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. How beautifully in

season, and absolutely true, this will be, needs, or ought to need, no words of mine to enforce.

Chapter 63

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:10-14

Chapter 2:10-14

Next, we have the position of paradise set out with sufficient definiteness to mark the locality in a general way. Eden was the country; “the garden” was that choice portion not in the west or center, but “eastward” which Jehovah Elohim planted for Adam, to which scripture alludes subsequently, not only in this book (3,4,13:10), but in the prophets repeatedly (Isa. 51:3, Joel 2:9), and most at length in Ezekiel (28:13, 31: 9-19, 36:39). It is quite distinct from another Eden, spelled in Hebrew somewhat differently, in Babylonia seemingly, referred to in 2 Kings 19:12, Isaiah 37:12, and Ezek. 37:23).

“And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became four heads. The name of the one (first) [is] Pison, that which compasseth all the land of Havilah, where the gold [is], and the gold of that land is good; there [is] the bdellium (B'dolach) and the onyx stone (Shoham). And the name of the second river [is] Gihon, that which encompasseth all the land of Cush. And the name of the third [is] Hiddekel, that which goeth forth before (or eastward to) Assyria. And the fourth river [is] Euphrates” (vers. 10-14).

That the district indicated is the plateau of Ararat ought not to be doubted, though it may be beyond the means of man to determine the great center of interest with precision. What is given clearly it was of interest to know: such particulars are withheld as might only gratify man's curiosity, or perhaps expose to dangerous superstition. The burial place of Moses is not the only spot which divine wisdom has veiled from human ken. And the site of the lost paradise might have been perverted to a still wider, yea universal, pilgrimage of folly and evil. The sad truth is that sin led to man's expulsion. He is an outcast. The natural tree of life was thenceforth barred with unmistakable power and rigor. But a better hope was set before the guilty, if we may anticipate a little, in the to be bruised Bruiser of the old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, who too easily overcame the first man. That God should have sooner or later effaced the Adamic paradise (for it was an extensive park, rather than what a garden ordinarily means) is as intelligible morally, as it accords with the fact that no such scene has greeted the eyes of man in the quarter where it must have been when our first parents were introduced there.

This is confirmed by the notable fact that the river which watered paradise is without a name; silence the more striking, because the four rivers, into which, after its allotted service, it was parted, are carefully named. One can readily understand that fact, if it were caused to disappear as well as paradise. It is implied in the description that it flowed through Eden before it watered the garden, and only after that was severed into four chief streams, two of which are the well-known rivers, Hiddekel or Tigris, and P'hrath or Euphrates. The last was notorious enough to need no description, its companion calling for the very few words, “that which floweth toward,” or in front of, “Assyria.” The first and second are described more fully, as being comparatively unknown to Israel, and in fact nowhere else mentioned in the scriptures. But the account has the difficulties arising from countries obscure to later generations at least, both in their own names and in those

of their products. Havilah and Cush have been debated nearly as much as Pison and Gihon; and not less the exact force of B'dolach and Shoham.

Josephus, in the first book of his Antiquities, led the way in strange departure by interpreting Pison as the Ganges! and Gihon as the Nile! Him not only many Rabbis follow (some reversing the case) but the best known of the Christian Fathers, as Eusebius, Epiphanius, Augustine and Jerome, &c., without speaking of allegorists like Origen and Ambrose, who adopted the idea of heaven, as others did the misty ideas of Philo Judæus. They accounted for those distant rivers by the supposition of their immense disappearance in the earth and rising again in the east and the south.

The great Reformed commentator, J. Calvin, was too sober to allow such reveries; but he adopted, or rather invented, the notion that by the four heads were meant, both the beginnings from which the rivers are produced, and the mouths by which they discharge themselves into the sea. Thus he argues that the Euphrates was formerly so joined by confluence with the Tigris that we might justly say one river was divided into four heads. But he misunderstood Strabo (Geog. lib. xi.) who nowhere says that at Babylon these two rivers unite, only that at Babylonia they approximate. The junction (save by artificial canals) is really far below at Kurnah (? Digba), whence their united streams form what is now called the Shatt-el-'Arab, discharging its waters into the Persian Gulf by the town of Bassorah.

Clearly therefore the scheme of Calvin, modified by Huet, Vitringa, and Wells, cannot stand, though the facts were not fully or accurately known before the publication of Colossians Chesney's Expedition of the Survey of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris (London, 2 vols. 4to, 1850). There is not the semblance of reason in making out two new rivers from the confluence of the old ones; nor did they diverge again, as he imagined and displays in his map. Dr. Hales in the second edition of his New Analysis acknowledges the error of this hypothesis (entertained in the first), and owns it to be untenable in every point. Calvin confounded the Eden which had paradise in it with that of a distinct spelling in Babylonia; whereas on the face of Gen. 2 it lay not far from where the Euphrates and the Tigris rose, their beginnings, not the end of their divided course. Nor can language be more perverse, than to count their separate streams after that union, had they really existed, the Pison and the Gihon, still less the mere canals higher up. And it is no improvement of the scheme, to make out that these rivers are the waters which wash Khusistan on the east and Arabia on the west of the Gulf. Another manifest confusion is the Havilah of our chapter with that of Gen. 14:7, Num. 13:29, and 1 Sam. 15:7.

But it is needless to point out the incongruities which will occur to intelligent readers. Reland has proved clearly in his Dissertationum Misc. pars. i. (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1706) that the Gihon is the Araxes, or. Aras, and given strong reasons to conclude that the Pison is the Phasis, though Colossians Chesney pleads for the Halys. Indeed the great Orientalist contended that Colchis, through which the Phasis flows is no other than the Greek form of Havilah; and certainly the connection of gold and precious stones with that land is attested from ancient times more clearly than can be done for the land skirted by the Halys. That the Cossaei, or descendants of Cush, were compassed by the Gihon or Aras cannot be doubted. There was an Asiatic Cush no less than an African, and widely dispersed too. It is the certainty of this fact which explains “The rivers of Cush” in Isa. 18:1. The nation predicted to intervene for Israel is to be “beyond” those rivers (the

Nile and the Euphrates) with which they ordinarily had to do.

On the whole then it is plain that the most celebrated men of research (and but a selection of their less strange speculations is here presented) have failed where they trusted either tradition or personal requirements, one swamp of uncertainty only succeeding another. If Dr. Adrian Reland first stood out speaking with more authority than his predecessors, it was because he adhered with commendable tenacity to the word of God. Not that his vast learning failed him here, for he wielded it with a simple mastery found in no other essayist; and this because he put it in its only just place of subservience to the words written with divine authority, while honestly owning difficulties not yet solved. Those who in our day boast of man are no less uncertain according to their unbelief of God's word.

But it may be noticed that in these verses we first hear of a “river.” Of course, to say nothing of previous conditions, there were such in the Adamic earth since the third day. But it was fitting that mention of a river, should be reserved till the Holy Spirit gave it first in connection with paradise. What the river was which went forth from Eden to water the garden seems intentionally withheld: if it vanished when the garden was no longer seen, it is not hard to see the wisdom of the scripture's silence. But it is certain that those who contend like our Milton, that it was the Tigris, which watered paradise, or, as others, the united streams of Euphrates and Tigris, do violence to the inspired text; and “scripture cannot be broken,” says our Lord. An unnamed river, having its rise in the territory of Eden, flows by the garden which it refreshed, and from thence (how far off is not said) it parts and becomes four heads, or chief streams, two of which (P'hrath and Hiddekel) are beyond doubt, Gihon only not certainly the Aras and Pison, probably the Rioni, if not the Kizil-Irmak (or Halys). For the river, after watering the garden in the east, may have run so as to cover the beginnings of these four in the west of that region.

As the chief modern explorer shows, even the Tigris has in Central Armenia two principal sources, both of which spring from the southern slope of the Anti-Taurus, near those of the Araxes and Euphrates, and not very distant from that of the Halys (Chesney's Exped. 1. 13). The Kizil-Irmak, he had already said, has its sources at two places, both of which are much farther to the eastward than they are generally represented on the maps. The sources of the Aras and those of the north branch of the Euphrates are about ten miles from one another (J. of the Royal Geogr. Soc. 6. part 2, p. 200). It is a curious statement, cited by 1. 274, from Michael Chamish in his history of Armenia, himself an Armenian, that Araxmais built a city in the plain of Aragaz, near the left bank of the Gihon, the name of which was then changed to Arast or Araxes after his son. Also, Benjamin of Tudela, the Hebrew traveler who visited the east in the twelfth century, calls the whole tract, east of the sources of the Aras, Cush or Ethiopia, and speaks of the river as the Gihon (Chesney 1. 282).

The text then is conclusive for the Armenian table-land as the true locality, and disproves every modification of the scheme that conceives the garden and the described rivers as in Babylonia or even farther south along Khusistan and E. Arabia. Nor does it compel one to explain away the meaning of a “river” or to give to “heads” any meaning which is not the natural and correct one. As to the moral lesson, it was but creature trial, and no permanence in either river or paradise. How different the paradise of God on high, or even that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God on earth! God is in the midst of her: this accounts for all in His grace. But the manifestation of

divine grace and fidelity for both awaits the coming of the Lord. Here was but the responsible man in the midst of the garden; and we see how quickly he fell and dragged down all in his own ruin. Christ alone overcomes, and through Him God gives us the victory.

Chapter 64

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:15-17

Chapter 2:15-17

We hear again of the Lord God putting Man, the man (Adam) into the garden. This is no vain repetition. In verses 8-14 the general fact was stated, and those special precincts described within a country of delight and pleasantness, where He Who built all things stocked it particularly with everything beautiful and good for His favored creature and representative on earth, but also with two trees, there only, which some have designated “sacramental.” Whether this be quite just or not, certainly they were most momentous and significant, the tree of life evidently and absolutely distinct from that of knowing good and evil, which alone was prohibited. In that garden was Man placed to abide in dependence and obedience, sovereign of all around him, subject to Him Whose goodness set him there with but one test of his loyalty. This we hear only in the second statement of his introduction there, where a river afforded its refreshing waters, which on leaving the garden parted into four heads or chief streams outside, two less known and more described, two more notoriously connected with man's sad history, of which the end is not yet.

The second mention gives the peculiar tenure of man in divine relationship, which is utterly lost when men, or even Christians, trust their a, priori reasonings All is false when inferences are drawn from man and creation under the fall. And philosophical theory is even more remote from the truth than the various and uncertain traditions in almost all lands and races of old, which may partially disguise but ultimately confess a pre-existent state of man and the earth in peace, purity, and happiness. The true golden age is to come when the Man of righteousness, not of sin, the Savior, not the son of perdition, shall rule to God's glory, and His heavenly bride shall reign with Him. Man and the earth are not ever to be the sport of the enemy, but the Most High shall vindicate His possession of heaven and earth. Adam was but a type or figure of the coming One. It ought to be plain, that, as we can know nothing of the glorious as well as solemn future save from God's revelation, so we can have across the ages nothing sure of man's primeval state save from His testimony. It was of the utmost interest and importance to know, not guess, how and for what ends, with what endowments, and on what conditions man was formed, especially, in relation to God; and if accountable to Him, as none but a wicked person doubts (brutalized morally, if he confound himself with brutes, as in effect but a superior brute), surely not left to a cruel and destructive darkness, but with light from God.

“And Jehovah Elohim took Man, and put him into the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. And Jehovah Elohim commanded Man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou shalt freely (eating) eat; but of the tree of knowing good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day of thine eating of it thou shalt surely (dying) die” (ver.. 15-17).

Now we have, not the locality, its resources and surroundings, however far-reaching, but the moral aspect and end. The divine Governor took Man and put him into the paradise He had prepared. Though all was in unfallen order and beauty, and no taint in Adam or the subject creation, and of course not in its fairest scene, Man was put there to till it and to keep it. Lordly indifference would

have been unbecoming, though Man was blessed and everything very good, and toil or sorrow unknown, and no sentence yet pronounced of death or curse, or even of eating bread in the sweat of his face. Still he was to dress the garden and keep it.

But more than this, “Jehovah Elohim commanded Man,” with liberty to eat freely “of every tree of the garden;” there was one and but one restriction, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was prohibited on pain of death. “In the day of thine eating thereof thou shalt surely die.” It was a law, not the law; positive, not moral; a simple test of obedience in what otherwise was indifferent: the only conceivable condition for an innocent, being's probation in an unfallen earth. For the law supposes a fallen state with lust already existing to do the evils which God interdicted. In both cases, as scripture expresses, transgression resulted; not sin simply or lawlessness (■νομ■α), but transgression of law (υ■μου παρ■βασις); for as the apostle justly argues, where no law is, there is no transgression, though there may be sin (as death attested e.g. between Adam and Moses, cf. Gen. 6 and Rom. 5:12, 14). Hence is evident the deplorable misrendering of the A. V. in 1 John 3:4, and its proper and needful correction in the R. V., from which systematic divinity, long deceived, has much to learn.

We may remark the charming simplicity of the earth's prince, but also the suited directness of. God's dealings with man. As there could be no prophet nor priest, there was no angel to intervene. The intercourse was unbroken, and communication immediate. Man needed no argument on the being of God, no disquisition on His attributes Who “blessed” and “commanded” him, Whose voice, or sound, as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day they heard to their fear when they had transgressed. Yet no man had ever imagined such a condition. The truth of it accounts for it to all save those who naturally love a lie and prefer the dark. For present experience would rather lead men to deny it.

The unbelief, which blinds skeptics where it is complete, darkens God-fearing men in the measure of their pursuit of human thoughts and theories. Thus soon after the apostolic age a patristic tradition grew up, from Rabbinism and philosophy, as if Adam, like Israel or fallen man generally, was under a moral government in respect of known good and evil in itself, or such a moral sense as man got by sin and a bad conscience. On the contrary he had only goodness to enjoy in thankfulness to the blessed Giver of all, abiding in that normal condition which was the peculiar position of primeval Man. A general state of government where he could judge intrinsically between good and evil was in no way his originally, though it became his when he transgressed and God drove him out from the garden, with that sad but useful monitor along his fallen pathway. Before he fell, it was his place to live in the constitutional enjoyment of divine goodness and its abundant gifts with a simple test of his obedience. His condition therefore stands in plain contrast with ours, who, being naturally sinful, by faith know Him that called us by glory and virtue, whereby He has granted to us His precious and exceeding great promises. But Man, when unfallen, had just to abide in, not quit his first estate, instead of being called out of a fallen one as believers are. No reward was proposed to him in obeying God's gracious call as to us now, nor was there the least room, as we need, to have senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil. Adam was simply warned against disobedience in one particular, which was evil because forbidden. Free to act in the sphere subjected to him, he was responsible to obey in refraining from the forbidden tree. Nor can notion here be more evil and false than the thought of freedom to choose. Alas! this suits man's pride, but it is bad and senseless to boot. Free to obey or disobey God! Can these

abstract reasoners mean what they say? Unfallen or fallen, man is only and always bound to obey God. He was not a slave of sin then; he is now. This is the truth according to scripture. It was then a natural relationship to God where all was good, but with responsibility to obey, and loss of all—death if he disobeyed. Sin put man out of that relationship to God; grace by faith alone gives a new and better and eternal one in Christ. Reinstatement there is none. The paradise of man is not regained, but the paradise of God opened by Christ to the believer, whom grace makes a child of God and teaches to walk in obedience, as Christ did perfectly and unto death—death of the cross.

Chapter 65

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:18-20

Here again it is manifest that we have not a second account of creation, but first of all the declared purpose of a moral relationship between husband and wife given through the same inspired writer, every difference of thought and word being strictly required by the divine design in each case. Here therefore the words “male and female,” so appropriate to their creation by Elohim, are out of place where the deeper question of such a relationship comes before us; and Jehovah Elohim expresses His judgment on that which is the chief bond of human society here below. It is accordingly “a help as before him,” his like or counterpart, that is now spoken of, not in Gen. 1 where the race are regarded simply as creatures of God, though constituted chief of all on earth. Each part of the communication is perfect for the varying design of divine revelation, both in entire harmony, the blessed instruction of all which is lost when men sink into the unbelieving superficial hypothesis of documents from different hands, whereby God, the real author who employed Moses, is excluded. No wonder that by such a process the light is quenched in darkness, and that the men who cheat others of the truth (themselves cheated by a subtler rebel against God) boast of their criticism, which sees only men in the case and, according to most, men dovetailing incoherent statements without perceiving it. It is never of such to glory in the Lord, but to rejoice in the works of their own hands. For “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.”

“And Jehovah Elohim said, [It is] not good that the man should be alone: I will make him a help answering to him. And out of the ground Jehovah Elohim had formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the heavens, and brought them to the man, to see what he would call them; and all that the man called a living creature (soul), that was its name. And the man gave (called) names to all the cattle, and to bird of the heavens, and to every animal of the field; but for Adam was not found a help answering to him” (ver. 18-20).

Even when perpetuation of the race was in view as in chap. i., we saw the marked distinction of Man. There was a single pair, and whatever the varieties to be in different parts of the earth, not a hint of “after his kind” as in the merely animal population of land, sea, or air. Man exclusively was made from the beginning in Elohim's image, after Elohim's likeness, with dominion given over fish of the sea, and over bird of the heavens, and over living thing that moveth upon the earth. But here in chap. ii. Jehovah Elohim, alike moral Governor and Creator, enters with gracious consideration into the daily life and comfort of man on earth, not only has a perfectly kind and wise mind about his well-being but expresses it that it be known as His, and this not by an imperative word as in ver. 16,17, but as the benevolent judgment of Him who absolutely knew all and abounded in favor to Man. “And Jehovah Elohim said, It is not good that the man should he alone.” Interchange of affection and interest is good for Man. No wonder that solitude is in general a most severe punishment short of death. Here no doubt intimacy of the nearest companionship is meant, and this as the revealed object of divine counsel. Indeed it is distinctive of the Jehovah Elohim section as a whole to develop, not mere creation, but creation, Man above all, in special relationships as He was pleased to order all; and hence the garden and the trees, &c., could suitably be here only.

Difference of authorship or document has nothing to do with the matter, and is the shallowest resource possible, as it explains nothing. Difference—of design—is all the more strikingly instructive because the same writer gives both consecutively.

The lack of a fitting help for Man, as his counter part, is shown and accentuated in what follows. “And out of the ground Jehovah Elohim had formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man, to see what he would call them; and all that the Man called a living creature, that was its name.” This is the more noticeable, because it beautifully confirms in the style and associations of the new section what had been said in the foregoing one of the Adamic dominion over the inferior creation (chap. 1:26-28). Here their subject relationship to Man appears by their being brought to him by Jehovah Elohim to see what he would call them. Man's government is not only asserted but exercised in the most precise way. It is not their rank in the scale of creation which is laid down, but their place relatively to Adam formally acknowledged. They are therefore brought by the Supreme to Man who gives names to beast and bird, as their appointed lord. Divine authority in the regulation of all is as manifest here in its moral beauty, as the majesty of creation cannot be hid in the previous chapter. Who was sufficient for these things? God alone Who inspired Moses to write both. Nobody pretends that Adam wrote these particulars as to himself and the subject creation, the garden, and all. And what could Adam of himself have told of the creation before he was made? The divine inspiration of it as it stands accounts for all as nothing else can. God assuredly knew and could give the truth with precision through Moses; and for this we have the highest authority, even the Lord Christ's.

“And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to bird of the heavens, and to every animal of the field.” Giving names is a right of sovereignty universally recognized in scripture, as may be seen not only in the book of Genesis but throughout the Bible, even when Gentiles were allotted the upper hand. Indeed, it is inherent in man and exercised to this day over all things or persons subject to him. But the most weighty application of the title, and full of interest, lay in unfallen man fresh from his Creator's hand, Who, Himself Sovereign Ruler, had pleasure in the rule of His earthly representative. Man naturally is not a mere creature, but, apart from the yet higher relationships of saving grace was originally son of God, His offspring, deriving the breath of life from Jehovah Elohim's immediate inbreathing. Thus did not any other on earth become a living soul, and therefore shared in no such relationship with Him. They are irrational, naturally made for capture.

Otherwise Man is regarded as but a brute of greater inward capacity, or, as some dare to think and say without authority and in the face of all truth, a development from any or all. But this is not science nor even its province, which is not to imagine or discuss origins, but to interpret accurately the general laws deducible from phenomena. Evolution is but scientific mythology in contempt of scripture; and the worst class in that school consists of those who are audacious enough to reduce the written word of God to an analogous growth from human elements. The sole field or groundwork of science is the fixed order everywhere observable in the created universe; but of creation, of the production of what exists, true science avowedly and necessarily knows nothing, only of existing natural order, and consequently should be wholly silent where its ignorance is blank. Faith alone understands it on the warrant of God's word, which is infinitely simpler and surer to every individual than in any other way. Nor can any proof of man's need be conceived more demonstrative than the adoption by scientific men of an hypothesis so irrational, which is at issue

with every fact really ascertained in the geologic ages no less than in historic times. Speculation is not science, which does not exist save by just deduction from fixed principles or constant order among the beings that exist. This is quite compatible with God's creation; not so the ancient notion of a constant flux or the modern evolution, both of which are ultimately due to man's anxiety to get rid of God and His will and energy here below.

We have further to note that it was this very survey of the subject and dependent creation which evinced the gap for its head. “But for Adam was not found a help answering to him.” God did not create the human pair together for the weightiest reasons, as we shall see conveyed in the verses that follow: a fact only in its due place in the second section, not in the first, where creature hood is the truth stated, not that circle of relationship which fills the scripture now before us. Discrepancy there is none, for chap. 1. gives no detail about the forming of the man or about the building up of the woman, but all is purposely general. “Male and female created he them.” Here throughout the later section we have details which bear on the relations in which they were placed, not with God only but mutually. And the moral importance of this fresh truth is felt increasingly as we ponder it with conscience and heart before God; otherwise it passes easily without a thought save of ignorance to slight or of malevolence to slander. If any one thinketh himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him take knowledge that the things which Moses wrote are the revealed truth of God; but if any one is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Chapter 66

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:21-23

The singular formation of woman is another detail reserved by the Holy Spirit for the section of Jehovah Elohim. Nor could it be appropriately elsewhere, supposing one inspired writer to have indited the preceding section as well as this. In the general account of creation Elohim made man in His image after His likeness, with dominion over all that peopled sea and sky, the earth and all that crept upon it. Or, as it is summed up, Elohim made Man in His image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them. Impossible to conceive a more distinctive and express place assigned to the race from its beginning, with marked pre-eminence over all those creatures here below, as God's viceroy and their head on earth. Yet, whatever its exclusion of the evolutionary fable, and the more evidently inspired because it is by anticipation in the simple statement of the truth, special relationships are untouched. Creature nature and position are alone laid down with perfect precision and in language as noble as all was very good even in the Creator's estimate.

From 2: 4 on the other hand we receive an equally fine and suitable development of man's moral constitution and the special scene of his probation in the garden of Eden with its mysterious trees, and his relations, not only to God on the tenure of obedience, but to the subject creatures as their appointed lord, peculiarly also and with the nicest care to woman as counterpart. Hence here only do we hear of Man formed by Jehovah Elohim, dust of the ground, yet the breath of life by Him inbreathed only into his nostrils; so that he alone thus became a living soul. How admirably each in place, Elohim's image in ch. i., constituted a living soul by Elohim's direct inbreathing in ch. 2., yet outwardly dust, His offspring thus as no other on earth was! The perfectness of the revelation is clear from the impossibility of displacing a single particular of either account, which is at once intelligible if the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write both; whereas it would only add to the magnitude of the miracle, where all miracle is denied, if we imagine two uninspired men writing two accounts going over the same ground in part at least, neither inconsistent in any respect yet without repetition, each true to an evident and most important design, and together issuing in a complete result, necessary to give the believer intelligence in the truth of creation and in the moral mind of God so far as it was then revealed.

The material differences, as well as those of form, flow from the design of each and are the more strikingly instructive as indited by the same writer. To assume that they preclude their being the work of the same hand is ignorance of scripture and of the power of God. That creation should be revealed in a style un ornate, measured, precise, with its recurring forms of expression, exactly suits a subject matter so majestic. That the revelation of the moral place of Man, in relation to all above him and beneath him and in the nearest association with him, should be couched in special terms freer and more varied, with a fullness and picturesqueness of detail out of keeping with the generality of creation pure and simple, is just what was requisite. What more worthy of creation than “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast”? And so it is in Gen. 1-2:3. But from 2:4 et seqq., how proper and affecting the change to Jehovah Elohim “fashioning” Man, and subsequently “in-breathing” the breath of life, “planting” a garden in Eden for him, and

“placing,” “taking,” “setting” him there with its two trees, suited to that scene and time and object, and no other, and with a described environment as full of interest as expressive of goodness on His part; then again bringing the inferior animals to their rightful lord; and, as the suited crown, bringing the woman whom He had “builded” from one of his ribs to fill that place of helpmeet, the lack of which all other creatures only made more apparent!

To call this a “duplicate” of the account of creation is the dregs of skeptical criticism, “higher criticism” only in the eyes Of men divinely ignorant and unsteadfast, who wrest these as also the other scriptures unto their own destruction. No doubt a different hand might account for separate accounts with varied phraseology and style, and distinct objects in each, and this regularly reappearing throughout. But the beauty, truth, and power of inspiration are only maintained by the inbreathed power of God, which enabled the same writer to vary his style and representation, in accordance with the varying design of the narrative, marked by the divine name employed as each part required with all its suited concomitants. We may see in every instance that the unbelieving hypothesis miserably fails to explain the phenomena, or the facts, which to the believer make manifest the divine energy that inspired Moses as every other writer of scripture. It is a libel to impute inconsistencies and contradictions. None but an enemy so says or thinks. To call, a wholly distinct aspect bringing forward different objects, an inconsistency, yet more a contradiction, is not criticism, but ill will. How absurd in the “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” to set chap. 2. on its union and external prosperity as a contradiction of chap. 1. on its extent and military forces! Yet this is a merely human view, immeasurably short of the comprehensiveness, and depth, the far reaching wisdom and prophetic scope, of the divine word.

In the verses before us is another example falling under the same principles. “And Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man; and he slept. And He took one of his ribs, and closed up flesh in its stead. And the rib which Jehovah Elohim had taken from the man He built into a woman, and. brought her unto the man. And the man said, This time [it is] bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh this shall be called Woman [Ishshah], because out of man [Ish] was taken this” (Gen 2:22-23).”

Apples of gold truly in baskets of silver! The God Who wrought has communicated the truth worthily to us. He would give man the boon of companionship, the joy of fellowship, the interchange of affection; and as the end into good, so the way. For He threw the man into an ecstasy, as the LXX. render it, that he might not feel painfully, yet know perfectly what God was giving him. It was not a separate human being independent of Adam, nor yet a female half severed from the male half of a Janus-like creature as Rabbins fancy. It was not from the head nor from the feet, an absolute equal nor an utter inferior, but from his side, as has been remarked by others, of old, the object of nearest love and sustaining cafe, an associated yet dependent sharer of all joy, and sorrow.

As Jehovah Elohim deigned to build his rib into an Ishah (woman), so He brought her to the man, the highest and best form of marriage; a source never absent from faith at any time, but as it was then, how admirably suited to primeval simplicity in the innocence of both! He who knew all had said that it was not good for the man to be alone. The recognition of Adam's authority in giving a name to the inferior creation only made the gap more sensible. And now that the woman was received as it were from the divine hand, not from Elohim only but from Him Who in all His action

here recorded was laying perfectly the ground for mutual duty in the relationship of marriage, “the man said, This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Ishah, for out of Ish was taken this.” He was instantly conscious of the intimate and suited relationship, though hitherto unacquainted with the divine purpose; and he gave her a name admirably expressive of the fact. How poor are all the imaginations of man on this theme in presence of the truth thus revealed to us! But it, could be appropriately communicated, not under the head of creation simply (Elohim), but of its moral government (Jehovah Elohim). So simple, sure, and unforced is the usage of the divine designations here employed, without the crude, superficial, and skeptical hypothesis of distinct writers, destructive as it is of all real intelligence, and of that good and profoundly wise design for God's glory which is the surest mark of inspiration from first to last.

Attention may also be drawn to the refutation which the simple facts here revealed give to the vain hypothesis that the use of intelligible. speech was a human invention. We need not quarrel in the least with the science of language, any more than with other Science. The ablest of comparative philologists cannot rise above the root welds in the Aryan, Semitic, and Turanian families of speech, pointing to a common source, the darkness of which science utterly fails to penetrate. Nor need it be doubted that imitative sounds and interjectional cries have added to the force and variety of language since early days. It is only when speculators cry up their little contributions, as if they were an adequate account of the origin of language, that they expose themselves to the derision of the Bow-wow and the Pooh pooh theories. For those who believe the word of God the question does not exist. It is certain that Elohim blessed our first parents, and said to them, Be fruitful, &c. It is certain that, When moral relations were established, Jehovah Elohim brought the subject creatures to Adam as to their lord for the names he would give them. Even before this the man had received the injunction imposed on his tenure of the garden with the solemn sanction of death on disobedience; as after naming the animals Adam intelligently expresses the woman's nature and relation to himself in a way beyond all Rabbins on the one hand and all philosophers on the other throughout the ages, giving her and self names accordingly.

To deny the reality of all this is worthy of the, irrationalism of the Rationalist. It is untrue that God addressed the sea monsters and their congeners, though He blessed them. It is the revealed fact that He did from the first address Man. He puts honor on His word throughout; but He “commanded” in ch. 2. as Jehovah Elohim, and was thoroughly understood. So Adam is declared to have exercised speech according to that power of God, alone suited to the beginning, which formed him a grown man in mind as well as in body, and with language as set over the animal kingdom, and with woman the meet companion of his life, where imitative lessons or interjectional outbursts could have no place, any more than rootwords.

This is the truth; and reason is bound to admit that it is as worthy of God as suited to man: even the vain Rousseau, after all sorts of efforts to account for it, was “convaineu de l'impossibilite, presque mantra, que les langues aient pit naltre, et s'etablir, Dar des moyens purement humaines.” (Inegal. des Hammes.) That Adam at once named the animals brought to him; that he learned to speak from their cries is an infidel reverie, not, an honest exegesis. Science even in its lowest yet haughtiest form, the Positive Philosophy of Comte, abandons all inquiry into the beginning of things as hopeless, abjures causes, and heeds nothing but the laws of phenomena. Rational science undertakes to treat of no more than the established course of nature; but absolute silence about the beginning! It can give no light on the ultimate producing cause; yet a

beginning, a primordial and permanent producing cause, there must have been; and this, whatever the mode or means employed, was none other than God.

To unfold creation is not the function of science, which therefore, if alone, leaves men infidel. But scripture supplies what science stops short of, speaks with divine authority and admirable clearness to the open ear, and makes the truth a matter of testimony, not reasoning, and hence adapted to all who believe. This was the way and the pleasure of God, if it is not to the taste of men apt to boast of a little science or learning. As the Hindu could not go beyond his imaginary tortoise, neither can the boldest modern speculator beyond the blank wall which bounds his array of secondary causes. Yet to assume that there is nothing, and no one, behind the blank wall is evidently on man's own ground illogical; for he is wholly ignorant. God Who created all knows all, and has revealed what no science can teach, what is of all moment for man to learn; not creation only, but redemption in Christ the Lord. But all have not faith; and faith alone receives what God alone wrought and revealed, momentous to understand on His authority in order to be saved from the lie of the enemy.

Chapter 67

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:24-25

The closing words of the chapter are the more to be weighed, as they were cited by our Lord in His vindication of marriage according to the mind of God, apart from that concession made to fallen man which is characteristic of the law. In reply to the question, Why the command to give a bill of divorce and to put away, Moses, said He, in view of your hardness of heart allowed you to put away; but from the beginning it hath not been so. As He had previously answered, Have ye not read that He Who made them from the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the twain shall become one flesh? so that they are no longer twain, but one flesh. What therefore God yoked together, let not man separate (Matt. 19:3-8). It is not Adam who so said, but God.

How good it is to have divinely given certainty! And this the Lord supplies. We need Him in one form or another to interpret the Bible; and here it is simple and direct. He Who made the man and the woman regulated the relationship from the first; and when things were out of course, the Lord Who made everything perfect cleared it of that allowance which man had abused, and recalled to its original order. This is all the more impressive, because it was so ruled of God, not merely for the transient state of paradisiacal innocence, but as His mind for man on the earth at any time: so the terms prove. Marriage was divinely instituted from the beginning.

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become (be for) one flesh. And they were both of them naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (vers. 24, 25). The former verse contemplates circumstances wholly different from those of Adam who had neither father nor mother to leave; the latter presents the facts which attached to the primeval condition and neither were nor could be with propriety at any other time. Shame followed sin: the knowledge of good and evil led them consciously fallen to cover themselves.

As marriage was to be the social bond, so is it the ground of family life; the oldest of all institutions I relative, yet a fresh start for each man and woman so united, as ver. 24 contemplates. The work of God corresponds with His word. If a man was to leave his father and mother, he was to cleave to his wife, not to multiply wives. So had the Creator made one man and one woman. So had Jehovah Elohim ordained. Self-will too soon broke through the order, and sorrow followed personal and widespread, for man in nothing errs with impunity, even in a world out of course.

But there are deeper things prefigured. The apostle refers to these words both in 1 Cor. 6 and in Eph. 5; and each is of the highest interest and importance, though the one be individual, and the other corporate. The fleshly union, shameful out of marriage, God would have honorable under marriage, honorable in all things (Heb. 13:4); for even the married are gravely exhorted, as the licentious are solemnly warned. But that union is used and meant to remind the Christian of his own blessed privilege: he that is joined to the Lord is (not one flesh but) one spirit. It is indeed in virtue of his receiving the Holy Spirit. Thus is impurity shown to be a sin not only against his own body, but against the Trinity and the price paid. “Glorify God then in your body.” The corporate

reference is no less striking. “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it,” not merely to sanctify it, purifying by the washing of water in the word, but to present it to Himself glorious, the Eve of the Second Man, the Last Adam. Hence He meanwhile nourishes and cherishes it; for we are members of His body. Thereon our text is cited, with the appended comment, “This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ and as to the church.” In no way does it yield the paltry sense of “sacrament” which Romanism has drawn from the Vulgate mistranslation, though not without the protest of such as Cajetan and Estius. Holiness is therefore as incumbent on the church as on the Christian; and the Holy Spirit abides in the one as in the other to secure it, and to make the sanction of evil inexcusable in either.

The type is methodically set out. On the man was laid the responsibility, when the woman was not yet in being (Gen. 2:15-17); as He Whom Adam foreshadowed was to glorify the Father and to bear all the consequences of man's failure in the judgment of God on the cross. Then began to dawn the hidden purpose about His bride, but His dominion is carefully shown over the subject creation before laying the basis of that purpose (vers. 18-20). Then comes the deep sleep on the man from Jehovah Elohim and the building up of his wife, owned by him as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, the intimacy of this relationship transcending every other in his eyes. So was it in the secret hidden from ages and from generations: even Christ, after His death of redemption, raised and glorified in a heavenly headship and universal supremacy, far above promise and prophecy; and the church made one with Him in sovereign grace, the sharer of all that is given to Him, His dependent but associated bride, even now His body, as each Christian is a member in particular.

Chapter 68

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:1

We have seen the first Adam in all that variety of relationships which chap. ii. reveals from ver. 4 to the end. No history follows unless so we designate the fact next recorded, the sad and solemn fact of THE FALL, with the righteous but withal gracious intervention of Jehovah Elohim, above all in the woman's Seed. How momentous the issues! Unbelief resists, derides, or at best neglects the word of God to sure and irreparable judgment; faith receives it to such a blessing even now, with heavenly glory soon and forever, as primeval innocence in no way contemplated. For if there be divine counsels revealed when Christ dead and risen was hid in God, all the ways of God are in view of the fall, whether in grace or in judgment, promise or law, government or salvation.

This accordingly the truth continually puts forward and presses, as philosophy no less invariably ignores it. So does man's religion really, though in form owning sin and striving to remedy it after its own fashion. God took care that when man fell, he acquired not only a conscience in the sense of an inward discernment of good and evil, but a bad conscience. He was consciously guilty. When innocent, such an intrinsic sense did not exist in man, and would have been incompatible. But a bad conscience never brings back to God; rather does it, without His grace and truth, lead farther and farther from Him. Sin is not canceled so. Only a Mediator can avail for man with God; and that Mediator God no less than man; and even He by death as a sacrifice for sin. Philosophy ignores the truth, because it seeks the glory of the first man, of the race; human religion, even while professing to acknowledge the Second Man, seeks the same false glory, by priesthood and ordinances. Both undermine the grace of God, are wholly ignorant of His righteousness, and deny present everlasting salvation for the believer; so little or null is the efficacy of Christ's cross to God's glory in their eyes, whether humanly religious or openly profane.

God never made man, the earth, and the lower creation as they are. “He saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” It is now a ruin; mortality works in animated nature, as sin pervades mankind, and the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now. Bible or no Bible, the world is in a state of departure from God; Bible or no Bible, man is a sinner and unable to stand before the God Who judges sin and sinners. But the Bible alone in its own inimitably simple, holy, and dignified way tells the truth how it came in. The myths of men in their little measure testify here, there, and everywhere, to that truth which scripture alone sets out so profoundly that the deepest plummet has never sounded it, so helpfully that the least draft has ever refreshed a truly thirsting soul. Here is not a word to puff a Jew more than a Gentile. Here man reads God's just sentence on his own inexcusable sin. “Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being beguiled, is involved in transgression.” What a key to the moral history of man! What a ground for divine order in God's church! Yet all in a fact which the O.T. records, and which the N. T. applies, as only God could reveal in either.

Undoubtedly the man was first in being, the woman first in sin; yet another being mysteriously intrudes, not yet alluded to, but availing himself of a creature best adapted to his fell purpose.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any animal of the field which Jehovah Elohim had made. And it said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (ver. 1).

Truly we may say, An enemy, the enemy hath done this. There is no allegory whatever, any more than in a dumb ass which, speaking with man's voice, forbad the folly of the prophet. Here it was the great adversary of God and man, who employed the crafty serpent as the vehicle of his temptation. The great apostle of the Gentiles in 2 Cor. 11:3 has ruled in the Spirit that Gen. 3 presents the actual, no fable or myth, but a positive fact: just as we have seen the fallacy of confounding the six successive days with the vast periods of geology that preceded them. A “scientific” account of creation Gen. 1 is in no way; but it does supply with plain certainty the divine revelation of that creation of which all true science professes its total ignorance. The records written in the rocks are wholly out of view in the scriptural account, which speaks solely of the absolute beginning in general, and in detail only of the time immediately connected with man's earth. The scene of geological research lies between, and is passed by in scripture as quite outside its moral scope, so that those labor in vain who look for a scientific tally there.

But true to God's design scripture here brings before us how Satan directed his first assault on man, a fact of the gravest import and nearest interest to all; and this precisely as it happened. On the other hand John 8:44 is a clear reference to the essential truth, stripped of the actual phenomena; and therefore only is the devil named as a liar and murderer. But the same inspired writer in the last book of the N. T. alludes to the first of the O. T., and here employs symbolically the literal instrument of the earliest temptation. See Rev. 12:3, 4, 7, 9 (where the allusion is put beyond doubt), 13, 15, 16, 17; 13:2; 20:2, to say nothing of vers. 7, 10. With this we may compare Isa. 27:1. But to treat the story of the Fall as myth or allegory, while allowing the essential reality of the truth conveyed, to maintain that the Mosaic narrative is not to be understood as literal history any more than the Apocalyptic visions! is, one may fear, to prove oneself incapable of appreciating either the one or the other.

The universal prevalence of serpent worship is the most powerful witness outside to the fact scripture reveals. For otherwise to worship it is far from being natural like that of the sun. But the form of this strange idolatry also, at many times and in unlikely places, points to that which made the deepest impression on the human mind and was handed down, less or more corrupted, from the beginning. It prevailed from China and Japan to Java; through Africa from civilized Egypt to savage Whidah in Guinea; from Scandinavia to Asia Minor, Phenicia, Canaan, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Persia, and India. North America knew it no less than Mexico and Peru; Russia, Prussia, Poland, France, Macedonia, Greece and its isles, perhaps no country more distinctly than England. Nor are any remains more striking in their way than those of Abury in Wiltshire, or of Stanton Drew in Somersetshire, where the Druids according to their vast conceptions did not merely raise the emblem for the entrance or at the altar, but formed the great temples in the figure of the serpent. In Ireland and Scotland the same worship was found extensively; and in the N.W. of France the ruins of Carnac attest a dracontium of not less than eight miles in length, with many of lesser extent.

Perhaps the engraving given in Humboldt's “Researches” (i. 195) of a hieroglyphic painting of the Aztecs may prove the vividness of the tradition more than most other witnesses. For a naked

woman, mother of men, converses with a serpent, not fallen but erect. Why too before a tree? In the Mex. Antiq. iii. of Aglio are representations, in one of a human figure smiting a great serpent on the head with a sword, in another of a divine figure destroying it. In plate 74 of the Borgian series in the same work is a god in human form thrusting the sword into the dragon's head, and his own foot bitten off by the dragon at the heel. Can this be mistaken? Faber too, in his Pagan Idol. i. 274, cites Marsden as testifying that the New Zealanders had “a tradition that the serpent once spoke with a human voice.” From what basis do these scattered fragments come?

Classic fables, as being more familiar as well as divergent through poetic handling, need not be added. But in that universal worship of the serpent we see the superstition into which fallen man sunk, growing out of the fact which Moses relates from God. The time or rather place was not yet come to lift the veil and disclose the evil spiritual agent that made the serpent his vehicle. The book of Job gave the suited opportunity to mark him as the great “adversary.” 1 Chron. 21:1, Psa. 119:6, Zech. 3 add a little more. All is in harmony, and utterly different from the Persian myth of Ahriman in conflict with Ormuzd. Scripture knows no dualism, but a rebel against the true God, a slanderer and tempter, of which after all Gen. 3 abides the witness, only less than Matt. 4 and Luke 4, with a vast detail over the entire N. T.

How then did he approach Adam? Through. Eve, the weaker vessel. It was but a question, as if surprised, at most an insinuation. “Is it so that Elohim hath said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden”? If He made and pronounced all very good, why keep back any? Is this love? Did Elohim really say this? Are you not mistaken? Distrust of God and His goodness was his first effort. And it will be noticed that he carefully withholds the title of divine relationship, Jehovah Elohim, vers. 1, 5, and ensnares Eve into fatal forgetfulness of it, ver. 3, in a section which everywhere else carefully maintains it: phraseology consistent with moral purpose, not at all so with an Elohist scribe, a Jehovist, a junior Elohist, a redactor, or any of the other fancied actors in the rationalistic farce. Scripture tells things simply as they were with the calm and simplicity of divine truth.

Chapter 69

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:2-5

The procedure of the enemy was indeed subtle. It was to awaken distrust of God in Eve's heart. Could it be good to refuse man the fruit of any tree in the garden? Distrust of God opens the door to every sin. Eve ought at once to have turned away. She knew the goodness of Jehovah Elohim. Why then parley a moment more with one who questioned it? To allow it was to sit in judgment on Him, to doubt His love, to accept the serpent as a better friend. She was deceived. Her obvious and urgent duty was to repulse the malicious overture with indignation.

The gift of His only begotten Son is God's answer. For so did He love the world, the fallen guilty world, that He gave His dearest object of affection and delight that every one that believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal. In presence of the most abounding liberality Satan found his opportunity in the one restriction by which God tested their obedience. In presence of a world of sins and sinners God gave His Son, infinitely more precious than the universe. Yet this was He against Whom grudging was imputed! And Eve alas! listened to her ruin.

“And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that, in the day ye eat of it, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil” (vers. 2-5).

Eve well knew the goodness as well as the command of God; nor had she forgotten the dread penalty of disobedience. She even added to His words, “neither shall ye touch it,” which adding may seem pious, but is neither seemly nor wise. The serpent advances a bold step now, and dares to give God the lie. This soon follows, when the heart conceives distrust of His love. “Ye shall not surely die.” “Fear nothing of the sort. On the contrary, to refrain from the fruit of that tree is to abandon your just hopes. God does not wish you to know good and evil as He does. He wants you to remain babes and slaves. Instead of dying, He knows that, in the day ye eat of it, your eyes shall be opened to know what He does. Fear not death, and assert your independence.” Divine truth and majesty were thus alike assailed.

It is so always. The moment God's love is distrusted, His word is sure to be speedily annulled, and His honor goes for nothing. If God is viewed with doubt, Satan reaps the spoil. To trust one's self is to fall a victim to the enemy, who is far stronger and subtler than man, and infuses into the human heart his own self will and enmity against God, especially against the Son Who alone reveals the Father and the Father's love. Man is in no real way self-sufficient, though his own pride and Satan's guile hold it out as a prize. Man had been set up to rule the lower creation, but as God's servant even while His vice-gerent, on the tenure of the amplest gifts and the least possible tax of obedience. But the enemy, concealing himself carefully under the serpent, drew on the woman to be his slave by distrust and disobedience of Jehovah Elohim.

As here, the real failure begins in the heart, which quickly betrays its departure from God by open opposition to His will. For one must be servant of God or of sin; and Satan it is who, behind, thwarts God and ruins man. Christ is, in all respects, the blessed contrast, Who being in the form of God counted it not robbery (or a thing to be grasped) to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him. Phil. 2:6-9. The one being a creature was responsible to do God's will in submissive service, yet disobeyed unto death through setting up to become as God. The other was truly God, even as the Father, yet emptied Himself to be a bondman, and, when found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself to the lowest in the death of the cross, to obey and glorify God where He had been shamefully dishonored. He came to do God's will, and did it perfectly at all cost to Himself. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, raising Him from the dead and glorifying Him in Himself on high.

“We know that everyone that is begotten of God sinneth not; but the begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). It was not so with Eve. Innocent she was like Adam, but not begotten of God, and consequently, instead of keeping herself, she parleyed, and the wicked one did touch her. She knew that the serpent was insinuating a doubt of God's goodness and emboldening her to disobey Him, in defiance of His word and threat; yet she did not turn away with horror, nor cry to God in her weakness. Thereby fatal lust, the desire to have what God forbade, was infused, which gave birth to overt sin. How different Christ! He instead of yielding suffered, which Eve did not; yet was He tempted far beyond our first parents, tempted in all things in like manner as we, apart from sin: the severest temptations ever endured, sin excepted. From our sinful temptations He was absolutely exempt. He knew no sin; which was as incompatible with His person as with the work He came to do. And we may well bless God that so it was: otherwise our salvation had not been, any more than God glorified in the cross of Christ.

The craft of Satan seduced Eve from one degree to another. First, she was drawn away to doubt His love; then she ceased to tremble at His word, His truth; and lastly, she fell by open transgression under the temptation to receive the devil's gospel—to become as God, knowing good and evil. Can any course more aptly portray what has wrought in hearts ever since? The difference is that we are by birth fallen and prone to sin, and that God has spoken and acted to arouse and deliver, above all in redemption by Christ the Lord; so that men are without excuse if they persist in the lie of Satan against the grace and truth of God. Yet do they live as if there were no death or after this no judgment, no real God, no destroyer, and no Savior. When man as he is takes up his own doings, or rites done by others, in the hope that God is too good to consign him to “the second death,” “the lake of fire,” he is evidently listening to the deceiving voice of the old serpent.

None but the Son of God and Son of Man can save sinners; and even He only by dying for their sins and bearing their judgment at the hand of God.

But this He suffered once, once for all: the infinite fruit of God's love to the sinner, and His hatred of their sins. But the heart must give Him credit for such love, and rest upon His redemption by faith: else there is no purification of heart or conscience; and this must be now and here below, that as believers, as His saints, we may serve and worship Him henceforth by the Spirit of God.

Thus the Savior reverses for good to God's glory what the enemy wrought to His dishonor through human weakness and sin. God is believed in His love that gave and sent His own Son; and thus the soul now repentant, taking God's part against itself in its sins, sets to its seal that God is true, looks up with the assurance which Christ and His atoning work inspire, and bows down in worship begun on earth, never to end in heaven, the new song of Him Who was once dead, alive again now and evermore. “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

Chapter 70

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:6-7

Thus did the enemy craftily prepare the way. The woman had heard him undermine successively the goodness, the truth, and the majesty of God; she had continued to listen when he held out the bait of a knowledge which God possesses and man could not have in his innocent state, the knowledge of good and evil. At length the desire for what God had prohibited was insinuated into her soul: when all the safeguards of obedience were sapped by his wiles, lust ensued.

“When (and) the woman saw that the tree [was] good for food, and that [it was] pleasant to the eyes, and the tree [was] desirable to make wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they [were] naked; and they joined together fig-leaves, and made themselves aprons (girdles)” (vers. 6, 7).

Little did the woman know the internal mischief which made the way for the open and positive act of disobedience. It had never been, had she kept the word of Jehovah Elohim before her in the confidence of His love and the fear of His warning. She was really giving credit to the serpent as a better friend than God to Whom he attributed envy in withholding from man so good a gift. She therefore no longer heeded His prohibition, but trusted her own mind, poisoned as it was against God by the enemy. It was the very reverse of the love of the Father, of which the apostle speaks, the fruit of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit, so characteristic of the Christian. Here was in principle the love of the world or of what is in it. And we are assured that all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and the tree was desirable to make wise, she took of the fruit and ate.” Was this obedience? or dependence?

Here was the root of all evil. She judged for herself. Independence means rejecting God and accepting Satan, though she, like her husband and future children, thought of nothing less. Self will blinds the eyes to God an d things as they are, and sees nothing but the fairness and advantage of what it seeks; in truth it is abandoning God's service for Satan's slavery. Verily, verily, said our Lord to the Jews, whosoever committeth (or rather practiseth) sin is slave of sin; and the slave abideth not in the house forever; the son abideth forever. If the Son therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Abiding in His word is the grand test. There only is the truth known, which makes free even a slave. On the other hand the devil was a murderer from the beginning and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. He is a liar, and the father of it as we see here; and this not only by direct opposition to God's word, but by a partial and cunning misuse of it which wholly misleads those that parley and listen when he pleads for disobedience. He that is of God heareth God's words. This Christ pre-eminently did, but not our first parent. She saw, reasoned, and was conquered. What she knew well, what she had repeated to the serpent, faded from before her mind. She acted from herself, under the instigation of the

devil, and boldly rebelled against Jehovah Elohim. “She took of the fruit and ate.” What a contrast with Him Who did nothing from Himself but as His Father taught Him! He spoke the words of light and truth and love; and He that sent Him was with Him; He left Christ not alone, for He was ever doing the things that please Him.

But the mischief alas! did not end there. She “gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” Mankind was now fallen. Cleverly had Satan planned his temptation He addressed himself to the weaker vessel, and deceived her as we have seen. He left it to the woman to draw the man into her error; and we are told by authority beyond appeal, by the apostle Paul, that “Adam was not deceived.” This is characteristic. The woman was deceived, not the man. So says the Holy Spirit in the Epistle. We perhaps might have failed so to infer from the ancient record, but feel none the less assumed that the difference is true and important, as appears from the application of it to Timothy. The moan without being deceived was entangled by his affection, and shared her transgression to universal ruin. Affection is an excellent bond and a great support when it works in God's order. But here all was out of course. The woman acted first in weak but known opposition to the divine word, and also, as compared with her husband, was not subject to him as became her. He followed, instead of directing her, in too bold disobedience, and so must share the punishment she had incurred. God was not in his thoughts. Satan triumphed for the while, always doomed to defeat in the end.

The moral effect was immediate; and the effort to hide divulged the disastrous wrong, as ever. “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” Jehovah Elohim knows good and evil as a holy being judging righteously, loving good and hating evil in His own nature. Man was made upright; but innocence was his condition, and obedience his duty. Of the tree of knowing good and evil he was not to eat. When the fruit was eaten, he acquired the intrinsic faculty of pronouncing this, evil, and that, good; as a fallen being, now the prey to that lust to which he had yielded in defiance of God. And this became the sad inheritance of every child of Adam. The Seed of the woman is the one blessed contrast. In Him was no sin: not only He did no sin, but sin was not in Him, and He knew it not. He was “the Holy Thing” born of Mary, but so born by the power of the Holy Spirit as none other before or since, the Holy One of God, as the unclean spirit was compelled to confess. Not that He was spared temptation, but on the contrary tried beyond all comparison with the first man, or Abraham, or any other. He was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin; not only without sinning, but sinful trial excepted. For this kind of trial He could not have from the holiness of His person, human nature as well as divine. A body God prepared Him for the work He was to do, with which “flesh of sin” had been absolutely incompatible. So it is written that God, sending His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin (i.e., as a sin offering), condemned sin in the flesh.

Our first parents were fallen, innocence was gone irreparably. Grace might and did intervene to bring in “some better thing;” but there can be no return of innocence, however surely faith finds life in the Son of God and inseparably along with it sanctification to God, the basis of all practical holiness. New birth is not peculiar to any time or circumstances, but belongs to every one that sees or enters the kingdom of God. Believing in the rejected Messiah, the Son of man, the Son of God, we have it in its highest revealed character. For “this is the True, God, and Eternal Life “; and eternal life we have in Him; but substantially this was ever true of the believer from of old, though it could not be made known as a present thing till His cross dawned, as we read in John 3. Some

misunderstanding the truth have lapsed into strange and deadly error. But the truth is ever simple to those who are simple in faith; and one part of it is not to be sacrificed to another, but all is consistent to God's glory in Christ, as the single eye sees.

The eyes of the man and the woman were opened, but not as they fondly hoped through Satan's prompting. They knew that they were (not divine but) “naked.” What a lowering of high and evil expectations! The shame of guilt invaded them. They recognized their fallen condition painfully. “And they joined together fig-leaves, and made themselves girdles.” No doubt fig leaves were broad and well suited to cover nakedness but what a humiliation! As yet there was no repentance. Alas! most men die unbelieving and unrepentant; and how solemn is the issue that awaits them! Few words of holy writ present it more strikingly than the apostle's to the Corinthians, when more or less awaking and restored from their high-minded folly: “If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” This from its external impossibility may sound a paradox; but it is really in spirit a weighty truth. In time present life, if a man be clad, he is for that reason not naked. But when resurrection comes, it may and will be very different. The true nakedness is not the body unclothed, but the lack of Christ; and this, which may be unperceived now, will be set in evidence then. For all will be raised, and therefore clothed with the body, in their order and season: those that are Christ's, at His coming; those that are not His, for judgment, when they shall be found naked.

Chapter 71

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:8-9

We have seen that the recorded effect of disobedience was the sense of nakedness, and this leading to an effort to conceal it from self and from each other. But worse than shame and humiliation followed quickly.

“And they heard the voice of Jehovah Elohim walking in the garden in the cool (wind) of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim, in the midst of the trees of the garden (ver. 8). Confidence in the Lord God was manifestly gone and sin had filled their hearts with terror as well as unbelief. For faith would have known that distance or darkness makes no difference to Jehovah, as is so beautifully expressed in Psa. 139. His voice was no attraction now; His rich unvarying goodness toward them was forgotten. They had acquired the knowledge of good and evil, but alas! to their own self-condemnation. So it is always. Not death only, but a bad conscience, they have left as a sad legacy to all their descendants. Man conscious of evil shrinks from God and distrusts Him.

So we find here the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim in the midst of the trees of the garden. No more flagrant proof could well be of the mischief the enemy had wrought. The wiles of the mighty and subtle Satan had drawn the first pair into rebellion, and their instant attempt to conceal themselves was the unmistakable evidence of it. They “hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim.” Had there been the least working of repentance, they had sought Him in self-reproach and horror at their sin, they had cast themselves in confession on a genuine repentance without faith, and faith in Him was wholly wanting. The voice of Him as He walked in the garden alarmed them, and they hid mercy which endures forever. But there is no themselves away from Him.

How different Christ and His own, who hear His voice and follow Him, who know His voice and know not the voice of strangers! The voice of Jehovah Elohim awoke nothing but the fear that has torment. Nor can conscience do aught else for man, guilty as he is, till he believes God's testimony to Christ. And Christ is the witness of the love of God, Who has sent none less than His Only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him; yea, more, sent His Son as propitiation for our sins. This indeed is love, not that we loved Him, though we ought to have done so, but that He loved us in spite of our sins. Nor could anything short of this love, not in word only but in deed and in truth, have availed us. For sin is moral death; and it is expressly said that we were dead in trespasses and sins. Divine love therefore, if it intervened to save, could only save by giving life to us who believe, His life, and His death too, that, with our sins blotted out righteously and forever, we might live to God.

Another thing calls for our notice here. God came to visit man in the garden. He had visited him before, when He laid upon him His solemn injunction as well as invested him with his high privileges. But He only visited. He did not dwell even in the sinless garden of delights. He came there as One that loved and was deeply interested in His creature, His vice-gerent. The book of Genesis shows us God visiting the earth again and again, and especially in Abraham's case. The

most gracious condescension was that seen in His intercourse with “the friend of God.” But even then there was no dwelling of God on the earth, nor yet in Canaan. This is most instructive and a trait which only inspiration could have conceived or given. It is the mind of God from the beginning and entirely above the thoughts of man. Redemption alone lays the ground for God's dwelling with His own on earth. The absence of it is the more striking here, because in the very next book of Moses redemption is the central truth, followed as it is by a habitation for God in the midst of His people.

It is true that the tabernacle was but a shadowy dwelling place for God; yet this was quite consistent with the facts. For the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was but the type of a better and eternal redemption now come. This Christ alone obtained by His death and resurrection; which accordingly is followed by God's habitation in the Spirit Who dwells with us and is in us, abiding with us forever.

Here, therefore, all is intrinsic, real, and everlasting. In Christ we have redemption. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost that is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Here the in-dwelling of God is individual and unfailing for the believer. But “know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). Here we learn that it is equally true of the church, of God's assembly, and no less abiding in this case also. Yet it is only so because of Christ's accomplished redemption. What else could secure it for us and us for it, when we think of our failures individually as well as corporately? But no, there is “one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” The Holy Spirit only came down because sin was judged to God's glory in the cross; and He abides because of the perfect unchanging efficacy of Christ's work. The unworthiness of man singly or together cannot more annul it, than the power or will of Satan: so the voice of God has surely declared; and so it will be till Christ comes again, yea forever.

Remark the beautiful simplicity of Jehovah Elohim exactly in unison with these primeval days. Here we are told of His “walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” So Jehovah spoke to Cain in remonstrance (ch. 4); shut Noah in the ark (ch. 7); and “came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded” (ch. 11). Favored Moses knew much of this gracious familiarity in a later day; but here even strangers to the covenants of promise were not without considerate communications of a personal kind. Does this provoke wretched man's unbelief, especially in this day of artificial habits? Let him judge himself, believe that every scripture is inspired of God, and enjoy the wisdom and goodness there vouchsafed abundantly.

“And Jehovah called to the man and said to him, Where art thou?” (ver. 9.) It was the first divine utterance to fallen man. What a volume of truth! On the face of things, past all denial, man was gone from God. He had morally doomed himself before he received the dread sentence. “He drove out the man,” we are told later in the chapter; but man hid from His presence at first, and thus drew out the words, “Where art thou?” Away from God! He did not mean to confess his sin, his ruin; but his act unwittingly told the tale, and the word of God, proving it, revealed the truth. Nor is there a road back, save in the Son of God, the Second man, Who is the way, the truth, and the life, as this very chapter shows us authoritatively. He only can break the power of the enemy, though this at all cost to Himself and to the God Who gave Him for this express purpose. How worthy of God, how blessed and reliable for man, is that written word, which unbelief slights now as it slighted Him

Who shines throughout it!

Chapter 72

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:10-13

Drawn from his concealment by the call of Jehovah Elohim, Adam appears. He might strive to hide his sin from himself; he could not hide from God. The very effort testified where he was, and what.

“And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and was afraid because I [was] naked, and hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou [art] naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. And Jehovah Elohim said to the woman, What [is] this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (vers. 10-13).

The effect of sin was ruinous in all ways. Jehovah Elohim at once became an object of terror, instead of reverence and gratitude, love and trust. Even men own that conscience makes cowards of all. So it was immediately with Adam and Eve. The presence of God is and must be insupportable and alarming to an evil conscience; and this was now acquired. In answer to the divine appeal the man unwittingly tells the tale.”. I heard thy voice in the garden, and was afraid because I was naked, and hid myself.” How different the state, feeling, and conduct, if our first parents had kept their first estate! Still more different, even had they stood in innocence, was Christ, Who waxed strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. He was the Obedient Man. His will was to do God's will. “The words that I speak unto you, I speak not from myself; but the Father that abideth in me, he doeth his works.” Yet these works, stupendous as they were, blessed and blessing overflowing in their nature, were not so characteristic as His dependence. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father.”

But who among those born of women, yea who even born of God, approached His obedience? Power and wisdom, to say nothing of inferior gifts, have been conferred, sovereign and without stint in men as God pleased; but our Lord Jesus stands alone in unswerving devotedness and absolute submission to God. This, the ideal moral glory of man, was His real and crowning perfectness here below even unto death, yea, death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name that is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, [of beings] in heaven and [beings] on earth and [beings] under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Messiah said to Jehovah, Thou art my Lord; He set Jehovah always before Him with an unwavering trust, through life and death, into resurrection and the pleasures for evermore at His right hand. However tried, neither Jehovah on one side, nor Satan on the other, found aught in Him but grace and truth, righteousness and holiness. According to the beautiful type of Lev. 2, in each act of His life He was like the offering of pure flour, mingled with oil, and oil poured over all, with frankincense thereon, an offering made by fire of a sweet savor unto Jehovah. He as a man lived, not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to accomplish His work. As the living Father sent Him, so He lived, not merely “by” but, because of the Father. “I do always the things that are pleasing to

Him."

Such was the Second man; but the first by his own account, as soon as he heard the voice in the garden, was afraid and hid. Fear has torment, for he had a bad conscience. He shrank from Him Whose word he had disobeyed, and recognized himself naked. "And he said, Who told thee that thou art naked?, Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?" He was in fact self-condemned. It was not sorrow after a godly sort for the transgression; no was there earnest care, nor clearing of self, nor indignation, nor any other such affection as the Spirit works in the conscience Godward. Consequently in nothing did Adam prove himself to be pure in the matter. His sense of nakedness evinced his guilt. "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And Jehovah Elohim said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I did eat."

It was too plain. They had believed Satan, they had forgotten and rebelled against God. In both the sin was aggravated. The man was bound to lead the woman aright, not to follow her in disobedience; the woman was not to direct but obey her husband, instead of inducing him from natural affection to join her transgression against the Lord God Who had blessed and warned them. Nor as yet was there repentance toward God. They were convicted and compelled to own their respective acts of sin; but there was no true self-judgment, no grief at their dishonor of God, no horror at the evil and their own guilt. On the contrary, there was the self-justification that proves the spirit unbroken, and the shiftings of the blame one on another, and even on God Himself.

Indeed the man was bold, instead of abasing himself as inexcusably wrong; for he not only put forward the woman as his excuse, but dared virtually to upbraid Him Who had in His goodness given her to be his counterpart. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And when Jehovah Elohim asked the woman, What is this thou hast done? her answer was, Not I have sinned, or I am guilty but "The serpent deceived me, and I did eat." Thus our excuses only make bad worse, and God cannot but righteously deal with pleas so vain and unworthy, which show that unrepented sin is apt to eat as doth a gangrene, and is truly ungodliness.

All this is plain and solemn fact, related not as a myth or allegory but as divinely given history, of the nearest interest and utmost importance to every soul of man. It is wholly unlike the visions of prophecy, such as are given to John in the Revelation, where we read "I was in the Spirit," "I heard," "I saw," &c. Nothing of the kind is found in Genesis. But the history at the beginning and the prophecy at the end have this in common, that their words are alike faithful and true, while the only sense of "myth" which scripture recognizes is that of "fable" in contrast to the truth. The Christian has nothing to do with the dreamy views of heathen philosophy, but with the revealed mind of God, which leaves no room for either Gnosticism or Agnosticism. W. K.

Chapter 73

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:14-15

There is no interrogation of the enemy: his history and character were already known on high, that “in the truth he standeth not, because no truth is in him.” Sentence is pronounced on the proved tempter forthwith. Now he is in fact a murderer, soon to be manifest, so in principle from the beginning.

“And Jehovah Elohim said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed [be] thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all [the] days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall crush thy head, and thou shall crush his heel” (vers. 14, 15).

This is a present and earthly judgment on the serpent, as we shall also hear subsequently on the woman and on the man, whatever else may be implied to the instructed ear. But in the former case there is exceptionally stated much more in ver. 15, which none but a natural man could limit to the animal, whom Satan made at once the instrument and the mask of his temptation. The language therein rises above the government of the world, though fully including this also, which is indeed on the surface. Isaiah, we may say, is very bold, not so much in declaring the serpent's degradation and special curse in ch. 65:25 ("Dust shall be the serpent's meat,” when all other animals share the blessed effects of the glorified reigning with Christ in heavenly places and Israel restored fully and forever), as in the utter overthrow of the malignant spiritual power whether on high or here below (chaps. 24:21, 27:1). The N.T., from its superior depth, now that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding to know Him that is true, lays bare the unseen chief of evil, and the details of his doom, not in the kingdom only but through eternity (Rom. 16, Rev. 20). Cursed is he in every sense.

It is among the striking points of the scene that the enmity is said to be put between the serpent and the woman, rather than the man. Grace so spoke; for the man might have reflected bitterly on her who had first listened to the enemy, disobeyed the divine command, and enticed himself to follow in the path of transgression, poor and unworthy though such an excuse be. Jehovah Elohim graciously lays stress on the woman, and still more on her Seed. It might have seemed natural to have dwelt on the man, head of woman, image and glory of God; as in the preceding chapter we read that into his nostrils was breathed the breath of life, and Adam was set in his place of privilege and of responsibility, where he forthwith acted on the dominion given by assigning names to the subordinate creation before Eve was formed. Notwithstanding all this God-given position of primacy in natural relationships, grace after the fall no less clearly speaks of the woman expressly as at enmity with the serpent. Of her in a peculiar sense was He to come Who should vanquish Satan. Isaiah 7 predicted it in due time, though here it is sounded out from the beginning for all that have ears to hear; whilst Matt. 1 gives certainty, when the prophecy was accomplished to the letter, that we have not followed cunningly devised fables in believing the inspired words of the law and the prophets any more than the apostle.

The woman's Seed is unmistakable. The first Adam was not that, nor could any of his progeny as such be said so to be. Only the Second man could properly prefer the claim in both spirit and letter. This He was beyond all controversy for every believer, though infinitely more: otherwise why should this have been in His case only? Scripture couples it with His Godhead: see Romans 7:3, Gal. 4:4.

But more than this. It is with the Incarnate Word, the only begotten Son when He became man, that we find the personal antagonism of Satan, as the Holy Spirit opposes the flesh, and the Father is hated by the world. For the development and revelation of all this we await the latest oracles of God; but here we see in the earliest days the enmity of the old serpent to the Lord Jesus. “For this cause the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil “: this the power of death, as He of life, and life-giving; the one the liar, as the other the Truth. Next to His eternal deity, there is nothing truer in itself, nothing sweeter to Christians, nothing more momentous in divine purpose for His glory than His assumption of humanity, spotless and holy, into union with the divine, so that He has both natures in one person.

The truth of His person therefore, as the immediate, unwearied, fatal object of Satan's malice, is the first test of the evil spirits which work in the many false prophets gone out into the world since the Savior appeared. Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God. And every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: not the fact only but the person confessed. A mere man, however great or good, must have come in flesh. The wonder is that He, the Son of the Father, was pleased so to come. He might have come in His own glory. He might have assumed angelic nature. But it was in grace to us, fallen men, and for our salvation in righteousness. Therefore was He sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” for He was born of the Virgin, herself a sinner, like every other daughter of Eve. It was in the reality of flesh: else His had been no valid sacrifice for sin on man's account, as on God's. It was “holy” by virtue of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Highest that overshadowed Mary, and so truly that as thus born He should be called Son of God. In flesh is “how” He came; but Jesus is He “Who” came, even Jehovah the Savior, Emmanuel as Matt. 1 carefully attests.

Granted that Josephus seems to have read these pregnant words as unintelligently as a heathen, divorcing them from the solemn fact of the temptation and the fall just before, ignoring Jehovah Elohim as the speaker and the judge, and utterly dark as to the purpose of God gradually growing into fuller clearness throughout till Himself came, the true Light. Was it the place for nothing more than a common-place on natural history? on the relative position of the serpent henceforth? on its hostility to the human race, provoking no less in turn? on its aptness to bite heels and in retaliation to have its head crushed? This may satisfy those erudite critics who are bent as far as they can on reducing the holy letters to a compilation of legendary tales or myths. But the irrationalism as well as the impiety of these skeptics of Christendom is self-evident to every believer; and the inspired word, though it may by grace convert the worst infidel, is addressed to faith, and given first to Israel, and now, that they are for the time Loammi and worse, to the church of God. Even an unbelieving Jew may not be so blind to the depths of what was meant to arouse inquiry and awaken a blessed hope, as well as search the conscience; as we may unhesitatingly say such a God must do if He spoke to man at all in the circumstances. Hence Maimonides (More Nevochim ii. 30) owns that this is one of the passages in scripture which is most wonderful, and not to be understood according to the letter, but contains great wisdom in it. He too was struck by the

mention of the woman's Seed, rather than the man's, as the bruiser of the serpent's head; and both Targums openly point to Christ, Whom we know to be none other than Jesus, not Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben Judah, but one and the same Christ, come and coming again to complete in manifested power and glory what He has already done in the efficacy of His reconciliation-work in death and resurrection. His second advent is as sure as his first.

Yet among those orthodox as to His person no error is more serious than attributing to the Incarnation what scripture uniformly bases on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Beyond doubt the Word made flesh was to save sinners, yea reconcile all things (not all persons), but this by His death. Not otherwise was God glorified about sin, however fully in an obedient man. But sin must be judged by God; and this was not, nor could be, short of His cross. And this betrays the vanity of all human systems, whether of ritualism on the one hand or of rationalism on the other: both agree in the error of making out a possible salvation through the incarnate Word, both therefore slight the redemption grace gives us already in Christ through His blood. It is the bruised Seed of the woman Who bruises the serpent's head. None short of a dead, risen, and ascended Christ is the Savior Whom the gospel proclaims. God is therein just and justifies the believer in Jesus, Whom knowing no sin He made sin for us, that we might become His righteousness in Christ. Thus vanishes the dream of broad-churchism that His birth was the reconstruction of humanity, and so brought every man into blessed relationship with God. Alike disappears the fable on the opposite pole that the sacraments are “an extension of the incarnation;” whereas in truth they are symbols of His death, and thus, only to faith, of a holy salvation according to God. Both systems stop short, even theoretically, still. more practically, of man's total ruin and proved guilt, and of God's righteousness and salvation, in the cross. Hence they lead souls back to an anterior state of things, to law and ordinances, of probation still going on, and of redemption unaccomplished.

Lastly, be it observed that we have here, no matter what theology of, every sort may say, no promise to Adam, still less to the race. It is really in the judgment of the enemy that we hear the revelation of triumph over him for the woman's Seed. If there be promise to anyone, it is to Christ, the risen Second Man. And this best secures the blessing that results in God's grace to all that are His. Thus it is for the believer, because it is in Him. He deserved all by His personal perfection and obedience; but He took it all by death which annulled him that had the power of death, reconciled us that believe sacrificially to God, and glorified Him in all His love and purpose, His majesty and moral nature. For how many soever be God's promises, in Him is the Yea; wherefore also in Him is the Amen, for glory to God through us (2 Cor. 1:20).

Chapter 74

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:16-19

Then God pronounced on the serpent without parley. As the devil “sinneth from the beginning,” so for this was the Son of God manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Untempted the wicked one fell, and became the habitual tempter in the circuit of Jehovah's earth, seeking the race of man as his prey, a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father thereof. How complete the contrast with the divine and personal Wisdom, Whom Jehovah possessed in the beginning of His way before His works of old! He was set up from eternity, from the beginning, before the earth was, Who was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in that scene and in those beings who were the object of Satan's ill will and destructive effort. All deliverance hangs on the woman's Seed, Who is none other than that eternal Word made flesh, bruised only by the Serpent, but his assured victor and destroyer. It is in the power of Christ's resurrection out of that atoning death which sets the believer free.

Whatever the fullness of light cast on this as on all else since God revealed Himself in Christ, it is important to observe that here and throughout the chapter, and in the O.T. generally, we only hear distinctly of divine government on the earth. Fuller revelation discloses more, especially in the N. T., as to God and man, Christ and Satan, the universe and eternity; and the Holy Spirit, Who includes the less (John 18:9) in the greater, could to faith bring out the greater from the less, as Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and saw it, and was glad, looking too, not for Canaan only, but for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. “Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises.” Nevertheless it remains true that the scripture here expresses divine dealings externally, and this in keeping with His relationship to the earthly people, unto whose keeping these oracles were primarily entrusted. So even the bruising of the Serpent's head, whatever else was implied to the pondering heart, is manifestly the destruction of his power over man on the earth; and this is the work of the Second Man.

To the believer at all times there were deeper questions behind. Not only the evil and its judgment, but redemption and the positive blessing of eternal life, are now fully brought to light in Jesus the Son of God. This is so true that to not a few there is danger of forgetting the importance of the earthly consequences because of the surpassing interest and weight of what is unseen and eternal. God made Himself known in the Son as to both His nature and His counsels as well as His will, and this accomplished by the only One, now man no less than God, capable of giving it effect for our reconciliation and blessing, even now for the soul, at His coming for the body also, when He reconciles in power all the creation so long dragged down into vanity and suffering through the sin of its first head. Therefore the apostle says that Christ annulled death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel. Again therein is God's righteousness revealed by (or out of) faith unto faith; while God's wrath is revealed (not yet executed, of course) from heaven against all ungodliness, or impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness—a still more solemn thing for souls in Christendom, whose orthodoxy if alone, where they be orthodox, will in no way shelter them in that day. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Now we turn to our first parents with whose conscience He dealt Who loved and pitied them, however inexcusably wrong both had proved.

“Unto the woman he said, Increasing (greatly) I will increase thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; unto thy husband [shall be] thy desire, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto thy wife's voice, and hast eaten of the tree [of] which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed [be] the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all thy life's days; and thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat herbage of the field; in sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thy return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken. For dust [art] thou, and unto dust shalt thou return” (vers. 16-19).

As with the serpent, Jehovah Elohim speaks to the woman of the present governmental effects of her sin. Woman, more than any other female, was to have sorrow multiplied in her pregnancy and in her bringing forth offspring. Woman, not man, is the victim of reiterated sorrow in this respect. It was righteous, however sad. She first listened to the enemy, despising God and His word; then she drew her husband after her into the ditch. Henceforth she was to be subject; like a younger brother to an elder (chap. 4:7), her desire was to be to her husband, and he should rule over her. The fall would make this hard. How different the original position of companionship! Sin made God a judge: before it, He simply blessed. But grace in Christ leaves Him free now in better and eternal blessings for faith.

To Adam He condescends to explain the reason. His vain plea becomes the ground (and so it always is) of condemnation. He had sought to excuse himself by laying the blame on “the woman,” and aggravated his fault by even imputing it ultimately to God “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me.” How irreverent as well as unthankful! His sentence is unimpeachably just, “Because thou hast hearkened unto thy wife's voice;” and his wife's voice echoed the serpent's in rebellion against Jehovah Elohim. Her solicitation ought to have deepened his horror of her sin; but, instead of this, he dared to transgress, not deceived as she had been, and ate of the tree in the face of the divine prohibition. How different the last Adam, Who suffered being tempted, obeyed His God and Father unto death, and bore in His own body on the tree the sins of those who are now His body and bride, “one spirit with the Lord,” and so made by a higher character and power than that of Adam and Eve who were but “one flesh!” His taking flesh was for our sakes, vindicating God, not in obedience only, but in sacrificially enduring the consequences of our disobedience, that we might be united by the Spirit to Him our glorified Head on high.

To Adam fallen the word is, “Cursed be the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; also thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thy return unto the ground, for out of it vast thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Here as before it is present and earthly judgment. On account of the man the ground is cursed. His

superiority entails wider and more serious results. He too must face sorrow here below all his days. Thorns and thistles oppose the food he needs and seeks; and hard toil must be his portion to eat bread, for the herb of the field was allotted, as to the subject beasts, to him who had lost through rebellion the beautiful and abundant garden which Jehovah Elohim had planted. In the

sweat of his face he was to eat till he returned to the ground whence he had been taken. How evidently the body only is here regarded, and the end of life on the earth! Yet the source of man's soul had been carefully shown in chap. ii. as emanating from Jehovah Elohim's inbreathing, contrasted with every other creature on earth, to the confusion of materialists old or new. Present government is the theme, and neither hades nor the lake of fire. So in the Psalms, though Sheol or Hades appears appropriately, we read, in Psa. 146:4, man “returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish.” The body alone returns to dust, out of which the soul was not taken, but, as we are told elsewhere, the spirit returns to God Who gave it. All the notice here taken of man is to humble him who did not look up to God, nor obey Him: sorrow and toil, death and dust. We shall find that more is intimated even here in what follows. If the apostle tells us that the wages of sin is death, we ought not to overlook that the sentence does not mean the whole of sin's wages, but the first part; as in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are expressly told on the one hand that it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, on the other that Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time apart from sin to those that look for Him unto salvation: the portion respectively of unbelievers and of believers.

Chapter 75

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:20-21

Chap. 3:20, 21.

These verses bring before us two facts of high and pregnant significance, stated with that simple dignified brevity which characterizes all we have had thus far before us: what the man called his wife at this critical time, and the reason why; what Jehovah Elohim did for Adam and his wife, and the effect.

“And the man called the name of his wife Eve (Chavvah), because she was the mother of all living. And Jehovah Elohim made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” (vers. 20, 21).

In chap. 2. the man gave his wife a name from himself. He was Ish; her he called Isshah. This was in due place and season; for the Holy Spirit there laid down the divinely formed relationship. But here sin had brought in disorder and ruin: our first parents were fallen. Nothing however is too far gone for grace, the grace of God, Who, as He will effectuate by indisputable power in the great day that is coming, revealed enough even from the fall to instruct and comfort faith. So it was with Adam now. He looked not at the things that were seen, temporal as they are but at the unseen and durable intervention of the woman's Seed.

Even when a revelation is clear and full, faith may fall short, as every believer knows too well in himself day by day, and as is plain in the Gospels which make known without disguise how far even the Twelve were from entering into the depths of our Lord's communications, till He died and rose and power from on high was given. But Adam did not hear in vain what Jehovah Elohim had intimated in His sentence on the enemy: a conflict, and not merely a successful temptation, from the enmity set between the old serpent and the woman and above all her Seed in some exceptional way specialized; and that conflict issuing in the final and irretrievable destruction of the foe, but not without previous anguish to the victorious Seed in achieving it. Hence in the depths of shame and wretchedness because of his transgression, with the woman's special penalty ringing in his ears, with his own doom to the ground cursed for his sake—to toil all his days ending in death, and to return to the dust whence his body was taken—, he calls her not Death but Life, or Living! The divine assurance that the woman's Seed should bruise the serpent's head (can we doubt?) led him to the new name. It was faith, and founded on the word he had heard; faith real, if not explicit. He confessed that which was before no created eye, what rested simply on the divine word, that she was “mother of all living.” Mother of all dying would have been the natural sentiment. But a hope founded on revelation glimmered through the darkness of sin, and Adam's mouth confessed what his heart believed. This he knew without a question that future blessing turned wholly and solely on the woman's Seed; and that woman, actually Satan's means of the mischief, would in due time give birth to Satan's Vanquisher.

It may be objected that scripture, in its roll of the worthies of faith, does not enumerate Adam. Good reason there surely was, in his introduction of sin and death into the world and the race of

which he was head, to abstain from singling him out for honorable mention. But not less surely would it be an error to conceive that none believed of old save those that are expressly so designated. And why, in the noble but short account of primeval facts, should Adam's calling his wife by this name be inserted, unless there were something of extraordinary interest, left (as so much in scripture is) to exercise our faith and spiritual intelligence, or to the corrupt speculations of unbelief? For the Bible is a moral book; and the judgments we utter on its sayings betray our own state, whether we reverently learn of Him Who inspired it, or set up ourselves for a very little while to judge Him and it in ignorance of our sinful folly.

Adam then looked above the just forfeits of sin, trusted not to his own strength, wisdom, or virtue, spoke of no seed of his to regain the lost paradise, but took occasion, by faith of God's gracious holding out the suffering but triumphant Seed of the woman, to call her Life, even then because she was mother of all living; an expectation most unsuitable and unwarranted, unless by the faith however dim of Him Who was coming (and now come), Who brought to light life and incorruption through the gospel, he, like those who followed in the growingly bright path of faith, knew little compared with what is now revealed. But they all looked to God for a Deliverer born of woman, yet in some mysterious way to defeat and destroy the evil one; a hope more than realized in Him Who became man that through death He might annul him that has the might of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

But in immediate subsequence let us note what scripture adds. “And Jehovah Elohim made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them.” It may suit an infidel to see nothing in this but letter and perhaps triviality. A believer is entitled to find and enjoy what is worthy of the only true God. Yet faith does not make haste but waits on God and His word. Imagination which adds to scripture is no more of God than the free-thinking which stumbles at the word, being disobedient. As every word of God is pure or tried, and He is a shield to those that put their trust in Him, so let none add to His words, “lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Our wisdom is to draw from scripture what God put into it.

Now here the force is the greater, because till after the deluge no moving thing that lived was given to be food for man. “Thou shalt eat the herb of the field” Adam had just heard once more. This has induced crowds of theologians to suppose that sacrifice was now enjoined by God and offered by Adam. But we are not at liberty to supplement the word of God with the tradition of man. Sacrifice has its own proper record in chap. iv., and scripture, hath Old Testament and New, attests the all-importance of its antitype for man and its acceptance with God; but we cannot go beyond the inspired word. Before the work of Christ which gave its meaning; faith in Him was the essential, as it still is. The action here revealed was on the part of Jehovah Elohim; not a word is said of what the fallen pair did. Jehovah Elohim made for each (for this is carefully noted), coats of skins and clothed them. More he does not say nor are we called to believe, as to the matter of fact.

Is there then nothing implied beyond a strong garb which efficiently covered their persons, in contrast with the poor aprons of fig-leaves they had made for themselves? There is a truth most impressively taught, that He Who clothed them made for each of them coats which had their necessary origin in skins of animals slain for the purpose. That solemn word, death, was now brought before them as a fact for the first time. Man fallen may vainly essay to hide his shame by some device of nature; Jehovah Elohim bases the clothing He provides on death, the penalty of

sin.

Thus whether it be life in ver. 20, or death in ver. 21, both point to Christ, and have no adequate meaning for a spiritual mind short of Christ. The natural man looks anywhere else; or if he does think of Christ, it is only to degrade Him, even when he offers a kiss or a crown. But as the Holy Spirit is come down from heaven to glorify Him, so did He in scripture point onward to Him in things great or small. Christ is secretly or openly the object of the written word. His life and His death were alike essential, and alike blessed, as alike they brought glory to His God and Father. But while we could not live to God without His life, it is only through His death that we could, when clothed, as the apostle says, be found not naked. Christ alone, by His suffering death, removes our nakedness. Those who reject Him, even when in their resurrection bodies for judgment, will be found naked (2 Cor. 5). Clothed or unclothed, present in the body or absent from it, the believer is never naked; he has on always the best robe.

Chapter 76

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 3:22-24

We have still to consider the word and act with which the chapter concludes. They are of importance in clearing yet more the true standing of man before the fall, and the anomalous condition of the race henceforth, wholly confused and lost in reasoning as men are apt to do from present experience. The a priori path is misleading to all who betake themselves to it, whether philosophers or theologians. The believer who yields to the snare is inexcusable; for grace has given an unerring account, concise and clear, of all that divine wisdom deemed well to tell us of the entrance of sin into the world through one man, type of Him that was to come, the Second man and last Adam. Here we have neither legend nor myth, but facts related in the language of unaffected simplicity and transparent truth fullness. What is revealed is as worthy of God, as it is remote from the instinctive popular representation of man, ever averse to self-judgment, ever prone to lower or shirk righteousness, ever blind to grace and hating it. Myths and legends are natural and should be left to heathen destitute of the truth, groping in the dark after God if haply they might find Him. But it is sad to think of Christians slipping after the philosophizing Jews of Alexandria, who turned their back on the Light already shining, lost the plain yet profound historic truth of scripture, and set up a Philonic Logos of their own in consonance with human thought, will, and unbelief.

“And Jehovah Elohim said, Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever,...Therefore (and) Jehovah Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So (and) he drove out the man; and he placed eastward of Eden's garden the Cherubim and the blade (flame) of the flashing sword to keep the way of the tree of life” (vers. 22-24).

Philosophy or fear of philosophers has misled very many to conceive that the utterance here received was a taunt on man's groundless pretension and an exposure of Satan's cheat. But scripture is plain, and the truth important. Opposition assumes to it what is false, that unfallen man already knew good and evil. He was innocent and upright, but is never said then to be righteous or holy. Nor could he be so called; for both suppose knowledge of good and evil, which he as yet had not and only got through transgression. In truth such a knowledge would have been useless in, not to say, incompatible with, an unfallen nature and world, where he had only good to enjoy in thankfulness to God, avoiding but one tree because God forbade it. There was not, as afterward, a moral government as to good and evil, which man could discern intrinsically apart from an outward law. And that special law under which man innocent was placed consisted solely in not eating of a tree which was prohibited, not because the fruit was in itself evil, but simply as a test of subjection to God. It was a question of death by disobedience. Disobedient, he lost paradise as well as life; but he acquired the knowledge of good and evil with that of his own guilt. Their eyes were opened, as we saw; they knew that they were naked, and were ashamed. “The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil.” Sense of responsibility he had; but now, when fallen, he could distinguish things as good and evil in themselves. He had along with guilt the moral sense to

pronounce this wrong and that right; he had conscience, sad but most useful monitor ever present when man was fallen from God.

Freedom of choice in paradise (or out of it) is an impious absurdity. Was Adam free to choose disobedience? That he did choose it was the fall and ruin. His responsibility was obedience. When he transgressed, God took care that in his sinful estate he should now possess an intrinsic sense of good and evil; and in due time, but not till long after “the promises,” absolute and unconditional to a known object, “the law” came in by-the-bye (Rom. 5:20) to raise the question of righteousness which can never be settled save to faith in Christ and His redemption. In the gospel God reveals His righteousness in virtue of Christ's work, and so is just while justifying the believer in Jesus.

A holy being knows good and evil of course, as God does perfectly; but this consists with the revealed fact that man while innocent had it not, and gained it only by disobedience and to his misery. Grace meets the guilty; but it is in the Second man, not by mending the first. Life is in the Son; and he that believes on Him lives of the same life, the ground of a holy walk, even as our responsibility as sinners is met by His atoning death. Righteousness and holiness therefore have no terror for the believer; but this is because of Christ dead, and risen, and at God's right hand. And such faith produces practical and kindred fruit acceptable to God. For not Adam, but the new man was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

But there is further the divine arrest of presumptuous sin. It would have been a chaos morally, and everlasting ruin if the tree of life had been eaten by our first parents in their sin. There was even mercy to them in foreclosing such a peril.

The natural tree of life for innocent man is refused to him fallen. How awful to be everlastingly fixed in sin! Christ thenceforward becomes the object of faith; and as He died for our sins, that they might be blotted out, so because He lives, we also were to live, as He said. Truly all enduring good now is of grace and in Him. There is no restoration to innocence, but to a far better standing. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The expulsion of the man therefore followed. He was now an outcast from paradise, to till the ground whence he was taken. So Jehovah Elohim drove out the man, and set the Cherubim, the symbols of judicial power, so familiar to every Jew, as represented not only on the vail but overshadowing the mercy seat, to bar the way. Here the force was the less to be mistaken, because there was also the flame of the revolving sword to menace the intruder. There is no way back to the lost paradise. Christ is the way, and “this is He that came by water and blood “; He is the way for the believer to the Father and the paradise that shall never pass away. There accordingly is no tree of knowing good and evil, no tree of responsibility: this was settled for everlasting righteousness in the cross of Christ, and hence in favor of all that believe to God's glory. There is but one tree, the tree of life, whose fruits full and fresh are for the heavenly ones, as the leaves are for healing the nations; for ha the kingdom will be not only heavenly things, but earthly, as our Lord pointed out to Nicodemus. According to the symbolic description of the new Jerusalem, there are twelve gates, shut not at all by day (for there is no night there), and at the gates twelve angels; and the names inscribed, which are those of the twelve tribes of Israel, witness of the mercy that endures forever. But there is no flame of revolving sword to threaten, though there shall in no wise enter into it aught common or one making abomination and a lie, only

those that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Chapter 77

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:1-4

Man was now, as he is still, an outcast from Paradise, where Jehovah Elohim had placed him in original innocence; he was an outcast, because he had sinned knowingly, deliberately, and without excuse. It was sin against God; and death the consequence, with its bitter accompaniment for all the creation subjected to man as its head, no less than expulsion from the garden of Eden. Yet man was not driven out before the revelation of the woman's Seed (oh what grace) a Conqueror of the enemy, Himself to be bruised though the Bruiser of the serpent's head. And withal Jehovah Elohim clothed both Adam and Eve, guilty and vainly covered as they were, with coats of skins: a clothing which could only be through death, and death inflicted on the victim for the covering of those guilty.

Now those who truly feel their fallen condition, yet believe in the true God of light and love, never forget but ponder in their hearts both His words and His ways. This is faith; as indifference to them is unbelief. The inspired record that follows brings both before us solemnly; for so it ever is from that day to this in a world and a nature under sin and death. Some believe the things spoken, and some disbelieve. Faith and unbelief have everlasting results: good works, and evil, now respectively; by-and-by life eternal on one side, as on the other wrath and indignation. Thus early does scripture present the principles, and in facts which the simplest may take in and the conscience is bound to heed: how evidently of God and for man

“And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bore Cain, and said, I have acquired a man from (with) Jehovah. And again she bore (she added to bear) his brother Abel. And Abel was a feeder of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground. And it came to pass in process of time (at the end of days) that Cain brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (vers. 1-4).

The “first man” Adam was now a father, but only when fallen; as the “Second man” became head of the new family of God, when attested as righteous in resurrection, obeying God and having borne our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Cor. 15:45, 46).

Further, Eve takes the initiative and expresses her thought religiously, but according to nature, which never rises to God's mind as to either man's sin or God's grace. Hence it is wholly unavailing to bring man out of evil to God: only God's word judging sin can give the truth which faith receives. “I have acquired,” said she, “a man (Ish) from (or, with the help of) Jehovah.” How fatal is the haste of nature! “He that believeth (or trusteth) shall not make haste.” But so it ever is with man or woman, One only excepted Who was absolutely what He said, and waited patiently for Jehovah. Not so Eve who yielded to her own thoughts and saw in her first-born the man gotten from Jehovah, the woman's Seed that should crush the enemy. But the fit time or person was not yet.

Eve knew not that first is that which is natural, not what is spiritual. Yet no truth is more certain, none plainer, throughout scripture, which we ought to know to our blessing. In each dispensation man is first tried in responsibility and fails. As with Adam, so with Noah; so with Israel and in detail,

people, priests, kings; so with the Gentiles to whom imperial power was entrusted, while Israel is Lo-ammi; so last and not least with Christendom. Not so Christ, Who as He glorified His Father in obedience all His life, glorified God as such in death and for sin; wherefore also God highly exalted Him And as Christ at His first advent was the Faithful Witness, though outwardly all seemed to fail in the death of the cross, so at His second coming everything which failed in man's hand will stand and shine in Christ—mankind, government, Israel, priesthood, royalty, Gentile, power and the marriage of the Lamb with His bride on high, when God hats judged Babylon the great harlot, “and her smoke goeth up forever and ever.”

It is no wonder that Eve could not forecast that the coming Vanquisher was to be the woman's Seed, still more true and exclusive and glorious than her firstborn, because He, He alone, was to be Immanuel, El Gibbor, as the prophet testified, the true God and Eternal Life, as says the apostle. Yet her language shows that she did hope for a min of worth from, or with the help of, Jehovah, though in the way of nature fallen and so coming to naught.

The same plague-spot reappears in Cain, only darker far, when in process of time the two sons approach God in worship. Nor does any other act on earth so fully decide the state of the heart. So it was here. “The way of Cain” abides to this day, as Jude lets us know in a verse which condenses volumes of truth. For the difference between the brothers did not lie in the presence or the absence of religion; but Cain was in nature, Abel in faith. Now nature ignores sin, and God's judgment of it, as well as the grace that revealed a future deliverer, God giving meanwhile a covering for the naked founded on the death of victims.

Of all this, though presented day by day to Cain at least as much as to Abel, the religion of nature took no account. There was total indifference about God's nature and will, and total insensibility about man's moral state. Cain no less than Abel had heard of their parents' transgression, of a lost Paradise, and of the woman's Seed, a sure Avenger to come and smite the enemy. But Cain had ears and heard not, as untouched in conscience about sin in himself and ruin around him, as he was careless of divine grace and truth. “Cain brought of the fruits of the ground an offering to Jehovah.” He never laid to heart “Cursed be the ground for thy sake.” He had tilled it in the sweat of his face; and this in his judgment added value to his offering of its fruit. The sin of man was no more to him than the curse of God. Why should He not accept the fruit of the ground, the offering of his own toil and pains? Cain knew not that it was but “the sacrifice of fools,” the proof of an unrepentant, unbelieving, heart.

Not so Abel who did not presume to approach Jehovah save by bringing “the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.” It was “by faith” he “offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Faith is by a report or hearing, as the report is by the divine word. The revelation of the woman's Seed had entered not his ears only but his heart, and purified it by faith. He looked for the Person that was coming, the hope of his soul; and the skin, given to his parents when convicted of sin, spoke of an efficacious covering on God's part which could only be by a victim's death. Thus did his faith prompt a sacrifice which acknowledged sin and found rest in the death of another between himself and God. The sacrifice was presented by one that trembled at Jehovah's word; and its character expressed not nature but the resource of grace revealed by God. It testified to expiation, the sole efficacious ground of acceptance for sinful man, confiding, not in himself or the fruit of his work, but in God Himself and the coming Deliverer. For as impenitent unbelief goes

back to what might have been well enough, if man were not a sinner, faith looks onward to a Substitute, Man yet infinitely more than man, and to the abolishing of sin and its consequences by a slain but worthy Victim.

It is remarkable too that “the fat” is especially noticed as offered to God in this, the first recorded sacrifice. We know how God loves to guide those who believe, and far beyond their measure of knowledge. For, more than two thousand years after, Jehovah reserved the fat as well as the blood, notably in the sacrifices of peace offerings, where communion was the point more expressly than in any other institution of the Levitical economy. The fat typified inward energy presented to God, and not only what propitiated. How full is the believer's acceptance in Christ! Here alone is truth, here alone righteousness unfailing and perfect; yet all is of God's grace; and man, confessing his sinfulness, blesses Him for Christ, the Savior of the lost. It was a new and supernatural standing which man, though fallen, found from and with God by faith. The ground of nature in such a case denies sin, dishonors Christ, resists the Holy Spirit, and defies God the Father.

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:4-8

The Epistle to the Hebrews is not the only inspired comment on the primitive account of Cain and Abel. There the faith of Abel, who offered thereby a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, stands prominent; through which the former had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness to his gifts. He approached God as in himself fallen and sinful, in the faith of Another, presenting the sacrifice of a slain victim. This was righteousness, and Abel is characterized accordingly. “And Jehovah had respect to Abel and to his offering; but to Cain and to his offering he had not respect: And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And Jehovah said to Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, will it not be lifted up (lit. is there not a lifting up)? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and to thee [shall be] his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (ver. 7).”

Cain had neither faith, nor righteousness, nor love; but he was not a hypocrite. He was not insincere. He then thought with himself that he ought to bring an offering to Jehovah; and what, he considered, could be more acceptable to Him, what more suitable to himself, than fruit of that ground on which he put forth his daily toil? Alas! it was the offering of that worst “folly,” which slights sin, forgets judgment, ignores grace, exalts man, and dishonors God. To have respect to such an offering and to such an offerer was morally impossible on God's part. It would have been indifference to evil. Jehovah appreciated. Abel and his offering. It was the divine testimony that Abel was righteous, not Cain. Men are proud Godward who bring nothing but sin and are wholly insensible to it. The believer owns his ruin by sin, but looks to a Savior from God, This faith Abel expressed in his sacrifice; and God, rejecting impenitent self-satisfied Cain, testified to Abel's gifts, as he accepted himself.

Nothing rankles more in a natural man than disrespect to his religion; and it assumes the most deadly character where God's disapproval is even insinuated. Yet what can be plainer or more certain than that a sinful man cannot be accepted of God in himself or in virtue of anything he can do? Sin is not canceled so, nor is God thus glorified. The believer judges self before God, not selfishness only but all that is in man as he is, of which nature is proud till God unveils all, too late for salvation; and this justly, for the evil of man, and the resource of divine grace, were before Cain no less than Abel. But Abel laid it to heart believingly, Cain did not and paid the penalty of woe, as all must who proceed in his way (Jude 11): a danger specifically laid before men in the Christian profession. So speaks, expressly in view of “the last hour,” the apostle John in the First Epistle, (chap. 3:12), where Cain appears as of the evil one and slaying his brother; and this, because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. If sin begins toward God, it goes on toward man, even if that man were a brother with the loving claims of a relationship so near. Thus the irritation from a worship rejected of God broke out in hatred of the accepted man, and murder was the result then as ever since (Matt. 23:35, Rev. 18:24), For scripture lifts the veil and proclaims the truth, whatever appearances or pretensions say; the Cain worshippers hate and, if they can, slay those like Abel because their own works are evil, those of the persecuted, righteous.

Here skepticism plies its destructive craft, and imputes a mythical character to the God-inspired history of Moses. To the believer what can be more touching than the intercourse of God, not merely with Adam unfallen, but as here with wicked Cain? How shallow to reason from later reserve, when the law kept man at a distance, or from the total change of the gospel when the intimacy of redemption became expressly one not of sight but of faith! Ought we not with adoration to admire His patience with His enemy, no less than His grace with the fallen if they might believe and be blessed? Unbelief gains nothing by its cavil but loss of God; and what a loss! How strengthening to the soul is the enjoyment of what is alike simple and profound, in His thus adapting Himself to the nursery days of mankind—the same true God Who went down infinitely lower for us in Christ and His cross. But the wise and prudent love not what our Lord Jesus delighted in, as in their measure do babes to Whom the Lord of heaven and earth revealed them.

Superstition no less surely loses the truth, though it wears a more reverent veil and in its odor of sanctity deceives itself more completely than can vain and empty skepticism. Yet is it only man's religion, and the world's worship, in direct rebellion against that worship of the Father in spirit and truth which our Lord announced for the true worshippers of the hour that now is. The total ruin of man is as unknown as the salvation of God in Christ. Grace in God toward the sinner by faith is hateful to both alike; and hence these two, adversaries as they are ordinarily one to another, may be found habitually to unite against His truth and His love. At the same time one thankfully owns that among the superstitious rather than the skeptical appear individuals who believe in the Savior, and are so far taught of God, in spite of their system which under its earth-born clouds, swamps and hides the Christ they love. If superstition is a corruption of what is good and admits of degrees, skepticism also may not be absolute, but is essentially antagonistic to divine revelation. In their common hatred of God's grace and their common confidence in man, both flow from the same unbelief of the flesh, which will not own and abhor its own enmity to God, and will not trust His love in a Crucified Savior and the free gift of eternal life to every believer. Religious or profane, unbelief resists God's sentence on man as lost, and misled by the devil, strives to improve the flesh and ameliorate the world: the denial of Christ and the gospel.

Cain, like every unbeliever, was insensible to the truth. He judged himself as he was capable of coming to God with gifts of the earth, which expressed neither sin nor death, neither judgment nor expiation. How could Jehovah have respect to him or his offering? Nor was this all. The acceptance of Abel provoked his proud spirit to fury and unrelenting hatred: Abel, his righteous and weak brother, was its object ostensibly; God's grace really and beyond all. Jehovah interposed with words of truth and grace, all in vain. “Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, will it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin (or, a sin-offering) coucheth at the door.”

It was Dr. John Lightfoot who first, as far as I am aware, suggested “sin offering” here rather than “sin,” as preferred in the ancient and most modern versions. Many since that great Hebraist, have followed in his wake, notably Abp. Magee in his well-known work on the Atonement, who argues from the admitted and peculiar form of the connected verb (couching) as strongly confirming an animal ready for offering, and not the sin calling for it, which he regards as, to say the least of it, “a bold image.” Then he summons to his aid the grammatical fact of the substantive, which is feminine, with a verb of the masculine, which he follows Parkhurst in thinking perfectly consistent with the supposition of a sin offering, the victim, and not the thing “sin.” This however is a slender

proof, for in the passages cited the words stand as subject and predicate, and therefore do not require sameness of gender, as anyone can see by examination not only of Hebrew, but of Greek and Latin and perhaps almost all if not all languages. There is no doubt that, besides the primary sense of sin, the word admits of the secondary meanings of sin suffering (i.e., punishment) and sin offering; which latter the Septuagint; translators render by περ■, (or ■π■ρ) ■μαρτ■ας, as we also find in Rom. 8:3, Heb. 10:6, 8. There is also in the Sept.,. text or various readings, simply ■μαρτ■ας ■στ■ν, as for example in Ex. 29:14, Lev. 4:21, 25, 29, 33, and 34, (το■ τ■ς ■μ.), ver. 9. It is a question of context, as we may observe in ver. 13 of our chapter, where the Sept. gives α■τ■α, a charge, fault, or crime; as the Auth. and Revelation Versions have “punishment” in the text, “iniquity” in the margin. It is therefore legitimate to conceive that a sin offering may be meant in ver. 7, especially as Jehovah uttered the words, though it was reserved to the law to define and demand them in due time, for by law is full knowledge or acknowledgment of sin. The Septuagintal rendering of the clause is far from happy. “Didst thou sin, if thou hast brought it rightly, but didst not rightly divide it? Be still: unto thee” &c. The Vulgate like the English is intelligible. The question is whether Jehovah simply charges home the conviction of sin on the wrong-doer, or intimates a sacrificial means of getting cleared, according to the proposed correction. In this case a burnt offering would not be in place, since it is generally expressive of man's actual state in approaching God, not a specific bearing away of positive and personal wrong-doing as is here implied. Even if certainly thus, what believer can doubt that the mind of Jehovah has in these words Christ and His cross before Him? What grace in bringing sin to the door!

There was no ground in any case for wrath or despair. God is the God of grace now, as by-and-by He will judge by the Man He has raised from the dead: the witness to the believer that he will not be judged, being already justified; to the unbeliever that he cannot escape judgment, having refused saving grace in Christ Who will judge him. Meanwhile the title of the firstborn remains intact for the unbeliever over the younger brother that believes; just as the man's over the woman. What a just God is ours even to an unjust Cain!

“And Cain said to Abel his brother...And it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (ver. 8). The Samaritan, the Greek, the Syriac, the Latin, read “Let us go to the field.” But it is far more impressive to leave the words as they are in deference to the Hebrew, as striking almost in its silence as in what is said. What matters it to learn the terms by which Cain deceived his brother? How beautiful the comment on the dark deed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “He being dead yet speaketh”! But it is through his offering, not his suffering, though this shall never be forgotten above or beneath.

Chapter 79

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:9-12

Even the atrocious crime of Cain only brought Jehovah once more on the scene. What a contrast with pagan philosophy or poetic myth! The true God deeply concerns Himself with man.

“And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where [is] Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: [am] I the keeper of my brother? And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And now cursed [be] thou from the ground, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield its strength to thee; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be on the earth” (vers. 9-12).

Not that Jehovah was ignorant any more than heedless; but He would bring home secret sin, and to the guiltiest give space and ground for repentance. Yet in the case before us the conscience was hardened by religious pretension without reality, and exasperated by the acceptance of him who stood only in the faith of divine grace, though in fact Abel's works were righteous and Cain's evil. He that received the best good in hope did good in his measure; he that despised it envied and hated and slew his own brother, that looked up in dependence on the God of grace.

The questions of Jehovah were searching: not, as before to Adam, Where art thou? but Where is Abel thy brother? and What hast thou done? Adam went away from God, self-convicted, before God pronounced on his sin and made known the resource of His mercy in Christ. Cain to his sin against Jehovah added sin against man, no a neighbor wily but his brother: type of the world's, especially the Jew's, sin in the cross of Christ, Who had deigned to come of that people according to flesh. But unbelief blinds the heart to the highest favor which godless will can torture into a wrong to justify its own murderous pride. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak (excuse) for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other hath done, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [it is] that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause” (John 15:22-25). The Son of God come and rejected proved the state of the world and of Israel in particular.

But Cain was as impenitent as faithless, and had the effrontery to fall back at once on falsehood. He knew not! he knew not where his victim lay! Yea, to a lie he added the insolence of “Am I my brother's keeper?” Had he laid to heart Jehovah's remonstrance in ver. 6, 7, he would have judged himself and brought a suitable offering, thankful that his brother had profited by taking the shame of sin and giving God glory for His grace. But as indifferent to God as to his sins, he was puffed up and fell into the devil's fault and snare, manifesting himself as a child of the evil one.

His second question Jehovah follows up with the direct and terrible fact. “And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now cursed be thou from the ground, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand” (vers. 10, 11). The ground had fallen under curse for Adam's sin; and Cain, utterly thoughtless of sin and of God's sentence had brought of the fruit of it under his tillage, itself a consequence of the

fall, as an offering to Jehovah. This might have been, had man not sinned. To ignore sin is to show neither repentance nor faith, without which no sinner can find the way to God. No believer would have offered what lay under curse, what spoke of his own toil. Now the proof of the unbeliever's evil was flagrant: violence and falsehood and irreverence. For his brother's blood cried to Jehovah from the ground. He himself too most righteously was pronounced accursed, not the ground now but the man who tilled it, because of the wrath which burned to white heat, not at the instant but the more his haughty spirit brooded over his own worship disowned, his brother's accepted.

It is to be observed that nothing answering to civil government was instituted originally; nor was it invented by man during all the centuries which preceded the flood. God set it up for the first time after that great event which ushered in those dispensations of God which still run their course till the Lord come. Hence it is that Cain was not punished by man, as responsibility would have required after the sword was committed to Noah. Thenceforward did God solemnly require blood for blood: “whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man.” The sword of civil government was only borne by man as God's minister after the deluge.

Nor do we find explicitly the eternal judgment in Cain's case any more than in Adam's. No doubt words employed occasionally imply more to the ear of faith; but the open statement speaks of God's government of the earth, as was suitable in a revelation given to His people Israel. Therefore we hear not of heaven or of hell; but “when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield its strength to thee; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be on earth” (ver. 12). Heavier than before was to be the lot of him who slew his righteous brother, cursed himself on the reluctant earth, whence with difficulty he should draw his food, and where he should be a constant prey to a had conscience and anxious fears, shunned by all around him.

How blessed the contrast in the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel (Heb. 12)! This called for vengeance, as that will for blessing on the earth when the day arrives for the liberty of the glory, as Rom 8 speaks: how due to an infinitely better than Abel!

Chapter 80

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:13-15

The sin of Cain was not simply self-will in rebellion against God like Adam's, but despite of grace in the fallen state; which broke out in murderous violence against the accepted man, not a neighbor only but his brother. It was the type of the Jews' sin against Christ; and the sentence was not death but to be cursed from the earth, a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. This too we see strikingly verified in that people, who as yet show as little compunction as their prototype, tenacious of religious forms, but leaders of the world in rationalistic infidelity with a bad conscience. “And Cain said to Jehovah, My punishment (or iniquity) [is] greater than to be borne. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day on the face of the ground, and from thy face I shall be hid, and I shall be a wanderer and a fugitive in the earth; and it will come to pass [that] every one finding me shall slay me. And Jehovah said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, it shall be avenged sevenfold. And Jehovah set a mark on Cain, lest any finding him should kill him” (vers. 13-15).

Here we see the reaction, from unbelieving indifference and dislike of grace and hatred of its object as well as its source, to despair. How deep the lesson and solemn the warning! How hard the heart which so slightly regarded his own fratricidal guilt, to say nothing of such a brother as Abel; and which so ungratefully received the goodness of Jehovah in all His ways and words with himself, which left the door open for repentance and, it would seem, a sin offering also! But his pride rankled with hatred because of his unbelieving and rejected oblation, even though his primogeniture was expressly declared to be intact.

How true is that which our Lord lays down! If, on the one hand, a man love Me, he will keep My word, as, on the other, He that loveth me not keepeth not My sayings. The holy pleading of Jehovah with His vain worshipper never entered that unhappy heart. In man fallen the beginning of moral goodness is in the confession of one's badness; and faith in the Deliverer coming, and yet more as come, produces this repentance, which bows to God and confides in His mercy. So it was with Abel; not so with Cain whose bitterness rose up everywhere rebelliously, the form only changing with the circumstances. Cursed from the earth though he was, he was to live a wanderer here below: Jehovah does not act on the precepts of earthly government He had not yet divulged.

What space for self-judgment, if the appeals of Jehovah had been laid to heart! Heedless of His words, thankless for His longsuffering, Cain sheds not a tear over his murdered and martyred brother; his whole feeling is for himself. It was not his iniquity that overwhelmed his conscience. Of his punishment he complained as too great to be borne. That this is the true meaning of his words the context shows. “Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day on the face of the ground, and from Thy face I shall be hid.” But what care for Jehovah's face had he, who, without a victim, without the confession of sin and death, still less of a Savior to come, dared to approach Jehovah with the fruit of the ground cursed for man's sin? His worship betokened his wickedness, his incredulity, his dark unexercised conscience; as Abel's told out his sense of ruin, but confidence in the One revealed of God to destroy the destroyer on man's behalf and to His own glory.

We shall see ere long how little Cain respected the divine sentence which he next repeats: “And I shall be a wanderer and a fugitive in the earth.” It was really a most mild and merciful dealing with the wicked man whose hands were imbrued with his brother's blood, directly suited to furnish time for bitter reflection and self-loathing and anguish, had not sin hardened his heart into a mill-stone.

Bold as he was, his consciousness of guilt could not keep his fears hid: “And it will come to pass that everyone finding me shall slay me.” There however he was mistaken. Jehovah's long-suffering with His adversaries is amazing; as men now would feel and own, if they only let in light enough to see their own dark enmity to God. “And Jehovah said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, it shall be avenged sevenfold. And Jehovah set a mark on Cain, lest any finding him should kill him” (ver. 15).

Cain was preserved, notwithstanding that which deserved immediate and condign punishment; he was reserved for the special dealing of Jehovah at the end; for He had even a mark set on him (of what sort it is not said) that none should find and slay him. He had the wretched consolation that man's meddling with him to his hurt, certainly to seek his death, would be avenged to the fullest degree. How evident a type it is of God's dealings, and in the revealed character of Jehovah too, with the Jew because of His blood Who was raised up from among His brethren after the flesh to be the anointed king and prophet and priest on His throne, all this and more, being in His own right Son of the Highest and no less God than the Father, Who alone of men and as man had glorified Him in all respects to the uttermost! Yet was He, yea because He was and spoke the truth to the Jews and witnessed the good confession before the Gentiles, slain far more wantonly and ignominiously than Abel was of Cain. But God in that unspeakable wickedness and crime of man made Him sin for us, that we might become divine righteousness in Him: the deepest and most needed and withal most effectual proof of what the God of love is toward man in salvation of the lost at all cost to Himself and His Son. But the Jew, blinded by religious pride and hardened yet more than the Gentile in his guilty course of evil, remains preserved of God, and awaits the special dealings of Jehovah at the end of the age, in that unequaled tribulation which is his predicted portion, before the indignation shall cease and Jehovah's anger in the destruction of the enemies of Israel.

Chapter 81

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:16-17

The way of Cain thus demonstrates the worthlessness of natural religion to meet the need of fallen man, still more to suit Jehovah. It ignores both the ruin through sin and the nature of God. “Thou thoughtest,” says the Psalmist, “that I was altogether such a one as thyself.” Spiritual insensibility like this, when reproved of God as with Cain, becomes furious against such as by grace bow to the truth, even were they in the nearest ties of flesh and blood. Finding acceptance with God is intolerable in his eyes who was rejected of Him. There was no self-judgment, though Jehovah pointed out the way of mercy for the evil-doer, and maintained Cain's natural primacy intact. His religious observance covered a heart darkened and defiled by unbelief; the word of Jehovah slighted left him a prey to the evil one; and murder followed. For Satan is a murderer, as we saw him a liar in ch. 3. And Cain declares himself hid from Jehovah's face; as the man and his wife themselves from the presence of God when they heard His voice after their transgression.

But there is more for us to weigh in this instructive history. Despair not only closes the heart to the word of God, no matter what the grace He reveals, but it urges on the spirit to ever growing departure, and to fill up the void with present objects of sense. This is the fresh lesson taught here. The time was not yet arrived for the enemy to bring in idolatry, of which we never hear in scripture till after the deluge; and we are not entitled to affirm it without proof. In the antediluvian earth, bad as men were and ever sinking lower, they did not yet worship the powers of nature; still less did they change the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.

But Cain shows us the progress of an impenitent soul in a field for the energies of man without God. His worship is dropped; the world morally begins.

“And Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of Nod [wandering] east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived and bare Enoch. And he was building a city, and called the city's name, after the name of his son, Enoch” (vers. 16, 17).

The language of inspiration is most significant. Jehovah did not leave Himself without witness, even to wicked Cain. He knew the end from the beginning, yet remonstrated with him when He could not accept his offering, urging righteousness, but disclosing the resource of grace when wrong was done. He laid the conviction of guilt on Cain after his secret murder of the suffering saint whose blood cried unto Him from the ground. What interest even in so wicked a man! What long-suffering with man as he is!

How can any believer venture to treat such early and gracious interventions of Jehovah as other than plain and sober, however solemn, facts! Undoubtedly they became rarer as the rule in man's history here below; and this in large part because they really were vouchsafed for his learning at the beginning. In no sense are they to be regarded as mythical, but as His actual dealings with man for his profit now and evermore, if he have ears to hear.

It was Cain then who “went out from the presence of Jehovah,” and dwelt in that land which seems named from his exile; east of Eden. Jehovah was no longer before his mind. The world was his object. There were such as he feared already (ver. 14); and Jehovah had given or appointed for him a sign, lest any should find and kill him. Fear of Jehovah he had none. What actuated mankind later wrought in him henceforth. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” The space which grace gives for repentance, ungodliness perverts to pursue its own will and indulge its lusts, in defiance of God and His word. His sin is the “initiated," whose name his father gives to the city he was building: a most striking fact for that day, and above all notable in him whom Jehovah had sentenced to be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth.

It is the rise of civilization without God; the effort of man to make a paradise for himself and forget that he is an outcast through sin. Cain shows us the first budding of what was to bear the bitterest fruit. Psa. 49 is a moralizing of the godly Jewish remnant, who in it see man, whatever his pretensions, no better toward God than the beasts that perish. With all their pride, then self-seeking meets its rebuke, for death shall be their shepherd, they being appointed as a flock for Sheol, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. Their inward thought is, their houses are forever, their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. This their way is their folly; yet after them men approve their sayings. Such is the world, till the Lord appears and executes judgment.

Chapter 82

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:18-22

We have seen under Cain the cradle of public civilized life, the first building of a city; his son named with an expression of initiation or culture, earthly as it was; and the city named in the pride of life after the name of his son: a little beginning of that vast system to rise up ere long in opposition to God, where the knowledge of the Father and of His love never penetrates, where Christ and they that are His cannot escape hatred. It was the resource of man under curse in the land of his exile, who went forth from His presence Who convicted him of sin against man, his brother, no less than against God. Faith alone purifies" the heart; but faith was as far from him as love, the fruit of that divine love which unbelief never sees or feels. And as there was no dependence on God, so a bad conscience engendered dread of man: "whosoever findeth me shall slay me," his own words. Within that wretched breast grew up the notion of a city; as his son's name furnished the idea of perpetuating a family boast on earth. Jehovah's name was nothing to his soul, save one of horror, because of his own conscious guilt. He must die like his parents, but his city, like his family, shall continue forever, his dwellings from generation to generation, and then at least the name should not die. Expulsion from paradise, going out from Jehovah's presence, only gave the occasion to prove how a brave and determined man can rise above the dreariest lot and turn a land of wandering into a settled habitation and secured from marauders and other foes.

"And to Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael; and Mehujael begot Methushael; and Methushael begot Lemech. And Lemech took to him two wives; the name of the one [was] Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was father of such as dwell in tents and [have] cattle. And his brother's name [was] Jubal: he was father of all such as handle harp and pipe. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-Cain, forger of every tool of copper and iron; and Tubal-Cain's sister [was] Naamah" (vers. 18-22).

In this first genealogical draft, what is said of Lemech arrests us. He is marked as violating first the divine order of marriage. It was "not good that the man should be alone." But His provision was not two or more, but one woman, "a helpmate," his counterpart. Self-will, ever growing, did not not longer hesitate to traverse God's mind, evidenced sufficiently for those who fear God in His act: and "Lemech took to him two wives." From the beginning it was not so. Our Lord treats the account, not as poetic, or mythical, but as authentic and divinely authoritative fact. He also, we may notice, binds together chaps. i. and ii. as parts of one inspired narrative, whatever the difficulties or dreams of soi-disant higher criticism, not only erring but in its overweening vanity ignorant of the scriptures, and of the power of God, which faith alone in the nature of things can apprehend and enjoy. Polygamy is a direct transgression of that unity which is of its original institution according to God's will. The law no doubt permitted a measure of license in view of the hard-heartedness of Israel (i.e. of man in the flesh); but the law made nothing perfect: Christ vindicated, as He is, the truth.

The names of Lemech's wives are given, as of our first mother, and these only, with his daughter Naamah, of the antediluvian women. As Eve was named with express significance, it may well be that Lemech's choice denotes the gratification of taste in the growing world. For Adah means “beauty “, Zillah “shadow “, and Naamah “pleasant.” God was not in the thought of their designations. They fell in with the advances of civilization, which disdains the pilgrim and stranger character, so dear to faith. Earth is its home, and every accession to present loveliness is welcomed. Why think of sin or righteousness, of death and judgment, of Christ and His coming? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die. A “garden” of Epicurism soon opened when Paradise was closed; and votaries were not wanting long before Epicurus rose among the Greeks or Sadducees among the Jews.

Still clearer or more certain is the inference from the verses that follow. “And Adah bore Jabal: he was father of such as dwell in tents and [have] cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was father of all such as handle harp and pipe. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-Cain, forger of every tool of copper and iron; and Tubal-Cain's sister [was] Naamah.”

Agriculture was the early occupation of Cain, as Abel had been a shepherd. “Building a city” followed guilt and dread of man without the fear of God acting on a mind stimulated by energy and fertile of resource, and a heart set on earthly hopes. Thenceforward the race progressed rapidly. Some, of whom Jabal is chief, pleased themselves in the rough and adventurous life of nomad herdmen; others struck out and pursued the inventive path of art and science. For Jubal, brother of Jabal, was father of all such as handle stringed and wind instruments: inventions cherished almost alike without a city as within, as experience shows. Nor this only: Tubal-Cain follows, forger (or furbisher) of every tool for cutting instruments of copper and iron. The road to eminence lay open for man alienated from God and indifferent to it, independent of God in will, if not really, and of course wrongly. He acts of and for himself to make the land of his wandering his paradise, of which he is the more proud because these useful or pleasant inventions he can boast of as his own. But he is God's creature, and responsible to obey, and must give account. By Adam's sin he lost his true place and relationship; and instead of seeking another and a better open to faith in the Second man, he prefers his own will, his fancied independence, which is no other than Satan's service, with Satan's doom at the end.

It may not be amiss to notice how the word of God overthrows the modern speculator who assumes the three ages of stone, bronze, and iron, through which they will have early mankind to have passed in pre-historic times. Even had we no inspired record, enough has been gathered from facts of the past to dispel the illusion. Epochs in chronology they are not in any sense. There are regions even now, and not all confined to Australia, whose use of rough stone implements would thus fix them in the palmolithic age. A similar condition was attested a century ago of races in the northern and eastern districts of the Russian empire, European and Asiatic. And we have good authority (Prof. Rygh, of Christiania, before the Stockholm meeting of the International Congress of Pre-historic Archeology) that, north of Nordland in Norway, the inhabitants remained in the practice of the so-called Stone age till the beginning of last century, though for hundreds of years in communication with people who used iron. See Academy, August 29, 1874. Again, the races of Mexico, Central America, and Peru, employed weapons of obsidian and implements of bronze, when the Spaniards overran and conquered them. So it was in the early age of Greece, which used stone and bronze together, but not iron any more than did S. America. And what

evidence is there of a stone age in Egypt, however early we trace the facts? No one doubts that a few traces of stone appear, and even bronze only prevailed a short while. In Babylonia both flint and bronze were used for war and peace; as were leaden pipes and jars, along with iron; as, much later, stone implements continued to be used, when ancient civilization had reached its zenith with cutting instruments of metal in familiar use (Smith's Anc. Hist. 375).

To this day the people in Northern Abyssinia use stone hatchets and flint knives, along with iron poignards. And as to cave dwellers, they are still found, not only in distant lands, but even in a land so near as Spain, where many perished quite recently through sudden floods which surprised whole families. It is a question, not of antiquity, still less of definite ages in that imagined succession, but of civilization; and scripture is express that the settled, ordered, and combined life of a city, as well as the working of metals, and the invention of musical instruments within two main divisions, began early in the life of Adam. The mythical treatment of the question is entirely due to skeptical men of science who prefer hypothesis to well ascertained fact, and seem pleased in opposing revelation.

Chapter 83

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 4:23-26

We have had in Cain the moral history of man outside Paradise, sin fully developed, not against Jehovah only, but, because his own works were evil and his religious service an offering of impenitent folly and rejected, against his believing and righteous brother Abel. Along side of it the long-suffering yet righteous dealings of Jehovah are of the highest interest and instruction, the manifest foreshadowing of His ways in due time with His people Israel, who would abandon promise by God's grace in Christ for conditions of law which flesh presumes to fulfill to its own ruin. Like Cain too, the Jews slew in result Jesus Christ the Righteous, though He came of them according to flesh, their own Messiah, Who is over all, God blessed forever. Hence they also are gone out from the presence of Jehovah, cursed from the earth for blood-guiltiness, dwell in a land of wandering exile, and, in the evident loss for the present of their divine mission of blessing to all families of the earth, betake themselves to city life, to bold adventure, to the inventions of art and science, and to the amenities of the civilized world. Man's will governs and pursues its onward way, totally indifferent to God's will and glory.

It is therefore not man only, but the firstborn in sin, answering to God's favored people, men religious after the flesh, but in fact unjust and rebellious even to the death of the Righteous One, Whom by the hand of lawless men they did crucify and slay. By fierce imprecation of all the people, His blood is on them and on their children, and their land as yet like the potter's field to bury strangers in, justly called Akeldama, Blood-Field.

This is followed up in the account of Lemech's words to his wives, on which tradition has hung its myths, and theologians have speculated through not seeing the divine mind and purpose to be gathered from the scripture. Either way God's word is not honored by faith; and who can wonder that edification fails?

“And Lemech said unto his wives,

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;

Ye wives of Lemech, hearken to my speech:

For a man I have slain for wounding me,

And a youth for hurting me;

If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold,

Then Lemech too seventy and seven[fold]” (vers. 23, 24).

It is the first recorded poetry in the Bible; and God is in no way the object, but self for this life: another and weighty addition to the picture of the world. Whatever the historical circumstances, the aim was to reassure his wives who dreaded the consequences of his violent deeds. Lemech appears to plead that the blood he had shed was shed in self-defense, not murderously like Cain; and therefore he avails himself of the divine shelter of his own forefather as the surest pledge of

intervention on his own behalf.

The fact is certain that God watches over His ancient people, guiltier far than Cain, but of blood that speaks better than that of Abel. For if the Jew has been kept, in the face of man ever hostile and ready to slay, in the face of more spiteful Christendom, Greek or Latin, utterly ignorant of God's secret purpose to pardon and bless in the end, neither bloody crusades of old nor cruel ukases now, will succeed to exterminate Israel, but only to bring punishment another day on their adversaries. There they are, wanderers but preserved, as no people ever was, for everlasting mercy when their heart turns to God and Him Whom they cast out. And here in Lemech's words, though he may have meant nothing higher than the sad facts of Cain's deed or his own, can we not hear the inspired image of the Jew's confession in the latter day? Assuredly we know on authority which cannot be broken, that the repentant Jew will yet own, like their forefathers in the analogous case of Joseph, but about One greater and better than Joseph, We were very guilty concerning our brother. For the prophet declares what divine goodness and truth will yet fulfill:— “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; 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” (Zech. 12:10).

Lemech's saying, therefore, is an unconscious prophecy like that of Caiaphas, but of the Jews acknowledging, not hiding, blood-guiltiness (Psa. 1), the blood of their own King: and of what a King! Himself, the sacrifice for the sin which slew Him; and those who in their blind unbelief were thus guilty brought to true faith and real repentance, thenceforward to have God blessing them, causing His face to shine upon (with) them that His way may be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations.

“And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Sheth: for God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, for Cain slew [him]. And to Sheth, to him also was born a son, and he called his name Enoch: then it was begun to call on Jehovah's name” (vers. 25, 26).

Abel had been cut off; Cain is not recognized here, save as guilty. All hangs upon the one that God (Elohim) appointed. It is not nature's hopes, but, after all had failed, the intervention of God's grace, and man taking his true place, weak, wretched; for so Sheth called his son. Then too it was begun to call upon Jehovah's name. So it will be in power and fullness another day. It is not Christ come and slain, but the coming Son of man. Jehovah will be owned fully. In that day, says the same prophet, shall Jehovah be one, and His name one. Rivals shall vanish away, false religion no more lift its head. The absurdity of the dovetailed hypothesis is here plain, as is the divine wisdom in the use of designations purposely employed. Men too unbelieving to understand, too conceited or impatient to learn, invented it to throw the blame off themselves on the book. Only think of the credulity of such as believe them instead of God!

Chapter 84

The Glory of God

Here is another privilege of faith, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. To the natural man this may seem beyond all measure. But God, Who has given His own Son, does not bless by halves. It could not be so, nor ought it to be; for Christ now is the title of him who believes. One's own name is merged in that of the Son of God. He is the first to own his sinfulness and his ruin without Christ; but now that he has received Christ, he has the title to become a child of God. He is justified by faith. He has access to God ever open; and he stands in His perpetual favor. And now he learns from God's word that, if he look onward into the everlasting future, he may and ought to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

This hope beyond all doubt is an immense thing to boast. But is it not a well-founded boast, if it rest upon Christ and Christ's work by faith? Nevertheless it is as simple as it is sure. It is no question of man's desert, but of Christ's; and Christ will not leave His own separate from Himself in heaven. He has already entered glory, and He will have those that are His own in the same glory as Himself. “The glory which Thou hast given me, I have given them” (John 17:22). Therefore it is that in Rev. 21:10, 11, the holy Jerusalem, the symbol of the glorified church, is seen “having the glory of God” in the day that is coming.

But we are also called to rejoice in the assured hope of the glory of God even now. It is now that we want its power in our souls. It strengthens us against the false and vain hopes of the world. There are few greater snares than human honor and praise; for they destroy faith. “How can ye believe,” said our Lord, “who receive glory one of another, and seek not the glory which is from God alone?” John 5:44. So in John 12:42, 43, we are told that, although from among the rulers many believed on Him, yet on account of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God.

When Adam was in paradise, the glory of God was not set before him as a hope. He was placed in a garden of delights, where all was very good. He had a test of dependence and obedience. He was forbidden to eat of the tree of knowing good and evil, whilst free to eat of every other tree in the garden. Under this tenure he was to keep his first estate; but he fell, and all was changed. He became an outcast from Paradise, subject to death, and after death to judgment: as scripture elsewhere declares, both appointed to men, neither to man in original innocence. But even then grace interfered and held out another man in prospect, the Second man—the last Adam. From that day all permanent blessing from God is by faith, the faith of Christ; and till He came, it was altogether in hope, nor could it be otherwise.

But now the Son of God is come and salvation is a fact; a reality to faith before the day of glory when it will be manifested to every eye. Hence it is written that all sinned, and do come short of the glory of God. Mankind are on a footing quite different from Adam. They are born in a state of sin, and they add their own sins. They are out of the first estate of man, being exiles from Paradise. The goodly garden is not their portion, and of the glory of God they come short. There was no abiding in pristine innocence: can men stand before the glory of God? This is the only alternative

now: to be lost as men are in unbelief, living and dying in their sins; or, believing in Christ, to be saved and to exult in hope of the glory of God.

Only Christ, only the gospel of God, can save any by faith. Hence the believer is now called by glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3), by God's own glory and by virtue. It is the love of God in the gift of Christ which wins a man when ungodly, careless, or hard. It is God's love in Christ which breaks down the proud heart (“by grace ye are saved”). But the glory of God in the future has the most powerful influence in the midst of present snares. Therefore has God revealed it as our hope through Christ and with Christ, to lift the soul above all existing attractions and depressions. He has called us by His own glory, and the virtue or moral courage that refuses the gratification of self, which is opposed to the will of God. We are therefore said to be sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ no less than to the sprinkling of His blood. 1 Peter 1:2.

How blessed then is the believer's portion! Though he had been in God's sight without righteousness of his own, positively unrighteous, he is now justified by faith. Such is the righteousness of God, Who gave His Son, and gave Him to die, that he might be not only forgiven but justified. He has therefore peace with God. He is humbled to the dust when he looks back on himself; but Christ is his peace; and it was made by the blood of His cross. Nor this only; he can approach God in perfect favor as his present standing, and he can boast in the hope of the glory of God for his unending future.

How strong the contrast with man as he is naturally, even if highly moral, benevolent, and religious after the flesh! For such men are either self-satisfied, because insensible to God as He is and to themselves as they are, easily compounding with Him for what they deem a little and inevitable sin; or they are in gloom and terror when they think of God as their Judge, and strive to earn mercy or a mitigated sentence by hard labor and penance beforehand. The true God is unknown, because the word of Christ is not believed, and the soul has never learned from the Spirit's teaching His value for the sacrifice of Christ. So precious is it in His sight that it procures peace for all that is past, favor for the present, and a place in the glory of God for all that is to come.

Chapter 85

Go Call Thy Husband

John 4:16-18

It is the way of grace to speak and act in a love beyond creature thought to one that deserves only blame. This had the Lord Jesus shown thus far to the Samaritan. In every way He is the image of the invisible God. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Nevertheless grace alone suffices not; for man is fallen, evil, and hostile to God without knowing it aright if at all. Now his ruin morally must be known if he is to be saved and blessed. He must therefore know himself as well as God; and himself in God's presence as God sees him. How can this be? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And He is “full” of grace and truth. Grace and truth came by Him; and both shine as none can deny, through His person and words on the Samaritan. She felt already in a measure His grace; but truth enters through the conscience in order that both grace and truth should be really known in the soul. Therefore, when the woman betrays by her dark request in ver. 15 (“Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw”) that she was still outside the marvelous light of God, “Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband and come hither.” It seems abrupt and at first sight strange. It was the direct path to her conscience and divinely wise. For grace cannot accomplish its purpose, God's purpose of love, till man is brought to see and own the truth of his own state. Then only can one appreciate the truth of what God is in the holy mercy that saves the unholy through Christ our Lord; and righteously too, for sin must be judged as it deserves.

The woman was still walking like the rest of the world in a vain show. From this the Lord delivers her. “Go, call thy husband, and come hither.” “I have no husband,” she answers quickly. “Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly” (ver. 18). How overwhelming, yet how gracious! Not a reproach in His mouth; but He Who knew all men drew from her, by a word of His, the confession of her actual state of sin and shame, and set before her such a sketch of her life as testified to her conscience, that in her case at least all things were naked and laid bare to His eyes with Whom she had to do.

Her answer proves that His words had entered her conscience, and that her soul fell under them. There was no effort to parry, no attempt to excuse, no seeking to hide or escape from His presence. On the contrary, she stood there a convicted sinner and owned, not merely that He spoke truly, but that she perceived Him to be “a prophet” (ver. 19). It was the word of God living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. She was manifest in His sight, but by the grace now applied, however humbled to the dust, content to own what she really was and to receive from Him as from God's mouth. For His is not man's word, but, as it is truly, God's word, which also works in every soul that believes.

Thus divine light must act out he soul now, in order that for it all things may be real before God. Hence where His word enters, discovering a life of sin and self, yet in full grace on God's part, the soul bows to God in confession. There is moral reality truly begun, however little developed in detail. How wondrous is God's intervention in Christ, as worthy of Him as suitable and cleansing to the sinner! It is the washing of water by the word, as says the apostle, speaking of Christ's love to the, church all the way through. And this the woman here proves.

So it ever is. The message of God to sinners (and all are such), when by grace received, deals with the conscience and not merely with the affections. Repentance ensues no less than faith; repentance by God's word judging all within, and faith in receiving God's word and God's gift from without. This now is fully revealed in Christ; and He is life, “Christ our life.” For the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining, and in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and consequently the seal of the Spirit. For it is of God that the soul, repentant and believing, should know grace and truth, beyond even what the Samaritan could then bear. Nor does any falsehood more dishonor the gospel than the dim religious light or rather darkness, which would plunge souls and even believing souls in uncertainty, and belie the God of all grace as if He begrudged the blessing to the contrite spirit.

Listen not, dear reader, to those enemies of the cross of Christ, who are so blinded as to teach that our Lord practiced reserve about His own precious work. It was He that announced, even before His Galilean ministry, that the Son of man must be lifted up (that is, on the cross) that whosoever believeth on Him may have eternal life; and that God so loved the world, the sinful, guilty, Christ-rejecting world, as to give His Only-begotten that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life. It was He, that in its course and in the presence of incredulous and blaspheming scribes, would have a most crowded company to know that the Son of man hath power, yea rightful title, on earth to forgive sins—a title assuredly not less since He died and rose, and has all authority given Him in heaven and on earth, saying to His servants, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation. It was He Who even before this lovingly rebuked the aspiring or murmuring twelve, who were in danger from vain-glory, with the words, “The Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” That Satan would stick at nothing to cloak from needy souls such words of grace is as certain as that the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost, among other ends worthy of God, to empower those that preach the gospel unto all the nations, beginning from the city wherein our Lord was crucified.

It is thus that the soul meets God, not in truth only but in grace; it is in His Son, Jesus Christ. “This is the true God and eternal life.” It is after the sin, but before the judgment, that the dead may hear and live—believing, have eternal life and come not into judgment, but have passed from death into life. Less than this is not the gospel of God—is not Christianity—as the Holy Spirit has revealed it.

Chapter 86

God Created

He Who “in the beginning” created the universe is also the source of spiritual life, of a divine nature as in 2 Peter 1. Every creature above or beneath is the fruit of His will and power, He sovereign and good, they dependent and subject responsibly if not in fact; for self-will, sin, entered both heaven and earth. As of old, so now, all blessing is in the Son, in Whom life was and is. The Spirit of God took His part then as He does to-day according to the scriptures. From above is every good giving and every perfect gift, from Him with Whom can be no variation nor shadow of turning. Hence, as sin completed brings forth death, He was pleased to bring forth believers by word of truth that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. There is for a fallen creature no holiness possible, no walk acceptable to God, save through faith in virtue of life above the creature; and this is now set in the clearest light of God's word. “He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God, the life he hath not.” Our Lord here below had presented the matter so fully that mistake is inexcusable. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life” (John 5:24, R. V.).

This is grace, which the sinner needs to save him; the believer knows it in Christ. But, even as to nature, how the Bible opens as becomes a revelation from God! There is no discussion, no reasoning to prove the being of God, no unfolding of His attributes. He acts in power, and speaks with authority, as the true God. He is good, does good, and pronounces on good, as One that has pleasure in it. If from the world's creation His invisible things, His everlasting power and divinity, are clearly seen, being apprehended through the things that are made, how much more does revelation make known? Science is here blank ignorance; it knows not and never can know anything of originations. Its field is the investigation of phenomena, and it rises by generalization to the fixed laws which govern what exists in nature. No doubt it may advance, to a fuller degree and a more exact distribution, by a better knowledge. But from the beginning there was a reality in God's creation to be investigated; and man, whatever his hostile will to hide and lose himself in second causes, cannot escape the conviction that there must be a first cause, God the Creator. He it is Who made known His ways to Moses, His doings to the sons of Israel. He it is Who later revealed Himself in Jesus, His Son, His Only-begotten, in Whom is life eternal for the believer, without Whom abides the wrath of God for him that disbelieves. To reject the grace of God in Christ is to remain in unremoved guilt and death, with a fearful expectation of judgment to come.

Only the fool has said in his heart, No God; he is fool morally and in the worst sense. Reasoning, if sound, may argue that so this or that must be; revelation says that so it is. Nothing is so simple, satisfactory, and deep as the truth. This alone in grace meets man's ignorance and his need: the truth answers both, now and forever. Believers are entitled to say, We know, and this on God's testimony, as sure as it is clear, forming the consciousness of the new man by Gods Spirit.

God, and God only, has self-being. He is the “I am,” and so speaks of Himself. He is the Most High, the Almighty, and the Eternal, and thus made His name known in due time; and He alone

can rightly say “I will.” So said the Son when incarnate here below; which could not be, if He were not one with the Father, as truly God, and therefore as competent by the sacrifice of Himself to save righteously, as to create.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Here we are not told of all the beings created at the first, for elsewhere we read of the angels of His might. Nor have we particulars first of the states, and then of the denizens, of the earth, before man was created under the new conditions of the six days followed by the sabbath. Previously to this, and it may be (according to men's research) traversing vast periods, far beyond the time-measures which concur with the human race, we have two revealed facts: creative energy originating the universe (Gen. 1:1); a subsequent state of utter confusion, into which (not the heavens, but) the earth was thrown (Gen. 1:2), before that reconstitution which made it the suited sphere for the moral dealings of God with mankind, and the display of His own grace in Christ. Then Adam's transgression wrought ruin to himself, the race, and the earth; but God will have His eventual triumph over evil power, as well as weakness, through His own Son, the Word made flesh. For He was the perfect pattern of obedience, in life and death the overcomer of Satan, the accomplisher of redemption already by His blood, about to come again to effect redemption by power, not only for those that are His for heaven and earth, but for all the creation itself, enthralled even yet by reason of the first man's fall, to be delivered for glory by the Second. The Holy Spirit will not restore all, whatever His blessed work in that day; it is an honor reserved for Him Who suffered on the cross: Jesus is Heir of all things.

Petty unbelief mocks at the littleness of the earth compared with the immense and countless system disclosed by adequate telescopes. Yet here, not in some distant star physically far transcending our sun, God thought fit to make and try man, and, as the needed measure with the fallen race, to wash away his corruption and violence in the waters of the deluge. Here He called out Abram and his seed to a land they shall yet truly and forever enjoy. Here He tested Israel by the law, and gave them priests, prophets, and kings till there was no remedy. Here, as sin had entered by the first man, He sent His Son, a man Christ Jesus, to vanquish in every way the enemy of God and man, and to deliver by His death and resurrection such of Satan's victims as believe. Here therefore was displayed God's moral glory in the humiliation, obedience, and cross of the Son of Man. Here consequently shall His glory be manifested, in Christ and all that are His above and below, to the blessing of the universe, when Jehovah reigns and the earth rejoices, set free from thralldom to Satan and his blinded instruments. No doubt the glory above is higher than what the earth shall enjoy, and those who suffered with Christ on earth shall be glorified with Him on high. In the Father's house, where He is now, they will have their deepest bliss in His love; but they are also to reign with Him over the earth in that day.

Nor is it for believers to heed the debasing dream of the evolutionist, as credulous of a mere materialist craze as heedless of the only sure and safe, holy and majestic, account of creation, which God gave through His inspired servant Moses. In the Bible alone, in Christianity at last revealed, we have the key to the unique place of man. It was in view of His own Son, in due time to partake of blood and flesh, in order to glorify Him in that nature which had so long played Him false; in it to defeat the great foe; in it to expiate sins; in it to intercede now as Priest; in it by-and-by to reign (as we who believe shall reign with Him) till all things be subjected, when He shall deliver up the kingdom, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may be all in all throughout

eternity. It is the revealed truth which alone vindicates, alone puts in their place, both God and man, the earth and all things.

See then, my reader, that as you have heard the word of truth, you believe it; for it is the gospel of salvation to all that receive the Savior on God's word. If he that disregarded Moses' law died without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses, of how much worse punishment shall he be judged worthy that trod underfoot the Son and counted the blood of the covenant a common thing?

Chapter 87

God Dwelling in Us and We in God

The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested and has been imparted to us: thus we are partakers of the divine nature. The affections of that nature acting in us rest by the power of the Holy Ghost in the enjoyment of communion with God Who is its source: we dwell in Him and He in us. The actings of this nature prove that He dwells in us. The first thing is the statement of the truth that, if we thus love, God Himself dwells in us. He who works this love is there. But He is infinite and the heart rests in Him. We know at the same time that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. But this passage, so rich in blessing, demands that we should follow it with order.

He begins with the fact that love is of God. It is His nature: He is its source. Therefore he who loves is born of God, is a partaker of His nature. Also he knows God, for he knows what love is, and God is its fullness. This is the doctrine which makes everything depend on our participation in the divine nature (vers. 7, 8).

Now this might be transformed on the one hand into mysticism, by leading us to fix our attention on our love for God, and love in us, that being God's nature (as if it was said, love is God, not God is love), and by seeking to fathom the divine nature in ourselves; or to doubt on the other, because we do not find the effects of the divine nature in us as we would. In effect he who does not love (for the thing, as ever in John, is expressed in an abstract way) does not know God; for God is love. The possession of the nature is necessary to the understanding of what that nature is, and for the knowledge of Him Who is its perfection.

But, if I seek to know it and have or give the proof of it, it is not to the existence of the nature in us that the Spirit of God directs the thoughts of the believers as their object. God, he has said, is love; and this love has been manifested toward us in that He has given His only Son, that we might live through Him. The proof is not the life in us, but that God has given His Son in order that we might live, and further to make propitiation for our sins. God be praised! we know this love, not by the poor results of its action in ourselves, but in its perfection in God, and that even in a manifestation of it toward us, which is wholly outside ourselves. It is a fact outside ourselves which is the manifestation of this perfect love. We enjoy it by participating in the divine nature, we know it by the infinite gift of God's Son. The exercise and the proof of it are there.

The full scope of this principle, and all the force of its truth, are stated and demonstrated in that which follows. It is striking to see how the Holy Spirit, in an epistle which is essentially occupied with the life of Christ and its fruits, gives the proof and full character of love in that which is wholly without ourselves. Nor can anything be more perfect than the way in which the love of God is here set forth from the time it is occupied with our sinful state till we stand before the judgment-seat. God has thought of all: love toward us as sinners, in verses 9, 10; in us as saints, verse 12; perfect in our condition in view of the day of judgment, in verse 17.

In the first verses the love of God is manifested in the gift of Christ: first, to give us life—we were dead; secondly, to make propitiation—we were guilty. Our whole case is taken up. In the second of these verses (10) the great principle of grace, what love is, where and how known, is clearly stated in words of infinite importance as to the very nature of Christianity. Herein is love, not that we loved God (that was the principle of the law), but in that He loved us, and sent His Son to make propitiation for our sins. Here then it is that we have learned that which love is. It was perfect in Him when we had no love for Him; perfect in Him in that He exercised it towards us when we were in our sins, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for them. The apostle then affirms, no doubt, that he who loves not knows not God. The pretension to possess this love is judged by this means; but in order to know love we must not seek for it in ourselves, but must seek it manifested in God when we had none. He gives the life which loves, and He has made propitiation for our sins.

And now with regard to the enjoyment and privileges of this love:—if God has so loved us (this is the ground that he takes), we ought to love one another (ver. 11).

No one has ever seen God: if we love one another, God dwells in us. His presence, Himself dwelling in us, rises in the excellency of His nature above all the harriers of circumstances, and attaches us to those who are His. It is God in the power of His nature which is the source of thought and feeling and diffuses itself among those in whom it is. One can understand this. How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us. What happiness! What a bond! Does He not communicate Himself Co the soul? Does He not render it conscious of His presence in love? Assuredly, yes. And if He is thus in us, the blessed source of our thoughts, can there be fear or distance, or uncertainty, with regard to what He is? None at all. His love is perfected in us. We know Him as love in our souls: the second great point in this remarkable passage, the enjoyment of divine love in our souls.

The apostle has not yet said, “We know that we dwell in him.” He will say it now. But, if the love of the brethren is in us, God dwells in us. When it is in exercise, we are conscious of the presence of God, as perfect love in us. It fills the heart, and thus is exercised in us. Now this consciousness is the effect of the presence of His Spirit as the source and power of life and nature in us. He has given us, not “His Spirit,” the proof that He dwells in us, but “of His Spirit:” we participate by His presence in us in divine affections through the Spirit; and thus we not only know that He dwells in us, but the presence of the Spirit, acting in a nature which is that of God in us, makes us conscious that we dwell in Him. For He is the infiniteness and perfection of that which is now in us.

The heart rests in this, and enjoys Him, and is hidden from all that is outside Him, in the consciousness of the perfect love in which (thus dwelling in Him) one finds oneself. The Spirit makes us dwell in God and gives us thus the consciousness that He dwells in us. Thus we, in the savor and consciousness of the love that was in it, can testify of that in which it was manifested beyond all Jewish limits, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We shall see further another character of it.

If we compare verse 12 of our chapter 4. with chapter 1:18 of the Gospel by John, we shall better apprehend the scope of the apostle's teaching here. The same difficulty, or if you will, the same truth is presented in both cases. No one has ever seen God. How is this met?

In John 1:18 the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. He Who is in the most perfect intimacy, in the most absolute proximity and enjoyment of the Father's love, the one, eternal, sufficient object that knew the love of the Father as His only Son, has revealed Him unto men as He has Himself known Him. What is the answer in our Epistle to this same difficulty? “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” By the communication of the divine nature, and by the dwelling of God in us, we inwardly enjoy Him as He has been manifested and declared by His only Son. His love is perfect in us, known to the heart, as it has been declared in Jesus. The God who has been declared by Him dwells in us. What a thought! that the answer to the fact that no one has ever seen God is equally that the only Son has declared Him, and that He dwells in us. What light this throws upon the words, “which thing is true in Him and in you!" For it is in that Christ has become our life that we can thus enjoy God and His presence in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. And from this we have seen the testimony of verse 14 flow.

We see also the distinction between God dwelling in us and we in God, even in that which Christ says of Himself. He abode always in the Father and the Father in Him; but He says, “The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works,” Through His word the disciples ought to have believed in them both; but in that which they had seen—in His works—they had rather seen the proof that the Father dwelt in Him. They who had seen Him had seen the Father. But when the Comforter was come, at that day they should know that Jesus was in His Father—divinely one with the Father.

He does not say that we are in God, nor in the Father, but that we dwell in Him, and that we know it, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have already noticed that He says (chap. 3:24) “hereby we know that he [God] abideth in us because he has given us his Spirit.” Here he adds, We know that we dwell in God, because it is—not the manifestation, as a proof, but—communion with God Himself. We know that we dwell in Him; always, as a precious truth—an unchangeable fact; sensible, when His love is active in the heart. Consequently it is to this activity that the apostle immediately turns by adding, “and we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” This was the proof for every one of that love which the apostle enjoyed—as all believers do—in his own heart. It is important to notice how the passage thus first presents the fact of God's dwelling in us, then the effect (as He is infinite)—our dwelling in Him, and then the realization of the first truth in conscious reality of life.

We may remark here that, while God's dwelling in us is a doctrinal fact and true of every real Christian, our dwelling in Him, though involved in it, is connected with our state. Thus chapter 3:24, “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.” Chapter 4:16, “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.”

Love one to another is indeed taken as the proof that God is there, and His love is perfected in us—this to contrast the manner of His presence with that of Christ (John 1:18). But what we thus know is dwelling in Him and He in us. In each case this knowledge is by the Spirit. Verse 15 is the universal fact: verse 16 brings it fully up to its source. “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” His nature is there declared in itself (for we joy in God); God is love, and He who

dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. There is none anywhere else: if we partake of His nature, we partake of it; and he who abides in it abides in God Who is fullness of it. But then remark that while what He is is insisted on, His personal being is carefully insisted on. He dwells in us.

And here comes in a principle of deep importance. It might perhaps be said that this dwelling of God in us and our dwelling in Him depended on a large measure of spirituality, the apostle having in fact spoken of the highest possible joy. But although the degree in which we intelligently realize it is in effect a matter of spirituality, yet the thing in itself is the portion of every Christian. It is our position, because Christ is our life, and because the Holy Ghost is given us. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” How great the grace of the gospel! How admirable our position because it is in Jesus that we possess it! It is important to hold fast this, that it is the portion of every Christian, the joy of the humble, the strongest reproach to the conscience of the careless.

The apostle explains this high position by the possession of the divine nature—the essential condition of Christianity. A Christian is one who is a partaker of the divine nature, and in whom the Spirit dwells. But the knowledge of our position does not flow from the consideration of this truth, though it depends on its being true, but of that of God's own love, as we have already seen. And the apostle goes on to say, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” This is the source of our knowledge and enjoyment of these privileges, so sweet and so marvelously exalted, but so simple and so real to the heart when they are known.

We have known love, the love that God has for us, and we have believed it. Precious knowledge! by possessing it we know God; for it is thus that He has manifested Himself. Therefore can we say, “God is love.” There is none beside. Himself is love. He is love in all its fullness. He is not holiness, He is holy; but He is love. He is not righteousness; He is righteous.

By dwelling then in love I dwell in Him, which I could not do unless He dwelt in me, and this He does. Here he puts it first, that we dwell in Him, because it is God Himself Who is before our eyes, as the love in which we dwell. Therefore, when thinking of this love, I say that I dwell in Him, because I have in my heart the consciousness of it by the Spirit. At the same time this love is an active energetic principle in us; it is God Himself Who is there. This is the joy of our position—the position of every Christian.

Verses 14 and 16 present the twofold effect of the manifestation of this love.

First, the testimony that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Quite outside the promises made to the Jews (as everywhere in John), this work is the fruit of that which God Himself is. Accordingly whosoever confesses Jesus to be that Son enjoys all the fullness of its blessed consequences.

Secondly, the Christian has believed for himself in this love, and he enjoys it according to its fullness. There is only this modification of the expression of the glorious fact of our portion—that the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is primarily here the proof that God dwells in us, although the other part of the truth equally says that he who confesses Him dwells also in God.

When speaking of our portion in communion, as believing in His love, it is said, that he who dwells in love dwells in God; for in effect that is where the heart is. Here also the other part of the truth is equally true; God dwells in him likewise.

I have spoken of the consciousness of this dwelling in God, for it is thus only that it is known. But it is important to remember that the apostle teaches it as a truth that applies to every believer. These might have excused themselves for not appropriating these statements as too high for them; but this fact judges the excuse. This communion is neglected. But God dwells in every one who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, and he in God. What an encouragement for a timid believer! What a rebuke for a careless one!

J. N. D.

Chapter 88

God Said

Great as creation is, God's word embraces far more and deeper things. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” It is therefore worthy of all acceptation, whatever He may say and whatever the theme. Thereby is revealed the truth by Him Who knows it perfectly.

In Heb. 11:3 we read, “By faith we understand that the worlds, have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear” (R. V.) Evolution is an hypothesis which leaves out God and denies creation. It is a mere effort of imagination to account for the universe, and an effort that sets aside that definite and universally observed fact which underlies all natural science, the permanence of species. So the ancients, in the West as well as the East, suggested cosmogonies no less fanciful. But the word of God is now scripture, which alone lets us hear what is worthy of God and satisfactory to man. “He spake, and it was; He commanded, and it stood fast.” Details are only revealed when man was about to be created. For scripture is a moral book; and God's good pleasure is in men. Hence, when the days” begin, how often we read in Gen. 1 “God said.”

Alas sin soon followed. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). As man thus universally failed in uprightness and fell under death, it became thenceforth, if he were not to be abandoned to ruin and despair, a question of divine righteousness and of life superior to death. And no sooner did God appear in judgment of the evil than He spoke of the Savior, the Second Man, the woman's Seed; Who, Himself bruised, should bruise the serpent's head. This was what “God said” to meet the fallen. And faith received it. So we learn in Abel; so the elders had witness borne to them. They believed God's word; they looked for a deliverer from sin and Satan. It was plain that He Who had authority had power. They in their way saw, as He saw fully, that everything He had made was very good. They heard that Adam and Eve had violated the LORD God's commandment. But they also learned that, if they listened to the evil tempter and transgressed, He did not leave them to perish, even though, in consequence of their sin, “He drove out the man.”

The Savior did not come yet, nor for ages afterward; but the word of God about Him was given at once. “The LORD God said,” even when pronouncing sentence on the serpent, that the mysterious Seed of the woman should crush the evil power which had misled man to sin and death. Man never thought of such a consummation, still less could he accomplish it. Nay, his proud unbelief refuses the blessing when accomplished, brought to his door, and proclaimed in his ears. It is of God's grace, the work of His righteousness, an revealed by His word; but man, being guilty distrusts His good and holy benefactor, dreads in measure His judgment, yet believes not His mere in a Savior, still less that (through His death for sin) it is God's righteousness unto all, and upon a them that believe. Even those who claimed to be God's people and were not idolaters, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Faith alone and always received the blessing; and faith is of hearing, and hearing by the word of God. From the beginning it was so, and so it is still. The word of faith is what the apostle preached. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10)

So ever since the fall every believer looked for the One that was coming, the woman's Seed. They did not know much of Him. It was not yet said that He was to be called Jesus, nor that God would raise Him from the dead. But they heard from God that He, the Seed of the woman, should bruise the Serpent's head: a work altogether beyond man as such. In due time God Who said thus much said more; but the little He said from the first, faith received; and those who believed were blessed. God in the blood of Jesus showed His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God. Thus was His grace in all past ages vindicated by the same death of Christ, which is the ground of the gospel now sent to every creature under heaven. Those who received what God said, be it less or more, of the coming Savior got the everlasting profit all through, even as Abel had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God testifying on the ground of His gifts. By faith he offered unto God a sacrifice according to His mind. He believed in the bruised Seed of the woman, and brought to Jehovah a sacrifice on which death passed; whereas Cain never rose above the reasoning of nature or the resource of his own wretched self.

Even so is it with the mass now. They trust in themselves or in men like themselves. They confide in human things and sayings. They venerate shadows and shows. They believe in ordinances. They are puffed up by sights and sounds, by ceremonies, processions, and the like. But they hear not Christ's words and believe not Him that sent Christ. They count it presumption for any to have everlasting life, delusion that a believer comes not into judgment, and mystical madness that he has passed out of death into life. The believer trusts God in Christ for eternal life. Self and its works, the church and its ordinances, are the refuge of the fearful and unbelieving, not God's love nor Christ's work as revealed by the Spirit in His word. There is neither repentance nor faith. Whatever good works, or the church, may be for the faithful, it is a snare for the sinner to trust them for salvation.

Development is as false to God's word, as evolution is to His creation. They are the extremes of superstition and of skepticism, alike frigid zones where life and light are unknown. The truth is inseparable from the Son of God; it was manifested in Him, Christ Jesus, a Man; and no lie is of the truth, no matter how long or widely held. Hence we are begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which liveth and abideth (1 Peter 1:23); and by the same word we grow unto salvation. For if we receive the end of our faith, salvation of souls, we are guarded by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, when our bodies will be saved as our souls now are.

Hence we are told (James 1:18) that God of His own will begat us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruit of His creatures. By-and-by new heavens and a new earth will display the glory of Him Who is the Father of lights, from Whom every good giving and every perfect gift come down. Believers are now a sort of first-fruit of it, the product and witness of His grace. His will working by His word is the source of the everlasting boon; as our will issues in lust, sin, and death.

But the word cleanses too, as the Lord told His disciples (John 15) that they were already clean because of the word which He spoke to them. Of this water is the well-known symbol, and the Spirit makes it living. Hence the Lord in John 3 explains new birth to be born of water and the Spirit. It is receiving Christ's testimony; and he that has received it has set to his seal that God is true: the blessed reversal of Satan's success at the beginning, when distrust of God entered the heart. Thus is the heart purified by faith (Acts 15:9).

Assuredly this is not all. For Jesus, the Son of God, came by water and blood: both flowed from His pierced side; and he who believes receives the virtue of both. Purification is by His death, and expiation too; as it is the Holy Spirit Who bears witness in the word of God. Sins are judged and confessed, alike hated and forsaken; the blood of Christ that cleanseth from every sin, and not the guilt of the believer, is before God. Faith rests on the perfect and efficacious death of the Savior. And he that believes the word of God, His witness, has peace with God and eternal life in His Son.

Chapter 89

God's Own Love

Yes, it is not more wondrous than true that, while we were yet without strength, Christ died for ungodly persons. Such are fallen men. Jew or Gentile made no difference as to man's nature. The law gave no power; religious form is not godliness. And because man is what he became through sin, in due time Christ died for us, powerless and ungodly persons. This was beyond all creature love. Man needs a motive to draw out his love to its object. He sees grounds, perhaps mistaken, for his affection; otherwise he does not love. And so the apostle writes, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.” Possibly the one known as the generous benefactor might embolden a man drawn by it, even to die on his behalf. For goodness is rare and moves the heart mightily. But God is sovereign in His love to guilty man. Far from aught congenial, there is everything in him suited to repel God. Fallen man is corrupt or violent, proud or vain, self-seeking or independent, the sad contrast of Him Who is not more light than love. Yet “God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Such love is peculiar to Him. He loves from His own nature with no motive in the object. He loves notwithstanding the utmost unworthiness. He loves where no goodness is, nor yet rectitude, where men are sinners and nothing else, \where there is only misery and guilt; yea, He commends His own love to such as were still far from Him and opposed to Him, giving the highest and most solid proof of it, in that Christ died for us who were in that evil case. Thus God and man now stand face to face as they really are. The time of probation is over: man after full trial is lost. It is not merely that in every way and degree he has proved disobedient to God. Last of all he rejected and crucified the Lord of glory. In the person of the Son he cast God out of the world—God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. The proof of it is the death of Christ at man's hand. But the love of God was signally shown in sending Christ, not as Judge but as Reconciler; so it is, still more deeply and conspicuously, in making His death a sacrifice to blot out the sinner's guilt. “Christ died for us.” None but God was capable of such love. Only He could rise perfectly above all the evil of the world. All this was ever before Him. Throughout all His dealings with man, with Israel in particular though never exclusively, God had intimated His mercy, and faith always received it. This gave meaning to pledges and offerings from the first. This was associated even with His acts in judging the world by a deluge or in destroying the firstborn of Egypt; there was divine love in exempting Noah's family in the one case, Israel's sons in the other. In the Levitical economy, whatever the judgment under which transgressors fell, nothing was clearer than the bright shadows of atonement in a variety of form, which found no answer worthy of God, no cleansing of the conscience from sins or dead works, till “Christ died for us.” God is glorified thereby in any case; if we believe not, He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself.

The gospel makes all now as clear as even God can, consistently with His love and glory, till the judgment. Then it will be proved that not lack of light from God was at fault, but man's will, who loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil. But now before the judgment, God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It is Christ's death which efficaciously and forever atones for guilt. It is by Christ's death that enemies

are reconciled to God. All is yours if you believe on Him; all is lost if you turn from Him.

How could it be otherwise if Jesus be the Word made flesh, the Son Whom God sent in His love, Whom Jews and Gentiles slew (proving what they were), Whom (thus slain) God in yet fuller love made a sacrifice for sin? It is righteous with God to justify you as a believer in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). Surely it is not unjust to judge you for all your sins, if you aggravate them all by spurning the Savior God has given in His infinite love.

I implore you, my reader, if you have never thus submitted to the righteousness of God in saving you, to search honestly what hinders you. It is certainly not on God's part; for the apostle declares that God is as it were beseeching you in the Sent One. Will you slight His call longer? How blessed, in life or death, to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Vain for us to think of making it. He made it through the blood of His cross: so says the scripture. What a proof of God's love no less than Christ's! If you refuse to accept it, who is to blame but yourself? It is the preference of sin and Satan to God and His Son. It is contempt of Christ's sufferings and blood, as it is unbelief of God's word and His own love.

Undoubtedly God looks for a holy walk in His children, He looks for the fruit of light in all goodness and righteousness and truth. But He looks for nothing of the kind till you are justified by faith: to ask such fruit from you in your unbelief would deny Himself, His truth. and His grace. Man deceives by vain words, if he says that one who believes but walks wickedly “hath inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ.” Such faith can save none. It is beneath that of the demons, who at least tremble (James 2). But the faith which comes to God through Christ as a guilty sinner, and yet rests on His work for the purification of sins through Christ's death, is of His Spirit, and works by love and receives its end, soul-salvation (1 Peter 1). It is by faith in. Christ Jesus that all or any are God's sons (Gal. 3). Now we must be in the relationship of sons before we can really walk as such. Till we are God's sons, we simply deceive ourselves by pretending to a walk which pertains only to faith. The relationship is of grace on His part, and so to us of faith, not for man's desert, but in spite of all demerit. Our duties, as His sons, begin when we are sons and know it: otherwise they are hindered through questions and fears. His own love in Christ answers every question and casts out fear.

Chapter 90

Scripture Queries and Answers

1. Q.—Did the high priest, after coming out of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, bless the people?

D. T.

A.—People confound that day's rites with the eighth day of priestly consecration, Lev. 9 There we find the figure of Aaron as Christ, the Priest after the sacrifices, blessing the people; then under he combined types of Moses and Aaron i.e. King and Priest, going in and coming out to bless them, the glory of Jehovah only appearing on this. But the holy force of Atonement Day is kept intact as the judgment and remission of sins. Only in Aaron and his sons we have the Christian place, indeed better than even Aaron's, as made free of the holiest at all times while Christ is within on high.

2. Q.—Does 2 Cor. 5:21 teach that the saints become in glory the righteousness of God in Christ?

X. Y. Z.

A.—There is no room whatever for such a force in the language of the Spirit; imported into the words, it is a meaning which distracts from what the apostle lays down from God, and therefore it tends to destroy His aim. The full scope of what is conveyed is its true meaning, not an imaginary sense which the words taught of the Spirit will not bear. The object of the enemy is plain: now as ever anything new or old to enfeeble the blessed fruit of Christ's work. Nobody doubts that righteousness was proved in setting the rejected Christ in glory (John 16) But here we are taught that, as God made Christ sin for us, so we become His righteousness in Christ. It is simply and solely our present standing in Christ. Nor does anybody question the future glorification of the saints; but this hope is wholly outside the passage, which refers exclusively, as its full scope, to what we Christians become (or were made) now in Christ—even God's righteousness. This is what many saints fail to believe. And the objection to apply in an absolute way to the believer, in his mixed condition down here statements in scripture which refer to what he is in Christ, shows that it is pure unbelief, which is so blindly put forward as “advanced truth,” to ensnare, unsettle, and overthrow the unwary. For the truth, which is to deliver from the weakness, and doubts, and all other evil to which the mixed condition is naturally subject, must be received and applied absolutely if taught of God: the faith is made void, and what is worse and goes along with it, the work of Christ and the grace of God alike. If I am not to believe in the most absolute way what the Holy Ghost declares I, a Christian, am already made in Christ, not only is all claim of advanced truth vain, but the gospel in any full sense is systematically denied. And the more evidently is it of Satan, because those who adopt such destructive reveries flatter themselves that they are going on to higher things, instead of virtually, though unwittingly, abandoning that distinctive truth, even as to the foundations of the faith, which used to characterize those waiting for God's Son from heaven. A sober and duly instructed Christian cannot doubt, unless under the strong bias of personal or party feeling, that the teaching is retrograde, false, and incompatible with the gospel.

Chapter 91

God's Purpose Inside Seen Events

The external course of events tells us nothing of what is really going on, which is inside it all. If the external plannings of men or of Satan further God's plans, they succeed; if not, they come to nothing. But what is really going on is still inside them all. Thus the Jews would not have taken Jesus on the feast-day, to avoid uproar; but He was to be the Paschal Lamb, and He is taken. They would have often taken Him; but His hour was not yet come: when it was, they take Him and their wicked plans succeed. When the heartless superstition of the Jews had the malefactors' legs broken, that which they really did in the one case was to send the man into paradise.

To the outward eye there happened to Job raids of Arabs and Chaldeans, ordinary predatory raids; and a violent storm blew down the house. Satan was in it all, and above him God arranging to purify Job's heart and to instruct us in all ages.

The political measures of Augustus as to the census of the empire brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus; and then it would seem that it was not carried out for nine years when Cyrenius, or Quirinus, was governor.

All we have to do is to discern God's will, and find by faith the courage to do it. All His strength is power to carry us forward. It may seem all to turn out ill, or to be a cross—it may be so; but we shall have the result of God's counsels and blessing by the way. Man succeeded in crucifying Jesus; because, however wicked the act on their part, it was just carrying out God's plan. Jesus knew His Father's will, and sought only to glorify His name, and had faithful obedience to act upon it; though to man's eye it was the ruin of everything, of every religious hope even. And so it was in man and in flesh, but the birthplace of all counsels in glory, of that new thing in Man wherein God will be glorified forever, of that wherein He was glorified in all He is essentially. The outside was wicked men's success, and the end of pious men's hopes; the inside (what all blessing that ever was, or could be really and permanently) is entirely founded upon that wherein alone God is fully glorified. Christ learned and did His Father's will: Satan's power and man's wickedness were there and triumphed as nowhere else; yet His death was the foundation of all true and everlasting blessing. J. N. D.

Chapter 92

The Gospel and the Church: 19. The Power of Binding and Loosing

The words “binding” and “loosing” signify power in both ways. The religious as well as the natural flesh loves power and authority, and each uses it sometimes “with a vengeance.”

To whom does the power of “binding” rightly belong? Every believer will agree with me in saying, To Him who “bound the strong man and spoiled him of his goods.” And who has the power of “loosing”? He alone Who said to that daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound those eighteen years, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.” He Who recalled Lazarus from death and corruption into life and said, “Loose him, and let him go; “He Who Himself was “loosed from the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it” —to Him alone rightly belongs the power of “binding” and “loosing.” If it has pleased Him, during His absence from this earth, to delegate part of His powers to His apostles and disciples or to the church, who would dispute His right of doing so? But He alone is and remains the source of all power and authority. He Who gave them can withdraw them again, and has done so, where that power and authority had been abused by unfaithful stewards and false shepherds or by Laodicean indifference for self-aggrandizement and self-enrichment and oppression of the flock of Christ.

“Unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath (or, as the Gospel of Luke has it, “which he seemeth to have”) shall be taken away from him.”

Let us now consider:

What is the character and purpose of the power of “binding” and “loosing”?

To whom was it given?

For what time was it given?

1. Their Character And Purpose.

The former is indicated by the very words themselves. To “bind” some one means to take away his liberty. To “loose” him means to give him back his liberty. Through sin man became Satan's slave, bound by the fetters of sin. By faith and regeneration he is set free from that terrible bondage and becomes in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, the willing and cheerful servant of God and Christ. The natural man is spiritually and bodily a prisoner, bound by Satan. God in His wisdom may permit Satan even outwardly to make manifest the terribleness of those bonds, as in the case of the demoniac and of the lunatic (Matt. 17:15-21), and of that daughter of Abraham who had been bound eighteen years.

But there are other bonds, those of legal bondage and fear, as expressed in the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Satan and the law (however good and holy the latter) can bind but not loose, i.e., set free. Christ delivers from both, “having found an eternal redemption.” He alone, Who “has ascended on high and led captivity captive,” possesses the supreme power for “binding”

and “loosing.” He will ere long bind and shut up in the “bottomless pit” Satan, the prince of this world, who keeps the world chained in the bonds of sin and of the fear of death, “that he may deceive the nations no more.” But after the millennial reign of Christ Satan will be “loosed out of his prison” and make manifest that man, even after a millennial blessing, ever remains the same; whereupon the “deceiver of the nations” and “accuser of the brethren” will be assigned to his final doom in the “lake of fire and brimstone forever and ever.”

But Christ, Who holds the supreme power of “binding” and “loosing” as He holds all power in heaven and on earth, can, as observed already, transfer upon others a part of it according to His good pleasure, as a king may transfer part of his power upon substitutes of higher or lower degree. So Christ, as Son over His own house, has for the purpose of discipline in the church during His absence, delegated to others part of His power and authority; be it for “binding” in cases where the honor and authority of our great Deliverer from the bonds of Satan, sin, and death, and judgment, and the holiness becoming His house have been practically disregarded by one of His redeemed; or be it for “loosing” where the “binding” has had its intended effect and the stray repentant sheep returns to the good “Shepherd and bishop of our souls.”

The “binding” may be of a spiritual or of a bodily character or both, as in the case of the sinner at Corinth, or even extend unto death, as with Ananias and Sapphira. In 2 Cor. 2:5-11 we have the “loosing,” as in 1 Cor. 5 the “binding.”

Sin binds, i.e., deprives of liberty. One who has sinned against God does not feel free before Him. We find this already with Adam and Eve as the effect of the first sin. They endeavored to hide themselves from God. If some one has sinned against his neighbor, he feels no longer free in his presence, but restrained and oppressed. Repentance and confession remove the pressure and restore liberty and easiness. So it is between God and us, and in our communion one with another. But if the one who sins will not confess it nor judge himself for it (I speak of course of believers), the Lord has graciously provided a way of binding the sin on the heart and conscience of the impenitent one, to make him feel its burden, by giving power to His own to exclude him not only from fellowship with the assembly but even with Him Who is in the midst, Matt. 18:18, thus depriving him, till he repents, of all liberty and joy, and so to bind him

2. Upon Whom Has The Lord Conferred The Power Of “Binding” And “Loosing”?

The Gospel of Matthew is the only part of the New Testament speaking of that power. In chap. 16 Jesus had announced to that “adulterous generation” which desired a “sign from heaven,” the “sign of the prophet Jonah,” so fatal for Israel, i.e., the death and resurrection of their rejected and crucified Messiah. Then “He left them and departed.” All was over with Israel. It was night. But in the same chapter the Lord shows to His disciples the morning dawn of the church, saying, “Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” But as to Peter himself, the Lord adds the special personal promise, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." That promise was given to the apostle Peter personally, evidently in close connection with the power of the keys for Israel and the Gentiles.

And in chapter 18 of the Gospel of Matthew, where we behold the morning red of the church, so to speak, the Lord says, “Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Here the Lord confers the power of “binding” and “loosing” on all His own, i.e., on the disciples then with Him, and on every assembly; for His words are here in close connection with what He said just before and after.

But we must not forget what the Lord adds immediately after, which naturally brings to the third question:

For What Time Was The Power Of “Binding” And “Loosing” Given?

To the Lord's apostles and His then disciples it was, of course, given for their lifetime, and also to the churches existing in the days of the apostles. But Christ, knowing before what use an unfaithful church in fleshly self-elevation would make of the privilege of the power of binding and loosing, has added the gracious promise, “Where two or three are gathered unto My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Wonderful privilege of grace, granted by the glorious Head of the church, foreseeing these days of deepest decline, even to two or three (the smallest number to constitute an assembly) who look up to Him from the ruins, as themselves forming a part of them, in the sense of their own weakness and our common shame. What are two or three thousand without Christ in their midst? Nothing but so many cyphers without a figure before them. Put the figure 1 before them, and it makes with the two following “naughts” one hundred, and three of them one thousand.

But think you, Christian reader, that the Lord will put His seal upon the decisions of gatherings small or great, and grant them the power of “binding” and “loosing,” which are founded on human statutes and ordinances, or such as were originally founded on scriptural ground, but have left the way of truth and followed man's will instead of the word of God? Never! That would mean setting His seal to what is contrary to His own word. Or could He recognize church actions. on the part of meetings which had been gathered according to scriptural principles, but have sunk to such a degree of moral and spiritual degradation that they have become destitute of spiritual discernment? Impossible. That would be nothing less than making Christ the servant of sin. It was Paul, but not the church at Corinth, who delivered the wicked person “unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The Corinthians, as every assembly of God, were responsible to “put away from among themselves that wicked person,” but could not “deliver him unto Satan.” Only the apostle as such could do this. But in the Corinthians “godly sorrow had wrought repentance not to be repented of” (2 Cor. 7); or they would not have been able to exercise “loosing” discipline in the power of the Holy Ghost and with the seal of Christ's authority.

To exclude or receive persons after the good pleasure of human leaders or of a party is easy enough; but such “bindings” and “loosings” are not recognized in heaven. J. A. von P.

The Gospel and the Church: 20. Christian Discipline

3. In what spirit and way should Christian discipline be exercised and carried out?

Christian discipline must be exercised in the spirit of grace and truth. By grace we are saved. Grace keeps our inward man as our outward man is kept by the power of God on our way, through a cruel and subtle enemy's territory, towards our final rest and glory with Christ. Grace then should be the keynote of all true Christian discipline, and truth in righteousness and holiness should characterize it. Throughout Holy Writ, grace and truth go hand in hand, from cover to cover. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,”

“He dwelt among us full of grace and truth.” But scripture does not say that, from His fullness we have received “grace and truth,” but “grace upon grace.” Grace then ought to be the keynote of Christian discipline. We are but too much inclined to deal in grace with ourselves, and (at least in our own opinion) in truth with our fellow Christians. Whenever our own faults are to be dealt with, we want our brethren to deal with us in grace and truth; but in case of a brother's failure, we proceed but too frequently as if it were written “truth and grace.”

When the Lord was speaking of Christian discipline, Peter asked Him:— “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times?” He evidently thought he had expressed the fullest measure of grace by saying “seven times,” this being the expression of spiritual perfection. But what was the Lord's answer? He named a still more perfect number. “Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven,” and then adds the solemn parable of the King “who would take account of his servants.”

Let us ask ourselves, Christian reader, “How often have you and I forgiven a brother who had sinned against us? I am afraid, if the same brother should sin against us the seventh time, grace would become an effort to us. We should in that case be inclined to think that with us “grace has had her perfect work,” and that he is “turning grace into lasciviousness.” But if you and I, reader, have once got beyond the number “seven,” we shall get such a relish for exercising grace in “forgiving one another,” “even as Christ forgave us,” that long before we have reached the number seventy,—not to speak of seventy times seven, i.e., 490, we shall have left off counting, in case we really had exerted ourselves with that unpleasant task “until seven times.”

In the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of John the apostle, that grace manifests itself in all its lovely and touching character. There we behold Jesus as “Son over his own house,” exercising discipline in the most solemn case of Judas Iscariot. There the darkest treason that ever was or will be had to be dealt with. And in what spirit and way did Jesus exercise that discipline? Was it with the rod, the “whip of small cords,” in His hand, as in the quite different case of John 2? No, but in perfect grace from first to last, though all the time in truth. For He dwelt among us in “grace and truth.” How often in cases where church discipline has become necessary, are we inclined to deal graciously with the sinning brother, if he has not offended us personally, especially if he is our friend or related to us! We are then often but too inclined to lay full stress upon grace at the

expense of truth. But in cases when he has been irksome or personally disliked by us, we are inclined to do the opposite, laying all the stress upon truth. How different was His procedure, Who is our pattern as He is our Savior. When the holiness of His Father's house was in question, He dealt in truth with those that defiled the temple. But in Judas Iscariot's case of the blackest treason and ingratitude against His own Person, He acts with such perfect grace, that to the natural mind it almost appears as if there had been too much of grace before truth. But we shall soon see that this was not, nor could be, the case on His part, with Whom grace never was separated from perfect truth, and truth never from perfect grace.

Not a few refuse to believe that Jesus could have washed the feet of Judas Iscariot; as such grace, shown to such a hardened unconscionable traitor, would not only appear to be thrown away, but scarcely in keeping with the dignity of the Lord. I am afraid that those who think so have very little entered into the spirit of that glorious chapter. From its whole tenor and connection there can be no doubt but that the Lord washed the feet of His betrayer as He did wash those of His other apostles. (Compare verses 10 and 11).

The same grace and love, which made the “Good Shepherd” exchange His glorious heavenly home for this sin-benighted world, the home of misery and death, in order to look, first for the lost sheep of Israel, and then for sheep who were “not of that fold,” moved Him, Who was grace and truth personified, to exhaust all the means of that grace and truth, to reach the heart and conscience even of him, who whilst eating His bread, had lifted up his heel against Him,

“But why all these attempts,” some perhaps will reason, “as Jesus must have known before that they would be in vain, Judas being the son of perdition!”

His thoughts are not our thoughts, reader, nor are His ways and His heart ours. The omniscience and perfect knowledge of the Son of God could not limit the grace of the perfect Son of man in its activity. What could be more adapted to reach the conscience even of a Judas and to soften his hard heart, than seeing Him, Whom he was about to betray, stooping down at His feet to perform the menial service of washing them? We should have thought, that (each time when those hands, which had fed those thousand hungry ones, healed the sick and blessed the little children, and during more than three years had given to His apostle the daily bread and blessed it and broken it with him, with their gentle touch applied the cleansing water to Judas Iscariot's feet), his heart must have welled up and discharged itself through his eyes, until the purifying streams of penitent tears had mingled with the cleansing water around his feet. And when He heard Peter say, “Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Thou shalt never wash my feet,” and then the Master's holy yet ever gracious voice saying, “Ye are clean, but not all;” and when He, whom Judas too called Lord and Master, then went down at his feet to wash them likewise, should we not have thought that the betrayer's trembling feet would have shrunk back, bringing him on his knees publicly to own his deep fall and the covetousness that had caused it? And when the same calm, unimpassioned, and yet so gracious voice added those warning words, “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me;” and when Jesus, “troubled in spirit, then testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me,” (these last words of grace and truth, addressed to Judas Iscariot's heart and conscience); and when “the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake,” —should we not have thought that if even the least spark of a better feeling had been in his heart, or the slightest movement of repentance in his conscience, such words,

spoken by such a Master, would have evoked there a response?

But Judas Iscariot's heart and conscience had become as hard as the thirty pieces of silver, which he had received from the chief priests and Pharisees. For more than three years he had walked alongside with the Son of God. He had seen and heard His mighty and gracious words and deeds. But whilst walking day by day as an eye-and-ear-witness, nay as an apostle, by the side of Him, who was “God manifest in the flesh,” his heart was a secret idol-shrine, where the “mammon of unrighteousness” was enthroned. Only his body, but not his heart, was in the presence of the Son of God. Thus all his privileges had only served to harden his soul entirely, and render his measure of responsibility and his deep fall and following judgment all the greater.

The bosom disciple “whom Jesus loved,” and who in our most solemn and yet so blessed chapter asks Him in childlike simplicity, “Lord, who is it?” addressed in his old age to all the children of God the solemn injunction, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

Jesus replied to His beloved disciple's inquiry with “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.” “And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”

Grace had done its utmost and exhausted its last remedy. Nothing remained but judgment. That portion of holy writ, spoken in solemn warning by our gracious yet true Master, had been fulfilled: “He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me." “And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.” “He then having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night.” Solemn words!

The Lord, the “Son over His own house,” had exercised discipline, but not until all the means of grace had been exhausted. Compare 1 Cor. 5:2.

Christian reader, I have dwelt at a greater length than usual on this case of discipline, unique in its terribleness, not in order to sit in judgment upon a traitor, but to judge our own treacherous hearts. Judas, though unconverted, was a man of like natural passions as we. How little, alas! have we learned from our gracious Master, Who showed such patience and grace to His betrayer, to exercise grace and patience towards our erring brethren in Christ, being unmindful of the injunction of the apostle of the church, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Hear the words of the inspired James:

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

How often have we exercised grace without truth, or handled truth without grace! It is difficult to say which of the two would be the worst.

In my next paper I shall, if the Lord will, offer a few remarks as to the way of carrying out Christian discipline.

Chapter 94

The Gospel and the Church: 21. The Way of Church Discipline

In what way ought Christian discipline to be carried out?

Having spoken already as to the way of carrying out Christian discipline in its two first aspects, we now only have to consider the way and manner, in which church discipline is to be effected.

First of all we shall do well to remember that the way of transacting church discipline is closely connected with the spirit in which it ought to be practiced, on which I have dwelt in the preceding paper. For if in the exercise of church discipline the Spirit of grace and truth is active within us, that divine Guide, dwelling in us, being ungrieved, will not fail to guide in the way and manner of carrying it into effect. Only let us ever be mindful that this blessed Spirit of truth can and will never prompt us to act without, let alone contrary to, the word indited by Himself, which is truth.

And what is it especially, that we find expressed so distinctly and decidedly in the word of God as to the way of carrying church discipline into effect? Is it not the common responsibility of the members of Christ before Him our Head in glory, as well as their mutual responsibility, as to any unjudged God-dishonoring sin, defiling the assembly as such? Let us take again the case at Corinth. That church had sunk to such a low spiritual condition, that they had become unmindful of their responsibility to “purge out the old leaven.”

How did the apostle proceed in that, humanly speaking, desperate case? Did he hold a private conference with Titus, Timothy, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus and a few others of his fellow-laborers, in order to come to a conclusion and decision in this matter? Did he say to them: The condition of the church at Corinth is so bad and spiritually so low, the spiritual life so feeble, the flesh so strong and prevalent, and the consciences so sleepy and inert, that there remains nothing but to take matters into our own hands, and to decide instead of them to put away that wicked person from the assembly? Does he send Titus or Timothy or Stephanas to Corinth with a message to the assembly, that he as an apostle, or, let us say, he and the other brothers with him had resolved to take the necessary church discipline into their own hands, and, carrying it out for them, had put away that wicked person from amongst them?

What would have been the effect of such an action? Why, the church at Corinth, had it “bowed” to such a resolution, and, acting upon it, had considered that wicked person as having been put away from among them, would have acted in the fear of the apostle and of the brethren with him, instead of under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the fear of the Lord. The consciences and hearts of the Corinthians would not have been exercised before God in His holy and gracious presence as to the evil they had allowed in their midst. In getting rid of one evil, they would only have opened the door to another evil, thus exchanging one “leaven” for another.

But what did the apostle? In his character and authority as such he indeed did say, “For verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan for

the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

But first of all the apostle says (ver. 4), "When ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ." Whilst speaking as an apostle, he entirely identifies himself with the church at Corinth simply as a member of the body of Christ, by saying, "When ye are gathered together and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" (not "with my apostolic power"). He seeks to bring the consciences of the Corinthians into the presence of Christ instead of into his own apostolic presence, so that they might. act "in the fear of Christ," and not in the fear of the apostle, i.e. in the fear of men. Whilst, in virtue of his apostolic authority, delivering that wicked person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (Job 2:6-7), he at the same time takes care to remind the Corinthians of their own responsibility for acting themselves in carrying out the church discipline, for he continues, "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." He does not say, "We have excluded from among you that person, and all you have to do is to notify this to the assembly," but, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

True, the same apostle writes to the Hebrews, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." We also do well to remember that the apostle writes to the Corinthians at the close of the same Epistle, "I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints), that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth."

God forbid that any should say or write anything that would tend to weaken or undermine the spiritual authority of rulers, pastors, teachers or overseers given by the Lord Himself, and to incite or foster in the churches a spirit of disregard and opposition against any true spiritual authority, appointed by God. Such a spirit is not from above but from beneath, as we learn from the Epistle of Jude, by where we are warned against two evil extremes. The one is that of "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage," and the other that of "despising dominion and speaking evil of dignities." Each of the two is a great sin, but whilst the former is innate in human nature (though none the less sinful and hateful), the latter is directly devilish and abominable.

But when those who have been looked up to, as leaders, have become so unmindful of their responsibility to the Lord and of their obligation to the church of God, accruing from the position they had held there, as to have attempted, especially in cases of church discipline, to lead the consciences of the saints practically away from Christ under their own superintendence and authority, they are no longer to be regarded nor treated as "leaders" but as "misleaders" or "seducers."

Only a few years ago the writer of these lines stayed some time as a visitor in a certain district (not of Great Britain), where there were numerous gatherings consisting of those who professedly avowed, held, and taught the simple truths of the church of God as presented in the scriptures. Amongst them it had become a usual practice, that by a certain gathering in a large town (the "Jerusalem" as it were, for all the gatherings in the land, at least for as many as were willing to own such an allegiance and there were hardly any who dared to disown it),—cases of church discipline were taken in hand and carried out, not only for neighboring but for distant gatherings likewise. Daring their Saturday night's private sittings at a private house some "ruling brethren," as they

were called settled among themselves any case of church discipline that had arisen in the gathering at that metropolitan center. Their decision was then made known on the Lord's day morning to the church as an accomplished fact which admitted of no contradiction. But those “ruling brothers” did not confine their activity to cases of church discipline in the gathering to which they belonged. They also took up questions of church discipline that had arised in neighboring, and even in distant gatherings, and then sent one or two delegates to the gathering in question, in order to notify to that meeting on the next Lord's day as an accomplished fact that such or such a brother or sister had put away from among themselves by the brethren at “Jerusalem.” On one of those occasions it even occurred that a brother, who protested against such a procedure, was also put away because of “insubordination.”

Where is the fear of God in such proceedings? Where is the word of God to justify it? What becomes of the guidance of the Holy Ghost in the assembly? What of the due respect to the consciences of the saints?

“With force and with cruelty ye have ruled them” (Ezek. 34:4). “I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them” (10).

There may be questions of church discipline, as for instance in cases of immorality, dishonesty and evil doctrine where true wisdom, love and godly care for the flock of Christ would equally forbid to make the whole of an assembly, young and old, acquainted with all the details of such gross sins. Such a procedure would not only not be helpful to the spiritual condition of the saints, especially the young, but only too often the very, opposite. One can hardly imagine anything more injurious to the spiritual life, progress and growth of an assembly, than such a procedure. The same it would be in cases of evil doctrines, where the soul-poisoning influence would often prove more disastrous still.

In cases like these it appears not only advisable but indispensable for the spiritual welfare of an assembly, that some elder brothers of spiritual weight and intelligence, should take up cases of discipline referred to above and sift the whole before it is put to the assembly for decision. In this way the consciences of the saints forming the assembly are properly exercised before God, without their hearts having been defiled by being occupied with the specialties of the leaven that had to be purged out. The assembly having then decided as to the necessity of exclusion, it is made known on the first day of the following week.

This way of carrying into effect the solemn act of discipline is according to God and His word, and very different from the above mentioned ungodly ways of procedure. In the former case, where a few “ruling brothers” take upon themselves the discipline to be exercised by the assembly, the consciences of the saints are left without exercise before God and put under human authority instead. In the latter of those two mischievous procedures, that is where the whole meeting, young and old, are made acquainted and, so to speak, familiar with details of the defiling leaven in all kinds of disgraceful cases, there is but too great a danger for the hearts, especially of the tender lambs of the flock, getting familiarized with evil and consequently callous or indifferent if not actually poisoned by it. It is difficult to say, which of the two would be the I worst: the hardening of the conscience from want of exercise before God; or the defiling and poisoning of the heart from too much of exercise and details demanding discipline.

May the God of all grace, through the Spirit of truth, power, love and of a sound mind, guide and bless us with that wisdom which is from above, in order that we may be filled “with fruit of righteousness unto the day of Christ,” and not be ashamed away at His coming.

Finally I would remark that there are two cases where a saint's personal withdrawal from a meeting would be not only justified, but imperative. The first is that of an assembly obstinately refusing to exclude such are guilty of unrighteousness and immorality. The second is that of a gathering remaining in fellowship with such are guilty of heresy and heterodoxy (evil doctrine). For discipline being one of the essential characteristics of the church, as the “house of the living God,” a gathering which refuses that discipline, ceases to be an assembly in the sense of the word of God, by willingly harboring the evil and refusing to judge it and put it away. Only every scriptural effort is due in warning and entreaty before such an extreme step can be lawfully taken.

As to the godly obligation for every believer of absolute separation in cases of heresy and heterodoxy, this has become, especially in these “perilous times” and “last days,” a subject of such paramount importance, that, before closing these remarks on Christian discipline, I purpose to offer D.V. in my next paper a few distinct remarks on this subject.

The Gospel and the Church: 22. Church Discipline

SECOND PART.—THE CHURCH.—XIV.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

As to the scriptural way of procedure in the case of those who cause sects and divisions, the word of God is clear enough:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:16, 17).

The duty of the church in such a case is unmistakable. For no godly Christian asserts that the apostle here (as in 2 Thess. 3) would rest in withholding personal fellowship with such as. act contrary to the doctrine of the apostles, undermining and destroying the church, the temple of God, by causing divisions and offenses, and deceiving the hearts of the simple. An assembly which sanctions such in its midst, thus opening the door to the enemy and destroyer, would only show that it. has no sense of what is due to God and to His Son, and to the church, as being the house of the living God. If they persevered, in spite of the remonstrances of the godly, in refusing church discipline, they would finally forfeit the character of an assembly of God, and to the godly among them no alternative would be left but separation from that which would be an assembly of God no longer. But the apostle justly began with calling on the faithful to mark such in order to their repentance.

And if separation becomes a duty for every true and faithful believer where the defilement of the temple of God is in question, how much more so, where the honor of God, and of His Son Himself is at stake, as when heresy has assumed the character of heterodoxy, i.e. false and God-dishonoring doctrine! The injunctions of Holy Writ, though plain enough in the former case, are here still more distinct and solemnly decisive, as the following passages show: 1 Cor. 15:12, 13-19, 33, 34, 13-19; Gal. 5:7-12; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; Titus 3:10, 11; 2 Peter 2:1-3;.1 John 2:18-26 John 9-11; Jude 3, 4

No upright and right-minded Christian will contend that the passages cited above, dealing with those tools of Satan, who by false doctrines seek to undermine the foundations of Christianity, do not go on to exclusion from the assembly, when self-will rejects all admonition. False doctrine, heterodoxy, is of all evils the worst, for it directly dishonors God and His dear Son, our precious Savior, ruining the souls of those for whom Jesus suffered and died, to a far wider extent and in a much more destructive way than in the case of moral evil. And if the apostle enjoined the Corinthians not even to take a common meal at the same table with that incestuous wicked person, could he have intended to say, think ye, that they quietly might sit down and break bread with those who attacked the very foundations of the Christian faith, nay, the person of Christ Himself and His work? What! associate and break bread with them at the table of the Lord (Whom

they had blasphemed) to “show His death till He come!” The very thought of such a Judas-fellowship is so revolting to every Christian sentiment, that I need not say more about it.

“Be not deceived: evil-communications corrupt good manners,” the apostle writes to the same Corinthians. By this he certainly did not mean that they were to continue with those false teachers in the fellowship of breaking the bread, thus giving them opportunity, gradually to poison the whole assembly? “Awake to righteousness and sin not,” the apostle continues, “for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.” He began, as we ought, with correcting the error in order to repentance. But if they refused the correction and thus became hardened in the evil, was this to be tolerated under plea of unity?

It is to be feared, there are not a few Christians in these days of Laodicean lukewarmness, to whom that solemnly warning rebuke of the apostle would apply. There are some who say that it could not have been the intention of the apostle to insist on the Corinthians excluding those false teachers from the assembly, because he did not expressly enjoin them to do so. Do not his words, “Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners,” express the warning of the Lord and of His Spirit through the apostle distinctly enough? We might just as well say, that the “elect lady,” whom the apostle John warns against receiving into her house any who did not bring the doctrine of Christ (nay, not even to greet him, because by doing so she would make herself “partaker of his evil deeds”), would have been quite free to break bread with the false teacher, the apostle not having expressly forbidden her to do so How crooked and deceitful is the natural heart in its thoughts and feelings, especially in a Christian who abuses grace!

These remarks hold good as to other portions of holy writ mentioned above, which are initiatory.

If then individual Christians who receive a heterodox teacher into their houses, or even greet him, become his accomplices, how much more solemnly is this true of a whole assembly according such an one a place at the Lord's table! The whole assembly would make itself partaker of his evil deeds. “Know ye not,” writes the apostle to the Corinthians, “that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” This principle of divine truth holds good not only in cases of gross immorality as at Corinth, but also in cases of evil doctrine; for the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth,” applies the same words through the same apostle to the Galatians, where it was a question of evil doctrine or heterodoxy (ch. 5:9, 10), adding, “I would they were even cut off which trouble you” (ver. 12). In 1 Cor. 15:33 the apostle urges the same principle with regard to evil doctrine as in the same epistle, ch. 5., to immorality, only in different words, as is clear from the whole tenor of ch. 15.

“But,” somebody would say, “suppose, some one has belonged to a gathering, where, without his being aware of it, an evil doctrine has been tolerated, though perhaps not publicly advanced. He is entirely ignorant of it all. Would it not he unjust, nay, cruel, to refuse to such an one a place at the Lord's table in other meetings?”

Yes, the Lord's table! This makes all the difference. It is the Lord's, and not our own table; and for this very reason that which is due to the Lord, and also to His saints in holy fellowship, ought to be our chief consideration. To receive such would be nothing less than linking ourselves with them, the Lord's table being the expression of the one body (1 Cor. 10:17). Thus we should make ourselves partakers of their evil deeds. Let us put Christ number one, and the “nice Christians” number two, and we shall make no mistake, but if we put the “dear Christians” first, and Christ in

the second place, we are all wrong. If we magnify Christ, all is plain. Leave Him out, or make Him—practically—secondary, and all is confusion.

As to the objection referred to above, an incident occurred some years ago which will furnish us with a satisfactory answer. A lady presented herself at a meeting in London wishing to break bread. She had been in fellowship at one of those indifferent gatherings, but said she had been ignorant of the doctrinal question. The brothers to whom she applied, believed her to be honest.

They, however, thought it right to enter into a conversation with her, to ascertain whether she might not, perhaps unwittingly, have imbibed some of those fatally erroneous doctrinal notions. And, behold, in the course of that conversation it became but too evident that she, though unwittingly, had imbibed not a few of them. Of course, she could not be admitted that morning, but had first to be convinced and delivered as to those errors, before she could be “received to the glory of God.” What would have been the consequence if she had been received without such helpful conversation? She would have, just as unwittingly as she had received them, imparted those poisonous doctrinal notions to the minds of other saints in that meeting, perhaps to some of the young. Thus the deadly poison would have been gradually instilled into the meeting.

What has been said shows the indispensable necessity for the greatest watchfulness and care in such cases of impure, God-and-Christ-dishonoring doctrines with their destructive effect upon the children of God. True love for the sheep and lambs of Christ ought to make us all the more careful for them, even where that love might have the appearance of harshness, lest they should be led astray by false shepherds to poisoned pastures. In a meeting where evil doctrine is treated with indifference, i.e. tolerated and harbored, the spiritual atmosphere becomes more or less impregnated with unsound doctrinal notions, though the open teaching and confession of them may be carefully avoided. The doctrinal virus which, though perhaps at first in small quantities, is floating in the air. The devil does not administer the poison to souls by spoonfuls, but in drops, or homeopathic doses, so to speak. It acts more gradually, but all the more sure in its effects on account of being not perceived. For instance, some one in such a meeting uses an ambiguous expression as to the person of Christ, talking about the “sinless infirmities of our blessed Lord.” That expression falls not only upon the ears, but sinks into the minds and hearts of the hearers, who think it quite harmless, the suspicious word “infirmities,” applied to the person of Christ, being guarded by the preceding word “sinless.” Now we know that all human infirmities are the result of man's fall and sin. Hunger and thirst, weariness with its consequence, sleep—are not “infirmities.” Adam and Eve were hungry and ate before they sinned, a deep sleep fell upon Adam before his fall. God had made man perfect. But infirmity implies imperfection, which is the effect of sin, as death is its wages.

“But,” some might say, “do you think that some erroneous notions, floating in the atmosphere of a meeting and thus ignorantly received, could have such an injurious effect upon the souls of honestly ignorant Christians?”

Indeed, they have. I will explain what I mean, by a simple illustration. I remember when a student at the University of Berlin, one day hearing of a remarkable incident which happened in one of the offices of the Ministry of Finance. Several of the officials had been taken ill. At last one of them died suddenly. This led to a close examination of the walls of the office which were painted green. It was then found that the paint contained a great deal of arsenic, and the rooms being heated to a

high degree, the atmosphere had become impregnated with the arsenic, to the serious injury of the health of the occupants of those rooms, and with fatal effect upon one of them. Thus their constitutions had been gradually poisoned, without their being aware of it. Were they less injured, because they were ignorant of the presence of the poison? It is just the same as to the effect of doctrinal poison upon the spiritual constitution of Christians.

Those who seek to cover their lukewarmness about the honor of our Savior with the cloak of Christian love and large-heartedness, are often heard to say, that we must admit to the Lord's table every one who has life from God, provided he walks consistently. But suppose, some one came from a neighboring country where the pestilence is raging, the question would not be whether he is dead or alive, but whether he is infected or not. He would be put under quarantine for some time till it became evident that he had not been infected. It would be in vain for him to say, that he does not feel that he is infected. He might have borne the germ of the malady within himself for some days, without being aware of it. Besides, is it consistent for a Christian to be indifferent to a true Christ?

One word more in conclusion. Take the case of some unnatural son having written and published a disgraceful libel against his father. What would be the effect of his scandalous conduct? Why, not only the mother but every right-minded member of the family would insist on the immediate withdrawal of the disgraceful paper on the part of that degenerate son, and on his penitent confession at the feet of the outraged parent. The author of that paper might have been a very kind brother toward his brothers and sisters. Would this be a reason for them to wink at his terrible sin, or to be less jealous for the honor of their father? On the contrary their love for the erring brother, however deeply grieved, as well as their reverence for their common parent, would equally impel them to insist on either the withdrawal of the bad paper, or the removal of the disgraceful son from the house, if all exhortations had proved fruitless. Would not every member of the family that would continue friendly intercourse with the wicked offender, just as if nothing had happened, rightly be looked at as taking the part of the unnatural son? (2 John 11). And if in such a case a decisive procedure becomes imperative in a respectable natural family, how much more in the family, the house, of the living God, when His own and His Son's honor is at stake.

The Gospel and the Church: 23. Closing Remarks

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE. CLOSING REMARKS.

In cases where church discipline has become necessary, the decisions of an assembly, I need hardly say, are not infallible. To assert the infallibility of such decisions would be nothing less than being on the high road to Rome i.e. to a so-called infallible church. On God's side—all is perfection and infallibility. But what as to our i.e. the human side? Here everything is subject to failure, be it, a single believer, or an assembly of believers. The infallible Spirit of God dwells in the believer. Does that make the believer an infallible pope? The Holy Spirit dwells in the chinch or assembly. Does that make it an infallible church or assembly? Jesus Christ, our blessed and never failing Lord. and Master, is present in the midst of His two or three that are gathered to His Name. Does His presence make His servants infallible, because they are gathered. to His Name? There could scarcely be a greater and more mischievous fallacy. We may with certainty presume that two such devoted servants of Christ, as Paul and Barnabas on the morning of the day recorded in Acts 15, had been gathered to the name of their common heavenly Master, praying for His guidance, before entering with Mark on their tourney. Yet they fell out on the way and separated from each other. Did they cease to love each other, because there arose a sharp contention subsequently? Certainly not. Perhaps the apostle and his fellow-laborers had omitted in their prayer for their journey the all important request for brotherly kindness, patience, and self-denial.

What I mean to affirm is simply this, that the Lord, in promising His gracious presence to His two or three gathered to His Name, certainly did not convey to any, that His presence however blessed would render those two or three (or any number of them) infallible in their deliberations, decisions, and actions, however willing and ready He may be to guide by the Holy Spirit those who really are gathered to His Name—which is just the, question, on which everything depends. But nowhere in His word does the Lord promise to us infallibility, either as to our thoughts or words, our decisions or actions. He Who searches the reins and the hearts knows too well the Romanist element, so inherent in man's fallen nature, to give us such a promise.

Even in those blessed Pentecostal days, when the believers were of “one heart and one soul,” the Spirit of God dwelling in the church with unimpeded power, the flesh and the natural evil heart, appeared in the saints, not only in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, but elsewhere in the church at Jerusalem, when the murmuring of jealousy, between the Grecian and Hebrew Christians arose (Acts 6). Nay, even in the assembly at Jerusalem, the apostles and elders being present, no small dispute arose (ch. 15.). But, the power of the Holy Spirit, of love, and of a sound mind being then unimpeded, the flesh was soon discovered and put to silence.

But how is it in our days? Days of the general ruin of the, Church of, God, when more than ever the solemn and humbling, truth manifests itself, viz, that man has been unfaithful and made shipwreck in everything which God had committed to his keeping, from paradise until Pentecost, and from Pentecost until now"? It would certainly better behoove us to lie before God on our, fakes with our mouths in the dust, instead of opening them to haughtily claim infallibility for assembly

decisions amidst the ruins—the mute but eloquent witnesses of our deep fall! When in these “last days” we hear of a company of Christians asserting the, proud claim of infallibility for their church decisions, founded upon the fallacies referred to above, we have every reason to tremble, for their spiritual condition.

Have we not heard of Christians from whom, according to their knowledge of truth, one might have expected better things, claiming church infallibility by reasoning like this? “The Holy Spirit” (they say) “dwells in the assembly, and the Lord has promised His presence in the midst of His own, even where but two or three are gathered to His name. It is evident, that the Lord cannot guide His people wrongly: consequently the decisions of an assembly, being the voice of the Holy Ghost, must necessarily be infallible.”

In the same breath, as it were, and in striking contradiction to the preceding claim, it is added: “But Should it happen that an assembly in a case of church discipline has made a mistake in excluding some one, the one thus wrongly excluded would nevertheless have to accept this as from the hand of God and to bow under it. By refusing to do so he Only would manifest his unsubdued will, and thus prove that he had deserved the punishment” (i.e. that the assembly after all must be held to be guided rightly, even though not justified in excluding him!).

Could there possibly be a greater proof of the perversity of the natural heart, even in Christians, unless kept by watchfulness and prayer in the humble sense of their entire dependence upon the grace of God which establishes the heart?

I was told that a very prominent leader of that religious sect said that, if any one, who had been wrongly excluded from an assembly, falls several years after into sin, it would justify the assembly for having excluded him, previously!

I should not have believed this report (such an expression being an outrage to the simplest principles of natural righteousness, not to speak of Christian truth and godliness), had I not myself read a quite similar and tantamount expression. of the same teacher in a paper, written and signed and circulated by himself

Chapter 97

The Gospel and the Church: 24. Order in the Church of God, Being the House

Subjects of such immense importance, as the church of God, require to be treated more fully and explicitly, which to many readers of periodicals appears to be wearisome, especially in these days of a “Tit-bit” literature. To such, an occasional interruption is a welcome relief and serves to make them return with renewed interest to that important question of divine truth.

I now take up again the thread of my remarks in the number for June of the preceding year as to the church in its character as the “House of the living God.” I then mentioned two essential requisites for the church in that character, viz. 1, Holiness, and 2, Order. The discussion of these two essential qualities of the “House of God” naturally led to the consideration of the all-important question of “Christian discipline.”

But true as it is, that holiness is the first and permanent requisite for the house of a thrice holy God, there is a second essential requisite for such a house, viz. Order.

What is, even in this world, a household without order? Such a house cannot stand.

Even in the heavenly courts of the Lord of hosts and King of kings, each of those myriads of angels has his place assigned to him, and moves in his proper sphere, as the sun and the moon and the stars of the firmament do. And could God countenance disorder in His house on earth, His church? Impossible. “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” But He can admit of no human order in His house. Human order in divine things, especially in the church, is but disorder producing disorder and increasing that which exists. God owns as order only that which He has ordained in His own word. Is His word perfect and therefore complete? No true believer would deny it. Well then, if so, it must contain everything that is necessary for the single believer and also for the church, be it as to godly walk, Christian discipline, united worship, gifts and offices in the church, administration, &c., &c. Otherwise the holy scriptures would not be complete, but imperfect.

Further, does holy writ consist of absolute or only relative truths, subject to alterations and additions, according to the “requirements of the age,” so-called, and to be adapted to them? “Thy word is truth,” said the Son of God to His Father, when about to leave this world, where He ever had been “the faithful witness” of that truth (John 17:14, 17, 18), rebuking the scribes and Pharisees for making the word of God of none effect by the traditions and additions of men. When saying, “Thy word is truth,” did He mean to say that the holy scriptures consist partly of absolute and partly of relative truth, i.e. truths applicable and valid for certain cases and times, and therefore subject to alterations and additions? Relative truths are no longer divine truths. For divine truth must necessarily be absolute, eternal and unchangeable, i.e. valid for every age and all cases. “The word of the Lord endureth forever” (1 Peter 1:25). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2

Tim. 3:16, 17).

The scriptures being, then, perfect and therefore complete and of absolute authority, i.e. equally valid and binding for all, and for every age under all circumstances, it follows, that they must necessarily contain the clear and distinct expression of the will of God and His dispositions as to the order to be observed in the church which is His house. Divine order must be founded on divine, and only on divine, precepts: otherwise it is no longer divine, but human order, i.e. Babel or confusion. God be praised, Who has given us in His word complete instructions (and binding for all times, as long as the church is left here on earth), as to the order to be observed in His church. And will poor sinful man in his fancied wisdom, which is folly in the sight of God, presume to improve on the order laid down by God in His own word, by adding human precepts, by omitting or altering divine ones? What should we think of an apprentice submitting his master's workmanship to his own judgment and attempting to alter and modify it accordingly? Would not his procedure be considered to be the climax of assumption, ignorance, and folly? It is just this, which the professing church has attempted to do with the order God has laid down in His own word for His church. The church became first worldly. Then it set up a worldly church order, and became a church of this world with human ordinances and statutes.

It would be useless here to enter in detail upon the many additions to, and alterations of, the divine church order laid down in holy writ, which have been attempted by human assumption and folly. Every true believer, who is instructed in church truth according to the New Testament, knows them. I prefer to offer a few remarks on the principles of divine church order, contained in holy writ.

May the Lord enable us to do it in the sense of our dependence upon Him and the guidance and teaching of His Spirit of truth and love, thus speaking the truth in love. “The entrance of thy word giveth light, giveth understanding to the simple,” which is better than controversy.

God is the source of all true order in the church as well as in creation and government. This great and all-important truth we find, as to the church, mentioned in 1 Cor. 14:33. This order, enjoined by Him for His church, refers either to certain offices and gifts given by Him, and the exercise of them, or to the seemly behavior of the saints, as becoming the house of God. As to the former, God is referred to (in 1 Cor. 12:18-28) as the fountain head of all order and authority. In ver. 28 we read, “And 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.”

The latter question, (the behavior in the “house of God”) for instance, with regard to the attire and the demeanor of the women in the assembly, is dealt with in the eleventh chapter of the same epistle, and in the first epistle to Timothy (ch. 2.). There are “diversities” of these offices and gifts, all of them being traced hack to God as their fountain, in the epistle to the Romans in reference to the gospel.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all” (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

(With regard to Romans, see chap. 12. of that epistle).

Here we have many diversities but constant unity, many gifts, but one and the same Spirit working all these, dividing to every man severally as He will (ver. 11). Of this I shall speak later on, when considering the church as being the “habitation of God in the Spirit.” We find differences of administrations, but the same Lord, Who gives them (Eph. 4:11, 12). Of this I shall speak further on, when considering the church as the body of Christ, the Head of His church. We further have “diversities of operations,” but the same God, Who worketh all in all. Everywhere we find oneness in diversities, perfect divine order and harmony.

“But,” some one might say, “is not the church, the house of the living God, in ruins, at least in its human aspect? How can we talk of maintaining order in such a house?”

To this question I reply in the words of a well-known teacher of church truth, who says,

“Are there then no means for the maintenance of order in the church? God has provided them. As to the exercise of gifts, where they exist, there are precepts given for it. I find further, in 1 Cor. 16:15, 16, some who had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. The saints were to submit themselves unto such and to every one that labored with the apostles. Here we have a moral motive for the souls of the believers, forming an assembly, in cases where there is no official precept. It is striking that in the first epistle to the Corinthians, who were in such disorderly condition, elders are not mentioned, nor do we find there any instruction for choosing them. The word of God is sufficient to meet all emergencies.”

The same we find in 1 Thess. 5:12, 13, “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

And in Heb. 13:17, we read, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

All this may he carried out, where no official nomination has taken place. For such, apostolic authority was required, which exists no longer, as little as the outward body, in which it was exercised. Everything now rests on the effect of the word of God on the consciences of those who are to be subject.

If any one come to me, claiming to be an official “elder,” he cannot show me the authority of scripture for the title and office he claims. If I am unruly, those who labor in the Lord, yea, every Christian may apply the above passages to me and to my conduct, and I have to submit to the word of God. If not, the brethren may withdraw from me and have no personal fellowship with me, that I may be ashamed. This is moral, but not official power.

In short, every true service must emanate from the gift, and is exercised in the church of God, or, in the case of the evangelist, in the world. If any one has received the talent, woe unto him if he does not trade with it.

What was the ONE church at the time of the apostles, has sunk into corruption and been split up into a multitude of sects. It exists no longer in its genuineness and truth and normal condition. There exists no authority for choosing and instituting official elders, nor does there exist one and the same flock of God, for which such an official nomination could take place.

But the word of God has provided for these days of the ruin of the church, wherever two or three are gathered to the Name of Christ, or for the service of the saints, according to every one's gift for such service, and according to his time or occasion for serving the saints, or as an evangelist serving poor “sinners.”

Chapter 98

The Gospel and the Church: 25. Order in the Church of God, Being the House

ORDER IN THE CHURCH, BEING THE HOUSE OF GOD.

There is one thing which has greatly contributed to the Babylonian confusion in the professing church. I mean the confounding officials ordained by the Lord through His apostles, with the gifts given by the Spirit for the whole church. There were two kinds of the former: deacons, who served the tables; and elders and bishops, who cared for the spiritual welfare of the churches. Both were ordained by the apostles or their delegates, such as Timothy and Titus. Nowhere do we find in the New Testament an instance of their having been ordained by others than those just mentioned. Those offices had been ordained by the Lord through His apostles in the days of the building up of the church. Such nominations could therefore only be made on the ground of the authority of the apostles, and therefore ceased together with them.

It is quite different with those whom Christ, as the head of the church, has given to her. (Eph. 4:7-12.) He had given them for the whole church and, with the exception of the apostles and prophets, for all ages, right on to the end, that is, even up to these last days of the deepest decline. Oh, and what a decline! If the Lord, addressing His once so flourishing church at Ephesus, was already in those early days obliged to address those solemn words of warning, “Remember therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works,” what would He say now? His awfully solemn words to Laodicea are the only possible answer to the present condition of the professing church. How sadly true are the lamentations of a well known writer about church truth. He says:

“Let us cast our eye, then, over this wide scene of ruin and desolation. There is absolutely nothing that God has instituted, which man has not perverted or destroyed. If God has set up the church as the body of Christ, man has converted it into a means of salvation, by which a person may be made into a member of Christ, man has made it the rival of Christ, and the authoritative judge of doctrinal truth. If God has made it heavenly in its character, its resources, and its hopes, man has lowered it to a worldly standard, has attained for it worldly support, and has given it worldly expectations. If God has established a divine unity, man has broken it up into a chaos of rival sects and jarring systems. If God has given it the word as its divine guide, man has called in his own wisdom to supply the deficiencies, or correct the error, of which, in his arrogance, he accuses the scriptures. If God has instituted local assemblies, to express the oneness of the assembly in each city, man has split them up into a thousand detached masses, not one of which is gathered on the true principles of the church. If God has instituted local officers, man has perverted them to every purpose except that for which they were appointed, has set aside the scriptural mode of ordination for the inventions of his own brain, and has invested them with a character which God never conferred upon them or upon any other human being. If God gave gifts to the church, man has insisted that these gifts should be exercised only according to his own will, should be restrained within the limits of an official class, and should be tied down to the narrow circle of a local

assembly. If God made office local, man has made it general; and if God made gift general, man has made it local. If God separated gift and office, man has insisted upon their union, regardless of whether the officer possesses gift, or the gifted person possesses the qualification for office. If God has left the exercise of gift free in the assembly, to be guided only by His own Spirit, man has deposed the Spirit by giving His authority to an officer of his own appointment. If God has gathered the assembly together with the special object of remembering Christ according to His own institution, man has thrust this institution into a corner, made it the exceptional instead of the principal object of gathering together, and put his own supposed profit in the place of prominence which Christ claims for the memorials of His death." The church offices have, therefore, from the reasons just mentioned, no longer an existence based on scriptural authority. Where they have been re-established and maintained, the old sin of Nadab and Abihu appears again, in bringing "strange fire" into the Lord's presence and service. God, foreseeing the sad decline of the church, had in His wisdom made those offices for the need of the churches, to depend upon the authority of the apostles and their delegates, as the builders of His church. Those offices ceased with the apostles. Had God permitted them to remain in a fallen ruinous church, He would have put His seal of approval upon human order, that is upon assumption and disorder. What, then, about His truth and righteousness? But man's follies and sins cannot impede the Lord's grace. Apostles and prophets have ceased. But His gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and the gifts of His Spirit are still there, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." All these are still in existence and active even amidst the sad ruin of the church. With God, perfect wisdom and grace are united. Had He inseparably joined together offices and gifts, as man in folly and assumption has attempted, God, who from the reasons just mentioned, could not allow offices to continue, would necessarily have withdrawn the spiritual gifts alike, and the church of God and flock of Christ would have been exposed to starvation. But, blessed be His wisdom and grace, He has separated the offices from the gifts, taking away what is not essentially necessary for the church, and leaving what is indispensable for her spiritual growth and welfare. Who would not admire such grace that still continued, to provide the church with such gifts, even where they have been abused so grossly? The church in Philadelphia found herself amidst declined churches. She herself formed part of the ruins around her. What was her security? She knew it, and in conscious weakness was "leaning on the arm of her beloved," her sole refuge and strength. She did not attempt amidst the ruins to build new churches with the decayed honeycombed and weather-eaten stones of the ruinous heaps around her, but contented herself with keeping His word, Who possesses not only the keys of death and hades, but also the "the key of David," i,e., the key for every success and blessing in His service. She was content to keep the word of His patience. Therefore she heard, amidst the ruins of an unfaithful church and conscious of her own failures and weakness, the everlasting words of her glorified head, the holy and true one, addressing her, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and none can shut it; for thou hast little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my Name." And then the blessed promise, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that none take thy crown."

The Gospel and the Church: 26. The Church As the Temple of God

2. THE CHURCH AS THE “TEMPLE OF GOD.”

We have considered the church in its character as the “house of God,” and the requisites of holiness and order corresponding with that character. Let us now consider it as the “temple of God.”

Three essential qualities characterize the “temple of God “: viz. purity, prayer and worship and praise.

(a) Purity in doctrine forms an especial aspect of holiness. Of that purity the Holy Ghost speaks in 1 Cor. 3:16-17: “know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

The apostle deals in that chapter with the laborers in God's work and their responsibility as to the quality of their labor. He as a wise master-builder has laid the only true foundation, even Christ, i.e., the Christ of God, the Christ of holy scripture. Now if any man should build upon this foundation gold, silver, and precious stones, i.e., if according to the doctrine of the apostles and prophets he taught, built up, exhorted and comforted the believers on the ground of our most holy faith, even Christ Jesus, he was to receive a reward. If he had built upon it wood, hay, and stubble, if he had introduced unsound material, the fire would burn up his work in the day of trial; but the laborer himself, having, after all, built upon Christ as the acknowledged foundation stone, would be saved, but, like Lot, through fire. But if any man did defile or destroy the “temple of God” by introducing heterodox doctrines affecting the Foundation Stone, i.e., Christ, Christ Himself and His work, and virtually setting it aside, if he introduced doctrines tending to subvert the foundations of Christianity, he himself should be destroyed of God for defiling the temple of God. Awfully solemn warning for any, and especially these last days! It is evident from the whole tenor of the chapter, that the words “for the temple of God is holy” refer here especially to purity of doctrine, which is of the highest importance in these “perilous times.” It is not merely the outwardly moral walk, which has been spoken of when considering the church as the “house of the living God,” where its great importance has been dwelt upon. That the purity of the church as the “temple of God” is to be maintained also against pursuits of worldly ends even in the earthly temple of God (and much more in the church), the Lord Himself showed in the most impressive way though symbolically in the Gospel of John, ch. 2:14-16, (compare 1 Peter 5:2,) the only time during His earthly sojourn that we behold the meek and lowly One appearing and acting as judge, with the scourge of small cords. “Take (said He) these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise,” according as it was written, “the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” (b) Prayer. We know that the temple of God is a “house of prayer.” The Lord Himself has characterized it as such when rebuking the commercial Jews in the temple: “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of robbers.” What a difference between that temple with the money-changers and dove-sellers carrying on unworthy trade, and Solomon's temple; when the

king stood before the altar of Jehovah in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and. spread forth his hands and addressed to “Jehovah, the God of Israel” his prayer! Thereupon “the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of Jehovah filled the house; and the people bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, worshipping and praising the Lord, saying, For He is good and His mercy endureth forever.” The glory of Jehovah had filled that temple “when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Jehovah, saying, For He is good, for his mercy endureth forever, then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of God.” Such a temple, dedicated in such a way, God could recognize. He said to Solomon: “I have heard thy prayer and chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.” What a difference, I repeat, between the temple of Solomon, and the “house of prayer” at Jerusalem, turned into a “den of robbers,” in the days of our Lord! But, alas! there is a still sadder and far more humbling difference. A marvelous temple, incomparably greater and more glorious than Solomon's, had been founded at Jerusalem at Pentecost. It was built with far more precious living stones, by a Master-builder greater than Solomon, upon a living Foundation Stone, even Christ, the Son of the living God. Those who composed that temple “were one heart and one soul.” And when they, under the pressure of persecution, “with one accord lifted up their voice to God” —a voice still more precious to the divine ear than that “one voice” of the trumpeters and singers in Solomon's temple,— “the place was shaken, where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:23-31). And when, awakening, as it were, from a beautiful dream, we look around us at the present condition of the church, what do we behold? What we see is enough to make us adopt, in a far more humbling sense, the lamentation of the prophet: “Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” “How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!” What has become of purity of walk and doctrine? Let us only glance at the professing church in its religious ramifications and societies. But a few years ago a strange, unnatural and till then unexampled spectacle was witnessed in a large town of this so-called protestant country. Nearly all (if not all) the “Christian” ministers of that town could be seen on the same platform with an avowed Atheist, to support his political claims! In another town, at a central committee meeting of a large and prominent religious sect, a minister unsound in doctrine was proposed for the presidency of that union, and, in spite of the protest of several of his colleagues, one of whom charged him publicly with unsound doctrine, he was elected president of that union. On another occasion a well-known preacher in the same town invited his colleagues from the different sects to meet in his large chapel a certain continental minister, famous in the religious world, but notorious amongst faithful Christians on account of his erratic, nay, heterodox doctrinal views and tracts, to express to him their entire approval and admiration. That invitation was numerously responded to, and the heretical preacher lauded to the skies, and intreated to communicate to them the secret of filling his church Sunday after Sunday to overflowing. Godly preachers, whose attendance decreases at the same rate as the “itching of the ears” and the turning away unto fables increase, are mourning

over the thin attendance at the prayer meetings in churches and chapels, and the promenading concerts and other musical entertainments with worldly songs and bazaars which take their place.

With fearful speed everything is hastening towards open apostacy.

And what about those who amidst the increasing decline and departure from “the faith once delivered to the saints” had comforted themselves with the thought of being the true “Philadelphia,” keeping the word of Christ and the word of His patience, not denying His Name? Do we indeed possess in our consciences the seal of His approval, that Philadelphia’s testimony was, and has been, ours? A retrospect of the last decade, and further back must suffice to disabuse our minds of such an illusion and to show us that we have neither kept His word, nor the word of His patience, and have been not far from practically denying His Name, supplanting it by the names of Cephas, Paul, or Apollos (or by even less honorable party names), and stamping the “word of Christ” (Col. 3:16) which alone “is truth,” with expressions worse than “Pauline, Petrine, and Johannean truth.” We know what the consequences have been.

Surely in days of general ruin and faithlessness none ought to take a lower place in shame and confusion of faces before the Lord, than those who had been favored by Him with very high and blessed privileges, and with so abundant a measure of divine truth, especially with regard to the church of God. But, as it is written, and is it not too true?

“They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; it hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up... They shall be as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.”

And have we, after all that has come upon us remembered the words of the apostle (“The temple of God is holy, which ye are") and sought to maintain the purity of that temple by purity of walk and doctrine? Have we, remembering what is written in 2 Cor. 6:16, 17, separated from those who tolerate heterodox teachers amongst them, or maintain fellowship with “Christians” indifference to the honor of the word of God and of His Christ? Have we, mindful of the words of Christ, “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer,” bowed down before the Lord in common humiliation and prayer in the spirit of His servants Ezra and Daniel, whether it might please Him, perhaps, in some measure to restore and revive the damaged testimony to the precious truth of His church? Alas, for the many souls injured and alienated by the sad shipwreck of that testimony! But Christ is the “bright morning star,” and close at hand, blessed be His glorious Name! As to the state of things around us, the words of a prominent religious party leader (“On our side are the gifts, the numbers, and the money") appear but to be the echo of Laodicea's boasting language and the sadly exact expression of its spirit.

The Lord grant us “broken bones,” which He “makes rejoice,” a “broken spirit” and a “broken and contrite heart,” the “sacrifices of God,” which “He will not despise.” (Psa. 51)

The Gospel and the Church: 27. Church

The third quality which should distinguish the church as being the “temple of God,” is that of Praise and Thanksgiving. The voice of praise should always be heard in the church.

“We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple” (Psa. 48:9). This character of God's temple appears continually even in the Old Testament. The glorious temple of Solomon was opened with the beautiful prayer of that king; but when after its close the fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, and Jehovah's glory filled Jehovah's house, the children of Israel bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, “For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.” “And the priests waited on their offices; the Levites also with instruments of music of the Lord which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy endureth forever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them and all Israel stood.”

What a grand and mighty volume of sound of praises and thanksgivings filled that temple, mingled with the lovely strains and the still more exquisite themes of the devoted and inspired lays of the departed Psalmist, the “man after God's own heart;” who like Abel, “though he be dead, yet speaketh” to us (though in a different way,) in his divinely inspired psalms, as he did to those gathered for praise in his son's magnificent temple.

When Israel under Solomon's foolish successor, who was heedless of his father's wise “proverbs,” had divided, and the ten tribes under their godless king had turned from God to idols, and Judah had not only followed their example, but surpassed them in wickedness, and like Israel, had been carried away into captivity, then, instead of the trumpets and harps and of the voices of the singers, the “lamentations” of the prophet sounded through the quiet air over the ruins of the city and the temple. But God, whose wrath does not, like His mercy endure forever, had at His own appointed time brought back from captivity a small remnant of His people for the rebuilding of His beloved city and His temple. No sooner had the foundation stone of Jehovah's new temple been laid, than afresh the voice of praise and thanksgiving was heard.

“And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel, and they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because He is good and His mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid” (Ezra 3:10, 11).

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising Thee. Selah. (Psa. 84:4).

On the threshold, as it were, of the Old and New Testament, we behold Simeon, and Anna “which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day,” praising God at the sight of the Divine Babe, the Word which was made flesh, the former testifying to the “salvation” of God, and the latter to “redemption.”

And when He Who was the salvation of God and a light of the Gentiles, come for the redemption of His people Israel, had been rejected by the builders, and crucified, and risen from the dead, did appear to His disciples forty days, comforting them and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and finally before their own eyes had been received up into heaven with hands lifted up in blessing them, “His disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

Now if that voice of praise and thanksgiving from the earthly people of God, and even of the disciples of the Lord, was heard in that temple composed of dead stones, how much more ought that voice to be heard in the spiritual house of God, built of “living stones,” the Christian “temple of God,” where the believers as “a holy priesthood offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5)!

“Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me” (Psa. 50:23). If prayer becomes us, being the expression of our dependence as creatures of God, children of the Father and servants of Christ, “praise is comely,” and giving of thanks, being due to God, as the fountainhead from whence all blessings flow. “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee” (Psa. 145:10).

Israel will one day praise the “glory of His kingdom and of His might.” But why do we praise Him? Paul, the apostle of glory and of the church, writes to the Ephesians: (chapter 1. ver. 3). “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.”

In the writings of the New Testament, we find besides the exhortation to pray, the constant injunction to praise and give thanks. In the Gospels the Lord Himself sets the example, be it at the breaking of bread, or at the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and even at the moment of the rejection of His testimony by the most privileged cities of Israel, nay on the very eve of His crucifixion, when He with His own sang a hymn of praise. The same injunction for praises and thanksgiving we meet with in the epistles of the apostle of the church.

If we have reason to tremble for a Christian who neglects prayer, there is no less cause for concern for the spiritual condition of one, whose voice is only heard in prayers to the exclusion of thanksgiving and praise. What should we think of a child constantly importuning his father with petitionings for this thing and that thing, without expressing his gratitude for the gifts received? Even the world despises ingratitude, however true it may be that “ingratitude is the world's reward,” as fully shown toward God and His dear Son.

What then can be thought of a child of God, in whose house the voice of thanksgiving and praise is seldom or never heard? Such a household resembles a damp and dark house, the rooms of which are never lit up and cheered by a single sunbeam; as in Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla, the gloomy inmates with drooping heads dragging along from day to day their weary existence. What kind of testimony can such a dismal Christian household render to its worldly neighbors? What testimony can such sombre Christian parents give to the unconverted members of their household? To make others happy, we must be happy ourselves. A truly grateful Christian will always be a happy one too, and in such a house the voice of praise will not be scarce. How much more then should that voice be heard in the church or assembly, which is the “temple of God?”

In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, as also in the third chapter of the Epistle of the same apostle to the Colossians, we are enjoined to praise God even the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to make melody in our hearts to our Lord and Savior and Bead in glory, whilst speaking to one another with singing lips in happy communion. In Eph. 5 this is presented as the effect of being filled with the Spirit, but in Col. 3 as the result of being richly indwelt by the word of Christ in all wisdom, in keeping with the character of each epistle upon which we cannot enter here. But in both passages we find the three kinds of Christian songs of praise, namely:—

l. Psa. i.e., Christian songs for thanksgiving and praise.

Hymns for Christian worship.

Spiritual songs, i.e., such as serve for domestic and social Christian edification.

The two former belong in an especial way to the assemblies of saints, especially those for the breaking of bread, whose character is that of adoration and thanksgiving. The third kind of Christian songs—those for edification simply—would be out of place there.

Assemblies, where spiritual songs for prayer and confession are the rule and hymns of praise are seldom heard, betray a low spiritual condition. May God increase and deepen in all of us the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of worship! Wherever there is worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), there will be no lack of “praying in the Holy Ghost” (Jude 20).

Chapter 101

The Gospel and the Church: 28. The Church God As Habitation of God in the Spirit

We have looked at the church as the “house of God” and as the “temple of God.” Let us now meditate upon it as the “habitation of God in the Spirit.”

Before doing so, it is well to remember that the two terms “house of God” and “habitation of God in the Spirit,” have a difference. The words actually employed in the original for each of the two—. “ο■κος” and “κατοικητ■πιον” —seem to indicate this. For though both have the same root, the composition and ending of the latter plainly shows that there is a difference, which appears to be simply this:—

Where the church is spoken of as the “house of God,” that term applies to those who compose the house, i.e. all believers as being His family. (1. Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:19; Tim. 3:15). But where the word “habitation” (κατοικητ■ριον) is used, which occurs only twice in the N. T., it refers to the character of the indweller of the house. So in Eph. 2:22, where the church is called the “habitation of God in [i.e. through] the Spirit,” and Rev. 18:2, where the professing church has not only become “Babel” but “Babylon the great,” “a habitation of devils [or demons], and a hold of every foul spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird.”

And what was it, Christian reader, that brought about that terrible change in the original character of the church, as the “habitation of God in the Spirit?” Was it not the practical denial of that blessed truth? It is just the wondrous fact of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost and of His sovereign authority and guidance in the church built by Him, which, together with the power of the name of Jesus and of his word, so decidedly stamps that part of the N.T. called “The Acts of the Apostles."

We behold this power of the Holy Ghost with regard to His dwelling place, the church, in that wonderful scene in Acts 4:31 (which reminds us of a similar scene at the dedication of the temple of Solomon, 2 Chron. 5:13, 14), when the persecuted saints “with one accord” lifted up their voices to God, pleading the name of His Holy servant Jesus, “and the place was shaken, where they were assembled together.”

We hear further the Holy Ghost asserting His sovereign authority in the church of Antioch, speaking with a loud voice in the midst of the assembly. “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). We even find Philip (chap. 8:39,40) “caught away” by the “Spirit of the Lord,” and transferred to Azotus, to “preach the gospel in all the cities,” after he, at the bidding of the same Spirit, had shown to the eunuch the way of salvation, and baptized him. Nay, we find, how also the apostle of glory and of the church, though he had been called directly from glory by the Lord of glory, even the Head of the church, in His service and testimony had to learn his entire dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit (ch. 16:6-7). We find that, where he follows that guidance, God's power and blessing accompany his testimony; whereas on Paul's failing to do so, the contrary takes place (chap. 21. 4.-11. Compare chaps. 21. and 23.) Even the church in Jerusalem took care to own its dependence upon the guidance of the

indwelling Spirit by their express words, “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us” (chap. 15:28).

When the second Person of the Godhead dwelt here on earth amongst men “full of grace and truth,” God being in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, men could not bear God coming so near to them in grace and truth. Had it been only grace, they would not have so much objected to it (Luke 4:22). But it was “grace and truth,” and that they could not bear (v. 25-29); for men loved darkness rather than light. So they cast Him out, Who was the light of the world.

And since the third Person of the Godhead, even “the Spirit of truth,” took the place of Christ here on earth, proclaiming to a world full of God-alienated and hostile sinners grace and pardon by faith in the once rejected and crucified Son of God, converting every believer into a “temple of God,” and making the church “the house of the living God” and “a habitation of God in the Spirit,” —does man show more reverence and submission to the presence and energy of the Spirit of God, than he did to the Son of God? No, man's enmity against God, and insubjection to His will have been and will be ever the same. If the Holy Spirit were only the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, “the world,” though ever objecting to all that is divine, would perhaps have shown its hostility in a less degree. The natural man admires, like Simon Magus, power, especially supernatural power. He appreciates love, and esteems soundness of judgment and a well-balanced mind. But the Holy Spirit is, above and before all, “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17); and this it is which the world cannot and will not bear, because it is ruled by him who “is a liar and the father of it.” Therefore he hates the word of God, which “is truth;” and inspired by the “Spirit of truth,” it testifies of Christ, Who is “the truth.” The lying Cretans of this world have a proverb of their own, which says, “truth does not find a home.” This witness is true. The first testimony of the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem was received by the religious world with mockery, and afterward rejected with gnashing of teeth, stopping the ears and the stoning of Stephen—His messenger and witness.

During the ministry of Christ on earth, false righteousness and hypocrisy withstood Him, because He was the true righteousness; and ever since the days of Pentecost, and in the last of the “last days” more than ever, the spirit of lying and falsehood withstands the Holy Ghost, because He is the “Spirit of truth,” and the word indited by Him, because it “is truth.” Rome has supplanted the word of God by the infallibility of the church (followed by the infallibility of the Pope), and made the Pope, instead of the Holy Spirit, the Vicar of Christ. As to the professing church throughout Christendom as a whole, in part we see what has become of the “habitation of God in the Spirit.” The sending, presence, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, though perhaps theoretically owned as a doctrine have been and are still practically denied. And this denial of the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the church is what made her already in the days of the apostles “a great house,” and has turned her in the course of time into a hollow “professing church.” Thus the original purity and freshness of churches like those at Antioch and Jerusalem, the “holy city,” degenerated into the system of Rome, the unholy city and capital of the world; which, instead of being the bride of Christ, has become, through the fiendish mockery and cunning of Satan, “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth,” a habitation of demons, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. 17; 18).

Christ (the glorious head of the church, His body, Who had sent the Holy Spirit, that He as the heavenly Eliezer might conduct His heavenly bride through this wilderness toward her glorious Bridegroom) had raised by His Spirit from time to time faithful witnesses of divine truths, especially that of His gospel, which, with the word of God itself, had been almost lost beneath the rubbish of guilty Romanism. But those witnesses, faithful though they were in the recovery and testimony of a pure gospel (although its heavenly side in resurrection and delivering power were only imperfectly known and understood even by them), possessed but very little light, if any, about the character of the church, as being the habitation of God in the Spirit, and as to her heavenly position, calling, and hope. This defect is evident even in the best of the reformers of the 16th century.

In consequence of the Thirty years' war, so pernicious in every respect, the Protestant bodies, soon relapsed into spiritual sleep and worldliness, and the solemn prophetic description of the “church in Sardis” became an accomplished fact. Toward the close of the last century God again raised several faithful witnesses to awaken the Protestant system, sunk in worldliness, from its sinful sleep. But even the testimony of men like Rowland Hill, J. and C. Wesley, or Whitfield, was chiefly confined to the preaching of the gospel. And though one chief blessing of the reformation (viz., the unimpeded dissemination of the Holy Scripture) had continued, so that the Bible had become common property, it nevertheless appeared as if the glorious truth of the church, having been buried beneath the religious rubbish of so many centuries, was to remain hidden still. For one of the manifold stratagems of the enemy of truth is this, that where he cannot entirely prevent or suppress the spreading of divine truth, he places some portion of it in the foreground, confining to it the interest and activity of believers, in order to divert them from other equally important, still higher, and more blessed divine truths, and to keep them in the dark background, however clearly and decidedly scripture may set them forth for the hearts and consciences of believers.

But our Lord Jesus Christ (Who is not only the Savior of sinners, but above all the Head of His body the church, composed of all really saved and sealed ones) would not permit, now when His coming is close at hand, the precious truth of Christ and the church—the very center of the divine counsels—any longer to be obscured and kept in the background. Blessed be His great and glorious Name!

I hope to offer some more remarks on this important subject in my next paper, if the Lord will.

Chapter 102

The Gospel and the Church: 29. The Church as the Temple of God

During the second decade of this century God raised in England some eminently gifted witnesses of the truth. One of them, endowed with gifts of an exceptional measure, was used of the Lord to bring to light again the truth of the gospel in such fullness, as had never been known since the days of the apostles. But not only was the gospel in its original purity and completeness recovered by that highly honored witness of the truth, but the pure light of the scriptural doctrine of the church (which in the course of centuries of decline had almost disappeared beneath the heaps of rubbish of human religious ordinances and dogmas) was put again on the stand in England in a clearness and scriptural simplicity, unknown in the history of the church since the days of Pentecost.

What characterized that movement was especially the practical acknowledgment of the presence, authority, and guidance of the Holy Ghost in the assemblies of believers. But that acknowledgment was closely united with the practical recognition of the written word of God and its authority, unlike many religious revivals, so called, where Satan endeavored to conceal the assumptions of the religious flesh set in motion by him, and to set aside, under the pretense of guidance by the Holy Spirit, the authority of the word of God indited by the same Spirit. The believers, referred to above, acted upon the thoroughly sound principle:—"Neither the Spirit without the word, nor the word without the Spirit."

The Spirit of God, who glorifies Christ, receives of His and shows it to us, dwelling in His own recognized authority in the assemblies of those Christians; His powerful and blessed activity was unimpeded in their midst. It almost seemed as if the glorious days of Pentecost were about to reappear amongst them, to judge from the freshness, simplicity, devotedness, love and unity that characterized them.

"The effect of the truth on the hearts and conscience," said A. Miller in his excellent "Short Papers on Church History," "soon was manifest. There was great freshness, simplicity, devotedness, and separation from the world. All was new. They flocked together and gave themselves to the study of the word of God, and soon experienced the sweetness of Christian communion. They found the Bible,—as they said,—to be a new hook. It was no doubt, in those days of virgin freshness a most distinct and blessed work of God's Spirit. the influence of which was felt not only throughout this country, but on the continent and in distant lands."

"It was no uncommon thing at this time to find valuable jewelry in the collection boxes, which was soon turned into money, and given to the deacons for the poor."

The eminent servant of Christ referred to already, who was God's instrument in the marvelous movement, wrote in those days at the request of a French religious journalist: "We were only four men, who came together for the breaking of bread and prayer, on the authority of the word, Where two or three are gathered unto my Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20); and not, I hope, in a spirit of pride or presumption, but deeply humbled at the state of things around us; and praying for all Christians, members of the body of Christ, wherever they were ecclesiastically. We

thought of nothing else but satisfying the need of the soul according to the word of God; nor did we think of it going any farther. We proved the promised presence of the Lord; and others, feeling the same need, followed in the same path, and the work spread in a way we never thought of in the least."

"It is very apparent," says Mr. A. Miller, "from this extract, that they had no thought of constructing a fresh system, or of reconstituting the church of God, as God had constituted it at first,—of restoring it to its Pentecostal glory. They seem to have had no statute, no system, no organization. They held the faith of all orthodox Christians with regard to foundation truths; but having received light from God's word as to what the calling, position and hopes of the church are, they could no longer remain in what man and the world called "the church." These thoughts and searchings of heart issued in the secession of many individuals from the various bodies of professing Christians, and in their coming together for worship and communion on the ground of the "one body," as formed and directed by the "One Spirit."

The secret of this Christian devotedness was their devotion to the Person of Christ in the power of an ungrieved Spirit practically acknowledged as dwelling among them. "They made," as Marsden says in his "Dictionary of Christian Churches," "no show of an especial creed. They simply proposed the practice of Christian truth, as taught by our Lord and His apostles in the New Testament. They taught that it is the presence of the Holy Spirit which forms the church. It is the acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit as the really present, sole, and all-sufficient guide of the church during the Lord's absence." This was a chief feature in the testimony of these Christians.

But the enemy of the truth did not rest. He who in Israel tried everything to counteract the divine testimony of the prophets of Jehovah by means of false prophets, and later on in the earliest days of the church, even during the lifetime of the apostles by false teachers, introduced such also amongst the happy Christians referred to above. Those tools of the enemy sought to paralyze, obscure, and, if possible, put aside those divine truths brought to light again by the above mentioned faithful servant of Christ and his fellow-laborers. Their efforts were, in an especial though indirect way, brought into play against the scriptural truth of the presence, guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit in the church of God, which these "evil workers" sought practically to set aside, supplanting it by the human demands of teachers of their own, and claiming for them absolute authority. Soon evil doctrines, derogatory to the honor of Christ, made their appearance; whence arose the necessity of godly separation from all those who tolerated and adhered to these false teachers and their doctrines according to the solemn words of the inspired apostle of the church: "There must be divisions among you, in order that those who are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:19). The faithful servant of Christ, alluded to above, was again honored at that time by his heavenly Master with being the champion of the truth and chief promoter of this godly separation, however humbling for all.

"Then had the churches rest" —for many years. But the adversary, who never sleeps, did not rest. He resorted to one of his old stratagems, by introducing the demon of religious party spirit, as he did of yore in that so richly endowed but elated church at Corinth, with no less contending parties and consequent moral and doctrinal evils. A second division was the fruit of those machinations of the evil one. "They have sown the wind and they have reaped the whirlwind;" whilst a small remnant, kept by the mercy of our God from being carried away by those party currents and

undercurrents, still remains in undisturbed peace on the terra firma of God's own word. May grace deepen the sense of our common shame and humiliation and of the sad havoc amongst that once so happy portion of the flock of God, and of the irretrievable damage to the testimony of divine truth! May the Lord in His mercy grant “repentance not to be repented of,” ere that solemn day appears!

J. C. B

Chapter 103

The Gospel and the Church: 30. The Body of Christ

2.—THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

We have considered the church in its character as the house of God. Let us now view her, with God's gracious help, as the body of Christ, her gracious Head in heavenly glory.

The words “church” and “body of Christ” stand in closest connection. The church is the body of Christ, and the body of Christ is the church. Only the word in the original used for (■κκλησ■α) means a (greater or smaller) number of person, called out from a promiscuous multitude to form an assembly, be it for worldly or sacred purposes (compare Acts 7:38; 8:1; 9:31; 19:3, Eph. 1:22. and others). In a strictly Christian sense it means an assembly of believers from different nations, called “church” from the Greek word Κυριακ■ς “belonging to the Lord,” the word “assembly” referring rather to its character as the “house of God.”

God's wonderful counsel (indicated in John 11:52, that Jesus was to die not for the nation only, but that the children of God scattered abroad amongst the Gentiles He should also gather into one) had been a mystery before the creation of the world, although foreshadowed already in paradise. But it could not be fulfilled until at Pentecost the Holy Spirit, the Revealer of the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, had been sent down from glory, after the “Son of Man” had been received up in glory.

Jesus (Who, as the only perfect man, alone could glorify and has glorified God on earth) must be exalted first at the right hand of God, before the Holy Ghost could come down to take His abode in the bodies of sinful men, who have been justified by faith and cleansed from all sin by the precious blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and thus made fit to be indwelt by this divine heavenly Guest. Jesus, the personal Savior of every individual sinner who believes in Him, must as the first-begotten from among the dead and “the firstborn among many brethren,” take His seat at the right hand of God as the Christ, the common head of His body, the church, before the believers could be baptized by the same Spirit, into one body, united to the head in glory, each “one spirit with the Lord,” as all of them formed it. At the first preaching at Pentecost, 3,000 were thus baptized into one body, and soon after 2,000 more.

Wonderful spectacle for angels, to study the wisdom of God! a spiritual body on earth, united to a heavenly head, the Son of man in glory, by the invisible tie of the Holy Spirit. Men only saw the visible effect of that mysterious union, for they beheld how these Christians loved one another, being “one heart and one soul,” as they were members of one body. Jesus the Nazarene, the Savior of sinners, approved among men by miracles and wonders and signs, rejected by the builders and disallowed of man, had been made of God both, Lord (for every individual believer) and Christ. He is the Head of His body, the church.

This was something entirely new, unknown in this world since its existence. There had been a congregation of the earthly people of God in the wilderness, the “house of Israel.” They possessed the living oracles of God, Who dwelt among them in tents, guiding them by the cloudy pillar in the

daytime, and by night by the pillar of fire towards the promised land. But that was neither the church of God nor the body of Christ.

When He, of whom Moses and the prophets had testified, had Himself appeared in the midst of Israel, and His own had not received but crucified Him, having risen from the dead and appeared in the assembly of His disciples, showing to them His hands and His side, and announced to them the result of His death, saying, “Peace be unto you,” there was indeed a blessed assembly, but it was not the church yet as the body of Christ, which is characterized. by the indwelling and guidance of the Holy Spirit, sent down by the glorified Christ.

Wondrous, glorious fact, but too little, alas! realized by Christians: a body here on earth, formed by a countless multitude of believers, from all nations, united by the Spirit of God to the God—man there above in glory!

But it has been always the persistent aim of the enemy of the truth to put aside this all-important and most precious portion of divine truth, or, where he could not succeed in this, at least to weaken the sense of its importance in the souls of believers. He seeks especially to enfeeble the living consciousness and happy realization of our two-fold relationship to God and to His Son, as children of our Heavenly Father and as members of Christ. For he knows but too well, that the godly walk and testimony of each individual believer is closely connected with the assurance and realization by faith, of our relationship as children of God, and with our living consciousness of being members of one and the same body,—the body of Christ for mutual service, help and edification. It is especially the fresh and living sense of the latter, which the adversary now more than ever is endeavoring to obscure and to weaken (peace with God, and the assurance of the believer's relationship to the Father, at the present day being more known and enjoyed. than in former years, owing to the fuller preaching of the gospel of grace).

It is not only in our individual character as children of God,” but especially in our corporate quality as members of Christ's body, that we are enjoined to serve and edify one another in the Epistles to the Romans (at least in chap. 12.), and to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. We hear among Christians a great deal about “children of God,” but very little about “members of Christ.” The former term implies our eternal security and our blessed privileges, and of that we love to speak. But the words, “members of Christ” and “members one of another,” remind us of our joint privileges and responsibilities, on which we are less inclined to dwell. That in all true children of God a desire for union should manifest itself is but natural; it springs from the very instinct of the new man (Col. 3 compare Jude 19). But that desire for union, right and proper as it is, we hear generally uttered rather with regard to the family tie of the “children of God” as such. But of the “one body” i.e. the unity of the members of the one body of Christ and their responsibility to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” we hear very little, but all the more of religious “bodies,” whose number is legion, and of “members” of this or that religious “body.” The word of God knows not “bodies,” nor speaks of “members” of confederations, formed by the will or spirit of man, and endowed with human ordinances, but not by the Spirit of God. The word of God. knows of only one, body, the body of Christ, of which every sealed believer is a member. There are in the N. T. churches in divers places, but they do not constitute sects, but present locally the one body of Christ, “the house of the living God.”

The history of the church shows the constant endeavor of the enemy of God as to His church, to weaken in the members of the body of Christ the consciousness and sense of that membership. Once having succeeded in this, the “accuser of the brethren” found it no difficult task to bring about all the sad schisms, divisions, and sects, which we perceive, and in these “last days” more than ever.

Ought not our own natural bodies to teach us better? What is our every morning's first experience when arising from sleep? Is it not the simple truth that one member serves the other? Did the left hand ever hide itself away, because the right hand occupies a place of honorable distinction and performs the most important part of every day's business? Or did the feet ever refuse to serve the hands, because of the undignified business assigned to them—ever to tread the dust and labor through the mire of the road, carrying the weight of the whole body, while the hands perform all the important and honorable functions. The hands, nay the whole body, could not do without the feet. What humbling lessons do not our own bodies daily teach us, Christian reader and fellow member in the body of Christ, if we had but eyes to see them, hearts to feel, and consciences to heed them?

A well-known and honored servant of Christ used to quote one of old: “suppose it pleased God to send two angels, the one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep a crossing in one of the streets of London; the latter would perform his business with the same willingness and heartiness as the former.” We are more than angels, fellow-believer, saved by grace and called to glory. Would we were more like these blessed heavenly servants of the Lord, who, though “excelling in strength,” yet never fail to do His commandments (strength combined with obedience), and, mark, Christian reader—not in a mere sense of duty, but heartily, “hearkening unto the voice of His word.” They not only know, but love the voice of their Heavenly Master. Do we, members of His body, who are united to Him and to one another by an infinitely closer tie than angels are, serve our Heavenly Head and Master heartily and with a ready mind?

One more illustration furnished by our own bodies. For this line of truth cannot be dwelt upon too much in these days of latitudinarian associations on the one hand, and sectarian divisions on the other.

Suppose I want a book in a distant room. My body, in obedience to the order received from the head, willingly rises at once to fetch it. The feet must carry me there. But they can do no more. The hands must take hold of it. But neither the feet nor the hands would be of any avail, unless the eyes show the way. If the eye is on the Head, we need not mind the “breakers ahead.” But if the light has become darkness, how great is the darkness! We need to remember Menenius Agrippa's famous parable and its instantaneous effect upon his Roman listeners. Alas! the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

But it is not only the lively sense of our mutual relationship as members of one body, oven the body of Christ, but the being, more than we usually are, alive to the wondrous fact of the union of that body with, and its entire dependence upon, the glorified head, Christ Himself, which for every true member of Christ is of the utmost importance and in our days more than ever. By the Spirit of glory the body of Christ here on earth is united with its Head in glory— “One spirit with the Lord.” Unless the members be consciously kept alive to this union also, their mutual support and service will be of little profit. The Holy Spirit dwelling in the church, by Whom all the members of Christ

have been baptized into one body, is indeed to lead these members; but He always does this in dependence on the Head of the body, even as Christ when on earth did and spoke everything in dependence upon the Father. He did that which He had seen with the Father, and spoke that which He had heard from Him.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). Further “I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:49, 50).

So the Holy Spirit: “However when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:13, 14).

All real Christians feel more or less the want of unity of co-operation in the body of Christ; and nowadays we need it realized more than ever. But what is lacking with so many, if not with most of them, is the conscious realization of our living union with, and of our entire dependence upon Christ, our glorious Head at the right hand of God. This is the reason why so many well-intentioned efforts remain fruitless. God is the fountain-head of every blessing, but “all the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Christ bodily” (Col. 2:9). In Christ, our Head, to Whom we are united by the Spirit of God, in order to draw from His fullness (of which we all have received grace upon grace) is wisdom, light, strength and all we need in this world to glorify God and the Name of His dear Son. The members of Christ must, by the Holy Spirit, receive orders and directions from their common Head in glory, which, as I scarcely need to add, never can nor will clash with the word of God written by the same Spirit.

May God grant to His own a deeper and more real consciousness not only of our close relationship as members of the same body, even the body of Christ and mutual dependence upon one another, but also of the dependence of all the members, and of each member in particular, upon our common Heavenly Head, crowned with glory and honor,—Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh! what sorrow and shame would the church of God have been spared, and what dishonor to the Name of our glorified Head have been avoided, had the members of His body been more alive to this wondrous fact and awake to the responsibility accruing therefrom.

The Gospel and the Church: 31. The Church

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S DEATH.

Let us now enter on a subject so near to our Savior's heart, and to the hearts of His dearly beloved and dearly bought ones. It is in itself the expression of the One body of Him, Who gave Himself for us, not merely that we should be one of many saved individuals (however countless the number may be), but that all the redeemed units should be united into one, even the One body of Christ.

Before our Savior suffered and died for us, it was His last desire in that upper chamber, where He for the last time was about to eat the passover with them, to explain to them the true meaning of it, be it as to the new covenant of the millennial kingdom, or as to Himself above all, the true Paschal Lamb Whose body was now to be given, and His blood to be shed for them—even the blood of the new covenant, which alone could secure and disclose for Israel those earthly blessings of the millennial kingdom, and infinitely higher blessings for us.

And when He after His victorious death on the cross and resurrection had ascended to heaven and taken His seat at the right hand of God, as the glorious Head of His body, the church, it was again His plain concern (after having from glory called Saul to be His apostle of glory and of the church and of the mysteries now revealed) to give to Paul an especial revelation and instruction for the church concerning the memorial of His love (1 Cor. 11).

Indeed no brighter, no more blissful, place could the imperishable love of our adored Lord and Savior have provided for His own, amidst a world full of daily increasing darkness and opposition to all that is divine, than this memorial feast of His love. Here it is that the family of His redeemed on the day of His resurrection, the first day of a new week) take their place, shutting the door upon everything around and within, to remember Him, Whose love, which was strong as death, all the waters of death beneath and around Him could not extinguish, nor the fiery billows of divine wrath consume, as it rolled over the One forsaken of God. Here it is that our souls feast upon Himself, whilst we muse upon Him and His cross, and our hearts dwell on Him Who is altogether lovely, whilst we partake of the memorial of His sufferings and death, showing His death in the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup of blessing “till He come.”

What would a family be without the family table? There its members assemble to realize, whilst partaking of the common meal, their near and dear relationship one to another and to the presiding parent. If there be anything amiss in the family, it is sure to be felt at the family table. How much more at the Lord's table, where the redeemed are not only as the members of a family, but as members of one body under one glorified Head, the tie of union being closer still!

Let us turn, for a few moments, to that solemn night, in which our blessed Savior bequeathed to His apostles and to us the precious legacy of His love.

Oh what tones of perfect love, grace, patience, goodness, and wisdom were heard that night, the atmosphere of which was saturated with the leaven of Satan's and men's wickedness! May that

night more constantly be present to our consciences and to the memory of our hearts! Then indeed, when sitting down at the table then prepared for us by our Good Shepherd, we shall better understand the meaning of His tender dying injunction," THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

THE NIGHT OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

It was the darkest of all nights—a night the like of which had never been on this earth, nor ever will be again. It was that night when Judas went out to betray his Master with a kiss for the price of thirty pieces of silver. The Holy Spirit Himself distinguishes that night from all the dark and terrible nights that had been in this world before, by those words, "AND IT WAS NIGHT."

And He Himself Who then and there was so shamefully betrayed, after He had ascended to heaven, surrounded by the light of glory, remembered that night, when He by special revelation reminded His apostle and all His own of it with those words, "THE NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS BETRAYED," thus confirming from glory the solemn comment of the Holy Ghost, "And it was night."

What a moment when Jesus sat down with His apostles, to eat the last Passover with them before He died!

Richer blood had to be shed now—the blood of the Lamb of God—to procure for them and for us the blessings founded upon it; for them on earth, and for us in heavenly glory. Before Him the roast lamb was placed on the table, of which He Himself was the blessed anti-type. What was the train of His thoughts when the Holy Lamb of God looked at the type before Him? Was it His own sufferings? Yes, but in what way? "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

The One who sat at the table with the twelve was the same Who made the world. Before the foundations of the earth were appointed, He was His Father's daily delight, and His delights were with the sons of men. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "Behold I and the children which God has given me." That which now engrossed His mind and heart was, not the anticipation of His sufferings (the hour of Gethsemane had not yet come), but those for whom He was about to suffer and to die. It was not the travail of His soul, but those that were to be the fruit of it, all whom the Father had given Him out of this world, whom He was going to redeem by His blood. They and we, fellow-believer, filled the foreground of His mind and heart before He suffered. And they—we—are the first of whom He thinks and speaks, after He had been "heard from the horns of the unicorns." "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

And did not Jesus know what manner of men they were, for whom He was going to suffer? As to "that nation" for whom He was to die, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

The Son of God, the King of Israel, Who saw Nathanael when he was under the fig tree, knew that in that very night the false shepherds of Israel were going to weigh out to his betrayer the price for a common slave, as their value of Jehovah, their Messiah. And as to His disciples, nay, His apostles, did He not know that one of them, who was eating His bread at that very table, had lifted up his heel against Him? And was He not aware that the chief of His apostles, whom He had

entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, would in that night deny Him thrice? And knew He not that all His disciples, the one “whom He loved” and who was then leaning on His bosom, along with the rest, would forsake Him in the hour of deadly peril? He knew it, and He told them. He knew and foreknew every thought and movement of their treacherous, proud, deceitful, and inconstant hearts—and of ours. He knew it all and He felt it too, as only He, perfect God and perfect Man, could know and feel it. The words, “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat,” only just preceded, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted [or, hast returned back], strengthen thy brethren.”

Did His hand, in the perfect knowledge of all this, hesitate even for a moment to take the bread and break it, and likewise also the cup after supper? The words, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you,” are followed by, “But, behold the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table. And truly, the Son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.”

There was one present, upon whose conscience even such words had no effect. Judas Iscariot took the sop. Satan entered into him, and finally hardened him, and afterward drove him to despair. The others were alarmed. But what comes next? “And there was a strife amongst them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.”

Wretched hearts of ours that betray themselves even at such a table and at such a moment, in the very presence of Him, Who made Himself of no reputation, but humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! But the purposes of the obedient Son could not be shaken by the treason and pride of men's rebellious hearts. When He came into the world, He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” When in service on earth, it was, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work “; and at the end, in Gethsemane, it was again, “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” There was an “if” in Gethsemane; and if any “if” be admissible, surely this was. But it was immediately followed by “Nevertheless.” How far superior is His “nevertheless” even to that of His faithful servant Paul (Phil. 1:24)!

Such an obedience could not be turned from its path by the defection of His own all around. Nor could His purposes of divine love be shaken or modified by the wretched selfishness in the hearts of His disciples—or by ours, Christian reader? No, His obedience was as unswerving toward His Father, as His love was unchanging toward those whom the Father had given Him: His love had its motive in Himself Who is love, not in anything in us or in our hearts, which are the opposite of love—selfish. Not that we loved Him, but He loved us, and gave Himself for us.

The Gospel and the Church: 32. The Church

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S DEATH.

Did His thoughts, whilst eating the Passover with them, travel back, if I may so say, to another night, separated by fifteen hundred years from that one? In that night He had also prepared a table—this very table—for His people in the presence of their enemies, when He went and slew the first-born throughout Egypt, to deliver His people from its bondage. Then cries of death and despair rang through the night, whilst Israel stood and fed in safety. But now the time had come, when the “First-born of all creation” was to be slain—slain by wicked hands; yes, and not only so; He was to be “wounded in the house of his friends.”

But there was more: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,” The Judge of Egypt, the Judge of the whole earth, was to undergo the judgment due to His people, and to you and me, reader! The Deliverer of His people of old was to be delivered by their children into the hands of sinful men, in order to deliver them from their sins. The Lamb of God was to take away the sin of the world, and to die for that nation, “His own, who received Him not.” Messiah was to be “cut off and have nothing.”

But, no! He looks onward, not backward. His words, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer,” are followed by, “I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And His words, “Take this [cup] and divide it among yourselves,” are followed by, “For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” Did they understand what He meant by “before I suffer,” and “until the kingdom of God shall come"? Alas! they were dull of understanding, “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken.” They did not know that Christ ought to suffer these things and to enter into His glory! They trusted that it was He who should redeem Israel. Redeem from what? From the consequence of their sins, i.e., the yoke of the Romans. Had they never heard of the words of the angel of the Lord, spoken to Joseph? “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.” Had they not heard the voice of the forerunner proclaiming, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”? If they had, they had either forgotten or not understood it. But had not the Lord Himself foretold them, “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again”?

“They were exceedingly sorry,” and Peter even said, “That be far from thee, Lord”! But the cross of Christ, the truth that He must suffer and thus enter into His glory, was entirely beyond the narrow compass of their thoughts, however clearly foretold in the prophets. They “understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, and they perceived it not; and they feared to ask Him of that saying.” The glorious truth of Resurrection was just as far, if not farther still from and beyond their conception. The first tidings of it “seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” But He who supped with them that night, the Holy, True, and Gracious One, not only forbore with their

ignorance (though culpable), but even stooped down and washed their feet, before He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter to suffer and die for them.

The Passover or Supper of the Old Testament approaches its end. All around, the atmosphere of evil is thickening. The prince of this world and of the power of the air is summoning and gathering his hosts of wicked spirits, to inspire, unite, and lead on deluded sinners, Jews and Gentiles, to their common conspiracy and open rebellion around the cross (as he will do at a later period for the final rebellion and battle of Armageddon). His satellites assemble at the house of the high priest; the watchword of treason is whispered, “Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast.”

But amidst and above that murky atmosphere of Satan's and men's wickedness, there arises from that upper chamber, where the Good Shepherd had prepared a table for His sheep in the very presence of their enemies, an incense sweeter than that of Mary's precious ointment, ascending to heaven. Hark! the notes of a hymn of praise going up to Him, Who “is good and Whose mercy endureth forever.” It is intoned by the voice of the Good Shepherd before He goes to die; and His sheep, minus the traitor, who know His voice, join in the wondrous song.

Oh, what a song in that night! Was there ever singing like this? At the Red Sea, from the shore of safety, the joyful song of redemption had ascended to God, when Moses and the children of Israel praised the mighty salvation of Jehovah, and Miriam answered with the daughters of Israel. A wondrous choir of praise, indeed, sung by myriads of grateful voices! Such a vast hymn of praise there had never been in this world, nor ever will be, until His people, made willing in the day of His power, will raise the shout of praise, “Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.” But what is all this when compared to the notes of praise that ascended to God from that upper chamber, sung by those twelve voices? Not Moses, the servant of God, who was faithful in all his house, intoned that hymn, but Christ Himself, the Son over His own house—Jehovah-Jesus, the Deliverer of His people of old, to whom that song of redemption at the Red Sea was addressed! He Himself is leading the song of praise to His little band. The voice, that was soon to appeal to His Father in the agonies of Gethsemane, and then from the cross in that cry, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me”? we hear at that table leading the praises of His little flock; just as if, even before He was heard from the horns of the unicorns, He must in anticipation praise His Father and God (soon to be known as theirs too) in the midst of His “brethren.”

He wept when He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. He sings a hymn when He is going to die—to die the death of the cross. Did not He know what Calvary meant? Gethsemane tells us. Oh for ears and hearts to listen to that voice, and to ponder over that song! What an insight it gives into the perfect obedience, and into that perfect love that dwelt in the heart of Jesus! May His word dwell richly in us, in order that “with grace we may sing and make melody in our hearts to” Him, our “Lord,” as He did to His Father and God in that never to be forgotten night!

The Gospel and the Church: 33. The Church

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S DEATH.

I have dwelt longer than may appear necessary to some, on that darkest of all nights, but the very darkness of which only served to set in relief the perfections of Him, Who from first to last was ever the light of the world, ever shining with equal undimmed brightness, but Whose love, obedience, grace, patience, meekness, and lowliness never shone out more brightly than in that dark night. It was the Lord's will that that night in Egypt by means of the Passover should ever be kept in the remembrance of His people Israel. And it is no less His will that that night in Canaan through the Lord's Supper should be kept present to the memory of our hearts, not to overcloud our joy in His presence, but to impart that holy, subdued, and deep tone becoming at such a table, joy springing from meditation on love that shone so brightly in that night Would that that night were more fixedly in the remembrance of our consciences, and that love more constantly in the memory of our hearts!

I have ventured a few remarks on the wondrous hymn of praise ascending to God from that upper chamber. But there were very different sounds and utterances which fell upon the ear of that night, such as these, “Which of us shall be the greatest"? “What will ye give me and I will deliver him unto you”? “Hail, Master,” and then the sound of the betrayer's kiss. “Although all shall be offended because of thee, yet will not I.” “If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.” “Woman, I know him not.” “Man, I am not [“ one of them"]. “Man, I know not what thou sayest,” accompanied by cursing and swearing. “He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?” Then the awful reply to that awful question. “He is guilty of death.” Then the sound of spitting, buffeting, and smiting, and the mock question, “Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is it, that smote thee?”

Reader! Some of these words—the worst—came from one who had preached the gospel of the kingdom and cast out demons. They came from hearts,—naturally not worse than yours or mine,—hearts with feelings of natural affections and friendship—with devotional sentiments, when in their gorgeous temple—some among them truly attached to the Lord, especially one of them. Yet they furnished each his part in the awful concert of voices and sounds heard in the night.

INSTITUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN SUPPER.

But in that same night a voice calm, even, and gentle, yet full of holy solemnity, in accents of purest grace and eternal love, spoke these words, “This is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me.” And “This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Oh may those words in divine power abide within us, producing in our hearts a truer response to Him Who spoke them and drawing forth in its constraining power the love of Christ towards those that are His! And may that grace and love shine out more brightly in a world where men are hateful and hating one another, where the darkness is thickening; in order that, during Christ's absence

from this world, we may reflect more of His light, Who when here below, was ever the light of this world, the “light of life”!

After these, however poor and feeble, meditations on the love of such a Savior, it is but with reluctance that one turns to doctrinal observations on such a solemn and blessed subject. But it appears, especially in these last days, of the utmost importance that those, for whom the Just One suffered to bring them to God, should not be left in ignorance as to the Corporate as well as the individual meaning of the memorial of Christ's death and thus be deprived of an important portion of blessing, connected with it, and, what is more, enter more fully into the intentions of our gracious Master, in bequeathing unto us that legacy of His dying love.

Let us now, with His gracious help, endeavor, in the light of His word and under the guidance of His Spirit, to learn something more of the true, deep, and blissful meaning of that divine repast for our souls.

Chapter 107

The Gospel and the Church: 34. The Church

The Passover, the supper of the Old Testament, being over, Jesus then institutes for His disciples, and for us, the supper of the New Testament.: He takes the “unleavened bread,” which formed part of the Old Testament supper, and says, “This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.”

Seven days during the feast of the Passover, from the fourteenth until the twenty-first day of the month of Abib, no leavened bread must be found in any house of the Israelites. The lamb was to be eaten with “bitter herbs” and “unleavened bread.” Whosoever did eat leavened bread during that time, his soul should be cut off. “Leaven,” both in the Old and New Testament, signifies that which is evil. The Lord enjoined His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, that is, hypocrisy. The apostle Paul warns the Galatians against the leaven of evil doctrine. “Know ye not,” says he, “that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”? In the same sense the apostle applies the word to the Corinthians, whom he exhorts to “purge out the old leaven; for even Christ, our passover, was sacrificed for us.” Therefore they were “to keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

Just as in the bread eaten with the paschal-lamb, not a trace of leaven must exist, so it was with Him, of Whom all this was but a foreshadowing type. To Him God Himself had “prepared a body,” even the body of the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot, Who not only had committed no sins, but “knew no sin.” Otherwise He could not have taken our place upon the cross as our substitute, as an atoning sacrifice for sin; He could not have been “made sin” for us, nor could He have “ borne our sins in His own body on the tree.”

It was this “unleavened bread,” connected with the supper of the Old Testament, which the Lord took, to show to His apostles its new meaning, saying: “This is my body, which is given for you.” But one chief element had to be added. It was the cup containing the wine. The eating of the roast lamb supposed the shedding of the blood of the Lamb, without which the lamb could not have been eaten. The Lord now takes the cup of the new covenant. At the institution of the supper in Luke 22, the “cup” appears twice; the first time (vers. 17, 18) in connection with Israel's blessing in the millennial kingdom, when they will dwell every one under his vine and his fig tree, when the Lord will say unto them: “Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (Song of Solomon, chap. 5:1).

Then, after the bread, the Lord takes the cup the second time, saying,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you.”

This is the cup of the Christian supper, “the cup of blessing, which we bless.”

We now come to a point of great importance, greater than it may appear to some at the first glance, I mean the difference between

“THE LORD'S SUPPER” AND “THE LORD'S TABLE.”

I need scarcely say, that both expressions mean one and the same thing, only under different aspects. It is well to be clear about this.

In the eleventh chapter of the first Epistle of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, we have the “Lord's supper” in connection with “Jesus;” whereas in the preceding chapter, it is called the “Lord's table” in connection with “Christ.” Why this difference of expression?

Substantially indeed, both terms mean the same thing; just as the two words “Jesus,” “Christ” signify the same person under different aspects. That blessed name, “Jesus,” expresses the person and character of our adorable Savior and Redeemer; whilst the word “Christ” expresses His position, be it in an earthly aspect as Israel's Messiah, or in a Christian sense as the glorified Head of the Church.

The very first word in the first gospel at Pentecost was that ever blessed Name of our precious Savior,

“JESUS.”

It concludes with the words, “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,” i.e., the head of His body, the church, consisting of all believers, though at Pentecost it referred to His Messianic character also.

Throughout the four Gospels it is “Jesus,” and when He is called “Christ,” it is in His character as the Messiah of the Jews, as in Matt. 16, John 1, and in other places.

When in that night the Lord instituted the Lord's supper, He did so in His character as the personal Savior of every individual believer, being not yet exalted at that time as the Christ, and the Holy Ghost not yet having been sent, by Whom the believers are baptized into one body. And as the Lord, in His special commandment given to His apostle, referred to that night, when He was still on earth and when there was no church yet but only individual believers, the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 11 consequently speaks of the “Lord Jesus.” But in the tenth chap. we have the “Lord's table” in connection with “Christ," our glorified Head, His table being the expression of the communion of the members of His body (ver. 17). So we read then in vv. 15-17, “I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say: 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? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” In the same chapter we find the expression, “the Lord's table,” in connection with Christ; whereas in the following chap. x., we have “The Lord's supper” in connection with “Jesus.”

Chapter 108

The Gospel and the Church: 35. The Lord's Supper

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S DEATH.

1.—THE LORD'S SUPPER.

There are three things, which characterize it as such, i.e., from the individual point of view:—

1—Salvation, i.e., the assurance of salvation in every believer, who partakes of it. This assurance of being saved is, of course, an individual or personal matter. At the “Lord's table” as such, we are partakers not merely as saved ones, but as members of the one body. Therefore we find those words referring to the death and redemption work of our Savior: “This is my body” “This is the cup of the new testament in my blood” &c., in the eleventh chapter in connection with the Lord's supper; whereas the words “body and blood of Christ” in chap. 10. do not so much emphasize redemption, but rather the ecclesiastical result of it, i.e., the communion of the body of Christ, as the glorified head of His body, and the communion of the blood of Christ, as having been redeemed by the same blood, and been baptized into one and the same body, by the Holy Spirit, of which the Lord's table is the expression (John 11:52 and 1 Cor. 12:13).

What further in an especial way characterizes the Lord's supper, is

2.—The remembrance of Him and of His love unto death.

If I love a person, the remembrance of him or her will not be a mere duty, but a necessity, a constant need for the heart. How much more would this be the case, if that person had not only risked, but given his life for me! How often would we remember such a friend? Once a year, say on the anniversary of his death? That would be a poor answer indeed to his love unto death.

Take the case of a decisive battle being fought between two hostile armies. During the battle the commander of the victorious army perceives that his sons, having approached the enemy too closely, are in danger of being surrounded and killed. The peril of his sons makes him for the moment forget everything else. He hastens to their rescue and succeeds in delivering them from the hands of the enemy, but he himself is wounded to death. The battle is won, and the commander of the victorious army is carried into his tent. His mourning sons, thus saved at the expense of their father's life, stand around the deathbed of the conqueror, their grief being rendered more poignant still by their reflection upon their foolhardiness having caused the death of their father. Would that father, think ye, have need to say, “My sons, remember me when I am gone?” Why, they would feel brokenhearted at such a request.

Suppose, further, the sons had, after the death of their father, had his likeness taken, with the death-wound in his breast, would they shut up that likeness in a closet, and take it out, on the anniversary of the father's death, to look at it and remember him? No, they would give to his likeness the best and most prominent place in the family room, daily to feast their eyes on the dear features of him, who was, under God's grace, not only the author but the savior of their lives.

Christian reader! When our Lord and Savior said in that night, “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me,” what did He mean by saying “as oft as ye drink it?” Once every year, or every six or three months, or once a month on the “Ordinance Sunday?” I leave it to your own hearts to interpret the meaning of those words, “as oft.” Those first Christians at Jerusalem did not appear to think that, by a frequent celebration, the memorial could lose anything of its solemn character and become something common, like an every-day duty, as is often asserted. Does the remembrance of a beloved friend, to whose self-sacrifice you owe everything, degenerate into something trivial, by your remembering him every day? I should think true love would hourly remember him. Certainly, for a loving heart it requires no effort to do so. Language of that sort savors of the same Laodicean lukewarmness, as the assertion not infrequently heard, that the “leaving the first love” is but a kind of natural law and therefore, so to speak, a “matter of course,” which cannot be helped!

Is this the way our hearts understand and interpret that loving injunction of our Savior, “This do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me?” Was this the interpretation, which He expected from His disciples, when leaving it to their and our hearts, to give the right meaning to those words? Is this the answer of our hearts to His loving word in that cold dark night, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer?” Shame upon such unworthy replies of Laodicean hearts! Our proper response should be, “Lord, with desire we desire to do this in remembrance of Thee, Whose love was strong as death, love which all the waters of death could not quench, nor the fiery billows that rolled over Thy head consume.”

At this memorial of His death the Lord expects from us the spiritual freewill offerings of our hearts and lips. What is not done spontaneously and heartily is not worth much even for the world. Of what value can it possibly be to Him Who searches the hearts and reins and says, “Give me thy heart, my son"?

From Pentecost and after the believers celebrated the memorial of the Lord's death on the first day the week, that is, on the resurrection day, as being the fittest time for rendering unto God and to His Son their freewill offerings of praise, adoration and thanksgiving, whilst remembering at the same time the suffering love of the Savior, “Who loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and made us a kingdom and priests, to His God and Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Those believers did not prefer on the resurrection morning of their Lord—to listen to some stirring or splendid sermon of a talented minister, instead of in subduedness of heart and mind, whilst musing upon the cross, feeding upon the roast lamb, worshipping God in spirit and in truth at the memorial-table of His love. They gave to Him the first place in their hearts on the first day of a new week, and afterward honored also His servants for their work's, that is for God's, sake.

I need scarcely say that this remembrance of the Lord is personal, although the public expression of it is rendered in the name of the whole assembly by those whom the Spirit of God may choose to be organs of the united grateful remembrance of the assembly in adoration and thanksgiving. From this point of view, I consider the remembrance of the Lord and of His sufferings and work of redemption as forming an integral part of the Lord's supper as such, His words, “This do ye in remembrance of Me,” having been spoken at the institution of the Lord's supper.

The Gospel and the Church: 36. The Lord's Table

And if I at the memorial of the Lord's death, in true remembrance of the heart think of my Savior and His love, the third characteristic of the Lord's supper will not be absent, viz.—

3.—The eating of the roast lamb.

This is the nourishment of the soul whilst meditating on the “altogether lovely” Person of our Lord and Savior. The heart cannot fail to be nourished and strengthened at this divine repast, where everything reminds us of the self-sacrificing love of our Redeemer. The Spirit reminds us of what He has said, of what He has done, and of what He is. For He has done what He has done, because He is what He is; as you and I, Christian reader, did what we did, because we were what we were. His Spirit who glorifieth Him, receiveth of His and showeth it unto us, makes us to realize both His Person and His work. Thus it is that we feed upon the roast lamb, being “strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.”

This individual feeding need not in any way impede the edification of the body, as such under Christ the Head, “from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” On the contrary, it contributes to it. For the joint-edification of Christ's body as such, which has its full and proper scope at the “Lord's table,” as presented in 1 Cor. 10, would be greatly impeded without the individual nourishment of the heart at the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11)

And where thus the “feeding on the roast lamb” proceeds in spirit and in truth, the effect of it will be

4.—The worship in spirit and in truth, in adoration and thanksgiving on the part of each partaker in the feast, being the natural response of the heart and lips to God, expressed by each member in the singing of hymns, or in words by such brothers as the Holy Spirit may be pleased to use as organs of the spiritual tribute rendered to God by the assembly. Worship then forms the connecting link between the two aspects of the memorial of the Lord's death, as presented in chaps. 10. and 11. of the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

Let us now turn to the tenth chapter.

2.—THE LORD'S TABLE.

“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. 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? For we, being many, are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they, which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar? What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifices to idols, is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [or, demons], and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Do

we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he”? (1 Cor. 10:15-22).

Here then we behold clearly the difference between the two aspects of the memorial of the Lord's death, viz., the Lord's supper and the Lord's table. Here we have not, as has been observed, Jesus in His character of personal Savior of each individual sinner, but Christ as the Head of His body, the church. He died “not for that nation” (i.e., the Jews) “only, but that also he should gather together in one” [that is, in one body] “the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52), Jesus died not only to save a number (however great) of individuals from hell and everlasting misery, but that those units should be united, i.e., baptized into one body, by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and the scattered children of God, whom the Father gave to the Son to be His bride, dwell with Him in glory and reign with Him over the earth.

In ch. 11. we have Jesus and the “Lord's supper “; in ch. 10., Christ and His body, the church, in connection with the “Lord's table,” being the expression of the “communion of the body of Christ,” and of the “communion of the blood of Christ.” Whilst in ch. 11. the (crucified) body and blood of Jesus, as the foundation of our individual salvation, occupy the foreground, the Spirit of God in ch. 10. lays the chief stress upon the communion of His body, not of the church, but of His own personal body given for us, and the communion of His blood, although here also His work of redemption could not be omitted, its being, in both aspects, the memorial of His death. Only His work of redemption occupies here (ch. 10.) a secondary place, in a similar way as in the first chapter of Ephesians where it comes in the second line, according to the character of the Epistle, whilst in the Epistle to the Romans it occupies the first place.

The memorial of the Lord's death, in its aspect as the “Lord's table,” presents to us besides the above mentioned character of worship, four especial characteristics:—

1.—Unity, i.e., the oneness of the church, as the One body of Christ, and the communion of the body and blood of Christ, claimed by the members of that body as such. The “Lord's table” being the expression of that communion, every true Christian has a title and claim, to take his seat with us at that table, provided the following essential conditions for such communion are to be found him:—

1.—True, living faith.

2.—Godly walk.

3.—Pure and sound doctrine, &c.

4.—No intercommunion with assemblies, where unsound doctrines are tolerated (Rev. 2:14, 15).

Where these four scriptural conditions are found no scriptural assembly can refuse such, because it is not ours but the Lord's table. But where even one of these conditions is absent, no admission can take place, because it is the Lord's table.

The Gospel and the Church: 37. The Lord's Table

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S DEATH.

2.—THE LORD'S TABLE.

I would not omit here a remark, which appears to be of importance. There are not a few Christians who “receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,” as they say, with blessing for their own souls. They maintain, that in commemorating the Lord's death they are not called upon to be occupied with their neighbor to the right or to the left, but with the Lord Himself. Upright and devoted souls of believers, ignorant of the double character and aspect of the memorial of the Lord's death, may receive individual blessing from God, Who is gracious and patient with such, provided they do not take it as a “Sacrament” or means of grace for the forgiveness of sins, for God cannot own with real blessing that which is in itself untrue. It is contrary to His own word, entrenching upon Christ's accomplished work of an eternal redemption. Mere religious sentiments are no blessings. I need scarcely add, that a believer, who, contrary to his conviction in the light of God's word, continues to partake of the memorial of the Lord's death together with known unbelievers or mere professors, cannot expect the Lord to countenance in blessing such an act of willful disobedience.

The next character of the Lord's table is

2.—Discipline. God is holy, holy, holy. The memorial of the death of His Son, the pure Lamb of God, “without blemish and without spot,” must be celebrated without the “leaven of malice and wickedness.” And if in every respect holiness becometh the house of God forever, this truth avails in an especial way for the table of His Son. No leaven was permitted in the house of an Israelite during the time of Passover. How much more does this hold good for us! “For even Christ, our pass-over, is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

The Corinthians, to whom these words were addressed by the apostle, furnished a solemn instance of Christ's exercising discipline as “Son over His own house” where His holy presence is disregarded. Besides the solemn exclusion of that “wicked person” from the assembly, many among them had been visited with sickness, some having been even cut off by death, because they had not “discerned the Lord's body,” and thus “eaten and drunk judgment to themselves.”

But where the memorial of our precious Savior's death is thus being celebrated by His redeemed people, the following characteristic of the Lord's table, viz.

3.—The “showing the Lord's death, till He come,” will take place in the power and demonstration of the Spirit as a testimony to outsiders.

But at this blessed table we “show the Lord's death, till he come,” thus at once connecting tile solemn remembrance of Him in His death with the bright hope of His coming again in the air, when all that are Christ's, will be caught up to Him “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” to enter with Him into His and our Father's house. This blissful hope of the coming again of our Lord thus

constitutes

4.—An essential ingredient of our divinely prepared repast at the Lord's table, its concluding refreshing portion after the “bitter herbs,” so to speak. Without this element of refreshment even the Lord's table would he not complete in blessing.

The Israelites celebrated the passover, after their deliverance from Egypt, as a memorial, that the Lord in that never-to-be-forgotten night had “passed over,” sparing their houses, not slaying their firstborn. When they had passed through the Red Sea dry shod, they sang: “All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased.” (They anticipate their passing through Jordan into their earthly Canaan).

Likewise we at the memorial of our Savior's love, remember that “Christ, our passover was slain for us,” that God's sword of judgment might pass us over. But we “show His death,” as a public testimony, “till He come,” when we shall pass over with Him into our heavenly Canaan, to be forever with the Lord. Blessed hope, which might become for us a still more blessed reality the next Lord's day, when showing His death.

May we not only at the memorial of His love, which was strong as death, but daily and hourly abide in His presence, for it is only in His presence, that the hope of His coming again can be to us a joyful and living hope. J. A. von P.

The certainty of a fact by sight is not belief; as far as it is worth anything, it is certainty, not belief—nothing to accredit it but perception.

Chapter 111

Our Gospel

The character of the ministry of the gospel is that the things are possessed for ourselves, before they can be ministered to others. In the Old Testament it was not unto themselves but unto us they ministered (1 Peter 1:10-12). We stand between the sufferings and the glories, with the Holy Ghost meanwhile sent down from heaven. Grace shines in our hearts to give out the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. When it pleased God &c. (Gal. 1:15, 16); mark, Christ was revealed not merely “to” but “in” Paul. It is the light of the gospel of the glory of God, and hence called the gospel of Christ's glory. Christ is speaking from heaven. We have got the full blessing, the last revelation connected with the glory of God in the Man Christ Jesus exalted in, heaven.

“Therefore, having this ministry, we faint not, &c.” The apostle had spoken of the contrast with Moses who put a veil on his face. It watt glorious; but no glory to be compared with that in the face of Christ. Israel could not look at glory, if it came with a legal claim on the heart of man. One never gets the light of the glory of God shining into the heart of a man, without the conscience being awakened and sin judged. If under law, I cannot stand in the presence of God; for it tells me what I ought to be, and if I am not that, haw can I look at the glory? He must hide Moses in the cleft, but when the glory of God is seen in the face of Christ, where is it seen? It is in heaven in the glorified Man—the Man that hung on the cross. We see the glory of God in His face, Who was once on the cross made sin for us. The meaning of the glory seen there is, that sin, death, and Satan, have all been put away together. He, being made sin, died, was laid in the grave but raised, and is gone to heaven. The only part man had therein was sin and hatred to Himself and to God. The glory of God in Christ is the witness that there is the complete clearing away of all evil from us. He Who is at God's right hand was made sin, went under death, has passed God's judgment, and is in glory. In virtue of the work accomplished the testimony comes to us. The Man Who bore our sins is in glory, and all is “finished” before God for the soul. There we find the full testimony to the glory of Christ, the witness to God's value of Himself and His work. All this I receive—the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Having been brought by Him to believe in God, I see the glory of God in His face, and I can look at and delight in that glory. The testimony of my salvation is the glory there; and, seeing it with open face, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. I say, “Let me see that my Sin-bearer is in glory, and I have therein the certainty that all sin has been judged on my behalf; so that the Holy Ghost comes down, and, because thus cleansed; I am sealed by Him.” A Christian stands and looks at Christ's accomplished sufferings; and, looking up, he sees the One Who wrought redemption in glory. Such is the way the glory attains its full effects by faith in the heart. It is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, though one may be confounded of course when first seeing it.

But what am I to expect if He owns me as united to Himself? I am waiting for Him to come, to take me where He is, and bring me into the things He has made mine. Power has come into this place of death. I want not to die but to be clothed upon, death swallowed up in life; I want not to die, but to be changed into the body of glory without dying at all. It is a present living power. We shall not all sleep or die, but all be changed, the power of death broken. If I go up to Christ's judgment-seat,

in what state shall I be there? The Lord will have fetched me on high. Christ, having set His love on me, comes and changes and takes me there glorified. No doubt I shall have to give an account of self, of all done in the body; and a very great blessing it is to have brought out in the light, how Christ kept in spite of my faults; when I fell, how He lifted me up. So it will be.

The fullness of redemption is manifested when we go up to the judgment-seat in glorified bodies. When He appears, we shall be like Him. What can I fear in regard of judgment? Now my Sin-bearer is ever at the right hand of God; having borne my sins on the cross the first time, He appears the second time without sin unto salvation. He will take us to Himself already made like Him. The wise virgins were asleep as well as the foolish; what brought out the difference? The midnight cry woke them all up, the testimony of the Lord's coming. The wise had got oil in their vessels, and, awakening at the cry, they were ready and went in. When asleep, they had like the foolish given up expecting the Bridegroom. When the cry came, the difference soon appeared. At first they went out full of the thought of His coming; afterward they got into ease and comfort; they went to sleep here and there, abandoning in practice the hope of meeting the Bridegroom. If the Lord Jesus came to-night, should you all be found with bright lamps ready for Him? Is it the state of your soul? We are to expect in the last days perilous times, but great blessing in the midst of all for the path of faith. Christendom has the forms of Christianity but denies the power.

In 2 Tim. 3. I am directed to the scriptures as the safeguard. When men say that the church teaches this and that, the question arises, where and what is the church? But if I believe that the scriptures say it, I know of whom I have learned the truth of God which never fails. “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, &c.” “The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, &c.” It deals with the conscience, not the intellect merely, as man's word. If I weigh it, it deals with my conscience, coming in with irresistible power. “Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did.” Faith's root is in the conscience. People talk of apostolic succession; but there is no succession in God or His word: all there is complete and perfect.

Just before Laodicea is spued out of Christ's mouth, the word is to Philadelphia, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, which no man can shut:” not a great deal to say about Philadelphia; but it is characterized by what God delighted in. The word of Christ had authority on the hearts and consciences; and they would be kept looking for the promise, “Behold, I come quickly.” He is waiting, and sits at God's right hand till His enemies be made His footstool. His friends are already perfected forever by His one offering. He is coming to receive us. He will not take a bit of the inheritance, till He has gathered up the fellow-heirs. Then all in heaven and earth will be gathered together in one, and all be under Christ. Our place is a peculiar one like Eve's, who was not lord of earth like Adam, but was associated with him over all of which he was lord, his helpmeet.

Our union with Christ is the one thing that constitutes our special relationship to Him. “God gave him to be head over all to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” We are joint-heirs with Christ, we wait for Him, the Eternal Lover of our souls. What we Christians see by faith now, is the unveiled glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that be lost. A veil may be on man's heart, but the fact of Man being in the glory of God remains equally true. And if the veil is untaken away, there is nothing to cone but the sword of Christ, when He appears in judgment.

Then we have to bear in mind, that the trials and afflictions are all connected with the earthen vessel. Even an apostle could only be kept each day by the power of God. The vessel is one thing, the treasure another. The vessel must be nothing, if the treasure therein is to shine out. The old man is judged and crucified with Christ; and I have to look at myself as having died with Christ. But I have also in practical experience always to bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. Suppose a light in a lantern; but, if the glass of the lantern be not kept perfectly clean, the light will not shine out. I have a glorified Christ in my soul; but if the flesh rules me, this is not the treasure shining out of me. Not only should I a Christian reckon myself dead before God, but stand as a new man in God's sight.

To reckon self dead is a privilege for myself and a necessity for my testimony. To put it simply, suppose a mother heard her son was half killed: would she stop on her way after him to look at the shops? If a Christian is full of Christ, he will not be drawn aside by anything of flesh. Where the earthen vessel is right, the light will shine out. Scripture holds out to the Christian no rest of a natural kind; nothing but sorrows and trials: so the apostle speaks of himself and others as always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. The Lord put the apostle through all sorts of trying circumstances. If anything of the flesh springs up, the red-hot iron must be put to destroy what is not of Christ. Death wrought in him that nothing but the life of Christ might appear. There is such a thing as a man superior to all the circumstances he may be passed through. He gets the sentence of death as he goes through everything, bold to preach &c. There is then the most complete superiority to circumstances. Look at Stephen: whilst the stones were flying about, he kneels down and prays for his murderers. He is the copy of Christ. It was life in the midst of death. “For all things are for your sakes.” So they felt who were loved of God, as shown in the gift of His Son. J. N. D.

Hebrews 7:1-3

The portion on which we enter develops the type of Melchisedec as far as it applies to Christ in heaven and the Christian portion. The future earthly part is but hinted at and in no way opened out.

“For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, that met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham assigned a tenth of all, first being interpreted king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened to the Son of God, abideth a priest continually” (Heb. 7:1-3).

Here the Spirit of God gives us a fine sample of unfolding an incident of the Old Testament in the light of the New. The glory of Christ as ever is the true key, without which the mind of God in His word is never apprehended. And it is striking to see that the reticence of scripture is only less instructive than its disclosures. All has to be weighed; but who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God, Who now works in us who believe by the same Spirit that inspired both Testaments, and works to glorify (not the Christian nor the church, blessed as both are, but) Christ, Whose grace and glory are the substance of our best blessings.

In Gen. 14 we have the last notice of the public life of Abraham as chosen and called out to walk in faith of God's promises; for chap. 15. begins the dealings of God with him personally. The occasion was the rescue of Lot carried away, family and goods, with the rest of his neighbors whose worldly advantages he had coveted. The man of simple faith and self-sacrifice, of whom he had taken advantage (chap. 13.) unhesitatingly pursues and vanquishes the victorious kings of the east. Thereon appears Melchisedec, the more unexpectedly as there is not the smallest ground to doubt that he was a prince akin to the guilty race that soon after were punished by the most solemn judgment of God. Yet was he not an idolater, but priest of the most high God. “And Melchisedec, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all” (vers. 18-20).

The all-important truth to grasp is that the Epistle reasons solely on “the order” of Melchisedec in contrast with that of Aaron. When it speaks of the exercise of priesthood, Aaron is the type and not Melchisedec; and then we hear of sacrifice and intercession, of bloodshedding and a sanctuary, with the Levitical ritual in general. Self-evidently all this has no relation to Melchisedec, only to Aaron as typifying the Lord's present action above, grounded on His atoning work for sin.

The exercise of the royal priesthood looks on to the earth in a future day, when the Man Whose name is the Branch shall build the temple of Jehovah, even He shall build the temple of Jehovah, and He shall bear majesty, and He shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and a counsel of peace shall be between Them both. Of that day Hos. 2:14-23 is a bright witness: only here it is according to His title of Jehovah. “And it shall be at that day, saith

Jehovah, thou shall call Me my Husband, and thou shalt call me no more Baali [my Master]. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth [He will be in fact and affection El-Elyon, the Most High God], and they shall no more be remembered by their names. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break bow and sword and battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith Jehovah. I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn and the new wine and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto Me in the land, and I will have mercy upon Lo-ruhama, and I will say to Lo-Ammi, My people thou; and they shall say, My God."

This will be the kingdom of God, not in the moral sense which applies now and always, of which our Lord (Matt. 6:33) and the apostle Paul (Rom. 14:17) speak, but in the future display when adversaries are put down. Our Epistle alludes to it as the habitable earth, or world, to come (chap. 2.), and as the age to come (chap. 6), as indeed in other forms most expressive. It is the great goal of prophecy whether in the Old Testament or in the New. Great must be the gap for his soul who does not look onward to triumph for mercy and truth, for righteousness and glory, not in heaven only but on this earth placed under our Lord Jesus, when Israel shall be by grace repentant and subject, and thus fitted to fill their allotted place in that day as God's people, His son, His firstborn (Ex. 4:22), and the Gentiles, humbled by divine judgments as well as by unmerited and inexhaustible goodness, shall know that Jehovah sanctifies Israel, with His sanctuary in their midst forever. The glory of the Lord manifested here below will be the answer to His sufferings and shame; and those who in faith and love have shared the latter shall enjoy the former, reigning with Him over the earth. This is not the eternal state, but the kingdom for a thousand years before eternity begins or that judgment of the dead, the wicked dead, which precedes it.

Nor has any one an adequate conception of the coming kingdom of God, who does not look for it administered by the risen Lord in person, the glorified saints being on high, Israel and the nations here below. For there are earthly things as well as heavenly. Of this the Lord reminded Nicodemus, teacher of Israel though he was (John 3:3, 5, 12); and many more in Christendom need to be reminded of it now. For men are ever apt to be occupied with their own things, and easily confound this purpose of God for Christ's glory with a vague and general view of eternity. But doctrinal scripture is as distinct and indisputable as the prophetic word. "For the earnest expectation of the creation" (expressly distinguished from ourselves also having the firstfruits of the Spirit) "waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God"; which without doubt is when we follow Christ out of heaven and are manifested with Him in glory (Rom. 8:18-25, Col. 3:4, Rev. 17:14; 19:14). This indeed is the regeneration (Matt. 19:28), that age, and the resurrection from the dead (Luke 9:35) when the Father's kingdom is come from above, and His will is done on earth as in heaven; yet it is not the end when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, but His reigning till He put all the enemies under His feet. And it is plain that death as last enemy is not annulled till just before the great white throne. For the millennium, however blessed beyond example, is not absolutely perfect like the eternity which it ushers in. See 1 Cor. 15 and Isa. 65.

One of the most distinctive marks of that day, dispensation of the fullness of the times, is God's heading or summing up all in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. No doubt as we are children of God, so are we His heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, the Heir of all things. Hence we are here said (Eph. 1:10-11) to have obtained inheritance, which will be manifested in that day; for the glory that the Father has given Him, He has given us, though we have to wait, in a hope that does not make ashamed. (John 17; Rom. 5) He that descended is the same that ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things. By Him the sacrificial work is done to reconcile all things to God, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens; and meanwhile we have been already reconciled, so as to await with joy His coming in glory. But when He does come, He with His glorified bride will take the universe, heavenly and earthly, as the scene of His glory. To make His kingdom the earth only is as false as to confine it to heaven. Scripture excludes the narrowness of either view, one of which obtained in sub-apostolic times, as the other in modern. The truth, as usual, is larger than all; and the truth demands both, worthily to magnify the Lord Who is the true Melchisedec and will bring forth bread and wine to refresh the returning victors. For there and then too captivity will be led captive. The faith that unselfishly refused the world conquers the world that had for a while the upper hand.

Such is the action of the Royal Priest in that day: not offering sacrifice, nor incense burning, but suited refreshment when the victory is won at the end of the age, and God proves Himself the Most High, the highest else being overthrown. It is emphatically blessing, as that day will be its irrefutable evidence. And the word of blessing is twofold: Abram (representing Israel as their father) blessed on the part of the Most High God, “the possessor of heavens and earth"; and on the other side, “blessed be the Most High, Who delivered thine enemies into thine hand,” Melchisedec thereon receiving tithes as duly and gratefully rendered.

But in Hebrews, as we may see, what is future exercise is barely alluded to. It is beautifully pointed out how significant is the name and place: “first being interpreted king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.” For this alone can be according to God, whether for heaven or for earth, for the Christian now or for Israel by-and-by: no true peace save on a basis of accepted righteousness flow blessed and sure this as every believer ought to know. What is dwelt on mainly is the order of this priest in contrast with Aaron's order, where limits of age and succession were indispensable. Here it is one sole ever living Priest: “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” Not of course that as a matter of fact Melchisedec had not parents, forefathers if not descendants, birth and death, as other men. For the notion of an angel, or divine power, or Christ, are as absurd as that of Shem, &c. Scripture intentionally veils all these; and the priest-king suddenly appears on the scene and vanishes from the inspired history, so as to furnish the typical shadow of our Lord as the Royal Priest. Hence he is said to be “likened, or assimilated, to the Son of God": language quite improper, if the Son of God had then really appeared. All we see of him is that “he abides a priest continually.” Nothing else is recorded. There is no preparatory record, and no sequel to the story. He is a king-priest without a hint of terminating his office or devolving it on a successor. He abides a priest for continuance, or without a break, the contrast of the Aaronic line.

Hebrews 7:4-10

The sketch hitherto given is wonderfully graphic and comprehensive. We come now to closer points of comparison between Melchisedec and Aaron.

“Now behold how great [was] he to whom [also] Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth out of the spoils. And those indeed out of the sons of Levi that receive the priestly office have commandment to take tithe of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren through having come out from the loins of Abraham. But he that hath no genealogy from them hath tithed Abraham and hath blessed him that had the promises. But apart from all gainsaying the less is blessed by the better. And here dying men receive tithes, but there one hath witness that he liveth. And, so to say, through Abraham Levi also that receiveth tithes hath been tithed; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him” (Heb. 7:4-10).

The facts recorded in the close of Gen. 14 are made the groundwork of weighty teaching. On the one hand the patriarch, whom every Jew looked upon as the historic head of Israel, gave Melchisedec a tenth of all the spoils taken from the vanquished kings. On the other hand Melchisedec as priest of the Most High God blessed Abraham most solemnly and significantly. Both circumstances were the more notable because they stand out in marked isolation from the ordinary life of the fathers, save where an inconsistency is recorded for our profit and that no flesh might glory. Thus Jacob vowed that if God would be with him and keep him, so that he should return in peace to his father's house, Jehovah should be his God, and of all He gave him, he would surely render the tenth to Him (Gen. 28). And in the land of the stranger, Jacob the pilgrim blessed Pharaoh, king of Egypt though he was (Gen. 47): a simple but real testimony to the superiority of faith over all earthly honor.

But here all is seen reversed to furnish an adequate type of what was due to Christ, however repulsive to Jewish pride and the petty reasoning of man's mind. There was a personage, a king-priest, so great in dignity that Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils at an epoch when God had just crowned himself with singular honor. From this is deduced the undeniable inference, according to a style of teaching which no pious or intelligent Israelite would question, that not Levi only but his priestly sons, the house of Aaron, entitled to tithe their brethren by the law, paid tithes in the person of Abraham to Melchizedek, to one who derived no succession and was absolutely void of genealogical link with the tribe, the priestly family, or with the lineal chief of them all. There stood the fact in the foundation book of holy scripture, and of that law to which even the incredulous party of Sadducees clung tenaciously. It was no question of a new revelation, nor of a doubtful reading, nor of an interpretation that could be challenged. In the plainest terms God had revealed a fact, the bearing of which may never have dawned on any until the Holy Spirit now applied it to Christ so unexpectedly.

Nor was Levi, any more than Aaron, degraded by pointing out the decisive act of Abraham recorded for permanent use in divine revelation, which proved a priestly office superior to the Aaronic. For He to Whom Melchisedec stood as type was their own Messiah, Jesus the Son of

God. To His mere shadow the father of the faithful, the friend of God, bowed down, acknowledging the highest representative of the Most High God, Possessor of heavens and earth, and involving in that willing homage all that sprang from him, even Levi and Aaron. Thus according to God it was shown that Aaron and his house had paid tithes to Melchisedec in their forefather. And herein was no failure of Abraham, but an act of faith, of which God has made much, as we shall see in the Old Testament as well as the New.

But we are directed to more than this. Abraham was a receiver from Melchizedek, who “hath blessed him that had the promises.” These might seem to exempt from the blessing of man the one who had the promises of God more characteristically than any other of the sons of men. But not so, this royal priest, who had no connection of flesh with Aaron and his sons (whom, Jehovah ordained to bless the sons of Israel, putting His name upon them to secure His blessing Num. 6), Melchizedek blessed Abraham with all publicity and in the most special manner—blessed Abraham on the part of God most High, and blessed God Most High on the part of Abraham. But beyond all controversy, all gainsaying apart, “the less is blessed by the better.” So in Luke 2 Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary, but ventured not to bless the Babe, even when in another sense he blessed or gave thanks to God. In that Babe his eyes had seen God's salvation; as in like spirit, though with beautifully suited difference of act, the wise men from the east fell down and worshipped, not the mother, but the young Child, and, opening their treasures, offered unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh (Matt. 2). Well had it been for the men and women of the west had they pondered the lesson.

Melchisedec then blessed Abraham; how much more is He the Blest and the Blesser of Whom that mysterious priest was but the foreshadowing! But another hint is given, more developed later, on which the less may be said now. “And here dying men receive tithes, but there one having witness that he liveth.” This is what we hear of Melchisedec; not a word of his birth or of his death. He is simply presented a “living” priest, with nothing before or after; whereas death is written on Aaron and all his sons, yet are they priests receiving tithes according to the law. But, so to say, the same law attests that through Abraham as the medium Levi too that receives tithes paid tithe in principle; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him and received the tenth of the spoils. Had Levi been born previously, he might plead independence and exemption. As it was, Israel, Aaron, and all were united in that one man's homage, the father of the chosen people.

Chapter 114

Hebrews 7:11-14

Thus far in our chapter the scripture unfolded is that given in the close of Genesis 14; and there is shown a priesthood incontestably superior to that of Aaron, royal in character no less than in place, expressly in relation to God's supremacy, and exercised at the moment of the victory of faith over the hitherto victorious powers of the world; distinguished by blessing, emphatically by blessing downwards and upwards, the father of the faithful blessing God Most High, and God Most High blessing him; and we can add from the ancient oracle, as “possessor of heaven and earth": to say nothing more now of the varied points of contrast with Aaron, which can be realized only in that Man who is God, the sole Man of whom the Spirit could say, “The same yesterday, and today, and forever.” If Melchizedek in the type abides a priest continually, the Son of God so abides in very deed.

Three proofs of inferiority in the Levitical priesthood follow. Melchizedek received tithes of him whom all Israel acknowledged as their father and chief. Abraham, the original depositary of the promises, and heir of the world, was blessed by the same august personage; and indisputably the less is blessed by the better. Again, Levitical priests without exception up to Aaron are but dying men, whereas we only hear of Melchizedek living, without one word of his death. And none can deny that the patriarchal head of the tribe that boasted of the priestly family, if he receive tithes from the people, paid tithes in Abraham to Melchizedek whose superiority was thus indelibly marked in God's word.

But the scripture quoted already (Heb. 5:6) from the book of Psalms (110:4) is distinct in predicating of the Messiah this highest priesthood of the Most High God. Here only is found perfection of priesthood. His person and His work alike warrant this confidence. Nowhere else is it, or can it be even conceivably. Jesus only is saluted of God as high priest after the order of Melchizedek, as the inspired Psalmist spoke of Jehovah, in the most solemn way, owning Him in this style, alone and forever. Hence our Epistle deduces another proof of Levitical inferiority.

“If then perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for upon it the people have received the law), what further need that a different priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called [or said to be after the order of Aaron? For the priest changed, there taketh place of necessity a change also of law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to a different tribe, from which no one hath given attention to the altar. For evidently out of Judah hath our Lord sprung, as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests” (Heb. 7:11-14).

If Moses testifies of a prophet to come like himself but greater far, so does David in Spirit of an ever-abiding priest according to the order, not of Aaron, but of Melchizedek. This is and secures perfection. It is Jehovah, Himself that announces it, long after Aaron, longer still after the historical king-priest of Salem. It unequivocally points to Messiah, but Messiah on the one hand to sit on the right hand of Jehovah, and on the other to strike through kings in the day of His wrath and to judge among the nations. The bearing of this is immediate, powerful, and beyond mistake. Aaronic order gives place to a far surpassing one, of which Melchizedek was but the shadow, in the person and

offices of Christ, the center of all glory, intrinsic and conferred; with the momentous basis of His redemption work, that He might be free to bless righteously, according to all the love and counsels of God, those who could have no other claim, but contrariwise had sin, guilt, and curse.

Perfection thus is manifestly not through the Levitical priesthood, which is but provisional, from first to last characterized by infirmity and even sins; and indeed it was to make propitiation for the one and to intercede for the other, with imperfection everywhere attending its transitory nature. How different in every way the true and great Melchizedek! How glorious His place on high! How unfailing too the blessing, not only for those who now believing follow Him in Spirit where He is at God's right hand, but for those spared on earth when the rod of His power is sent out of Zion, and blessing flows here below as the exercise of His priesthood. God Most High will be then the manifest possessor of heaven and earth, as the rejected but exalted Messiah will be the channel and guarantee of blessing, the King as well as Priest in the displayed glory of that day.

But Israel had the law given them under the condition of the Levitical priesthood, and on no other footing could it be. A faulty people could not draw near to God as things then were with no more than a figurative redemption and sacrifices. A failing priesthood must intervene tremblingly and with rigor of rite and ceremonial on pain of death if transgressed. There was clearly nowhere in that system “perfection"; yet perfection there must be to meet the mind, love, and holiness of God. It is attainable and found only in Christ, as it is here shown in Him “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Therefore, as is argued, the further need of a different priest arising as the Holy Spirit has predicted, according to that supreme order of blessing without fail, the glorified Messiah, and not said to be after Aaron's order. And the change of the priest necessitates a change also of law. This is the true statement of inspiration here; not of “the law” as has been said by a lively but often erratic commentator, but “of law.” There is a totally different principle henceforth. Grace only can save a sinner, not the law, nor a mixture of law and grace, which only the more condemns the guilty as being the less to be excused. It is by grace alone that the believer is or can be saved; through righteousness indeed, but this exclusively in Christ, however truly the faith of Him produces its fruit abundantly through Him unto God's glory and praise. It was when He had made purification of sins, as we read at the beginning of the Epistle, that He set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty, though it is only in the tenth chapter that we learn fully the perfected status of the Christian.

And the change is shown further by the fact which is next noticed, that He of whom these things are said belonged to, or had His part in a different tribe, not Levi but Judah, from which no one had ever been officially attached to the altar. For it was plain before all that our Lord, as it is added, “hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spoke nothing about priests.” The break was as clear as decisive. Messiah was to be born of David's line, of a virgin espoused to a man of the Solomonic branch: so prophecy declared; and as He on high, after His sacrificial death and His resurrection, was saluted of God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, it was undeniable that the change from Aaron's family tribe was divinely marked beyond all controversy.

Thus Christianity is essentially different from Judaism. No doubt that man's rationalism and ethics are radically worthless and false. There is in both, there was for the Jew visibly, a priest and a sacrifice, a sanctuary, and an altar; but their nature wholly differs by the intention and word of God. Therefore there is no excuse for ignorance; for the O.T. prepares for what the N. T. propounds

with all plainness of speech. The essence and substance of all blessing to faith is in Christ, rejected of men and of the Jew especially, but risen and at God's right hand; and we who believe belong to Him for heaven, as this Epistle elaborately proves. He is coming to bring us there in His own likeness. Every Christian is already not sanctified or hallowed only but perfected by His one offering. But in these days of declension and self-complacency, is there aught that Christians need to learn of God more than their own Christianity as He has revealed it, unless it be Christ Himself on whom all depends? Even saints are slow to believe the grace and glory of His cross, as they instinctively shirk the crucifixion of the world to them and of themselves to the world which it entails. But this is the word of the Lord for His own now. (Gal. 6).

Hebrews 7:15-19

It has been shown then that a change of priesthood (and consequently of the law also) was involved in the priest addressed by God in Psalm 110. As the subject of the Psalm is confessedly Messiah and so of necessity David's son, He must spring out of Judah, not out of Levi as did the house of Aaron. But there is another and far weightier difference to which he next proceeds: He was David's Lord. No wonder that singular dignity of office attached to a person so glorious. He was no priest according to the law.

“And it is yet more abundantly evident if (or since) according to the similitude of Melchizedek ariseth a different priest who hath been made, not according to the law of fleshly commandment but according to power of indissoluble life. For it is witnessed, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. For there is a putting away of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law perfected nothing), and an introduction of a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God” (Heb. 7:15-19).

It was conceivable that a more exalted being might have taken up, in the sovereign will of God, the priesthood of Aaron, and shed new luster on it according to His superior glory. But the Holy Spirit here leads the writer to press, not only the change already urged, but the still more striking distinction of a different (■τερος, not ■λλος merely) priest to arise according to the likeness of Melchizedek. This leaves Aaron or any successor of his, and the law with which they were bound up, completely aside. Thus the great weight of the testimony extracted from Psalm 110 comes more and more into evidence. Of Messiah it speaks beyond controversy, of His intermediate position at the right hand of God, of the divine recognition of His priesthood after the order, not of Aaron but, of Melchizedek, and not only of His Kingdom introduced as it is here and elsewhere shown to be, by divine power and judgment of His foes. And the more intelligently that Psalm and others are read, the more convergent the light on Christ, and the more indubitable the inference in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the truth alike of Jewish hopes for the future and of Christianity at present.

For it is the rejected Messiah that we see all through the Psalms, opposed by the nations and peoples, by kings and rulers; but God declares His decree not only on Zion to set His anointed, but to give Him the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, when He will rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Clearly this is not yet accomplished; nor has Messiah yet asked for it. He is waiting on the Father's throne; He will at His coming sit on His own throne, when those who are now being called shall reign with Him in glory. Meanwhile we have to pray that our hearts be directed into God's love and the patience of Christ (2 Thess. 3:5). We keep the word of His patience (Rev. 3:10). As He is waiting on high, so are we below, knowing that He that shall come will come and will not tarry. If made a little lower than the angels, He is because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor in a higher and larger sphere than David's Son in Zion; He is the suffering but exalted Son of Man in heavenly glory, and about to come with the clouds of heaven, invested with universal dominion,

that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him: an everlasting dominion and a kingdom which shall not be destroyed.

But while He waits on high, He is active as a priest in sustaining His own suffering ones, tried as they are on earth. And the order of His priesthood is not after the likeness of Aaron but of Melchizedek. It was not the day of His power when He came the first time. He was crucified in weakness then. So only could there be reconciliation to God by His blood. Redemption otherwise was impossible, and that glorification of God concerning sin without which there could be no righteous, no stable, blessing for any one or anything. Now the infinite work of atonement is wrought and accepted; and He Who was delivered for our offenses was raised for our justification, is at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession. He died for the nation too, as well as to gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad, though the application of His work to “the nation” awaits the hour of their repentance and faith in Him, their own Messiah, Whom they slew by the hand of lawless men. He will sit as a priest on His throne when Jehovah shall send the rod of Messiah's strength out of Zion.

But He discharges priestly functions, a priest for us now, and He only is competent and all-sufficient, and must needs be so; as the very essence of His order is that, like Melchizedek, He stands alone with no companion in it nor subordinates, with neither predecessor nor successor, the one sole priest after the order of Melchizedek. The day of His wrath is future and introduces His kingdom; and He is Jehovah as well as Messiah. Thus it is that Jehovah shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall Jehovah be one and His name one: never till then a universal religion and universal kingdom, but all this then of the God of Israel in the person of the Lord Jesus.

And the heavens shall no longer be aloof but be united in homage to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Then He will have the glorified, who shall reign with Him. The suffering church will be manifested by His heavenly Bride. Nor is anything more opposed to all truth than that they are so reigning now: one of the evil roots of popery and of other self-exalting delusions. On the contrary now is the time to suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. It is an error as old as the ease and honor loving Corinthians, in the germ at least. See how nobly the apostle dissipates it as chaff in 1 Cor. 4:8-16, comparing 6:1-9; 7:29-31; 9:24-25; 15:23-24,42-58. But in fact where is not this truth underlying if not on the surface? The reign of Christ and His heavenly ones will take in the heavens, but be over (not on) the earth.

But to return to our chapter, the reasoning is conclusive. The change to a different priest of unique and surpassing glory is the teaching of that O.T. which every Jew owns to be divine. The infirmity of the Levitical priesthood is thereby demonstrated, and Christ alone answers to the type of Melchizedek. He is beyond controversy the other and different priest that arises, Who has been so made or constituted, not after a law of fleshly commandment, but after a power of indissoluble life. For he is testified of, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. What can be conceived plainer or more conclusive? Even the royal priest who blessed Abraham was but typical and shadowy. The body is Christ's. Aaron's priesthood was fleshly, Christ's according to power of an imperishable life. It is as risen and in heaven that He is Melchizedek priest.

Our chapter however draws a still larger deduction, not only an incomparably higher priesthood, to which Aaron's gives place, but disannulling of a foregoing commandment as weak and unprofitable; for, as he adds parenthetically, the law perfected nothing. Christ is not only perfect

Himself but brings in perfection, and in every way. And this is what was exhorted in Hebrews 6:1, “let us go on unto perfection.” It really is Christianity in contradistinction from Judaism, wherein even the heirs were under age (Gal. 4:1-3). The Christian is a son and heir of God, and we know it by the Spirit of His Son sent forth into our hearts and crying, Abba, Father. Compare also Rom. 8.

Thus the change of the priesthood from the order of Aaron to that of Melchizedek is shown to be exceeding deep and wide and permanent. Even now, whatever glorious results are in the womb of the future, there is on one hand an abolishing of antecedent injunction because of its weakness and unprofitableness, but on the other an inbringing of a better hope, the parenthesis simply summing up and clenching in a few pithy words the failure of the law to perfect one thing. Perfection is in and by Christ alone; and this by grace so fully as to glorify God and meet the believer's need in everything—even in the body at His coming again.

But meantime “we draw near to God.” How blessed! It is the standing truth of access: never true even of Aaron, save once a year and then with solemn rite “lest he die.” Now it is alike and always true of the Christian family. For here is no question of differing gift or of special position or local charge. It is the common blessedness of all, due to the work and blood, the person and priesthood, of Christ. “We draw near to God.” To assert difference in this is to resuscitate the abolished injunction, and to despise the introduced better hope. It is to set aside the gospel and go back to that law which, if God's word is to be believed, made nothing perfect. This is what is seen in much the greater part of Christendom. It was the wedge of Tractarianism; it is the flag of Ritualism. And it is the weakness of true Christians which leaves the door open for all such dark rebellions against divine grace and truth. For to say that there are no priests now on earth is but half a truth. The truth is that Christ is the great Priest on high, and that believers now on earth and since Pentecost are free of the sanctuary. “We draw near to God.” How so if we have not priestly nearness of access? To claim, to allow, that some have it for others virtually denies Christianity.

But the perfection goes far beyond our being now made of age, in contrast with legal minority, as we shall find throughout this Epistle and in what remains no less than what we have had; so that this need not be more than noticed according to the brief allusion in the text.

Only it is well to observe that the A. V. of the passage is untenable, and so are the various antecedent translations. Thus Wiclif muddles the entire context, though he is right as to the last clause. It is the more curious as the Vulgate is correct, which helped the Rhemish, though their English is here clumsy, and their punctuation cuts all thread of sense. Tyndale, by failing to see the parenthesis, led the way into the strange error of understanding (seemingly for it is preposterous) that “the law made nothing perfect: but was an introduction” &c. Cranmer followed in his wake. The English version of Geneva erred in another way of like misapprehension by giving, “the law made nothing perfect: but the bringing in of a better hope made perfect” &c. The A. V. followed this by inserting “did.” The truth is that no verb is needed other than the text supplies in the beginning of ver. 18, which stretches over to ver. 19 also. There is a doing away of a foregoing commandment, and an introduction of a better hope, by which we draw near to God; the legal state is annulled, and a better hope supervenes now. It is Christianity, and by it we draw near to God, instead of standing at a distance as is essentially Jewish. There is nothing more characteristic of the gospel, as the result of Christ's cross and blood-shedding by which we are brought to God. All priesthood for us save Christ's vanishes away; and Christ's is to maintain us in

that nearness which His work gives us even now, all Christians being priests.

Hebrews 7:20-22

Another proof of superiority for the priesthood of Christ over Aaron's is found in the oath which Jehovah is declared to have sworn in the former case, as attested in the same fruitful verse of Psa. 110. We have already had this argument drawn from His dealings with Abraham after he was tried and found faithful as to the sacrifice of Isaac (Heb. 6). It was God's appreciation of the faith that surrendered the dearest object, and in the most painfully trying way, to Himself trusted absolutely. And the divine oath was added to the word of promise, that, by two unchangeable things in which it was impossible that God should lie, we might have a strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. Here it is yet more solemn as His appreciation of Christ's priesthood which is final and forever, as being perfectly satisfying to His nature, love, and glory, in His Son as well as the Man Who had alone glorified Him even as to sin, competent alike as God and man in one person and in all His work.

“And inasmuch as [it was] not without swearing of an oath (for they have been made priests without swearing of an oath, but he with swearing of an oath by him that saith unto him, Jehovah swore and will not change his mind, Thou [art] priest forever), by so much also hath Jesus become surety of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:20-22).

Thus did God mark the incomparable honor of Messiah's priesthood; as the Aaronic was transitory, His forever. How strange at first sight that a Jew should overlook what was so distinctly involved in this solemnity on Jehovah's part in that dignity peculiar to his own Messiah! But it ceases to be strange, if one reflect on their habitual history, not as they flatter themselves in modern times but as God has recorded it imperishably in His living oracles, where we see them ever stiffnecked and rebellious, ever forsaking their most needed mercies and their brightest glory. All this would be inexplicable if one did not remember the wily adversary, the old serpent, who has wrought with not less ruinous success in Christendom now than in Judaism of old. Nor will that sad history close for either, till He appears in His glory for the judgment of both.

But no mark of God's estimation of Christ's priesthood above the Levitical is simpler or surer than swearing as He did when inaugurating Messiah in that position. The deduction is equally irrefragable: “by so much also hath Jesus become surety of a better covenant.” If He took aught in hand, if He became responsible, heaven and earth must sooner pass than His word or His work. The Second Man stands forever. And “blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” The old covenant cannot but be death and condemnation to the sinner. The new covenant rests on His blood shed for the remission of the believer's sins, and is truly a better covenant; as the Jew will one day be the loudest to proclaim, whatever may be his obstinacy now, proud of what has ruined him and his fathers blind for ages.

“Testament” is here quite out of place; for what has a giver of security to do with making a will? Heb. 9:16-17, is the sole passage of scripture which requires or even admits of such a sense, which is there due to “eternal inheritance” in the verse immediately preceding. The word in itself is capable of either sense, meaning in human relations a disposition, especially of property by will,

and in divine things a covenant, which naturally predominates in the Septuagint and the N. T. The context decides with certainty. Thus, in Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, remission of sins is expressly bound up with the “new covenant,” not testament, as in Jer. 31:31-34. Even the Vulgate has here “novum foedus,” not testamentum, which ought to have sufficed to have kept Jerome right in the Gospels. And what has “blood” to do with a “will"? That it should be the basis of a covenant is a familiar truth. A will or testament is unknown to the O. T. Not less clearly is it the God of Israel's “holy covenant,” as it is rightly rendered in Luke 1:72: testament can have no relation to the oath sworn to Abraham; though the Vulgate gives that word followed by Wiclif and the Rhemish translators, as it misled all the English in the three texts first referred to in the Synoptic Gospels. Acts 3:25; 7:8, are equally plain for “covenant;” and there all the English versions are correct, save Wiclif and the Rhemists, servile as usual to the Vulgate. But they were all inexcusable, particularly as to Acts 7:8, which directly alludes to Gen. 17, where the Vulgate has uniformly “pactum,” never once “testamentum.”

The Epistles are just as unambiguous. Thus in Rom. 9:4, “the covenants” (cf. Gal. 4 and Eph. 2:12) can be the only right sense, referring to Jer. 31:31 for the new, and to Ex. 24:8 for the first or old. Here the Vulgate follows the erroneous singular, as in B D E F G etc., against the true text in A and the mass of uncial and cursive copies &c., (save that A and L omit so as to be out of court), and all critics except Lachmann, who, great a scholar as he was, can never be reckoned on for a spiritual judgment. The English are right, save Wiclif and the Rhemists and the margin of the A. V. In Rom. 11:27 the meaning is beyond doubt “covenant,” as in the English with the same exceptions; where the error of the Vulgate is the more flagrant, because in Isa. 59:21, it gives “foedus” rightly yet mistranslates as usual in the N. T. citation. 1 Cor. 11:25 falls under the remarks on the Lord's Supper in the Gospels as already seen. 2 Cor. 3:6-14 can only mean “a new covenant” and “the old covenant,” the reference being indisputable; yet here the influence of the Vulgate misled all the English discreditably. Even Beza had corrected himself; for while wrong in his edd. of 1559, 1565, and 1582, he abandons “test.” and substitutes “pactum” in his last two editions of 1588 and 1598, though without a reason given in his notes. The connection of Gal. 3:15 is conclusive for the more general “covenant” even though human only, rather than the narrower “testament,” which is here more excusable in the Vulgate, Wiclif, Tyndale, Cranmer, and the version of Rheims, while the Geneva rendering of 1557 led the A. V. to “covenant,” with “testament” in the margin. This is confirmed by ver. 17 where a last “will” or “testament” cannot rightly be understood, though here again we have the same parties similarly ranged. In Heb. 4:24 the A. V. alone of English is correct, with the marginal alternative for which there was no good reason. In Eph. 2:12 the Geneva V. was the forerunner of the A. V., Beza being right all through. This brings us, according to the usual arrangement, to our Epistle, and to this the first mention of the word, where “covenant” has been shown to be right. In Heb. 8:6, 8-9 (twice), and 10 it is unmistakably and uniformly “covenant;” for what has a “mediator” to do with a testament? Other proofs are so obvious as to need no further pointing out. So in Heb. 9:4, the ark was of the “covenant,” with which a will or testament had no congruity: and with the “tables” too in the same verse. It has been remarked also that “a mediator” goes with “a covenant,” not a testament (ver. 15), and the bearing of the “first covenant” is determined by O. T. reference. “Testament” it cannot be. But the inspiring Spirit, in the parenthesis of vers. 16, 17, avails Himself of the signification so familiar to all who spoke or read Greek, in order to impress the place that death has for introducing and giving effect to the blessing of the Christian. A covenant does not imply in any case the death

of the covenanter to give it validity; a testament invariably supposes the testator's death to bring it into operation. All learning or argument to set aside testament and testator here is but beating the air. Equally vain is it to establish testament in ver. 15, or in 18 and 20, where “covenant” alone suits, alone is warranted by the O. T. God enjoined a covenant, not a testament, and that by blood. The same proof applies no less stringently to Heb. 10:16-29, Heb. 12:24, and Heb. 13:20; as also to Rev. 11:19. Now these are all the occurrences in the N. T.; and the sum is that “testament” is out of place everywhere save in Heb. 9:16-17, where alone special contextual bearing gives occasion to that sense; whereas the universal O.T. force prevails in every other. The question is here gone into fully, that no reader may allow the unbelieving notion of the least uncertainty hanging over the usage. It is in vain and even injurious to parade a crowd of the learned men opposed to another crowd not less learned, save to prove that our faith ought in no case to rest on man but on God's Word and Spirit. Thus regarded, the uncertainty of men confirms the believer in the value of the provisions of God's grace.

Hebrews 7:23-25

Another proof of superiority over the Levitical priesthood is claimed for our Lord Jesus in His abiding triumph over death, from which neither Aaron nor his successor had exemption any more than other men. They all succumbed to death, which rendered their priesthood necessarily successional in order to its very existence.

“And they have been made priests more in number, because they are hindered by death from continuing; but He, because He abideth forever, hath the priesthood unchangeable: whence also He is able to save completely those that approach to God through Him, ever living as He doth to intercede for them” (vers. 23-25).

The text had already been applied twice in this chapter (Heb. 7:8,16): the first time, in reasoning on the type of Melchizedek paid tithe to and testified of only as “living,” scripture being as silent about his death as about his birth (whereas under the law none but “dying” men receive tithes); the second time, in contrasting the respective principles, a law of carnal injunction, weak and profitless on the one side, and on the other, power of indissoluble life through the perfection of which we draw near to God. Here, as has been remarked, we have the Holy Spirit noticing the appointment of numbers of priests Levitical, because death hindered continuance; whereas the high priest of our confession, because of His abiding forever, hath the priesthood unchangeable. The personal contrast of His abiding forever with the many sons of Aaron who could not but pass away through death, emphasizes the priesthood in His case as indefeasible.

Nor can any demonstration be conceived so convincing and irrefutable. For death tells the tale of man's weakness and sin; and the more as he was constituted to live, with suitable provision for it, had he obeyed God. Nevertheless Jesus did taste of death, but in no way by sin, yet for it as a sacrifice. By the grace of God He tasted death for every one (or, thing). And this infinite act of His love not only availed for us before God in a way and measure with which nothing else can compare, but gave occasion to display the power of an imperishable life in Him. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” When scripture records its remarkable list of antediluvians (Gen. 5) living 930, 912, 910, 895, 962, 969, 777 years, the solemn words follow in each case, “and he died.” Had Jesus lived as many as any, or double the oldest, men might still have said, Wait and see what the end will be. But He, after taking humanity just long enough to do the will of God perfectly, as its climax laid down His life in a single generation, that He might take it again in resurrection. Thus was marked out, on the one hand, the annulling of Satan's power in his last fortress of death, on the other the victory of the Son of God after full submission to God's judgment of sin. It was His resurrection that proclaimed death defeated. He only is the Living One, Who became dead and is now alive again forever more, in possession of the keys of death and Hades. And as thus living He carries on His priesthood on high.

Therefore is there but one. Death has no more dominion over Him, as sin never had. No successor is needed, none to replace Him Who ever abides. Vain search! for none else had the qualification. Through death there was no continuance. Hence is He in manifest contrast with

Aaron's sons who followed in a family succession more numerous than the sons of David, till He came, the promised and predicted Son, Who is the King after God's heart not in type alone but reality, as He is the Priest, the one Mediator Whose love and effectual love has been proved to the uttermost, and Who now lives to sustain, guard, and sympathize as well as intercede on our behalf.

And the power by which He lives forever is the guarantee of a commensurate salvation (ver. 25). For if the priests, the sons of Aaron, could not save themselves from death, still less could they save others. Christ only when His work was done, having been perfected, became author of everlasting salvation to all that obey Him. “For if, being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved in His life,” i.e. in virtue of it. He abides forever and because it is so, He has His priesthood unchangeable. Thus also He is able to save completely those that approach to God through Him. In His case it is not the cold or poor plea of a divinely ordained office administered by an unworthy occupant, which brought death on many a son of Aaron as we may see in early days, and which filled with grief and shame far more “Israelites indeed” to the end of the sad story. If the law made nothing perfect, still less did the numerous priests as they succeeded one another supply strength and profit.

But here the glorious presence of God's Son gives a fresh and unfading and incalculable luster to the office, enhanced as all is by an unwavering obedience which glorified His Father absolutely. He therefore is the sole priest able to save completely (ε■ς τ■ παντελ■ς) those that approach to God through Him, since He ever lives to intercede for them. As their need here below is great and unceasing, so is He above always free, competent, and efficacious to interpose on their behalf. Do they approach by Him to God? He saves them throughout and entirely. Divine love and righteousness are thus at one in carrying through to God's glory and salvation in the face of every difficulty or danger. Nor is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved.

Hebrews 7:26-28

The superiority of the true Melchizedek is thus shown in every respect incontestable and manifest; and in the unjealous ways of grace, His purity and His glory are bound up with the heavenly dignity of the believer, as it is here expressed.

“For such a high priest [also] became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who hath no need day by day, as the high priests, first for his own sins to offer up sacrifices, then [for] those of the people; for this he did once for all, having offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests having infirmity; but the word of the oath-swearing that [was] after the law, a Son perfected forever” (Heb. 7:26-28).

The reason assigned (for the sentence takes that shape) is made all the more striking when compared with a designedly similar one in Heb. 2:10. “For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” The glory of God, His truth, His justice, had been compromised if sin were not judged unsparingly in His person Whose grace made Him responsible for all its consequences. Therefore did it become God to make Him Who knew no sin sin for us. Here no less wonderfully does the Holy Spirit say that “it became its” to have a high priest in every point of view and beyond comparison superior to the Aaronic line. “For such a high priest became us,” not only of purity unexampled, but made “higher than the heavens,” the glorious place in which the Epistle loves to regard Him, due to His personal and divine dignity, but taken as the result of His atoning death, for a heavenly family.

The word “holy” should be considered. In Greek as in Hebrew two expressions are employed: one (■γιος) to imply separateness for God from evil, the other (■σιος) graciousness, which said of God means His mercy, said of man means his piety. It is the latter term which is here rendered “holy,” a holiness full of loving-kindness. Next, ■κακος is poorly translated “harmless” as in the A. V.; and “guileless” as in the Revision answers to ■δολος. In Christ it rises to a total absence of evil found in none else. “Undefiled” declares Him untainted by the corruptions that surrounded Him when here below, where His moral beauty shone on all who had eyes to see, above all in His Father's Who bore witness from heaven. Appropriately therefore is He next said to be “separated from sinners,” not from sins only, as the Pesch-Syriac says, but from sinners. What was ever morally true was crowned in His leaving the world behind, the enduring effect of a completed act, and so leads on to the only place befitting Him, “made higher than the heavens.” There He exercised His high-priestly functions, having laid the ground in His propitiatory work on the cross. It should surprise none to hear that such a place became Him. Revelation declares that such a high-priest became us. Divine righteousness does not justify us only but sets us in and as Christ before God (John 16; 2 Cor. 5); or, according to the doctrine of our Epistle, constitutes us holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, and (as we shall see) exhorts us to approach with a true heart, as having boldness for entering into the holies, by the blood of Jesus. It is not then because we were so far from pious, &c., but on the contrary because we are so blessed, objects of perfect favor, and

bound for glory under an unfailing Leader, that “such a high priest became us,” in contrast with the earthly people who had high-priests like themselves.

In Heb. 7:27 is a brief exclusion of the shortcomings of earthly priesthood, leaving its full discussion to a later moment. Aaron, or his successors, needed day by day to offer up sacrifices, first for their own sins, then for the people's; Christ once for all when He offered Himself, which is the clearest token of absolute sinlessness, and according to the worth of His person was infinitely effectual for others, as He needed nothing on His own part. This the previous verse demonstrated, if proof were asked, though it ought not to be. And the whole is clenched by ver. 28. “For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity.” All here was imperfection. “But the word of the oath-swearing that was since the law, [appointeth] a Son perfected forever.” “Son” is characteristic, and hence has not the article, though He be the Only-begotten, but not here a designated object; so that the language is perfectly correct. Its insertion would make Himself prominent rather than His near relationship to God. The perfect participle passive here as in ver. 26 points to the permanent character acquired, and not to the simple fact as the aorist would express. As in His severance from sinners, so in His having completed all for His priestly place, it is the lasting result of either terminated act. In Heb. 2:10 it is the act itself on God's part.

Hebrews 8:1-2

The truth of Christ as high priest, most important for the Christian, and especially for such as had been Hebrews, has thus far been richly unfolded according to the order of Melchizedek, but not without a glance at its exercise after the type of Aaron, yet even here immeasurably superior even to frequent contrast. This however demands further development, and first as connected with “a better covenant which was established upon better promises.” The contrast of the first or legal covenant with a second and new one, never to grow old or vanish away, occupies our present chapter for the most part. But it opens with a reproduction of what has been laid down already under a brief heading.

“Now, as a summary on what is being said, we have such a high priest who sat down on [the] right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, minister of the holies, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8:1-2).

The glory of Christ's person, Son of God and Son of Man, is developed in Heb. 1 and 2, and in both with His work, not only for purging us, but to vindicate God, annul the power of evil, reconcile all things, succor the tried, and bring many sons to glory. This is the admirable introduction, followed by His office of apostle and high priest for those who are pilgrims passing through the wilderness of the world to the rest of God, as we see in Heb. 3, 4; and it is precisely to such, no longer in Egypt but with Canaan in view, that the priesthood of Christ applies, as is shown in Heb. 4, 5, 6, along with the hindrances by the way, the awful peril of going back, and the grounds and motives for the full assurance of hope to the end. Heb. 7. is an elaborate proof from first to last of the Melchizedek priesthood, fulfilled not yet in its exercise but in its order in Christ, altogether and incontestably beyond that of Aaron.

If therefore a Hebrew Christian were in danger of pining after a Levitical high priest as drawing near to God for a moment on behalf of the ancient people of God, could he fail to see the infinite superiority of Christ in this very respect? It is not that Israel had one, and we Christians have not. Their own scriptures attest another and far higher coming, mysteriously bound up with the Messiah, to which their God was pledged by an oath, and this to abide forever. There stands the promise in Psalm 110, and now it is beyond cavil accomplished in Jesus dead, risen, and glorified. It is inexcusable unbelief to evade this word of God. What a blessing to receive it as our assured portion in God's grace! “We have such a high-priest,” to maintain us consistently with all that God is and loves as fully revealed, to sustain in our weakness, to sympathize with our every trial and pang. His position declares His unique and incomparable dignity, His intimate nearness to God in glory. His seat is “at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens,” a stronger statement even than what was given at the starting-point of the epistle (1:3). “Throne” is added now, and the “heavens” take the place of “on high.” Could the most prejudiced Israelite fail to perceive the superior dignity and efficacy of such a high-priest above even Aaron or the most favored of his line? Nor could he deny the absolute authority of the scripture which reveals the divine intention now carried out in it. Is it for Jews to doubt the glory of the Messiah or the blessing

achieved and secured to those that are His?

There has Christ taken His seat. It is calm and permanent intimacy where no believer can dispute the greatness, and the power, and the glory, any more than the love, and tender interest, and unfailing support. He is “minister of the holies,” in no merely typical sense to bring truth down palpably to infantine minds. It is the house of heavenly worship and divine glory in its fullest reality and display. Therein Christ ministers according to the nicest consideration of the living God, as the sole person suited to Him and to us equally and in perfection, true God and real man, Who obeyed unto death (yea, of the cross), that God's honor should be retrieved and His love meet with a love like His own, Who died for our sins when we were as powerless as ungodly, and thus again proved divine love to the uttermost no less than holiness and righteousness. Such is the minister of the holies, that God in the heavens and the saints on the earth should be adequately conciliated, even in the time of our present infirmity and exposure.

Thus the high-priest we boast is exactly in keeping with “the tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Less and other than He would not suffice for the majesty of God, or for His grace. For as “the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand,” so does He delight in having Him ever nearest to Himself, that He may give us to enjoy His own ineffable satisfaction in Christ's laying down His life that He might take it again (not merely laying it down for the sheep, John 10:15, compared with 17); so too in all the efficacy of His office maintaining us in harmony with Himself in heavenly glory, notwithstanding our pitiable weakness, and the rude storms and hostility of the world we pass through.

We have noticed already that the ground of the epistle is the wilderness, not the land; and so here is the “tabernacle", rather than the temple which would suit the rest actually come, not the pilgrimage. This is full of instruction which Christendom has overlooked and abandoned. Great is the spiritual gain for such as seize the truth by divine teaching and are practically faithful. For nature chafes at the walk of faith and craves what is “settled” or “established” (2 Sam. 7), on the specious plea that the world is the Lord's and the fullness of it, for any present enjoyment as well as to adorn His sanctuary; as the rich and royal adorn for themselves a house of cedars. Whereas in truth since redemption to this day He has walked in a tent and in a tabernacle, and has never spoken a word to us, saying, Why build ye not Me a house of cedars? This is reserved for His Son, the Man of Peace, when the sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth shall have smitten the nations in revolt, and the Man Whose name is the BRANCH shall grow up out of His place and build the temple of Jehovah. Even He shall build the temple of Jehovah; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zech. 6). It is still the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, not yet Himself come to reign in power and glory over the earth. We are nothing if not heavenly, as He is for us in the heavens, minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Even the tabernacle of old needed its gold and silver and precious things, as the Levitical high-priest his varied jewels on his shoulders and breast. Ours is the true tabernacle on high where all is the glory of God and His Son in the power of redemption. There created ornaments have no place. There Christ ministers, and thither we approach by faith, looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal;

but the things which are not seen are eternal. And no less than the Holy Spirit of God is given us as God's children to make this access real, and full of peace and joy. How sorrowful for any thus blessed to “turn again to the weak and beggarly elements” of earthly sights and shows and seasons like Israel, or to conceive that corruptible things as silver and gold can be acceptable in the hour now come, when God must be worshipped, if at all, in spirit and in truth—worshipped also as the Father, Christ's Father and our Father, His God and our God.

Hebrews 8:3-6

The immeasurable superiority of Christ as High-priest will appear in Heb. 9, 10, with the fullest evidence. Here the Holy Ghost only lays down the principle in a few words that His is a real active function, and not a mere title, His heavenly glory only giving additional force to His functions.

“For every high-priest is constituted to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore [it is] necessary that this one also have something to offer. If then he were upon earth, he would not even be a priest, since there are those that offer the gifts according to law, such as serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is divinely warned when about to complete the tabernacle: for See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mountain. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is also mediator of a better covenant, such as [since it] is enacted upon better promises” (Heb. 8:3-6).

Thus the very aim of high-priesthood is presentation of what is acceptable to God and needed in the highest degree by man. Ministry of the word is essentially different, the communication to man of what God reveals. As the former characterized the Jewish system, so does the latter Christianity, and, it may be added, most distinctively the gospel of God's grace proclaimed in the whole creation that is under heaven. Ministry of the church also could only be when the church was called into being.

But there is another consideration, to which the type in the Book of Numbers gives marked and repeated expression (Heb. 3:9; Heb. 8:19; Heb. 18:6-7), which ought not to be overlooked. The Levites as a whole, whatever their distinctions of ministry, were given to Aaron and his sons; they were wholly, absolutely, given to serve Aaron on behalf of the children of Israel. Thus was the ministry of the tabernacle made essentially dependent on the Aaronic priesthood; and it had no place or propriety otherwise. The outward service entirely hung for its value and acceptance on the inner worship. The tribe of Levi was joined to Aaron and ministered to him, and had no other reason of existence. Undoubtedly the priesthood being now changed, of necessity a new change of law takes place. But the principle abides. After the likeness of Melchizedek there stands up a different priest, who has been made after the power of an indissoluble life, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man. All real service, as it flows from the Lord, so depends on Him in the sanctuary and refers to Him there. Otherwise it becomes false, if the source be made human or the motives be of the world. The Lord can be no party to His own dishonor. How all-important for His servants to test themselves by what is not merely an O. T. type but the plainly revealed truth of the apostolic Epistles. The Holy Spirit is the power of all true ministry; but He works in us that we may serve the Lord Jesus, and there is the same Lord whatever may be the diversities of ministrations. On Him within the rent veil hangs all the worth and efficacy of what is ministered here below.

He Who in personal dignity and official honor surpasses both Aaron and Melchizedek did not fall short in what He had to offer. He offered up what neither one nor other could on their part, what He

only could, He offered up Himself (Heb. 7:27); and it was once for all, for there alone was the perfection of gift and sacrifice, as God marked His acceptance of all by seating Him at His own right hand in the heavens. It is no question here of propitiation, but of His service in the true tabernacle. Propitiation was exceptional, and in it the high priest represented the people as well as his own house. None but he could do it, as the type of Christ lifted up from the earth on the cross; yet it was not his regular priestly service as setting forth the Lord's ministry now on high.

“If then He were on earth, He would not even be a priest, since there are those that offer the gifts according to law, such as serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things,” &c. (Heb. 8:4-5). Christ is characteristically to the Christian the heavenly Priest. On earth He could have no sacerdotal place: God had called Aaron and his sons in succession to minister and to serve therein; and, when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, such there were still offering the gifts according to law. Christ's priesthood was wholly different, of sovereign grace and exercised in glory, as was due to His person and His work, when the first man had fully displayed his failure, sin, and ruin, in the rejection of the promised Messiah, the Son of God, come in divine love to bless. But the chosen people, priests, and rulers would have none of Him; and in His death by lawless hands propitiation was wrought; and the risen Christ entered that sanctuary on high, where ever living He alone maintains His own in their weakness here below according to the efficacy of His sacrifice which has made purification of their sins. As yet the earthly Aaronic priesthood carried on their service, which was but a representation and shadow of the heavenly things, “according as Moses is oracularly told when about to make the tabernacle. For See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mountain.”

In Christ all is real and enduring, as it is divinely and humanly perfect, the person, the work, and the priesthood, as indeed all else. No one beforehand could have conceived any one of them; yet when the facts come out, he who believes is thenceforth satisfied that not one of them could be otherwise, if God were to be glorified and man blessed now and evermore, A human priesthood on earth for Christian people is apostacy from the truth of the Son perfected forever and ministering on high according to power of indissoluble life; it is to rehabilitate the defunct Aaronic order, disannulled because of its weak and unprofitable nature; it is virtually to deny the very gospel of salvation which announces to all who believe that the blood of Jesus at once blots out their sins, and brings themselves nigh to God in a constant nearness, far beyond what the sons of Aaron and Aaron himself ever enjoyed (Heb. 10). And if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. For He is able to save completely those that approach through Him unto God, always living as He is to make intercession for them.

We see the importance of Aaron's intervention in the Pentateuch when the people and his own sons had sinned (Lev. 10, Num. 16), to say nothing of the beautiful type of the budding priestly rod which grace conferred on him to bring through the desert those for whom Moses' authoritative rod could only have assigned and executed death. “But now hath He (Christ) obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also mediator of a better covenant, of one which (such as) is enacted upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6). Of this covenant we shall hear more, and of its promises, in the quotation from the O.T. which follows.

Hebrews 8:7-9

The object of the Holy Spirit is to prove the inferiority of the first covenant, to which Jewish unbelief was clinging, as pertinaciously as their fathers of old were prone to abandon it for any idol. Such alas! is the self will of man, from which no favors from God deliver, short of redemption and a new life in Christ. But as in Heb. 7. we had the Levitical priest set aside by One after the order of Melchizedek according to Psa. 110, so Heb. 8. with no less conclusiveness sets before us a new covenant promised in the unerring word.

“For, if that first had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For, finding fault, he saith to them, Behold, days come” &c., (Heb. 8:7-8).

It is in vain for men to reason in an abstract way against the word of God. It was He that inaugurated the covenant of Sinai, which confronted the self-confidence of fallen man, and, if he had used it aright, would have convicted him of his evil and compelled him to look to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. But Israel, like other natural men, perverted the law to make out a spurious righteousness of their own, and to cloak their sins under the smoke of their sacrifices; the end of which things is death, as the Jews were soon to prove even outwardly.

God is free to set aside the old and bring in the new. This He never does arbitrarily, but in goodness, wisdom, and holiness worthy of Himself. But the idea of absolute law is a common delusion of Judaism which some even of their Rabbles repudiated and disproved from scripture, though Christian theologians, even such a man as Hooker, (Reel. Pol. i. 2, Keble's ed. i. 204), have not failed to defend and use it controversially. But it is false, the fruit of man's pride and perversity. God is sovereign: the blessed resource of His nature, to vindicate His name when wronged and insulted, no less than to deliver guilty man from his own evil and Satan's power. And never was absolute law more mischievously employed than now by skeptics who avail themselves of theological errors to promote their own darker and more deadly unbelief, while scorning the source from which they derived their poisoned shaft. For they reduce God to nature, and insist on absolute law to deny miracle, prophecy, and revelation generally in any true sense, whatever the fair words in which the milder men deceive themselves and the unwary. But the idea is really heathen (and so Hooker quotes Homer, Mere. Trismegistus, Plato, and the Stoics), however much it delighted Jews and Christians, to say nothing of free-thinkers. For God is light and love, not law, and whatever He may have imposed on the creature, He left Himself entire liberty to work in sovereign grace for good; as He could not but judge what was inconsistent with His nature and majesty, and what rebelled against Him. To send His only begotten Son to die is not law, any more than through the faith of Him to save sinners that deserve condemnation. It is grace.

Hence God, as He saw fit to bring in the first covenant, which condemned the sins of the first man, or more definitely of guilty Israel, is no less free to promise a new covenant, bringing out “Jehovah righteousness” in the Messiah, the Second man, by whom He can afford to pardon and give the knowledge of Himself to His people, however undeserving. How sad that those who need to the

uttermost such saving mercy, should turn a deaf ear and prefer their own foolish reasonings to His word Who cannot lie, and Who is a Savior God no less than a judge! But the Jew objects, so long alas! the leader of the world's incredulity, that it is the gospel which so proclaims; and this they believe not. Nay, son of Abraham, hear your own acknowledged and inspired prophet. It is Jeremiah that speaks, full of sorrow over Judah's apostasy from Jehovah, on which he pronounced speedy and severe judgment. But he divinely comforts by the vision of the final and everlasting restoration in His grace, people and land blessed under the true Beloved their King. He Who had unsparingly chastised them for their iniquities, He will rejoice to bless both Israel's house and Judah's house, as never of old, and will assuredly plant them in the land, then truly glorious, with His whole heart and with His whole soul. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. For thus saith the LORD: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which “the LORD hath chosen, He hath even cast them off.” Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them” (Jer. 33:14-26). From a previous chapter (31) of this very portion our epistle quotes. Its bearing on the future and still unaccomplished blessing of all Israel that shall be spared in the latter day is direct, unambiguous, tender, and beautiful. “Behold, days are coming, saith the Lord, and (or, that) I will consummate a new covenant in respect of the house of Israel, and in respect of the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in [the] day of My taking their hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in My covenant, and I disregarded them, saith the Lord” (Heb. 8:8-9). Equally vain is the dream that the church, or the Christian, is here contemplated. On every sound principle of interpretation the same people, and in its divided houses, is reserved for future blessing whose iniquities the prophet bewailed and denounced. The truth always suffers by tampering with its integrity or by ignorance. Israel only had the first covenant; Israel by grace will have the second. Israel lost their privileges and land under the old; Israel will be restored and blessed more than ever and forever in their land under the new covenant. Meanwhile we, once Gentiles, who had neither the adoption, nor the glory, nor the covenants, nor the law-giving, nor the promises—we are called by sovereign grace in the gospel to privileges higher far as God's children, and members of Christ's body wherein is neither Jew nor

Gentile, blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, as Israel will be blessed in their land, when this age gives way to the new age of Christ displayed in power and glory. But the death of Christ, which laid the basis for the gospel and also for the church united to Him glorified on high, is the ground of the new covenant also; as the Lord emphatically shows in the institution of His Supper (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25), and as the apostle characterizes the ministry of the gospel in spirit, not in letter. Hence the application here and in Heb. 10 is as full of comfort to the believing Hebrew, as 1 Peter 2:10 in applying Hos. 2:23. The believer now anticipates all the blessing as far as the higher calling of Christianity admits of it. The earthly part awaits the earthly people; and the days are not yet come for the chosen nation as a whole to be blessed according to the strict and full terms of the prophecy in their own land. Heaven is to us what Palestine will be to Israel, and they will be seen there under Messiah; as the Christian Jews are now to walk as pilgrims and strangers, waiting for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for them. Israel, not we, are to be sown to Jehovah in the earth; and this not before the day when Jehovah answers the heavens, and the heavens answer the earth.

Hebrews 8:10-11

But it is instructive to consider the terms of the new covenant as here cited from the prophet, though from the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew, and not without change even from that.

“For this [is] the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; giving my laws into their mind, I will also write them upon their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they shall be to me for people. And they shall not teach each his [fellow] citizen and each his brother, crying, Know the Lord, because all shall know me from little one unto great of them” (Heb. 8:10-11).

The essence of the new covenant is that Jehovah undertakes its accomplishment. The first covenant could not but fail, because it depended, not on God, but on the Israelite; and the Israelite was already a sinful man. This the law made evident. As long as men only hear, and speak, and judge others (perhaps satisfactorily to themselves), they may keep up a claim of their own righteousness. It is quite another thing when they strive seriously to obey. Then they find out that they are without strength, enemies of God, and ungodly. Christ comes from God to meet the need, giving them life on the faith of Himself, and dying for their sins that they may be remitted of God.

But while there was evident propriety, in writing to Hebrew confessors, to quote from the inspired words of Jeremiah, it is an error to assume that the gospel as preached now is the fulfillment of the prediction. It is perfectly legitimate to apply the words to privileges conferred by the gospel without denying that the prophet has in view the days when the house of Israel and the house of Judah shall alike be blessed under the reign of the Messiah; whereas during gospel times the Gentile is as open to the call of grace as the Jew, the cross having proved that all sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is now no difference any more in them than in indiscriminate grace. Salvation is preached to both alike.

But in the days which strictly the prophecy contemplates, God will own His ancient people again and never more shall the seed of Israel cease from being a nation before Jehovah forever. In those days shall the city be built to Jehovah from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goah. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate toward the east, shall be holy unto Jehovah; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more forever. It is the restoration of the people and the land and the city, when Messiah reigns on His own throne; of which the reader can find more in Isa. 11; 12; 35; 65; 66; Jeremiah 16-18; 30; 32: 37-44; 33; Ezek. 40-48, and in the minor prophets, especially Zech. 12-14.

Application of part to gospel times is not denied; for grace now reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord, as then a King shall reign in righteousness. But judgment shall return to righteousness at that epoch, and the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness so as they never do now. All the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah in that day, which it never will in

this day. To the believer now the principle of the new covenant applies, as far as his soul is concerned; but Israel will enjoy its terms directly and unqualifiedly, when the Branch of righteousness, grown to David, shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land, and all nations are blessed in Him.

The first blessing here specified is that the Lord not only gives His laws into the mind, but also writes them upon the heart. It is in pointed contrast with the first covenant written on stones. The law as a system was external, and was characterized by an elaborate ritualism, visible and palpable, when anointed priest, Levite, ruler, and ordinary Israelite had his defined place, with meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, as well as specific gifts and sacrifices which could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. The blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, could not do more than sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. The laws were outside the Israelite; they were not written on his heart. Far different is the work of grace now. God gives them into the mind and writes them on the heart of every believer. There is for the Christian a renewing of the mind, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given to him. The principle of the new covenant is not only verified, but in a richer way spiritually than Israel can have by-and-by, whatever their wondrous privileges in the exclusion of Satan and the presence of Christ, and the whole creation delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God then reigning with Him.

Next, “I will be to them for God, and they shall be to Me for people.” As this will be Israel's portion in that day, so it is ours now. It is not less ours, because we can say by the Spirit “Abba, Father,” Christ's Father and our Father, Christ's God and our God. As before, it will be no longer an imposed ordinance or a possibly vain title of relationship. All is by His grace made real, intrinsic, and abiding. All the blessing that is involved in what God is to His people is secured, as His people are secured in their due place toward Him. But we can add our Father, though this did not fall within the design of the epistle to unfold as we find it elsewhere.

Further, “And they shall not teach each his [fellow] citizen, and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, because all shall know Me from little one unto great of them.” This is another privilege in which we more than anticipate the blessings of Jehovah's manifested kingdom. The Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. And no wonder; for the Christian has eternal life in the Son, as he has also the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, both capacity and power, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. So it will be when the new covenant is established with both the houses of Israel. “In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.” As it is elsewhere written, which also explains it, “All thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” Hence it will be no question of teaching, each his fellow-citizen, and each his brother. The salvation which Israel enjoys in that day so illustrates the scripture, that there will be no need of objective knowledge (γν■σις) for the ignorant, because all shall have intrinsically possessed conscious knowledge (■ιδ■σουσι) from little even to great of them. The universality of the result testifies that God it is Who ensures it; for under human teaching, however good, we see every degree of proficiency and at best knowledge far from perfect. Compare also Joel 2:28. The outpoured Spirit gives understanding and power.

Here too in Christianity we may observe remarkable analogy. It is in addressing the babes (παιδ■α) of God's family that the apostle John declares “ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.” This is of course true of the “fathers” and “young men” in Christ; but it is said expressly to those who most needed such encouragement, exposed as they were to seducers who boasted of their knowledge and undermined Christ. “But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 John 2:20-21, 27). Teachers there are, and those that rule or guide, while Christ is on the throne of God; but they should be the first to maintain the privileges of the simplest believer.

Hebrews 8:12-13

But there is a further and most needed gift of mercy to which God stands pledged in the new covenant. This, too, the apostle does not fail to cite as now applied to the believer; though to the Israelite it is set in the last place, whereas the Christian enjoys it as a starting-point, as we may see throughout the Acts of the Apostles.

“Because I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins I will remember in no wise more” (Heb. 8:12). It will be noticed that the words “and their lawlessnesses” disappear. They are not in the Septuagint any more than the original Hebrew, which indeed has also the singular form, where the Greek gives the plural. It would seem that the words in question were inserted from Heb. 10:17, where beyond doubt they occur, but without “their unrighteousnesses.” In any case grace meets the guilty but now renewed souls, and comforts those who feel and own their sinfulness with the assurance of divine forgiveness.

How different the terms of the first covenant, even when Moses went up on high the second time, and saw not Jehovah's glory but His goodness pass before him, and heard Him proclaim Jehovah, Jehovah El, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting &c! Now it is precisely clearance of conscience or guilt, that the awakened soul longs for and seeks from God; and what the law could not do, God does in the gospel by virtue of Christ made sin for us. So our Lord spoke and dealt with Zaccheus, chief publican though he was, and so most offensive in Pharisaic eyes. But the rejected Messiah, the Son of Man, came to seek and to save that which is lost. His coming and work of expiation deposit an infinite fund of mercy toward the guilty, which God in the gospel uses to clear and justify all who believe.

“Merciful” here is not mere pity, but “propitious.” Undoubtedly unrighteousnesses are hateful in God's sight and abhorrent to His nature; so too they become to a soul when born again. For as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, as our Lord ruled. The old nature does not become new, but remains evil and never to be allowed. But a new one is given, which finds not relief only or even pardon, but deliverance in the death and resurrection of the Savior. Here we transcend the terms and ideas of the new covenant which go no farther than God's mercy in remission and remembrance of sin no more at all. This the Christian has, but in a far surpassing mode and measure. For he is entitled, as we know from other scriptures, to know that he died with Christ to sin, as set forth even in his baptism; that he is risen with Christ, and seated in Him in heavenly places. But as this preeminently exalted aspect of the believer's present blessing is not in the most distant way couched in the promises of the new covenant, so it nowhere appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And this rightly; for the Holy Spirit is therein drawing out the force of the O.T., and at most what was latent in it, rather than going on to the wholly unrevealed fullness alike of Christ as head, of the church as His body, and of our individual Christian standing too.

An important inference is now drawn from a word. “In saying 'new,' He hath antiquated the first [covenant]: now what is being antiquated and growing aged [is] near disappearing” (Heb. 8:13). It is in vain therefore for Jews or other men to reason abstractly for the perpetuity of God's law: His word has already decided the question. The prophet Jeremiah declares in the Spirit that Jehovah will make a new covenant, and an everlasting one, with all Israel. This, as is here shown, antiquates the first or legal covenant. The new one is evidently not of man's will or weakness, but of God's gracious power working in His people. And those who believe now, whether Jews or Gentiles, anticipate Israel for whom it was made, but to whom it is not yet extended. But it is sure to Israel in due time, for the mouth of the Lord has said it.

Hence it is added that what is being antiquated (not “decayeth” as in the A. V.) and growing aged is near disappearing. The cross fulfilled and annulled the legal covenant; the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was its grave.

Hebrews 9:1-5

The apostle proceeds to draw out, in contrast with the principles of the first covenant, that which the prophet declared should take its place, or rather that which is the Christian's portion now that Christ is dead, risen, and ascended. It is the way into the holiest now made manifest; the conscience purged by the blood of Christ from dead works, to serve the living God; and the eternal inheritance, of which they that are called receive the promise.

“The first [covenant] then also had ordinances of divine service, and the sanctuary a worldly one. For a tabernacle was formed, the first, in which [were] both the candlestick, and the table and the setting forth of the loaves (the show-bread), which is called Holy [place]; but after the second veil a tabernacle that is called Holy of Holies, having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid all round about with gold, in which [were] a golden pot holding the manna, and the rod of Aaron that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and above over it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; of which things one cannot now speak in detail” (Heb. 9:1-5).

Ordinances of divine service the first covenant had in abundance, and most instructive; but the sanctuary was and could not but be a worldly one. For God was not manifested in flesh here below, nor was man received up in glory. The infinite sacrifice for sin had yet to be offered, in which God is glorified, and whereby He can bless the believer to the uttermost, sin being fully judged in the cross. The veil therefore was still unrent, and the way into the holiest neither available nor manifest. As the sanctuary was of the world (Heb. 9:6), so the ordinance was carnal (Heb. 9:10). All was of the first creation, shadowy, and provisional, at best the witness of good things to come, as the tabernacle itself was of testimony, not one thing there of intrinsic excellency or divinely efficacious.

Such is ritualism. Only it is now beyond measure evil for faith and practice; because it is condemned and annulled by the cross of Christ. It is despite of the Spirit of grace sent down from heaven; it is the gainsaying of Korah against the true Moses and Aaron—even Christ now on high. The Jewish system had divine sanction till Christ came, accomplished His work, and took His seat on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. Ritualism in the Christian congregation is not only ignorance but contempt, however unwitting, of the gospel as well as of the church, and what is graver still, of Christ's work and priesthood. The grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ is virtually denied, yea, and destroyed by it, so far as falsehood can.

When we come to particulars, the character of the first covenant which we have traced generally is no less evident. Thus attention is here drawn briefly to its two divisions, the Holy place (ver. 2), and the Holy of Holies, each severed by a door or veil, as we read for the holiest of all, “after the second veil.” Both veils barred the entrance of man. Even the high priest could only enter where the cherubim of glory overshadowed judicially, to put blood on and before the propitiatory and not without clouds of incense “lest he die.” How contrasted with the access by faith we have as a settled title into this grace wherein we stand! For now the veil is rent in twain from top to bottom, ever since Jesus yielded up His spirit on the cross: the unambiguous proof on God's part that the

first covenant is ended, the barrier gone, and the way into the holiest laid open. Not that either part of the tabernacle ceases to yield its instruction to faith: whether the outer, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; or the inner, with golden censer, and the ark of the covenant and its significant contents and surroundings. Of these it was not the Spirit's purpose here to speak severally. Their import indeed is not uncertain when viewed in the light of Christ, to Whom each and all bore witness. For He in the first was attested as both light in the sevenfold power of the Spirit, and nourishment in administrative fullness as Man and for man. In the second, to say nothing of that which maintained intercession, was the display of God in judgment and sovereign government, with the testimony of executive power to make good His will. Within the ark, underneath the throne where His glory shone, were the memorial of His people's food when passing through the wilderness, the authoritative sign of that power of life and fruit in priestly grace which preserved from judgment, and the tables of the covenant which expressed the rule that menaced transgression with death. How transcendent the change when God no longer dwelt in thick darkness, but revealed Himself in Christ, the true Light, and sent Him, not only as life, but as propitiation for our sins W. K.

Hebrews 9:6-10

The aim of the Holy Spirit, in referring to the first covenant with its ordinances, and especially its sanctuary, becomes now apparent. It was not to speak in detail of the contents of the tabernacle exterior or interior, however symbolically instructive, but of its distinctive contrast as a whole with Christianity. For this, not the church, is the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as it abides a primary truth for any soul, Gentile no less than Jewish, without which (held simply, clearly, and intelligently) the doctrine of the church is apt to be a danger rather than a blessing, as it surely is in itself instinct with the love and glory of Christ according to the counsels of God and made good by the indwelling Spirit Who baptized all into one body. But where there is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, the soul under the gospel becomes the object of that grace, reigning through righteousness, which gives the access into this favor wherein we stand, as Rom. 5:2 puts it, or, as in our Epistle, the way into the sanctuary, not the holy place but the holiest also, made manifest.

So characteristic of the gospel is this privilege that we find it since the cross almost everywhere, and claimed for all that now believe as their assured portion, by none so much as by the Apostle Paul, set as he was for the defense of the gospel, and its minister in all the largeness of its scope. Rom. 5 we have heard. 2 Cor. 3:18 is no less explicit, contrasting the Christian with Israel who could not gaze even on the reflected glory which shone from Moses' face and required a veil to hide it; whereas we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed accordingly even as from the Lord the Spirit. Again, in Eph. 2:13-14, 18, “But in Christ Jesus, ye that once were far off are made nigh by (or in) the blood of Christ; for He is our peace...for through Him we both have the access through the Spirit with the Father.” No less plain and decisive is Col. 1:12-13: “Giving thanks to the Father, Who made us meet for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light, Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” 1 Peter 2:9 declares that God called the Christian Jews “out of darkness into His marvelous light;” even as Christ did, Who suffered for sins once, that He might bring us to God. Nor is 1 John 1:7 less to the point, where he lays down that, as walking in darkness is the status of those who falsely profess Christ and do not practice the truth, we (Christians) walk in the light, as God is in the light, have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin. No doubt he says “if;” but this condition is simply if we are real, not nominal merely, in following Christ, and so not walking in darkness but having the light of life (John 8:12).

“Now these things having been thus formed, the priests enter continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high-priest alone once in the year, not without blood, which He offereth for Himself and the errors of the people, the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way of (or into) the holies hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle had yet a standing; the which [is] a parable for the present time according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices, unable as to conscience to perfect the worshipper, [being] only with meats and drinks and divers washings, ordinances of flesh imposed till time of setting right” (Heb. 9:6-10).

It will be noticed that it is the present, which the Vulgate and the A. V. alike neglected, though Beza rendered it correctly; yet the present not historical, but ethic; for the tabernacle in the wilderness is before the writer, not the temple: so we saw in chapters 3-4, and so it is here and throughout. This is evident in the early verses of the chapter, summed up in “these things having been thus formed” or prepared, not only the tabernacle but its furniture; which differed in some essential respects from the temple, for it was the figure of the millennial kingdom and rest, as the tabernacle is of the resources of grace in Christ for the wilderness and its pilgrimage. Hence the ark when set in the temple had neither the golden pot with manna therein nor Aaron's rod that budded (2 Chron. 5:10), which we find carefully named in ver. 4. With such wisdom markedly, divine was the scripture inspired in the O.T. as in the New.

Nevertheless the law, whatever shadows of heavenly things it afforded, made nothing perfect. And this is demonstrated here by the fact that the priests in their continual entrance go no farther than the first tabernacle or holy place; into the holiest only the high priest once in the year, and then not apart from blood which he offers for himself and the errors of the people. How far from the gospel which goes out to the ungodly and lost, reconciling to God all that believe in virtue of the death of His Son!

When Christ came, God was in Him reconciling the world to Himself; but Him both Jew and Gentile rejected and crucified. Under the law God did not reveal Himself, but barred even His people absolutely from His presence; for how could God, if He were dealing with them on the ground of their conduct, make them free of His presence? He dwelt in the thick darkness, and allowed the priests to approach no nearer than the holy place, the high priest alone (type of Christ) entering the holiest but once a year, and then (for he was but a type, and in fact a sinful man) with blood to offer for himself and the people's sins of ignorance. The barrier was still maintained. But now, and only by the death of Christ, is the veil rent; and the Holy Spirit signifies thereby that the way into the holy places has been and is manifested. It was the death-knell of Judaism, but the foundation of better and heavenly blessing; and as man is put to shame in it, having no part but sins, God is glorified and can thereby work freely in sovereign grace to save alike Jew and Gentile. This is precisely what He is now carrying out in the gospel.

Thus the Incarnation was God come to man in Christ; but by the cross man who believes is brought to God, and the way into the holiest is now manifested. In the incarnate Word was divine love and absolute Obedience; but the work of atonement was solely in His death. For God was not before glorified as to evil, nor was sin judged to the full, nor consequently the righteous basis laid so that God could be just in justifying the believer: to say nothing of what was of the nearest interest to Himself, the Father, raising Christ from the dead and setting Him, the glorified Man, at His own right hand on high, Head over all things to the church which is His body. Hence the notion that the Incarnation was the reconstitution of humanity is a fable opposed to and destructive of the truth: hence no less available to the rationalist, than to the Ritualist. For it is the alleged ground of blessing without Christ's sacrifice, or God's righteousness, or sin's judgment, or the triumph of grace over evil and Satan in the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Savior. But it is His death which scripture reveals as the true ground-work of redemption, though no doubt the glory of His person, true God and perfect man, gave Him the needed competency, not only to redeem sinners, but to be the Head of the new creation and indeed over all things. Only as raised from the dead and exalted in the heavenly places, is He appointed Head of all things (Ephesians Phil. 2,

Heb. 1:2.); and this, because, sin having ruined both the heirs and the inheritance, there could be no vindication of God, no adequate and everlasting deliverance for man, without the suffering of death (Heb. 2). It is only thus He became the efficacious center (John 12:24, 32). He is Son of God, and Son of Man; but all true faith stops not short of His death: else (whatever the motive) it would make light of sin and of the judgment of God. Compare John 6:35 with John 6:53-56, &c., 1 John 5:6.

So here we see (Heb. 9:8-9) that, under the law, as the way into the holiest was not manifested, so its gifts and sacrifices could not make the worshipper perfect as to conscience. Now the work, and nothing short of the work, of Christ meets both God and the worshipper, nay the darkest and most distant and defiled of sinners. “Such (these things) were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by (4) the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6). The provisions of the law, however admirable as a witness of man's sinfulness and of a coming Redeemer, were but superficial and temporal, conditioned only by “meats and drinks and divers washings” of an external sort; and consistently they touched no deeper wants than “the errors of the people” (ver. 7). They were, as here styled, “ordinances of flesh imposed till time of rectifying."

Hebrews 9:11-14

Thus the Holy Spirit pronounces the Levitical institutions, however instructive in their season, essentially provisional and temporary, adapted to man in his weakness, ignorance, and probation. Christ is the intervention of God in man, yet God's own Son, revealing Himself, and saving the lost.

As John puts it, the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ. Nor was it word only, even if this were, as it really is, God's word. God has wrought in Christ. Instead of responsible man, tried in every way, and proved failing and guilty in all, we see now by faith the Second man in heaven set down on the right hand of the throne, sin judged in a perfect sacrifice, death vanquished, Satan's power annulled, God glorified, and the way into the holiest now manifested, to the present blessedness of every believer here below. And these are and are declared to be everlasting realities, in contrast with Israel's natural and transient privileges in the past, and before the day when they too, repentant and renewed, enter by divine mercy into their portion, even Messiah and the new covenant, which shall never pass away.

“But Christ having come high priest of the good things to come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), nor yet by blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holies, having found an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and a heifer's ashes sprinkling those that are defiled sanctifieth unto the cleanness of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of the Christ, who by an eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God, cleanse your [or our] conscience from dead works to serve a living God” (Heb. 9:11-14)?

The great, sure, and plain basis of the Epistle is Christ, not reigning yet as Son of David, but arrived at His actual heavenly position. He is High priest not here below, but in the heavenly places. It is no longer a figure in the hand of mortal man on earth, but God's work of everlasting efficacy in His Son, yet man risen and ascended, by virtue of an atonement, the perfection of which God thus attested, as well as the glory of His person Who suffered to the utmost in achieving it; for sin could only thus be absolutely judged and Satan triumphed over by such a sacrifice. Yet while the blessing is fully made known to the believer now, in order to place him in immediate access to God according to the rights of Christ's glory and of redemption actually accomplished for the soul, the phraseology is purposely such as to hold out and ensure “the coming good things” for His people another day, like “the world to come” in Heb. 2, “the rest that remaineth for the people of God” in Heb. 4, “the age to come” in Heb. 6, and the implied exercise of the Melchizedek priesthood in Heb. 7, to say, no more now. They were familiar as promised in the O.T. For the Christian the direct aim is to, place him through Christ in present, known, and settled relationship with God in the holiest.

Accordingly the text runs “by the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not hand-made, that is, not of this creation.” We may make allowance for the difficulty of presenting the force of both this clause and the preceding one in Latin, which wants the definite article; but Tyndale, Cranmer, the Geneva, and the Authorized ought to have adhered to the sense. The Rhemish, singular to say,

has “the” good things to come, but “a” more ample and more perfect tabernacle: why they should have thus halted, it is hard to conceive. “The” greater and more perfect tabernacle is in contrast with the earthly one reared by human hands. High priest and sanctuary are in exact keeping. Christianity is “not of this creation” but divine and heavenly, though for believers here below; as Judaism could not rise above sinful dying man and the earth, whatever its solemn sanction or its rigid separateness. Hence it perfected nothing and could satisfy neither God when He revealed Himself, nor man when the depth of his need on the one hand and the resources of grace on the other were fully made known. “Due time,” “season of rectification,” came when Christ, rejected of man, became by His blood-shedding the ground of God's righteousness, Who thereby and forthwith proceeds to justify the believer through faith of Him. And this is here stated in terms of the Epistle to the Roman saints that the thorough identity of the truth with that set before the Hebrew confessors may be shown without argument.

There is a curious erratum (almost certainly the printer's) in the middle of Tyndale's version of Heb. 9:12—"we” entered, for “he” as it unquestionably should be. The error involves the deplorable connection of our having “founde eternal! redemcion,” an idea as remote as possible from that faithful translator's mind. Of course, no ancient reading, or version, led to it, but a mere slip of typography overlooked in revision of the proof.

The “blood of goats and calves” was a grave object-lesson for Israel in the days when God condescended to deal with the ignorant and erring by the law and a worldly sanctuary and earthly rites and a high priest compassed with infirmity like the people. Now they slight the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and are pronounced, fruit as well as root and branch, the weak and beggarly elements to which some bearing Christ's name desire to be in bondage. Now the entire system is unbelief and ignorance of Christ Who “by His own blood” entered once for all into the holies, having found eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). “For us” is the gratuitous addition of the Geneva Version, followed by the Authorized. Abstractly the statement is no more than is in substance taught elsewhere, notably and yet more forcibly in chapter 10 of this Epistle. But here it is not only uncalled for, as not so written, but improper, as going beyond the actual aim of the Holy Ghost Who is setting out the intrinsic value of the infinite sacrifice, not its application to any, which follows in its own due time and place.

It may be added that there is no good reason here to give the preposition translated “by” the mere local (10) or instrumental (12) notion of “through,” though capable of either when contextually required. But Jui may and does when needed express the circumstantial condition, as in Rom. 2:27, and elsewhere. So it is best understood here. Into the holies (the veil being now rent) He entered once for all. There He abides without change or the need of repetition, indeed contrasted with any such thing; and His own blood was not for Himself, as if He required any sacrificial means of entrance: therewith it was an eternal redemption He found.

There had been of old a provisional value attached to the Levitical offerings. “The blood of goats and bulls,” on the day of atonement, &c., had an impressive significance; so had a heifer's ashes sprinkling those that had been defiled in the wilderness (Num. 19). But if these things sanctified “unto the cleanness of the flesh,” how much more shall the blood of the Christ cleanse your [or our] conscience from dead works (as all the acts of a sinful nature must be) to serve religiously (λατρε■ειν) a living God? Only consider the Christ, glorious in Himself, in the character of His

offering, “Who by an eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God.” As He stands alone, so does that offering of Himself; and the Holy Spirit's part in it is marked here as “an Eternal Spirit": so does eternity characterize this Epistle, and so was the Christ as ever dependent on God thus, while offering Himself up without spot to bear our sins. For here it is the previous act: not ■ν■νεγκεν, but προσ■νεγκεν. Compare Heb. 9:28, where both occur and in their due relation of course.

Hebrews 9:15-17

Here the Holy Spirit reverts to Christ's mediation, but avails Himself also of the revelation of inheritance in the close of Heb. 9:15 to introduce, what was familiar to all, the allusion to a testamentary disposition or will, inasmuch as the Greek word for “covenant” had equally the sense of “testament” in ordinary usage. This accordingly serves to illustrate and confirm the all-importance of Christ's death, as the hinge of present and everlasting blessing from God, alike the end of the old covenant, and the basis of the new, with the added truth that death as a fact is essential to give validity to a will, which has no operation as long as the devisor is alive. Such is the digression by the way in Heb. 9:16-17.

“And on this account He is mediator of a new covenant, that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those that are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament [is], the testator's death must be brought in; for a testament [is] valid in case of dead persons, since it is never of force while the testator liveth” (Heb. 9:15-17).

It will be observed, that, notwithstanding the doubt cast on the rendering of “testament” in the last two verses by many eminent Christians and able scholars, there need be no hesitation in deciding for this sense, as here the sole tenable one. That “covenant” is meant everywhere else in the N.T., as in the Old, is clear from contextual requirement. The same reason of the context here excludes “covenant” and demands “testament,” but here only. As there has already been given a general view of the other occurrences throughout the later scriptures, it is not needful to repeat it. Let it suffice, without a shade of disrespect for other commentators, to examine these three verses, with what follows them immediately, and judge if there be not proof, that the meaning in either case is certain from evidence as it were on the spot, ample and convincing for every soul subject to scripture.

For as to Heb. 9:15 there ought never to have been a question that “a new covenant” is the real sense, not only because “new” is beyond controversy a reference to the prophecy of Jeremiah, who speaks of a “covenant,” and not a testament, but, without going from the same clause, because it has a “mediator.” Now a mediator was familiar to the Hebrews in connection with a “covenant.” Nobody, in any people, place, or age, heard of a mediator to a “will.” There is the further disproof in the same verse that we hear of “the first covenant,” which furnishes the reason for and explanation of “a new covenant” if there was to be redemption from the guilt and misery under the first. For the first covenant, as we are elsewhere taught, was a ministration of death and condemnation, as the new is of the Spirit and righteousness (2 Cor. 3). On every ground “testament” would be here out of place, indefensible, and misleading. “Covenant” alone satisfies every condition of the verse. Death (and what a death!) met “the transgressions that were under the first covenant,” and effected a redemption that answered to the glory of His person and the efficacy of His sacrifice. By virtue of His death Jehovah said according to the prophet (as we have it already cited and shall have it again), Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Such is

the voice of the new covenant, in contrast with the old which could only claim obedience, and on failure sentence to die. But His death having taken place, so that law's authority was established to the uttermost, grace could act freely and grant remission of sins, instead of keeping up their remembrance; yea more, it could righteously vindicate God's forbearance in the past for redemption of the transgressions “under the then legal condition, with its penalty of death for the offender. Now, on the contrary, death having come in, Christ is Mediator of a new covenant, that the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. All hangs on Christ and His efficacious death; and those that are called pay earnest heed to the glad tidings of God and await the eternal inheritance that is promised. For the blessing comes of faith, that it may be according to grace: no other way honors Christ to God's glory, or puts man in his true place.

No less determinate is the meaning of what follows in Heb. 9:16-17, the idea of the inheritance naturally suggesting a will, which comes into force by the death of him who made it. The general principle is laid down in the broadest terms; and these can only mean, without strain of known phraseology, a “testament,” not a “covenant.” “For where a testament [is], the testator's death must be brought in; for a testament [is] valid in case of dead persons, since it is never of force while the testator liveth.” Now this, which is an axiom and universally applicable to a will, is notoriously untrue of covenants in general; so much so, that it would be hard to point out a single covenant so established among men. For it would assume the necessity of every one's death who made a covenant to ensure its operation. Who ever heard of such a covenant? Yet the rendering would imply that it is true of any covenant, and of all. Hence to understand “covenant” in these verses has led many from the appropriate sense of “the testator” to substitute for “the covenanter” (here obviously impossible) “the covenanting victim,” “that which establishes the covenant,” or some equivalent phrase; a sense which appears in no writing sacred or profane, and is easily shown to be ungrammatical, especially as being inconsistent with the middle voice. Quite as great violence is done ■π■ νεκρο■ς in Heb. 9:17, which cannot express “over animals slain,” but “when men are dead,” or the like.

Now our Lord in Luke 22:29 (to say nothing of John 14:27) prepares the way for the technical term here twice given as “testator.” There He was in the act of devising; here it is in its regular form and force, though of course not that exclusively. But no Greek, if he read the sentence simply as it stands in these two verses, would hesitate to take it substantially as given in the A. and R. V. It is the equally sure sense of “covenant” in Heb. 9:15, as before also; and no less clearly is “covenant” understood in Heb. 9:18 and expressed in Heb. 9:20 (as it should be) and in Heb. 10:20. “Testament” here is through neglect of the context, which in every other place of scripture, save Heb. 9:16-17, needs “covenant.” What has a testament to do with blood-shedding? A hard and fast uniformity has its snares as well as a too great facility of change; both are to be shunned as unfaithful to the written word, which is as profound as it is simple, being God's word.

Hebrews 9:18-22

From the digression, which avails itself of a testamentary disposal, coming into force only after death, to bring out the blessing from Christ's death, we return to the far more usual notion of covenant in the verses which follow. Accordingly “blood” again resumes its place. This of course is quite foreign to the associations of a will, but most familiar to all acquainted with the ancient covenant of the law.

“Whence not even hath the first [covenant] been inaugurated without blood. For every injunction having been spoken according to law by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of the calves and the goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, This [is] the blood of the covenant which God enjoined as to you. And the tabernacle too and all the vessels of the ministry he likewise sprinkled with the blood. And almost all things are purified by blood according to the law, and apart from blood-shedding no remission taketh place” (Heb. 9:18-22).

There are here three distinct uses of blood in the Levitical economy, all of them solemn and momentous, the last of them leading the way into the fundamental blessing of the new covenant which the gospel announces to every believer.

1. The first covenant was inaugurated with blood, as we read in Ex. 24. This is not redemption, but in the strongest contrast with it. The type of redemption had been already given (Ex. 12-14) in the blood of the paschal lamb, followed by the passage of the Red Sea: the blood which sheltered from the judgment of God; and the power which thereon set the people free from their enemies destroyed forever. But now Israel far from God had accepted to stand on the condition of their own obedience, Ex. 19; and God had spoken those ten words which would put the people to the proof. Here accordingly (Ex. 24) the covenant receives its seal in blood. “And Moses took half of the blood and put it in a basin; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant which Jehovah hath made with you concerning all these words.” It was the old covenant, not the new; the law, not redemption. The blood which, as this epistle states, was sprinkled on the book and all the people, simply set forth death as the penalty of disobedience. Hence it was in no way propitiatory but penal.

2. Attention is drawn to Moses sprinkling the tabernacle also, and all the vessels of the ministry in like manner with the blood. That this is distinct from the inauguration of the law should be clear, if only from the fact that neither the tabernacle nor the vessels appertaining to it yet existed. There was of necessity this provision against the defilement of the meeting-place with God, and the vessels for service: without the sprinkling of the blood all must have contracted defilement, because a sinful people were concerned, and God was holy. And this was so true that it is added as almost a fact that with blood all things are purified according to the law. Yet it is not stated absolutely, for water was employed in some cases, fire in others; both figurative of death, and the

latter in its extreme form as divine judgment. How blessed for us is the gift of grace where judgment was felt in a perfection unknown and impossible elsewhere! “This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with water only, but with water and with blood.” He expiates as well as purifies, and both by virtue of His death. Out of His pierced side came blood and water.

3. “And apart from blood-shedding no remission taketh place.” Here we come in type to the grand truth which vindicated God in all His moral being and brings effectual blessing to guilty man if he bow to God. It is not sprinkling with blood here, but shedding of blood, without which remission cannot be. It is the efficacy of the blood shed once for all, presented to God, and bringing to man remission: the ground of divine righteousness, when human righteousness had been proved wholly at fault; the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all those that believe, rolling away every distinction, that God may bless any, as He surely does all that believe.

Hebrews 9:23-28

We come next to most important inferences from the intervention of God in Christ, His death and blood-shedding. The typical institutions of the tabernacle are judged in their true character, as man is. The most solemn and instructive shadows, which confessed sin in man and looked for mercy in God, pointed to but were absorbed in the reality that is already come in Him, Who suffered for sins on the cross, and is now risen and entered once for all into the true and heavenly sanctuary, having obtained everlasting redemption.

“[It was] necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into holy places made with hand, figures of the true, but into heaven itself now to appear before (to be shown to) the face of God for us; nor that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy places year by year with blood of others: else he must have often suffered since [the] world's foundation. But now once at a consummation of the ages he hath been manifested for putting away of sin by his sacrifice. And inasmuch as it is laid up for man once to die, and after this judgment, so Christ also, having been once offered to bear [the] sins of many, shall a second time appear apart from sin to those that await him for salvation” (Heb. 9:23-27).

When God gave Israel under law a tabernacle of witness, it was of necessity, unless He would compromise His holiness, that the need of sacrifice should be everywhere impressed. Not only could not the Israelite approach God without a burnt offering, even if he needed no sin offering, but the earthly copies of the heavenly originals, which Moses saw on high and followed in the construction of the sanctuary and its contents, required purification. Yet the blood of earthly victims was but formal. It could not purge the conscience, only the flesh. Its purification was for a time and of an external character. It was therefore provisional at best, and could satisfy neither God nor conscience awakened to see sins in His light. Hence the veil subsisted, which signified that man could not draw near to God. But the death of Christ rent the veil, which signifies that the believer is free and invited to draw near boldly; for, instead of his sins, the blood of Christ is before God.

This changes everything, not yet to sight as it will be when Christ returns in power and glory, but to faith even now and forever. For the everlasting effect of God's work in Christ is a cardinal truth in this Epistle, as also is our association with Him on high. Hence there is defilement as the effect on that sanctuary of our connection with it whilst we are passing through the wilderness. Every need is met by the blood of Christ, which purified the sanctuary as completely as it cleanses us from all sin. Whatever sin or Satan could do to sully has been counteracted by sacrifices better than creatures ever offered. And Christ entered heaven itself to be presented manifestly to the face of God on our behalf. There He is for us before God in all the efficacy of His work, in all the acceptance of His person. In Him God came out to replace shadows of good things, and alas! realities of evil, by His own work of redemption; and now in Him man is gone within the holiest. “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him” (John 13:31); as our Lord added, “God shall glorify Him in Himself, and shall glorify Him immediately.” This was done, and is true

ever since His ascension, instead of being deferred to the day when His world-kingdom shall come, as come it will in due time (Rev. 11:15). Such is our unchanging representative in the presence of God.

Mark also the pointed contrast with Jewish sacrifice in Heb. 9:25-26. Repetition was the inevitable fact even in their weightiest rites, as on the great day of atonement. It is the blessed truth of the gospel that Christ's one offering is complete and everlasting in its effect for every one that believes. Indeed the Holy Spirit deigns to show the impossibility of a repeated offering on His part, because it would also involve His often suffering. Even the feeble believers who crave a fresh work for each fresh failure must resent as intolerable all thought of His suffering again. Anything of repetition in His case is therefore a merely natural and unbelieving sentiment. The essence of the truth of His work is that now once at a consummation of the ages He has been manifested for putting away of sin by His sacrifice.

“In the end of the world” is surely as misleading as unwarrantable. All the older English versions are vague, if not precisely alike. Wiclif and the Rhemish would have done better if they had adhered yet more closely to the Vulgate; though it is pretty clear that Jerome did not understand the sense more than they. The Revisers have rightly given “of the ages.” These ages were the dispensations in which God had been putting to the proof sinful man, who had been tried in every possible way, and failed in each and all. There had been the promises, the law, the prophets, the kings, &c. God had sought fruit; but instead of paying His dues, His servants had received rebuff, mockery, and murder. Last of all He sent His Son. This gave occasion to a worse iniquity. Not only did men fail in duty, and spurn His envoys in contempt of Himself; they rejected the Christ of God, they turned God in His person out of the world, they crucified Him who was not only their own Messiah, but divine love in Him, God in Him, reconciling the world, not imputing their trespasses.

On that very cross where man put the Lord Jesus, God by Him wrought redemption. His love rose above the world's enmity, and now sends the glad tidings of His grace to His enemies: such is the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, that it can bring to God the foulest without spot or stain. Yet so much the more ruinous will it be for those that believe not. Far better to be a heathen that never heard the gospel than to be a christened man neglecting so great salvation. The day will come when the new heavens and new earth will display the reconciling power of Christ's sacrifice, for every trace of sin will then have vanished from the world. And this is the full force of John 1:29, as of our Heb. 9:26 also. Yet the gospel meanwhile is the message of God to any; and there is no difference of Jew or Greek, for the same Lord of all is rich toward all that call upon Him. The more you hate your sins, the better for your soul if you are at the feet of Jesus. The Holy Spirit in quickening discovers to us our exceeding evil, where previously we may have deceived ourselves and gone on hard or haughty. But through the sacrifice of Christ God can afford, and loves, to send forgiveness commensurate with His person and work. It is well to judge oneself for one's sins; but God will act according to His estimate of Christ's death for us.

The last verse is little understood in general. There is a striking contrast between “men” as such and believers. Hence “judgment” is necessarily to be taken as destruction to the false hopes of nature. Compare John 5:22-29, where it will be apparent that anarthrous or not makes no difference in respect of its unutterable solemnity to the unbeliever. Not to see the opposition between “men” as they are now naturally, and “those that await Him” is to be wholly unintelligent of

the context. For it sets the portion of “men,” with death and judgment before them, in the most forcible comparison with those who have Christ once for all offered to bear the sins of many, and about to appear a second time apart from sin to those that await Him for salvation.

It is untrue that believers are all to die. 1 Cor. 15:51 explicitly contradicts it; and 1 Thess. 4, 2 Cor. 5, imply the reverse. “We shall not all sleep.” Equally certain is it that the believer does not come into “judgment” (John 5:24), where also the word is anarthrous, as the meaning indeed requires in both scriptures. The believer shall be manifested, and give account, but come into judgment of no kind whatever. His resurrection, if he die instead of being alive and changed, is “of life,” not “of judgment” like that of the wicked. So the prayer of Psa. 143:2 expresses far more of truth than these low traditional views which confound men as such with believers that await the Lord apart from sin for salvation. Christ's one offering at His first advent was to bear the sins of many, i.e. of the believers. Hence when He comes a second time, He has no more to do with sin, having already been a sacrifice for but apart from it. He shall appear to those that await Him, solely His own, and not mankind indiscriminately, not for judgment but for salvation, which is in contrast with it, as distinctly as eternal life is in John 5.

Hebrews 10:1-4

The grand distinction between the legal economy and Christianity was set forth luminously in Heb. 9, with the facts which made the contrast clear, and above all His person, work, and place Who closed the one and introduced the other. In the first half of Heb. 10, we have the truth triumphantly applied to the conscience in order to our enjoying the presence of God where Christ is gone.

“For the law, having a shadow of the coming good things, not the image itself of the things, with the same sacrifices which year by year they offer in perpetuity, can never perfect those that approach: else would they not have ceased being offered, because that those who serve, having been once purified, would have no more conscience of sins? But in them [is] a recalling to mind of sins year by year; for [it is] impossible that blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 1-4).

The law had a shadow, and but a shadow, of the coming good things, not the very image. There is even contrast in what is most characteristic. The law made nothing perfect. The work of Christ as now made known perfects the believer, not of course in his state or conduct, but in his standing before God. It was never so under the law. People or individuals, all they got was temporary relief. Finality they had none. They had to offer the same sacrifices: the greatest year by year, the lesser as need arose from day to day, they had to offer without a break. It was only provisional, at best a witness of good to come. But now in Christ and His work the best is come. The Second Man is the Last Adam. None shall rival, still less supersede, Him; and the efficacy of His work is in keeping with the perfection of His person. The constant repetition of the old sacrifices tells the tale of their intrinsic shortcomings. Christ's own sacrifice bespeaks its everlasting worth. Of old, sins if renewed, as they were, demanded a fresh offering. Where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sins; and this is only and precisely true, now that Christ has been once offered. He obtained eternal redemption; for it the believer does not await, like Israel, the day of His appearing. While He is still on high, the Holy Spirit is sent down; and he that believes the gospel, purified in his conscience before Him, beholds Him on the right hand of God. No need for Him to offer Himself again; else must He often suffer. But this were an insult alike to Christ and to God, to the Spirit intolerable. Where faith is, God sees, not the believer's sins, but the blood which blots them out forever. There is no renewal, because he has been once purified and has no more conscience of sins.

But men in Christendom have so receded from the gospel of salvation to a mingled system of half-law and half-gospel, that we rarely hear this truth proclaimed, this privilege enjoyed. Even saints on either hand wonder at the sound. Right well they know when awakened that the Spirit wrought by the word and laid their sins heavily on their conscience; and they cried to God in distress of soul, and called on the Lord—surely not in vain. Still their experience has been very like the saints of old, seeking fresh recourse to His blood on every fresh occasion of need. To use the truth before us, they have still a conscience of sins. They believe in Christ, but do not bow to the efficacy of His work. Of old it could not be otherwise, for it was not yet accomplished. Even the

most Evangelical of prophets, as he is called, was not given to say more than “My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.” But now in the gospel, God's righteousness is revealed (Rom. 1), and believers receive the end of their faith, salvation of souls, not yet of bodies, but of souls by a work divinely perfect, which “perfects those that approach.” How could it be less? God Himself could not add to the perfecting virtue of Christ's blood. By Christ “all that believe are justified from all things,” from which none could be by the law of Moses. It will be known better, enjoyed fully, by the saints in heaven; but God will never estimate it more highly on our account than He declares already to us; and faith now rests on His word. Without Christ's blood it were impenitent and obdurate presumption to pretend to “no more conscience of sins.” It is putting shame on His work for one who believes on Him to doubt that God beholds him washed in the blood that purifies from every sin. The only true title to believe that any are canceled ought to assure one that all are gone.

How sad it is that those in Christendom who have least pity for the poor guilty Jews are themselves in their faith more Jewish than Christian! Let them test themselves by this capital truth of the gospel. Do they draw near as worshippers once purified having no more conscience of sins? Is this the ground they take in private and in public, in their prayers and in their praises? Do they believe that their guilt is quite gone and forever by Christ's sacrifice? Read how the inspiring Spirit lays bare the total failure of the Levitical sacrifices, “In them is a recalling to mind of sins year by year;” and the reason is no less evident, “for it is not possible that blood of bulls and goats should take may sins.” Christ's work is God's intervention to do away with the believer's guilt. This He has done once and forever. Every wrong deed, word, or feeling calls for humiliation on the Christian's part, as other scriptures show; but no scripture enfeebles the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice for him that believes. No doubt it is a sin which exposes to other and all sins; as it may end in total ruin and prove that the doubter never was born of God.

Hebrews 10:5-7

Intrinsic and everlasting value there was not nor could be in those creature sacrifices, which, far from purging guilt effectually, testified by their necessary repetition that the sins were still there and ever coming into remembrance before God. But He had in His purpose a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they; yea, in the midst of the Levitical system He had expressed His dissatisfaction with what fell so short of His own nature and of His people's need. All really depended on One to come, not the first man but the Second.

“Wherefore, when he entereth into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for Me; in whole burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin thou tookest no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I am come, in heading (or chapter) of a book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:5-7).

It was His not only to make known, but to effectuate the will of God. That which had been set out previously was suited to man's estate, partial, earthly, and temporary. From the first God had held out the sure prospect of what was divine and enduring, yet in man and alone perfect for man. This unbelief never saw, because man's will was now opposed to God, dreaded His judgment, believed not His grace, and sought self-satisfaction. But faith looked to Christ and, in the sense of sin and ruin, found rest nowhere else. And when He enters into the world, His eye single, His whole body full of light, according to Psa. 40 He speaks, whatever the cost to Himself; and it cost Him everything. He recognizes that His work, itself the most stupendous of sacrifices, must take the place of those that God had provisionally instituted; more than accomplishing each of them, but superseding them all, because perfection only now was found in it. Peace (or thank-) offerings did not meet God's will any more than oblations, or meal offerings: instead of either He prepared a body for His Son, the Messiah. This exactly suits the revealed facts of the Incarnation. He was to come by the woman, more fully man thus than Adam, but conceived of the Holy Spirit, as was neither Adam nor any other: so truly did God fit a body for the Son, that even in human nature He alone should be the Holy One of God. Nor otherwise would it have suited the Son, either as the constant object of the Father's delight all through the days of His flesh, as the adequate vessel of the Holy Spirit's power in service, or as the sin offering at last. How different from us, who even when born of God are anointed only as under the efficacy of His blood! His body was the temple of God without blood.

Dr. Randolph, unless memory fail me, in his elaborate examination of quotations from the O. T. in the New, gives up the attempt to account for the change in the LXX from the Hebrew form of the last clause in ver. 5; and so does the late Dean Alford “leave the difficulty an unsolved one.” There is no sufficient reason to suppose a misreading gave rise to that Greek version, with Abp. Ussher (vii. 517), followed by Ernesti, Michaelis, Semler, &c., down to Bleek in our day. That the Epistle to the Hebrews adopts it, not as the literal rendering but as the substantial sense, is of deep instruction and interest; and this has commended itself to the most reverent and competent readers to the present time. The allusion is neither to Ex. 21:6, nor to Isa. 1:5: Psa. 40:6 (7) is

distinct from both, though all three center in the Messiah. (1) The Holy Spirit in the Psalm refers to the assumption of human nature in a condition wholly different from fallen man, even from His virgin mother. Of this the figure of “ears digged,” not merely opened or bored, is the striking expression. Other ears were deaf through sin; His only God dug for Him, as He only ever heard and obeyed, living thus “not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” “A body didst thou prepare for Me” well answered to that, and gives the meaning which all might not so easily draw from the Hebrew phrase. (2) Then comes the application of the prophet who speaks of the Messiah morning by morning wakened to hear. “The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear.” It is not alone holy humanity given Him at the outset, but His habit of daily dependence as “the Servant.” (3) The type in the law completes so far; for this conveys that at the end of faithful service, when He might have gone out free, He, in love to His master, His wife, and His children, submits to have His ear “bored” through with an awl, as the sign of serving forever. It is His death for the glory of God, and the life and blessing of all that believe. Thus consistency marks all, while each is distinct; and our text refers to the divine preparation of a body for Messiah, suited for His work.

“In whole burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin thou tookest no pleasure.” The last words are still the energetic rendering of the Septuagint, not an exact reflection of the Hebrew, Thou didst not ask. Men easily satisfied themselves and trusted that God was satisfied with offerings of free will when they prospered, and no flagrant evil required sacrifices for sin. But God ever looked on for His will to be done—the last thing possible to the first man, fallen as he is, and far above him even when unfallen. For this appeared the One Who was alike Son of God and Son of Man according to what was written in a roll familiar to the Father and the Son. It was a purpose indeed before man or the world existed, the fruit of which will abide in the new heaven and new earth, when time melts into eternity for weal and woe.

“Then said I, Lo, I am come (in heading of a book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

Such was the place Christ took here below. Adam, surrounded by all that was very good, failed utterly, even when tried by the slenderest test. The race had not even the wish nor yet the notion. Self-will characterized all nations, most strongly (perhaps because we know them best) Greeks and Latins. All sinned; these boldly: nothing more preposterous in the eyes of either than to give up one's own will, to do only God's. And what can we say of English, French, Germans, &c., since Christ marked out that sole path of perfectness for man here below? Ah, the Second man is also the Last Adam. Not that many, many thousands, have not followed His steps in faith and love by Him Who strengthened and directed them; but how feebly and afar off, even those nearest! For, as was the glory of His person, such was His devotedness, whatever the trial. Though He was Son, yet learned He obedience (previously and absolutely new to Him as truly divine) by the things which He suffered. Being in the form of God He counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman, made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. Others had done miracles; to His own He promised works greater than even He had done, because He went to the Father; but what man ever obeyed as He? Who, even as a saint, could say like Him that he had never done his own will? He, and He only, was entitled to say, “Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God.”

As the person was thus glorious, the body fitted as only God could fit by a miracle of holy character and power, we shall find that the end was worthy of that wondrous path, whereon the Spirit of God descended as a dove and came upon Him, and the Father's voice out of the heavens at length saw meet to break His hitherto ineffable silence with the words, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I found My good pleasure.” Freely He had come to glorify His Father; but when He is come, He keeps the position of man unswervingly to do the will of God.

Hebrews 10:8-14

Attention is drawn to the wondrous fact in the unseen realm, disclosed of old, now set before us with emphasis, where the Son proffers Himself at all cost to effect, for God's glory and for man's blessing, what was wholly beyond the creature. Thus only could purpose and obedience meet in Him Who deigned to take manhood, to save the fallen by the sacrifice of Himself, and glorify God in all respects. “Saying above, sacrifice and offering and whole burnt offering and sacrifice for sin thou wouldest not, neither tookest pleasure in (such as are offered according to law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do Thy will. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second; by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth day by day ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, such as can never take away sins. But He, when He offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down continuously at God's right hand, henceforth waiting till His enemies be set as a footstool of His feet. For by one offering hath He perfected continuously the sanctified” (Heb. 10:8-14).

Even in the O.T. enough was said to intimate the divine estimate of the sacrificial system. It kept up the wholesome acknowledgment of man's need and guilt. The remembrance of sins never actually effaced the witness of God ready to accept, but of creature offerings altogether inadequate. It pointed to One Who, in the body prepared for Him alone, could and would do the will of God, not an angel but a man, though infinitely more. Law was wholly unavailing to glorify God on the one hand, and to deliver man on the other. Only the Son of God could do both; and He on this account becoming not only man, the woman's Seed, but in grace obedient up to death (which had otherwise no claim whatever on Him), a sacrificial death for sin, not His own in the least degree but ours solely; and this after a life of unswerving faithfulness and absolute devotion to His Father's will and glory in a world of sin, sorrow, and suffering.

Hebrews 10:8 sums up the result in a few pregnant words: “He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.” The sacrifice of Christ was alike the consummation and the close of the Levitical economy. It was no longer of man required, but God's will done perfectly; so that He could in virtue of it bless weak, failing, guilty man, if he believed, according to all the love of His heart. For this He had waited—oh! how long. God's will was now done. How different from the will of man in pride or vanity, in violence or corruption, as the race had done since Adam! This wrought curse and ruin; that, blessing without measure or end; and worthily. For, having done the will of God in a life of goodness, He suffered notably all through life but above all in His death, as from man for God, so from God for man at last crowning all, when for us made sin that we who believe might become God's righteousness in Him Between the Father and the Son it was settled ere man or time began; in due time, when all was moral wreck and man had failed under all circumstances, after every trial on God's part among the chosen people as outside them, He became man to do it, and He did it at all cost to perfection, glorifying God withal in that sacrifice of Himself which was to abolish sin forever. The highest angel is but a servant; the Son became one. As written elsewhere, He emptied Himself, having taken a bondman's form, being come in likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient up to death, yea death of the

cross. To the Christian the religion of signs is forever gone.

Thus did He establish God's will, “by the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all” (ver. 10). Once God set apart Israel to Himself after a fleshly sort, which involved in it nothing spiritual, though the figure of the mortification of the flesh. Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles previously, have been and are set apart through that body offered up once for all; and it is in virtue of God's will by means of Jesus offered up that we are thus sanctified. Men as such have been, and been proved, utterly sinful. Later in the Epistle (Heb. 12:14) we are exhorted to practical holiness, the holiness apart from which none shall see the Lord. But here it is a divine operation already accomplished in the Christian, the effect of which abides; for it is once for all, like that offering which supersedes all others and can never be repeated. God rests in all its completeness and perfection, and sanctifies us accordingly.

But there is yet more, which calls for a further contrast with Judaism. “And every priest standeth day by day ministering, and offering often the same sacrifices, such as can never take away sins; but He, when He offered one sacrifice for sins, continuously sat down at God's right hand, henceforth waiting till His enemies be set as a footstool of His feet. For by one offering hath He perfected continuously the sanctified” (Heb. 10:11-14). The immeasurable superiority of Christ's sacrifice is here demonstrated in the clearest way. The Jewish priest “standeth,” being necessarily called to constant readiness of service day by day, and offering often the same sacrifices, because they were intrinsically ineffectual and needed habitual repetition. Not so the Saviour: His one sacrifice for sins is so efficacious that He took His seat in perpetuity at God's right hand. “It is finished.” The will of God as to this is done. Christ offered up Himself, God has accepted it, the believer is perfectly blessed thereby. It is once for all, and attested by His unbroken sitting at God's right hand, whence He will rise by-and-by to execute judgment when God gives the word to deal with His enemies. There meanwhile He sits, having done and suffered all for His friends, once His foes but now believing in Him. And the reason assigned for His continuous seat there is full of blessing for us: “For by one offering hath he perfected continuously the sanctified.”

It is not enough then to assure the Christian that he has been sanctified or set apart by Christ's effectual offering once for all, though this surely is immense in itself. By the same one offering has He perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. Perfected Himself as risen and glorified, He has perfected those set apart to God. Both the perfecting here and the sanctification in Heb. 10:10 are completed actions, the effect of which does not pass away. They err who teach that either is a process going on. Both are blessed effects of Christ's offering, to which nothing can be added for their end. Nor is this at all weakened, as some argue, from the form of “the sanctified” in Heb. 10:14; because this expresses the class in an abstract way, not at all the time: if it did, it would contradict the form of the statement in Heb. 10:10, which does express time, and declares that we enjoy the settled result of God's having thus set us apart. Such a contradiction is not, and would not be, in the inspired word. Our bodies of course await the glorious change at Christ's coming again. Meanwhile we ourselves, our souls, are perfected without a break through the work Christ has done for us. The Father and the Son could do no more for our sins than is already accomplished in the sacrifice of Jesus, and revealed to our faith in the written word. There is growth, there ought to be advance, and there may be declension, in holiness; but this is not the question here, which treats of the Christian standing through Christ's offering. And this admits of no degrees. It is always perfect for every believer.

Hebrews 10:15-25

We have had the will of God as the source of our salvation, and the Saviour's work as the efficacious means. There now follows the no less indispensable witness of the Holy Spirit as the unfailing power of bringing our souls into the possession and knowledge of the blessing. Thus each person of the Godhead has His appropriate place and all contribute to this end as worthy of God, as needed by man.

“And the Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us; for after He hath said, This [is] the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, saith Jehovah. Giving My laws, on their hearts and on their mind I will write them; and their sins and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more. Now where remission of these is, [there is] no more an offering for sin” (Heb. 10:15-18).

The dignity of Him Who testifies is an essential part of the boon conferred on the Christian. None less than a divine person was in accordance with the purpose of God or the accomplisher of His work, His own Son, for Whom, with whatever imperfect light, all saints had waited from the first. Now that His will was done by Christ to the glory of the Father, a competent and suited witness was requisite; and this was no other than the Holy Spirit Who ever gave energy to what God took in hand. Nor was it less imperative if we were to receive and to enjoy that certainty of acceptance with God which is essential to Christian communion, worship, and walk. Faith had ever been the condition of all that pleased God in men; now that Christ is in heaven, it has a pre-eminent value: we walk by faith, not by sight. But faith is only another way of expressing divine certainty. It receives on His word what He reveals.

It is interesting also to observe how carefully scripture avoids the error of assuming that the new covenant expresses our standing. The blood of it is shed; the spiritual blessedness of it is ours who believe. But its strict and full import awaits the house of Israel and the house of Judah at a future day, as we saw in Heb. 8. Then all its terms will be verified; not only what the heart needs, and the mind, with full pardon, its principle, though neither has yet bowed to the Messiah. But as His work is done and accepted, so the Spirit attests the full remission of sins in His name: God will remember them no more for those that believe. And where this remission is, there is no more an offering for sin. Such is Christianity in contrast with Judaism. It is founded on Christ's sacrifice which has so completely taken away the sins of believers that no offering for them remains.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh; and [having] a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering, for He is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another for provoking into love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as [is] customary for some, but encouraging, and so much the more as ye see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:19-25).

But Christ's work avails much more. It gives present entrance into the holies. What took away our sins rent the veil; and those who believe are invited and free of the innermost sanctuary even now. Boldness to enter there on any pretension of our love or holiness, of nature or even divine ordinance, would be mere and shameless presumption. Here it is calmly claimed for Christians, who are exhorted in the strongest terms to approach by faith God's presence without a doubt or a cloud, now that their sins are gone. Boldness to enter there is due to the blood of Jesus. Only unbelief hinders. It is a new and living way which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh: We honor Him by using it in the fullest confidence that it pleases God.

Nor this only: we have a great Priest over the house of God. His is the title. He is Son over God's house, which even Moses was not, but only a servant in it; and His house are we if we hold fast our boldness instead of shirking or giving it up. In heaven itself Christ now appears before the face of God for us, who through His sacrifice have no more conscience of sins, as He there is the proof that we are perfected unbrokenly. He is above to maintain us, spite of our weakness and exposure here, according to the cleansing of His blood and the nearness it confers.

Hence we are told to “approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Never could we deserve such a privilege. His glory and His work alone entitle us; but they do so completely; and we honor Him and appreciate the grace of God by approaching not with fear or hesitation but with a true heart in full assurance of faith. God Himself has wrought by His Son and in the Spirit that we might be fully blessed even here and enjoy already this access to Himself in the sanctuary. What an indignity tradition puts on every person of the Godhead alike, on the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, when it drags souls back to the dread and distance of Judaism! For there is no humility so genuine as that which is the fruit of faith, sees itself so unworthy as to deserve only condemnation, and bows in everlasting gratitude to God and the Lamb, Whom the Holy Spirit teaches us to be worth all our thoughts and affections, our worship and service.

The figures employed are drawn from Levitical institutions, but express a settled condition which far transcends what could be then: “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water.” The sons of Aaron outwardly were washed and sprinkled for priestly service. Elsewhere we find provision for failure, as in John 13 and 1 John 2:1; here we have only the fundamental ground which abides. This it was the more necessary to insist on, as in an epistle for those who had been Jews ever used to failure and provision for it, to whom the new and living way was unknown with its eternal and fullest blessings. And now souls in Christendom need to be weaned from those Jewish elements to which they have been so long in bondage. Even Christians generally need the truth of the gospel to deliver them from human thoughts and ways. When they are established in grace, other wants claim their place.

Again, the word is, “Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering,” that is, without its wavering, not through our strength or courage, but “for He is faithful that promised.” Power of continuance is in looking to and for Christ. In the A. V. of verse 23 “faith” is a strange if not unaccountable mistake. “Hope” is here right, as “faith” in verse 22.

Then comes the call to “consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.” When set right before God as to the present and the future, we are in a condition and are exhorted to seek the good one of another. And, in order to promote the affection and deeds worthy of Christians, it is important to hear the caution, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is

customary for some, but encouraging." For this is well, rather than an abjuratory tone, which provokes neither to love nor to good works. Our gathering together is of great moment: none can neglect it without snare and loss.

As responsibility is here in view, it is "the day" or appearing of the Lord that follows, when our fidelity or the lack of it will be manifested. Conscience should be the more in exercise, because of the grace wherein we stand; but flesh would take advantage of grace for carelessness. The assembly has its serious place and claim according to God's word, as well as the soul. Difficulties increase, as the day approaches; but His word is authoritative for such as fear Him, and never misleads where the eye is simple. The Holy Spirit effects this by directing us to Christ. Then scripture tells on the heart as well as on the conscience; the new man answers to the word of the Lord, and lives in obedience.

Hebrews 10:26-31

There follows a most solemn warning, as much in keeping with the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, as that given in Heb. 6. with the displayed power of the Holy Spirit in honor of His person. To abandon Him or His work is fatal; and that is the question in both warnings, not personal failure, or practical inconsistency within or without, however grievous and inexcusable, but apostacy from the power of the Spirit to forms or from the only efficacious work of the Saviour to indulge in sin willfully and habitually. Either is to prove oneself the enemy of God's grace and truth, though the two paths may diverge ever so widely. But faith, and the faith, are alike abjured, whether for religious vanities or for reckless unholiness. It is man in both, fallen man, preferred, God and His Son rejected, however seemingly far apart as the poles. Both paths of ruin, not without votaries in apostolic days, are at the present crowded, and ever increasingly.

“For if we are sinning willfully after we received the full knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fierceness of fire about to devour the adversaries. If one set at naught Moses' law, he dieth without compassion on [evidence of] two or three witnesses: of how much worse punishment, think ye, shall he be thought deserving that trod down the Son of God, and counted common the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that said, To Me [belongeth] vengeance, I will requite, saith Jehovah; and again, Jehovah will judge His people. A fearful thing [it is] to fall into a living God's hands” (Heb. 10:26-31).

It is a serious consideration to read “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the custom of some is” in such proximity to apostacy. But so it is. The habit is not only unworthy of Christians, but perilous. It is to neglect, if not to despise, one of the greatest means of edification and comfort. It is indifference to the fellowship of saints. It is independence and slight of His presence Who not only loves us, but is pleased to be in our midst for blessing ever fresh and growing. Are these privileges of little account in opened eyes and to ears that hear? Then weigh what follows in the light of “the day drawing nigh,” when motives as well as ways will be laid bare. Little as the beginning seems to some; it is the beginning of a great and possibly fatal evil. “For if we are sinning willingly after we received the full knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.” Giving up any assemblage which has the Lord's sanction for ease, or private reasons which are not imperative duty, may embolden to give up many, nay, all, and so end in callous contempt and fleshly self-indulgence.

It might seem incredible, did we not know as a fact, how many unestablished young get worried by the enemy when they find themselves so far below the standard of Christ, and particularly when through unwatchfulness they have found themselves guilty of sin. But their state is wholly in contrast with the apostate boldness described in this chapter as well as in Heb. 6. There is nothing really in common. The apostate is as self-complacent as haughty toward Christ, and hates the truth the more because he once professed it. The tried and shaken believer condemns himself unsparingly and desires above all things fidelity to Christ. Confidence in His grace through a fuller

sense of His work in judgment of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:1-4), not remission of sins only, is the great remedy so little appreciated generally, as well as His advocacy in case of special failure (1 John 2:1-2).

The reader should observe that “sinning” in Heb. 10:26 is the present participle and does not relate to an act or acts of evil (as in the last text referred to), but to the habitual or continuous habit of the person. And this is strongly pointed out in a Greek Scholiast which Matthaei quotes. It supposes souls not born of God; which is in no way inconsistent with “we” or with having received objective knowledge, however accurate, full, or certain. On the contrary, both here and in 2 Peter 2:20, this is expressly allowed to be within the range of flesh's capacity: the lesson which is lost for all that assume, like Alford, that this can only be by those who are real possessors of life or spiritual grace. Hence it is a plain and instructive fact that not a word in any of those scriptures implies that they were begotten of God. They were mere professors of Christ, never children of God; and they might have had the highest external privileges of the Spirit and powers of the age to come (cf. Matt. 7:21-23), which only aggravated their defection from the Lord, but in no way intimated, as Delitzsch fancied, “a living believing knowledge of it [the truth] which laid hold of a man and fused him into union with itself.” It is a gross error that thus ver. 29 becomes unintelligible. Those who speak so only prove how far they themselves were from a sound intelligence of scripture as to God or man. Another form of misunderstanding appeared of old in the Novatian controversy from misuse of baptism; for which the curious reader may consult of the Greeks Chrysostom and of the Latins Augustine, as well as later writers, or the still lower because more human school of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

It is clear that, abandoning Christ, they forfeited sacrifice for sins, His only being effectual, and writing death even on what had pointed to His. There remained therefore for such as renounced Him “a certain expectation of judgment and fierceness (or heat) of fire about to devour the adversaries,” into which apostates necessarily pass. And this is confirmed from God's dealings in the past, allowing for the vast superiority of gospel over law. If one set at naught Moses' law and dies apart from compassionate feelings, in case of two or three witnesses, of how much worse punishment, think ye, shall he deserve that trampled down the Son of God, and counted common the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, and insulted the Spirit of grace? One cannot conceive thoughts or words more energetic, and a doom implied more awful. And so it must be: for a blessing spurned, after being received on the fullest proof and the surest attestation, becomes the measure of the guilt of abjuring it. As in ver. 26 we saw the eagerness of some to infer the defectibility of grace and the denial of eternal life, so here we have to face the straits of pious men trembling for the truth sacred and dear to their hearts, and conceiving strange evasions, instead of trusting absolutely God's word. Thus Dr. John Lightfoot, followed by Guyse, &c., argues that Christ was sanctified by blood! (Heb. 10:29), as others refer the sanctification in question to the covenant! Here again the contending parties overlook that the Epistle to the Hebrews contemplates, as does 1 Corinthians, Christian profession; which ought to be real by divine grace, but may be only external, and thus admits of a “sanctification” not necessarily inward.

The citation of Deut. 32:35 ought to strike those who question the apostle's hand; because it differs from both the Hebrew original and the Sept. version, and is identical with Rom. 12:19.

Hebrews 10:32-39

There evidently had been ground for the extreme warning given us in chapter 6 also; and of course the danger of apostacy is always real among those who name the Lord's name. Only those who become partakers of divine nature by grace surmount the difficulties and overcome the world through faith. Yet here as before the actually bright side is not forgotten, but enlarged in for the comfort of those who held fast.

"But call to remembrance the former days in which, when enlightened, ye endured much conflict of sufferings, partly being made a spectacle by both reproaches and afflictions, and partly also having become partakers with those thus conversant. For ye both sympathized with those in bonds, and accepted with joy the plundering of your goods, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better substance and abiding. Cast not away therefore your confidence, since it (the which) hath great recompense. For of endurance ye have need, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a very little while he that cometh will be come and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we have no shrinking back unto perdition, but faith unto soul winning" (verses 32-39).

Relaxation is ever a danger for soldiers when on service, as Christians always are here below; and those who had been Jews were exposed to it as much at least as Gentile brethren, which we may see for those last in 1 Cor. 4 and 15. The Hebrew believers had begun well; they are here urged to continue enduring the fierce conflict of the enemy. All the old English versions save that of Rheims (1552) narrow their sympathy according to the Text. Rec. to the bonds of him who now wrote; but the better reading seems to be "the prisoners" i.e. of the Lord in general. To some of feeble faith this is no small trial; to others the plunder of their property. These saints had shone in both respects. "In heaven" appears to be a copyist's addition, as is "in" (■ν) just before. Still the great guard is against casting away their confidence or boldness of soul, the root within of outward suffering as of service. Patient endurance is needed as ever, of which the love of Christ is the spring, glory with Him the cheer along the road, where the will of God is for us to do, as it was done by Him perfectly. The recompense assured is inseparable from His advent; which here as elsewhere is kept immediately before the Christian.

The application of Habakkuk's words is modified in accordance with our hope by the same divine Spirit Who inspired the prophet. "For the vision is for a time, and it shall shoot forth at the end, and not in vain: though he should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely be come and will not delay." So runs Hab. 2:3 in the Sept. Christ's first coming and work give occasion for the beautiful and true modification in our paraphrase, while the prophecy abides in all its undiminished force for those who received Him, and others like them up to the end. For the Christian the known person of Christ shines; He is all. Death is in no sense our hope, but the coming of the Bridegroom, not the mere fulfillment of the vision. If we depart to be with Him meanwhile, it is far better than remaining here absent from the Lord. Present, or absent, we are still waiting, as He is, Who will surely be come and not tarry. Times and seasons have do with "the day of the Lord," when execution of

divine judgment comes on the world, not on the dead yet, but the quick. “The coming or presence of the Lord,” as the hope of the heavenly saints, is altogether independent of the revelation of earthly events, as it is before their accomplishment; and therefore is that hope precisely the same for us now as for those in apostolic times.

Christendom fell away, though never so much as in the last century and half, into the dream of the church triumphant, not suffering, and of a worldwide victory for the gospel during the Lord's absence. All distinctive truth and heavenly hope are surrendered by an error as stupendous for principle as for practice. For it levels the N. T. to the footing of the O.T., and obscures, where it does not destroy, the characteristic force of both. The result for thoughtful minds, we say not for believers, is an enormous impulse given, both to superstition, which in its blindness seeks to amalgamate Judaism and Christianity, and to rationalism, which has no faith in the word of God, and no divinely given perception of either, as Christ is little to both.

But the language of the prophet in the verse (4) that follows is also turned to suited and serious use: “It he should draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him; but the just one shall live by faith in (of) me.” It is plain that in this epistle the order is adapted to the object in hand, which is not to enforce justification by faith as in Rom. 1:17, nor to set aside the interpolation of the law in opposition to grace as in Gal. 3:11, but to insist on faith as the power of life, and this too practically, as in all else: of which the chapter that follows is the weighty and interesting illustration.

If the true reading here is, as it appears to be on adequate authority, “my just (or righteous) one,” it is excellent sense, as testifying God's appreciation of the one who walked in faith and righteousness—of the power of his life. In contrast is “his soul which is lifted up,” instead of dependent on God and His word. Like Cain, there was no uprightness in him, but evil works and hatred, the end of which is drawing back to perdition: nothing more offensive to God. The notion for which Delitzsch very improperly contended, that “thy righteous one” is the necessary subject of the sorrowful supposition that here follows, is quite unfounded, as ought to have been plain from verse 39 which encourages every believer. Never does the Holy Spirit lead such an one to a doubt; but many a professor does draw back to his ruin. W. K.

Chapter 136

I That Speak Unto Thee Am He

John 4:26

Now that the conscience of the Samaritan was reached and in exercise before God, the grace of the Savior was not in vain for her heart. She had listened to words that brought home to her unmistakably the love of God, whereof His Son was at once the witness and the fullness. One thing more she needed, which He was waiting to grant, the knowledge of Himself come, the Father's sent One, without which there is no Christianity. He is “all,” as He is “in all” that are His; but He is also for any, as the gospel announces, and the woman here discovers. She felt that the flood of light which the Lord shed on the worship that was at hand, was too much for her apprehension, and accordingly says to Him, “I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when He is come, He will tell [declare] us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.”

The Lord had declared the Father's name, little as she took it in; He had also confessed and denied not but confessed, that He Himself was the Christ. And we have His word for it, whatever the difficulty and the darkness unbelief pours over all, that this is life eternal, that they may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He sent. For such knowledge is of the Holy Spirit, and, unlike all other knowledge, is inseparable from life. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God.” Grace had opened her heart, the truth had searched her soul; and the Lord laid hold of the confession she made (however feebly) of a coming Messiah, to declare Himself the satisfying object of trust. It was far from being His highest title; it was not the everlasting glory of His person; it was what He became as man on earth the promised One, and what He, rejected of men, is now also made on high. For His death that seemed to disappoint all hopes was essential if only to efface our guilt, and His resurrection restored (and more) what death took away. Thus He graciously met her, in that recognition of what He truly was, to her unspeakable comfort and rest.

Faith always meets Christ. He is the great divine discovery to the soul. All must meet Him, on the throne one day; but this will be everlasting ruin to such as do not meet Him now. For them it will be judgment. Now it is the grace of God which gives and forgives. The unbeliever refuses Him now and comes into judgment then. To meet Him now by faith is life and salvation, as the Samaritan proved. Thousands saw and heard Him while on earth; but where no faith was, there was no life. It was when the woman believed that she received the blessing. And this blessing is no less offered to all that believe on Him without seeing or hearing. Indeed there is emphatic blessing, as He told Thomas, for those who have not seen and have believed.

The Holy Spirit has recorded the tale for your soul, dear reader, that you too may believe, and be saved if you are not already. To you the word of salvation is sent; for Jesus is still a Savior, not yet a Judge. By and by He will be Judge and not Savior. Never are the two functions mixed. Nor does the believer, as He assures us, come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. His work fails no more than His person; and he that believes has eternal life. The unbeliever will hear Him

pronounce all, but too late. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6).” “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12). He is the truth: rely on Him.

The unworthiness of the Samaritan up to that very day did not hinder His grace nor her blessing. Why should you doubt His willingness to receive and help you just as you are? For the blessing depends entirely on Him and His sacrifice. To receive it through Him, confessing your guilt and need, is to submit to the righteousness of God; to prefer your own efforts and sacrifices is going about to establish your own righteousness, as the unbelieving Jews did. Those who are indifferent to their sins, God's warning, and Christ's salvation, defy judgment and despise mercy. Alas! they assuredly must meet the due reward of their deeds and unbelief. For God is not mocked; and those that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Hear then His words in faith. He pleads with your soul. “I that speak unto thee am He.” And He is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever. Doubt yourself; for indeed you have the gravest reason. Believe foulest sinner and His worst enemy, if they repent and believe the gospel. His was all the worth, His all the suffering, His all the grace. Give Him then all the glory, as He willingly gives you all the blessing. This is God's truth, God's love, and God's way. It is His gospel, His glad tidings, sent that you, may believe. He does not begrudge you life and salvation in Christ; He delights in blessing; and this too, most rich and needed blessing.

But He warns too. “If the word spoken by angels (i.e. the law) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Thus judgment at the close vindicates the God Whose saving love in His Son is set at naught. The sanction is as solemn, as the blessing is full and plain, immediate and everlasting.

The message meanwhile bespeaks God for its author; He is the God of all grace. But it is grace reigning through righteousness, for Christ suffered for sins, Just for unjust. Not otherwise could the defiled and guilty be brought to God. Our ransom is not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with Christ's precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. And faith honors both Christ and the God Who gave Him, as unbelief adds rebellion and contempt of God to our other sins which are many and deep. No doubt you deserve nothing from God but judgment, which, without faith in Christ, is perdition. But Christ deserves, and has secured by His work, that every believer should be saved. If this does not gratify man's pride, it suits God's love and glory, in which the believer finds his everlasting blessedness.

Chapter 137

In Him a Well of Water

John 4:14

To the unrenewed mind there is nothing so foreign as grace. God's grace to a sinner seems to a moral man making light of sin; and therefore the higher his idea of divine holiness, and the greater his reverence, the less is it credible. The sinner himself regards it as too good to be true. Only when we stand convicted in our own consciences before God, revealed as He is in Jesus, do we believe it; and only as we walk by faith, are we enabled to use His grace without abusing it. Nothing so needful to the sinner, nothing so blessed to the saint, as grace, unless it be the God of grace in Christ, the source and fullness and display of it all in the Only-begotten.

Here the woman of Samaria was at first bewildered, though struck and attracted by the wondrous Man that brought God so near her in compassionate love to meet her sin, misery, and want. She answers the expression of infinite grace with the difficulties she considers insuperable. “Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou this living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?” (vers. 11, 12.) It was but natural thought and natural religion; wholly inadequate for man's case, now that he was sinful and an outcast from God; and how much less adequate for God, dishonored and disobeyed, unknown and disliked, because He must judge sins? What then must become of the sinner? How can he save himself?

Jesus spoke of another well incomparably deeper, of which as yet she had no comprehension. Jesus had—yea, was—everything to draw with; Jesus has and gives the living water. He is the Son of the Father, and entitled to give the believer eternal life, and, more than that, the Holy Spirit as the power of enjoying it in fellowship with the Father and the Son; and all this on earth now, in spite of what we naturally are, by virtue of His redemption. He is both the life eternal and the propitiation for our sins. He had the living water as the Son; He could and would give it to the poorest sinner that believes the gospel as the Savior of the world, fruit of His sufferings unto death of the cross, and of His resurrection.

“Greater than our father Jacob"! ay, immeasurably greater than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; than Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; than Noah, Daniel, and Job; than all the saintly men and women that ever were; than Michael and all angels and principalities, to say nothing of powers. For He is God, the eternal Word, the Only-begotten of the Father. He is therefore divinely competent as He is absolutely reliable. And He is full of grace and truth—the very thing that lost man has not and can find nowhere else. Could the law, truly of God as it was, save the guilty? It could only condemn; and to this an awakened soul sorrowfully but humbly and thoroughly submits. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. Is not this grace, the saving grace of God?

But no one receives it who doubts the full glory of Christ's person. For indeed there is otherwise no sufficient basis before God for sinful man. No mere man could dispense the living water. The

Samaritan saw Jesus wearied with the journey, sitting just as He was at the fountain; and she heard Him to her surprise ask of her to drink, though then she judged Him but a Jew, though she could not but feel increasingly as He spoke how extraordinary He was. Come of woman indeed He was to save lost man, come under law to redeem those under law, that either and both might receive sonship as a gift of God's grace, and not this only but the Spirit of God's Son sent out into their hearts, crying Abba, Father. This could only be because Jesus is the Son of God, as no other is or could be, though by grace every believer is truly child and by adoption son of God.

Hence, that the faith should be of divine source and character, the necessity of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 John 5:1, 5). As yet, the Samaritan was in the dark, though moved and drawn by His gracious ways and words; and so she understood not His words no less plain than marvelous. God's grace was no more believed than Christ's person, and thus the blessing was to her inscrutable. Yet to her unbelieving and unintelligent question the Lord replies with what, when she did believe, would prove a truth full of comfort to man as of goodness from God. “Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water which I shall give him shall become in him a well [or, fountain] of water springing up into eternal life” (vers. 13, 14).

The Lord thus explains more clearly than ever how the living water is the great supernatural gift man needs. The water of an earthly spring, however good, like every natural boon, lasts but for the moment. It quenches thirst, only to recur soon and constantly, as is the nature of all things seen and temporal. The soul, immortal as it is, needs more to satisfy, as God delights in giving when He is looked to in felt want. But here the Lord vouchsafes what satisfies the believer and God Himself, what forms a blessed and permanent and intimate relationship with the Son and the Father. It is not only eternal life, as in John 3, but the Spirit of adoption given, and therefore said to become in him, the believer, a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. Not only are creature things no longer an object of desire, but a fountain of divine refreshment is within through the indwelling Spirit, Who ever leads the believer to worship by His own power, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh. It is not holy longings only as of old, but present possession and enjoyment by virtue of Christ come and redemption. It is inexhaustible and leads the soul to the sources on high.

My reader, have you thus found rest and everlasting joy in the Son of God? The Holy Spirit is given, now that His atoning blood is accepted for the believer, to glorify Him. It is as free as air, but only to faith in Christ. “Whosoever"! Forsake not your own mercies; despise not God's grace. Receive Christ, believing on His name: and all is yours forever. For God Who calls is faithful.

Chapter 138

The Incomparable Love of God

Human love of whatever degree or kind yearns for and insists upon an object which it believes to be worthy of it. But it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of divine love that its object affords no originating impulse whatever. For “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). It is well to lay the thought of man's real condition much upon our hearts; since it were comparatively a small matter to point out that the ephemeral creature, man, was unable to show any excellence capable of exciting the love of One so far removed from him as his Almighty Creator. Indeed, reasoning from this thought alone, some have falsely concluded that it is incredible, and even impossible, for God to entertain even the slightest regard for man upon earth. Nevertheless, the astonishing truth, exceeding all human conception, and revealed, not in nature but in scripture, is that, though man is in a desperate state of irreconcilable hatred and antagonism to everything divine, God loves him in spite of all.

Neither is this a matter of speculative theory, but an actual fact, bearing the highest credentials. God's love has been manifested. It is no longer a secret of the divine bosom; for its display was perfect and sufficient, being in and by the person of the Only-begotten Son of God, Who came tabernacling in flesh as the only competent exponent of that love. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

Moreover God has been pleased to allow His love to be tested and proved. And the proof He has given is that which ranks as most convincing in man's estimation. For the fullest possible attestation of one's love is to lay down one's life. No sacrifice can exceed this. “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life” (Job 2:4). But Christ laid down His life, as He said, “I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:15). Among men, however, it is barely conceivable that such an extreme sacrifice could be made for any but a friend or benefactor. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7, 8). Thus, blessed be His name, God has abounded above the thoughts as well as the sin and bitter enmity of His creatures, and bestowed His Son both as the propitiation for our sins and as the incomparable witness of His incomparable love. 1 John 4:9, 10.

Have you ever known and believed that God is love? Is not the proof sufficient? God calls you to look at Christ and Calvary, and not around you for the exhibition of His love. The world is full of the fruits of sin; yet physical pain, mental anguish, and universal sorrow do not deny the goodness of God but proclaim the evil of man. And though the Son of God came from heaven to stem the overflowing tide of woe, men still give credence to the devil's lie, rather than to God's truth that He is love. But let it not be forgotten that those who continue to resist this super-eminent love will assuredly add to the weight of their everlasting condemnation.

W. J. H.

Isaiah 6

Prophecy is not the law, but the warning testimony of judgment when the law has been departed from; it is the turning the eye of those that believe to better hopes and foreshown deliverance for the remnant. It supposes apostasy, though it may be in different form or extent. Therefore we have “beginning with Samuel and all the prophets;” for then Ichabod was written. The great definite presentation of the place and character of prophecy is in Isa. 6.

The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint: from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, it was wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. As to the vineyard, it brought forth wild grapes; its wall was to be broken down, it was to be laid waste. This was the state of things as to the rights of that people who formed the object of Jehovah's care, the center of His earthly plans, the place of Messiah's visitation. But Jehovah was unaltered in character and purpose: in character, and therefore He must throw down; in purpose, and therefore He would not cast away.

But His throne was now to be set up as that from which prophecy was to flow: so it is, and His train fills the temple. And a man, though of unclean lips, is sent with lips purged by a coal from the altar, and then willing to go, but still dwelling among a people of unclean lips, having seen what Jehovah was, holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts. His soul is filled with and affected by the contrast, but he, touched with the coal, said, “Here am I: send me.", “And He said, Go.” But what was His message? “Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again and be healed “; and this “till cities be wasted without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the ground become all utter desolation, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaking (or solitude) be great in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and be eaten.... the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

Now Jehovah had long patience; He sent prophets till there was no remedy. He smote Israel and cut them short. He let Judah go captive and restored them again, so that the land was occupied and the temple built. Still the word ran, though the prophet did not live forever. The householder had long patience, till, having yet one Son, He said, “It may be they will reverence my Son,” round Whose head prophetic testimony and present blessing closed for a crown of glory and of witness. The word of the Lord, and the works of the Lord; the righteousness, and the patience, and the grace alike, with the Father's voice, testified Who He was. But the awful knell of God's judgment still filled the unholy air of that favored country, “Make the heart of this people fat.” Now it was after long patience and marvelous love that it really came out: the sentence of God's judgment came to the earth, for all the patience of love had been tried. God had nothing more than His Son to be testified of.

“How often would I have gathered!” was now the word of reluctantly departing loving-kindness and favor, but stored in a heart from which it could not be abstracted, which nothing could reach to alter. If sin could drive love in there and shut it up, there it dwelt untouched in its own blessed and

essential perfectness: no sin or failure could enter there to mar its perfectness or diminish its power. Such is God, such must He be known to us in Christ. If love and favor be driven back by sin, it is but to separate into the power of His own essential and unmingled perfectness, and, there retired, to dwell on and delight in itself. Judgment shall make a way for it to break forth only in its own unhindered excellency, and in unqualified and unparalyzed blessing. Such is God, and such is the Lord's way. But it was now only proved by his long patience that “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet to their fathers” (Acts 28:26).

For in them was fulfilled His prophecy which said, “Hearing ye Shall hear, and shall not understand” (Matthew 13:14). “For the people's heart had waxed gross; and, what Isaiah prophetically announced, when He Saw His glory, was now fulfilled when He Whose was the glory came” (John 12:40, 41).

This, known to the Lord, was parabolically communicated in Matt. 13; for then His patience had not had its perfect work. In Matt. 23 it had; and God's dereliction, His going and returning to His place, was publicly announced, and “their house” left to desolation. Then, on this same footing, again prophecy begins (Matt. 24, 25.). Whether the vineyard, or in closer judgment the house itself, left desolate, the broad foundation is the same; and the remnant understand, believe, and are comforted. Nothing can be more solemn than our blessed Master's word at the close of the previous chapter. How much implies a little word from His mouth! What depth and terribleness the gentlest often conveys! It was not in severest judgment, “Ye have made My Father's house a house of merchandise.” He had left it. It was their house: what was it worth? Goodly stones, which a poor heathen would throw down. No self-exaltation, no harsh reproach. His heart, the Lord's heart, yearned over Jerusalem. But so, alas! it was. Terrible might be His judgment on the leaders of this people, who caused them to err; but of them, of the inhabitants of loved Jerusalem, He would only say in tenderness and sorrow, “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 Jehovah.” J. N. D.

Chapter 140

Thoughts Suggested by John 1:14

It is well to be jealous of any mere intellectual appreciation of the word of God. For undoubtedly, even in the case of those who are truly converted, there is a danger of mind and fancy being gratified at the expense of heart and conscience. It is admitted of course that the intelligence must play a necessary part in the apprehension of any statement, secular or sacred, as it is also true that the poetic temperament will not blind the soul to heavenly glories, where sin is judged and Christ is paramount. Only let us realize that the Bible is God's voice to us, “quick and powerful,” and “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Then indeed shall we be slow to indulge an uncontrolled fancy; and, on the other hand, distrusting self, we shall not miss the needed blessing and refreshment.

Now it is hardly necessary to say we are not concerned with those who take merely a literary interest in the Bible. There are those we know, who do indeed discover a moving and pathetic story in such a history a s that of Joseph, but nothing beyond; as they see merely a tale of sweet and inimitable naturalness in that of Ruth. Clearly no spirituality is necessary for this, as in fact those who see no more in these histories are in general infidel. This is not the danger to which believers, as a rule, are exposed. The latter are well aware that these Old Testament narrative are not of any “private interpretation,” any more than prophecy is, but that they point with undeviating constancy to our Lord Jesus Christ. Our danger, on the contrary, is to rest too much in our apprehension of the admirable variety and fullness of these precious types, and in our possibly keen appreciation of them, without much practical result as to our ways. It is the same with the material symbols of the Levitical economy as with those of a personal character. It is one thing, for instance, to note with what exquisite precision the Holy Spirit enjoins the blue, and the scarlet, and the purple, according as heavenly character, earthly grandeur, or royal dignity were to be symbolized by the coverings of the mystic furniture of the Tabernacle; it is quite another to be formed and molded by the varied teaching of these different scriptures.

But the dangers attending the study of the New Testament are somewhat different. As the “very image of the things” is there unfolded with divine clearness and exactitude, there is a directness of statement which leaves less room for ingenious and far-fetched interpretations, and there is less risk perhaps of the imagination running wild. Doubtless there are snares of another kind, more purely intellectual as with the Gnostics of old, and more subtle.

Witness too some recent vagaries, not confined to one quarter, with regard to our Lord's Person. The fact is that there are snares for imaginative and intellectual alike, and both can find material in either division of the Book of God. Yet, while we should judge self unsparingly, it is becoming to cherish simplicity, equally free from legal bondage and from self-confidence. Indeed they are not wise who are always analyzing their feelings—an occupation as unhealthy in spiritual as in physical matters. Hence it is enough to have pointed out a danger before turning to a verse than which there is none sublimer or more majestic even in the fourth Gospel—so simple in its language, so profound in its significance.

Simple language, profound meaning—do not these words sum up the characteristic features of St. John's Gospel, as of his Epistles? Whether his aim were to enforce the great truth that Jesus is the Christ, as in the Gospel, or that the Christ is Jesus, (Whom they had seen and handled) as in the first Epistle, clearly no complicated arguments were necessary in order to “declare what he had seen and heard.” We know that there are arguments, and indignant ones, though most suitable in their season, in the writings of the apostle Paul. Burning words and sharp remonstrance were necessary at times from one who had the “care of all the churches,” and who was jealous with a godly jealousy for the honor of Christ. But in the Gospel of John how different it all is. And yet he was a “son of thunder;” nor is the remark of Augustine inapt that John begins his Gospel with a peal of spiritual thunder. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” But all is calm and reposeful in the manner; the thunder is not in the collision of earth-born clouds, but in the majesty of the revelation. He who declared the eternal life that was with the Father, speaks in accents that breathe the calmness of the Son's own divine dignity and glory. The Word was (■ν) God; but we read further that the Word was made (■γ■νετο) flesh. Already a touch of pathos in the announcement of His Incarnation; no exemption from human vicissitudes, though wholly apart from sin. And so He “tabernacled” here for some three and thirty years, most of which, as we know, were spent in holy seclusion, whence God has not thought fit to withdraw the veil, but of which more may be known (who can tell?) in the coming day. We are permitted one or two glimpses of exquisite loveliness (Luke 2); and then the silence of almost twenty unrecorded years. But even of the three years of that wonderful ministry, only some of the miracles and some of the sayings are told us; there are the “many other signs,” and the “many other things” that “are not written in this book.” So He displayed His glory, not only those moral perfections that could not be hidden, but each miracle, as the one in Cana of Galilee, manifested the majesty of His Person to such as had eyes to see.

But there is more. It is glory as of an Only-begotten with a Father. And indeed, though doubtless the apostles raised the dead, and did other miracles—not to speak of the greater (spiritual) miracles they wrought after Christ had gone to the Father—yet in truth there was a stamp of peculiar dignity in our Lord's own works and words. For He alone could and did touch the leper without being defiled, as on the same occasion, with full consciousness of His divinity, He said, “I will” —fitting words for One, Who could say “I am.” He answered the governor nothing, so that Pilate marveled. The people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, saluted Him, when He had just come down from the Holy Mount; the glory still lingered that had been so dazzling at the transfiguration. And so we might recall many an incident situation described in the Gospels, where the splendor of His divine Sonship seemed to pierce the veil.

Yet surely are we, who by grace rest in Him, not less, but more, favored than those who had His bodily presence. R. B. Junr.

John 14:9

There are innumerable incidents in the Bible, which, although they may not bear directly on central doctrines or upon the great principles of dispensational truth, are nevertheless most instructive and often peculiarly precious. The most conspicuous of these are naturally such as concern our blessed Lord—His ways, His words, or His silence. Side-lights these, so to speak, but not less luminous than the central rays. To pursue the figure, one might compare the broad stream of dispensational truth of divine doctrine generally to beams of undivided light, whereas in these minute touches we have the blue and the purple and the scarlet of the refracted ray. In short, each has its own place and beauty, as the Holy Spirit alone can lead our hearts into the enjoyment of both. The great doctrines of Christianity, we know, are of supreme consequence; nor are those to be trusted who affect admiration of the lovely traits disclosed in a Joseph or Daniel, and still more in Christ Himself, while they slur over or ignore the emphatic warnings of the scriptures as to sin and coming judgments. But when the conscience has bowed to the solemn truth, and the heart believed, and the mouth confessed, then truly we do well to mark every attitude of the Son of God, and to note every word that fell from the lips of Him, “Who spake as never man spake.” Such are found especially in the scriptures that seem, not so much to unfold truth about Him, as to present Himself.

Hence I propose to dwell for a moment upon part of the verse indicated in the heading of this paper: not on the whole of it; nor, as intimated above, in its central aspect. The great truth, that the Lord Jesus is the sole Revealer of the Father, cannot indeed be enforced too frequently. It is insisted upon by our Lord in emphatic words in the verse before us; it is stated with wonderful precision and majesty in the first and third of the synoptic Gospels. It is always supposed, whatever the special doctrine under consideration. The revelation of the Father by and in the Son is without controversy the keystone of the entire arch of revealed truth.

But the object now is of less wide and far-reaching compass, though what it may gain in limitation is balanced by the necessity for peculiarly reverent handling. Indeed the writer might almost apologize for attempting any more than just calling attention to the words themselves—so closely do they touch the very sanctuary, if one may so say, of the Lord's Person. Comment too often tends to enfeeble, and that in proportion to the loftiness of the theme. Most of all is this the case in dwelling, not so much on the doctrine or even the works, but on the words and manner of the Son of God. Yet after all the record is divine, and so cannot be touched by the infirmity of human language.

“Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip”? They were but a brief period, the years of that holy ministry—the time was short even if we reckon from our Lord's birth. He was crucified just a little past the age when a Jew was considered to have attained full manhood. But to Him (and what spiritual mind can wonder?) it was a long time—long to bear the contradiction of sinners, if not the slowness of heart of His chosen. Nor is this the only occasion on which we learn indirectly what this world must have been to Him, Whose natural home was

heaven, but Who had emptied Himself of every glory save that alone which was inseparable from Him,—the glory of His infinite moral perfectness. “How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?” was His exclamation as recorded by Mark, when pursuing His course of beneficent healing. And how much “virtue” must have proceeded from the blessed Lord during those wonderful years! Time indeed is rightly measured by the work accomplished and the sacrifices endured, and the love expended, even in the case of a mere man. He lives longest who serves God. There may be much activity that is merely beating the air. But how infinitely filled up with good works (but which He showed them from the Father) was the life of the blessed Son! It was not merely the “sinless years, that breathed beneath the Syrian blue,” but the untiring self-surrender of the Word made flesh, the Servant-prophet, but withal Jehovah. Moreover (but here silence is more becoming than words), did not the shadow of His coming passion lie before Him? “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished” (Luke 12:50)!

See then the contrast of Philip, tenderly but unhesitatingly rebuked by Christ for not having known Him. Does it not teach us for the hundredth time how inadequate is human exactitude and reflectiveness in matters that must be spiritually discerned? For we have evidence that Philip was exact and observant as a man, and, perhaps we might add, as a saint. He it was (as an eminent writer has remarked) who so clearly defined the characteristics of the Messiah to Nathanael, who was convinced that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not suffice for the hungry multitude, nay, who recommended Nathanael to come and see for himself the wonderful Person, with whom he had made acquaintance. It was not the impulsive Peter or the despondent Thomas who failed in this respect, but the very apostle who seemed particularly observant. Thus all must be the Holy Spirit, or it is vain. We note too a touch of pathos in the Lord's words, underlying the grandeur of the truth He declared and which He emphatically was—and is.

Unlimited truly are the virtues that open out for learning in reading and meditating on the pages of scripture. It has often struck the writer that we do not dwell as much as we might on what may be called the objective aspect of sacred incidents, particularly such as are recorded in the Gospels. Have we not here, as it were, an endless gallery of divine portraits? Thus it is wise to neglect no part of Holy Writ, to study and ponder again and yet again the great doctrines of individual salvation, of the church, the coming of the Lord and the kingdom; but not to overlook that inmost shrine of blessed truth, which reveals most nearly the ways and words of our adorable Lord. R. B., Jr.

Chapter 142

Thoughts on John 16:27

“The Father himself loveth you.” There is no thought in this little paper of dwelling upon the important announcement with regard to Christian prayer, marking a great dispensational change, which was the occasion of our Lord's uttering the words just quoted. And there is the less need for attempting it, that it has been abundantly unfolded by abler pens. Nevertheless it may be doubted whether believers are as a rule sufficiently alive both to the intrinsic greatness of this favor on the part of God the Father, and also to its far-reaching consequences.

And first, if the conjecture be just a word or two as to the cause of this failure which perhaps is not far to seek. Is it not connected with the fact that the children of God are but human, and consequently feeble oftentimes in appropriating their vast inheritance'? “There remaineth much land to be possessed” is as necessary a reminder as ever it was in Joshua's days. But this lack of apprehension may even be due to pre-occupation with other truths, with that perhaps which is not only good but paramount, as the love of Christ Himself, which clearly no Christian can estimate too highly. Yet surely to forget the love of the Father is no necessary consequence of occupation with that of the Son. Rather is it that we are one-sided, and that nothing is rarer than perfect equipoise in appreciation of truth. But in fact no truths of Holy Scripture are antagonistic; for all are centered in Christ, Who is the Truth. Accordingly, as we apprehend Him in His person and in His work, so shall we in like measure realize every resultant blessing, not the least being the love of the Father. And thus intelligent appreciation of our Lord Jesus will, ipso facto, quicken our spiritual sensibility to all He has accomplished, even in gaining for us His Father's love and complacency.

For while it must not be forgotten (and this is another aspect of the truth) that love to the world was in God Himself as such (John 3:16), and needed no prompting, yet this love of the Father is consequent upon the affection produced in the believer's heart to Christ, because of what the Lord Jesus is and what He has done. And so further we learn, as the Lord goes on to tell the disciples, that it is because they had loved Him that the Father's love had been thus drawn out.

On the other hand when it is a question of the church, we read that Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). Such are the varied aspects of the divine love, distinct, but, it is needless to say, exquisitely consistent, as indeed is the whole body of revealed truth.

Now in a manner it is intelligible that Christians should be specially impressed by the love of the Lord Jesus, when they meditate, or praise, or pray. For though we have not with us that corporeal presence, having neither heard, nor seen with our eyes (save by those of faith) nor contemplated, nor our hands handled, “that which was from the beginning,” as did the first disciples, yet we have the priceless record; and He, the Son of Man, has “drawn us with the cords of a man.” We can picture Him in the Temple, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Gethsemane; we hear His words (such as man never spake before) of encouragement, of benediction, of rebuke of all that was opposed to His own stainless holiness; for us too He is no impalpable abstraction, but “the Man Christ Jesus.” Our salvation, again, is secured by no fulfillment of philosophic precepts (although the only true philosophy be wrapt up in Christianity, that wisdom to be spoken among them that

were perfect, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:6), but by faith of Christ, faith in His atoning blood, in His glorious resurrection, even as His person is to be worshipped and adored; for, Stupendous as are His works, He Himself is greater than all He has wrought: in other words, all is inestimable because of His being “God manifest in the flesh.”

But God the Father! Unto what heights of majesty do we here ascend! We think of the High and Holy One, Who inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy, and of the inaccessible light. Nor is it unwholesome to remind ourselves again and again that God is infinite in holiness as in power. For such reflection need in no wise dim our perception of the characteristic relationships into which grace has introduced us in Christ, one of which, viz., the love of the Father, it is the aim of this paper to enforce. And that this is nothing recondite, no exclusive appanage of the mature believer, is plain; for the beloved apostle says, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” Also the peculiar beauty of this passage is well-known. For, if the little children were entitled to know the Father; and that the Father loved them, the fathers could know nothing higher than Him “Who was from the beginning.” So that it is precisely the young believer who is characterized as entering into that aspect of the divine love which might have seemed the special portion of the most advanced. For God delights to show the power of His grace just where the objects are weakest. And so it ever is under the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). The “ministration of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:8) exceeds in grace as in glory.

And, if one of the consequences of thus entering into “the love the Father hath bestowed on us” (1 John 3:1), be to quicken the spiritual energies to more earnest adoration of Him Who seeketh worshippers (John 4:23), surely it will in no wise detract from the glory due to our blessed Lord, Who equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost is worthy of supreme homage. But, seeing that our Lord deemed it not unnecessary to remind His disciples of the Father's love, we may well seek to encourage our own hearts in the enjoyment of it in however inadequate a manner.

R. B. Junr.

Chapter 143

Thoughts on John 16:9

It is not the part of wisdom to deny, but rather freely to acknowledge, that fragments of truth, more or less numerous, are to be found in the ancient philosophies and religious systems. Undoubtedly such are often accompanied by much folly, and perhaps seem all the brighter because of the surrounding darkness. Still they bear eloquent testimony to the fact that God created man upright, whatever his subsequent degeneracy through the fall. But when these philosophers stepped beyond the praise and vindication of morality, it is clear they encountered a serious difficulty, inasmuch as everything of what may be called a constructive character must obviously have been only so much speculation. In other words they could claim no authority, no “Thus saith the Lord,” even if reason (which for the most part it did not) led them up to the conviction of a Supreme Being. Hence one great and broad line of demarcation between the heathen systems and Judaism, which was a revelation of God. The former, even where most incrusted with sound moral notions, when consequently they were at their best, offered, it is needless to say, no anchorage for the soul, being in truth but the surmises of men. Such were the doctrines of Stoics and Epicureans, of Socrates and Plato, and, in more remote antiquity, of Confucius. At their worst these systems were a conglomerate of poetical romancing, e.g. the mythologies of Greece, or they were the monstrous dreams of orientalism: the former beautiful, the latter grotesque, but both corrupt.

But when we come to the New Testament, we have a line still broader and more striking, in that Christianity is not merely a divinely-given unfolding of truths that deeply concerned mankind, as was the Hebrew dispensation, but God revealed in full personality, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In short, as has been often remarked, the religion of Christ is Himself. It is not merely that He speaks with authority, as Moses did, and as heathen teachers could not; but, though the humblest of men and the meekest, He ever enforces His own claims as absolute and unquestionable. He is not merely the prophet like unto Moses, though far greater, come down to inaugurate a loftier system, to exhibit a sublimer abnegation, but He was—is—Himself the center and circumference, the Alpha and Omega, of all that He did and taught. We hear from His own lips that it is in vain to pretend to honor the Father without honoring the Son. Such is our Lord Jesus Christ; and as the Father attested, so the Holy Spirit sealed.

Nor in any portion of Holy Scripture does our Lord more emphatically enforce His claims than in the verse under consideration. The Holy Ghost, we read, would reprove or convict (or haply afford demonstrative proof to) the world “of sin, because they believe not on Me.” It is not because men are base, or deceitful, or immoral, not because of any specially heinous form of violence or corruption, not for one sin, as men count it, singled out of the dark catalog of human misdeeds; but “of sin, because they believe not on Me.” Nor is it hard to understand the reason of our Lord's solemn statement. Clearly unbelief as to Himself, and the refusal of His claims, whether openly aggressive, or coolly indifferent, is the crowning sin of which the human heart can be guilty. Not that in these words of Christ there is any palliation of human evil. If by the law was the knowledge of sin, and by the commandment sin became exceedingly sinful, how much more so when He

came, Who was “full of grace and truth,” Who is the truth! What would not the truth and the light make manifest? But when the truth was manifested in its most winning form, that of grace, only to be rejected, evidently sin is not only seen at its blackest because confronted with perfect holiness, but the unbelief that will have none of God's remedy becomes necessarily the sign of utter sinfulness and blindness. We have, as it were, a climax of wickedness in the rejection first of righteousness as under the law, then of the fullness of truth in Christ, nay, of “grace and truth,” grace pre-eminently, but grace made living and energetic by its intimate union with truth. No wonder then if it is written, “Of sin because they believe not on Me.”

How belief in the Son becomes effectual to the salvation of the soul is not the point in this verse. We know it is by His death, and that our Lord is not more surely the Way, the Truth, and the Life, than the propitiation, even as He came “by water and by blood.” But His person is the theme here as the supreme object presented to mankind, and in Whom the Father was to be seen. How admirably in keeping is this verse of John, the latest, with the “Come unto Me” of the earliest Evangelist! one mark out of a myriad of the deep harmonies of the word of God. While critics are occupied in discovering (sometimes, it is to be feared, trying to discover) difficulties and discrepancies in the letter, the humble child of God, better so engaged, will find beauty upon beauty, token upon token, of its incomparable accuracy, in proportion to the diligence of his search, and the reality of his self-distrust.

Finally, we may note that our Lord uttered these words after having declared His manifold offices of mercy and benefaction. He had already said, in words of living power, “I am the Living Bread,” “the Light of the world,” “the Resurrection and the Life,” “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” “the Good Shepherd,” “the True Vine.” May we not liken these glories to so many glowing colors into which the white light of His Deity is refracted in the prism of the Gospels? At any rate in the majestic words, “I am,” which occur so often in John, His Godhead is implicitly conveyed. How great then, unless they repent, the loss of those, whom the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, because they believe not on the Son of God!

R. B. Junr.

Chapter 144

Thoughts on John 6:68

It is interesting to note how, on more than one important occasion, both before and after the resurrection, Peter was privileged to give definite expression to some cardinal and pre-eminent truth. Incidentally we are reminded, if need be, that no slight honor was reserved in the counsels of God for the apostle of the circumcision. As at Pentecost he was the spokesman of the eleven, and proclaimed to the house of Israel that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36); so it was his, before our Lord suffered, to make the great confession (Matt. 16:16), that He, Who loved to speak of Himself as the Son of Man, was the Christ, the Son of the living God—a doctrine than which none is more central in the whole range of Christianity. Our Lord, as we know, at once declared that this great truth was the rock on which He would build His church. Nor was this the sole occasion on which Peter thus emphasized both the Messiahship and the divinity of the Lord Jesus. He makes the same confession in John 6, after having uttered the words more immediately the subject of the present paper. It would seem that, on this subsequent occasion, it was rather in connection with individual need (“Lord, to whom shall we go?"), whereas in Matthew the words had a corporate significance. With these prefatory remarks (not superfluous perhaps, inasmuch as a lurking and half-unconscious disparagement of the apostle Peter is not uncommon), I pass to our verse.

The time was critical. It was one of those occasions, not rare in the fourth Gospel, when our blessed Lord's deity and manhood seem equally in evidence. At others, one or other may seem uppermost, though these twin threads of gold and silver are indissolubly intertwined. Nor can any essay to gauge that mystery without being baffled and confounded. “Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken.” Our Lord, accordingly, had just uttered the profound words as to the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood—clearly communion with His death (vers. 51-56), as before with His incarnation (vers. 32-50)—and had thereby estranged many who had seemed to follow Him, but who were stumbled by this “hard saying.”

To us, who are familiar with and rejoice in this most precious truth, it is not easy to enter into the feelings of Jews, who had been forbidden by God Himself to eat blood, and to whom therefore of all men this doctrine was most startling. Yet did the Lord most emphatically declare that otherwise they had no life in them. This was the stumbling-block. In fact these words, when not spiritually understood by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, have ever been either abused by superstition or caviled at by unbelief. Here indeed “in the days of His flesh” unbelief prevailed, and so the Lord asks of the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Weighty words in truth, for did they not suggest the infinite loss in which such abandonment would involve them, as, on the other hand, it is clear that our Savior's human spirit valued their ministrations? Did He not subsequently say, “Ye are they who have continued with Me in My temptations"? (Luke 22:28.) Thus in another aspect we see the mingling of the divine and the human in that inscrutable Presence. And so, in words of earnest deprecation, Simon Peter replies, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life.” Surely this too had been revealed to the apostle by the Father in heaven, and was doubtless remembered by him long afterward, when he declared, with pathetic emphasis, that they had

followed no “cunningly devised fables,” but were eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty.

Science is well in its own sphere; nor is it wise, because of some fancied opposition to the word of God, to challenge, with inadequate mental equipment, fact if indubitable. Time was when pious men would have staked the credit of the Bible on the supposed flatness of the earth! On the other hand, we may rest assured that any conclusion of science, that traverses the explicit language of scripture, is and must be erroneous. For as has often been remarked, scientific facts are one thing, inferences are quite another. Another thing to be borne in mind, and recently pointed out by a writer (who, always eloquent, is not always equally sound), is, that engrossment with some special study is not the way to have correct views on men and things in general, least of all on what concerns the life to come. Persons so absorbed, he says, are apt to see nothing but their peculiar hobby, and seem to be afflicted with a kind of atrophy as to what is outside their individual line. This witness is true. Shall we therefore depend upon such for a decision affecting our eternal welfare—upon men who, after all, discern but fragments of truth, and whose minds may “degenerate into mere machines for grinding out general laws”? Such, at any rate, was the remarkable confession of one of them.

And this leads to the question, Is the intellect the highest part of man? Are not moral elements, on the contrary, above what is merely intellectual? It is not necessary to be a theologian to see this. How says the most eminent of recent poets, “I trust we are not wholly brain, magnetic mockeries.” How vain then to anchor one's soul on what at best is but fragmentary, where not positively misleading. I say not that such leaders may not be judicially blinded. The safe and excellent way is to believe God's word because it is His, knowing that difficulties, and mystery here and there, are rather proofs of its divine origin. At any rate to reject revelation on the ground of mystery is surely illogical. I suppose we ourselves, spirit, soul, and body—are a mystery in one sense: is it not “nearer to us than hands and feet?”

Science therefore can have no direct word on what concerns man's eternal interests. Of course she may speak as handmaid, and sometimes with some effect, as when, for instance, it is shown that the darkness at the crucifixion can have been occasioned by no eclipse, which a mere tyro in astronomy knows can only happen when the moon is full. Or, again, by specific knowledge some ancient manuscript is deciphered, which may shed important light perhaps on a disputed passage of the New Testament. But yet science is un-moral, so to speak. It has no direct connection with what concerns the soul. Moreover, is it not often tentative only? How fatuous then and worse to depend upon so shifty a guide in relation to the life to come!

Shall we then have recourse to art and culture? Shall we emulate the Greek spirit? Alas! is it not abroad all around us? Not that it is wrong to love beautiful color, or musical notes; it is fatal to deify beauty. This was what the Greeks did, and moderns imitate with infinitely less excuse. On the other hand, bare Puritanism is not Christianity. For it is significant that when the Holy Spirit would portray that which is brightest and holiest in heaven, He employs as symbols that which is accounted most lovely on earth, it matters not whether it be the breastplate of Aaron, or the foundations of the Holy City. Clearly then the evil does not consist in appreciating what is lovely in its proper sphere, but in making it an end. A vain dream!

But what of philosophy, said to be “divine by its votaries,” and “full of nectared sweets” but coupled with “vain deceit” by the Spirit of God? Will this give us peace? Truly the scripture adds “falsely

so-called," but even when legitimate, philosophy, and science, and art, are impotent in man's extremity. And is it not notorious that some of those who have discoursed most eloquently on morality, &c., have been most unhappy, where indeed they have not sunk below ordinary decency? Let us not be too hard upon the Socrates and Platos. They groped in the dark, and often with noble aspirations) the True Light had not yet shone. But no such apology can be extended to those who reject God's living oracles, and prefer the first man to the second. Surely it is not surprising that modern systems should reach lower depths than ancient ones (witness spiritualism, theosophy, and similar enormities), inasmuch as they have given up the true God. Alas ! such will increase to more ungodliness. But at least such doctrines as these testify that no mere materialism will satisfy the human heart. Hence the believer may well reply, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Whether it be things excellent in their own place, or things essentially evil, all leave an aching void. Science is cold, and "Art is long," and the end draweth near. What matters it if we have truly heard those words of eternal life? Do they not point out "an anchor for the soul both sure and steadfast"? "The words that I speak unto you," said the Saviour, "they are spirit and they are life." All other voices are like the idle wind. B. B., JNE.

Chapter 145

Jonathan

(1 Samuel.)

We enter now upon a history which, though brief, is rich in spiritual instruction. Presented to us in the clear light of inspiration, without any of the false coloring of human imagination, it is intended to warn as well as to interest us. As a narrative, it certainly is “one of the most pleasing incidents in the Jewish annals;” but if read aright, it will search the heart of every sincere Christian even more than delight his mind.

The most memorable event in Jonathan's life, as it is also one of the first recorded, marks him as a man of faith. When Saul's carnal arrangements for carrying on the work of the Lord in Israel failed, his standing army (his first care) reduced to about six hundred men, deprived of their arms and practically shut up in the. fortress of Gibeah by the Philistines, Jonathan, in fellowship with one of like spirit and by faith in the Lord alone, met and broke the whole power of the enemy (1 Sam. 14). Both father and son were workers in the Lord's inheritance. The father, with every external advantage, had given up the word of the Lord; the son, with none, relied upon it and refused the resources of the flesh.

The conviction that, if he wrought with God, it must be in separation from Saul must have deeply exercised the affectionate heart of his son; but it was the secret of his power, as subsequent events clearly proved. Is it possible then that he who thus by faith “waxed valiant in fight and turned to flight the armies of the aliens,” could ever forget this first, this all-important, lesson? Could he ever enter into an alliance with carnal authority and power, and make flesh his arm? The end of his career, alas! was not at all in keeping with the beginning. He gave up the holy vantage ground which he occupied at Michmash, and, in company with Saul and his army at the terrible battle of Gilboa, was defeated and slain. We have both scenes vividly depicted by the Spirit, and how great the contrast (14. 31.)! The final one is briefly told, but with simple and touching pathos. Saul, forsaken of God, his army overpowered, he himself wounded and paralyzed with fear and despair, having in vain sought death from the sword of his armor-bearer, fell upon his own. “So he died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men that same day together.” His body was found soon after by the Philistines among the slain and treated with every indignity. Jonathan's also was not spared. They were then fastened together on the wall of Bethshan until rescued by the gratitude and courage of the men of Jabesh-Gilead.

Thus the overcomer at Michmash was overcome at Gilboa, and he who wrought with God at the beginning of his course fell with Saul at the close of it. Why was this?

We are apt to forget that, while every true believer from Abel is, through. Christ, a child of resurrection, a vessel prepared for glory, yet is he subject to the government of God on earth Who, in the firmness of His love has chastened His people by the infliction of even death itself. The case of the prophet in 1 Kings 13 is in point. The lion met him by the way and slew him for his disobedience; yet he was a “man of God,” and this Is insisted on even when the sentence of death

was pronounced. His eternal salvation therefore is not by this extreme discipline put in question. It would be to question the faithfulness and the love of God. So Jonathan was a man of faith, though he fell with Saul at Gilboa. This, then, will simplify our inquiry.

The trials of Jonathan and the difficulties that surrounded him were of no ordinary kind. On the one hand, there was what was righteously due from him to Saul. As the anointed of the Lord and in possession of the throne, all the sacredness of office and external claims to authority still attached to him, and moreover he was his father. On the other hand, in Jonathan there was spiritual life which gave to God His supreme place and delighted in His will and in the unfoldings of the purposes of His grace. There was not a trace of this to be seen in Saul. Under every test he manifested only the characteristics of an unregenerate, though religious man. He was not without some noble qualities and generous impulses, but, as we have seen, they were powerless to subdue his personal will or to extinguish his causeless hatred of David. It is, alas! the history of man epitomized, and of Israel in particular; the will refuses the restraint of the law and the heart the attractions of Christ. Jonathan by pace was in both respects unlike his father. He truly acknowledged the Lord, and David he greatly loved. We have seen the results of the first at Michmash; we have only to trace the course of the second, and must begin at chap. 17. “When David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hands.”

We might naturally suppose that David, thus presented before Saul and his court, would at once draw the hearts of all to him in admiration and gratitude; but Jonathan again stood alone. “When David had made an end of speaking with Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul... And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” It is clearly one thing to be saved, and another to give up all of self to exalt and magnify the savior. How many profited by the marvelous work accomplished, yet Jonathan alone thus openly confessed his love for him who accomplished it. Later on indeed the women sang their songs in his praise, but we know how easy it is to do this, even in the case of Him Who is infinitely more worthy of gratitude and love than David. It involved no sacrifice and resulted in no separation. Yet love delights in a sacrifice, both in making it, and accepting it. David greatly valued this open confession of the love of Jonathan and sought to assure him of it again and again by entering into solemn covenant with him. The most touching part of his elegy is that which refers to him.

“I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:

Thy love to me was wonderful,

Passing the love of women.”

Yet he could but allude, though in the most delicate manner, to the fact that he never gave up his position with his father for his sake, never, like Samuel and others, followed him in exile.

“Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

The test for Jonathan was this. Faithfulness in service he had displayed in a remarkable manner, and his love for David was very real and at times self-sacrificing. He could speak for him, and speak nobly and well; but he could not, or rather, did not follow him. He was taught of God to love, but failed in the lesson “love not.” He overcame the enemy, but not the world (1 John 2:14-17). He brake through the host of the Philistines; but this was to deliver the people, not (as some) to bring the water of Bethlehem to refresh the soul of God's elect (2 Sam. 23:15-17). He kissed and wept, but suffered him he embraced to go his solitary way, a banished one, while he returned to the city (ch. 20:41, 42). So, alas! is it with Christ. He is wounded still in the house of His friends, who, like Jonathan, talk of the future, of the day of His glory, and even of being next to Him then—Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee (23:17)—but in the day of His rejection are more often found with His enemies than with Him.

Yet Jonathan was not idle in the cause of David, though misdirected in his efforts. He labored to induce Saul and his followers to receive him again, and for a moment appeared to succeed so that “he was in his presence as in times past.” But his father's heart was unchanged, and David once more had to flee for his life. It is the story of Christendom, briefly rehearsed: amiable efforts on the part of true Christians to reconcile worldlings to an acknowledgment of Christ, while their hearts are far from Him.

Jonathan himself did not escape the effects of his father's wrath. He was cruelly and grossly wronged before all the court. To his praise, however, it is recorded, that he made no complaint of the injury done to himself, but “was grieved for David because his father had done him shame.” This is a family feature. The most worldly child of God at the bottom of his heart loves Christ better than himself; and, let it come to persecution, Satan will find that out.

Still Jonathan was a great loser by the course he took. He relinquished much communion with David and many opportunities of effective service. He was not even consistent with his expressed hope, for, if the kingdom was sure to David it must depart from Saul. He was thus in constant peril of falling in its overthrow. Gilboa only made manifest what was true before; that is, that judgment was on the whole system. How needed then the blow that fell there!—needed for the truth of God—needed for David's

glory—painfully needed for poor Jonathan himself; and surely needed for our profit, if we will but profit by it. Identification with Christ in His rejection must be trying to the flesh. What ties must be broken! what friendships forfeited what hostility provoked! what scorn excited! Yet is not the call of the Holy Spirit becoming daily more and more earnest, to “go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bearing His reproach?” The heroes of Israel were found in the caves with David, and not enjoying the fields and vineyards and dignities bestowed by Saul (2 Sam. 23:1 Sam. 22:7).

Chapter 146

Justified by His Blood

That there is none just, no not one, the apostle had proved from the Psalms (Rom. 3:20). Those under law are, no less than those without law, all under sin. There is no difference in this: all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Such is the condition of mankind, and authoritatively so declared. As being then guilty, of themselves none can enter heaven, none escape hell.

Therefore did God, after revealing at the beginning the coming destroyer of the enemy, at length send His Son, Who so glorified Him in obedience unto death for sin, that God can righteously send the good news of remission of sins, and life in His name, to every soul that bows in faith. Thus does He justify freely or gratuitously as far as man is concerned, by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The grace of God is the motive or proximate cause for justifying the unjust; and this is what is meant in such scriptures as speak of justifying any by the grace of God (Rom. 3:24, Titus 3:7). In His pure, spontaneous, unmerited favor it originated. We were not only—not just but ungodly, even if moral or religious after a fashion; “we were yet sinners.” But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There only was the efficacious. sacrifice for the defiled; there the ransom most precious to God. This lays the ground for a new kind of righteousness—for God's righteousness in justifying him who, having no righteousness for God, believes in Jesus at the call of God. It was righteous in God to raise from the dead Jesus Whom unrighteous man crucified; it was righteous to set Him at His own right hand in heaven (John 16:10). But, further, it is His righteousness to justify the ungodly one, not in working for it, but in believing on Him as the God of grace in Christ (Rom. 4). For to him that works for it the reward is not reckoned for righteousness. For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; and this, not more that the glory may be to God, than that the blessing may be sure to the soul that believes. For, as the Lord Himself taught us in the parables, it is the joy of God to save the lost (Luke 15). By His grace the believer is justified.

Hence we are also said to be justified by (or out of) faith (Rom. 5:1). The Jew, and indeed the natural man, is apt to think that justification must be out of works. But clearly if a soul could be justified by works, Christ died in vain; and the grace of God would be made void. Hence the gospel is preached to us expressly as lost and powerless; and Jesus our Lord was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised again for our justification. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” There is no other, principle or way for a sinner; and sinners we have all been, enemies in mind by wicked works, utterly-unfit for the presence of God. Therefore did Christ suffer for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God; Who can meet us, as we are, on the ground of that atoning death, and justify us by the faith of Jesus. By Him, as the apostle at Antioch of Pisidia preached to souls who had never heard such good news before—by Him “every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).

But there is a further connection in our text. We are said to be “justified by His blood.” Here it is the apostle's design to express the power or virtue of that which has justified the believer; and he declares it unequivocally to be the blood of Christ. There is no room for mistake. Where the apostle speaks of, the efficacious basis for that immense change of relationship, which is called “justification,” he says it is by or in His blood. Thus only does God account the believer righteous. “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” So it was, not with blood of goats and calves, He entered once for all into the sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption. It is a work done and accepted by God, outside the believer, yet for him and in full view of his sins, which Jesus bore in His own body on the tree,—bore away unto a land not inhabited, never more to be. The believer once purged has no more conscience of sins. When awakened by the quickening voice of Christ in the word, his sins lay overwhelmingly on his conscience, and he judged himself in repentance before God. But now by faith he rests on the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; he rests on God's estimate of that blood as proclaimed in the gospel; he believes that God has found a ransom; and he himself has, what Scripture calls, no more conscience of sins.

My reader, turn not away, because you think such news too good to be true. Too good to come from man, undoubtedly; but what can be too good for the God Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son?—gave Him, that whosoever believeth should not perish but have eternal life. God feels, speaks, acts, worthily of Himself in justifying the ungodly. His grace prompted the wondrous work on behalf of sinners; faith is the empty hand which receives the boon; and the blood of Jesus is the mighty sacrifice, by which you have your sins blotted out and yourself brought nigh to the living God as your Father. Forget not that despisers shall perish.

The Known Isaiah, Part 1: Chapters 40-66

Incredulity grows apace and with little shame. Take, as recent instances, the Cambridge “Divine Library,” the Oxford “Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament,” and Prof. Cheyne's Bampton lectures on “The Origin and Religion of the Psalter:” works successively sinking lower and lower, as inspiration yields to the fancies of the fashionable criticism of the hour. That their authors, as well as some of their prototypes, deceive themselves, is true; but it is false to say that their premises and conclusions “do not touch either the authority or the inspiration of the scriptures of the Old Testament.” They subject the divine to the human in the written word; just as kindred unbelief works as to Christ's person. As faith knows that He, though He became flesh, is none the less the True God and Eternal Life; so are we assured that every scripture is inspired of God and profitable for all spiritual uses: not only that men spoke from God, moved by the Holy Spirit, but that scripture, very scripture, is God-inspired. This is conclusive. The Holy Spirit has ruled dogmatically (as the Son of God did throughout His life and ministry, His death and resurrection) that scripture is God's word and absolutely authoritative. Criticism is free, yea, bound, to clear away the errors of men that copied, of versions, &c. But it is rebellion against God, under plea of “literature” or “scientific methods,” to question what inspired men wrote from God. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” “Not in words taught by human wisdom,” says the apostle (1 Cor. 2), “but in those taught by the Spirit.” Was He at all liable to mistake? or unable to secure the truth in result? God graciously employed men; but it is His word as truly as if His mouth alone had uttered it. This is not theory, but revealed truth.

The Christian stands on the vantage-ground of divine inspiration. This settles all questions. A book might be the genuine work of a given author; it might be authentic. But inspiration insures incomparably snore, even God's will and power and design executed by the instrument of His choice. For what more absurd and misleading than only helping so far as to leave disorder, inconsistency, or error, as His word? Nor is this all. His Son, the Lord Jesus, appeared long after the Old Testament was complete, and just before the New Testament began to be written. He, the Judge of quick and dead, has decided for faith the questions men have been raising as to the Old Testament for the last century and more. They did essay the same speculation, founded on alleged internal evidence, as to the New Testament. This last seems dropt by our English followers of the German school. One of them declares, that the same canon of historical criticism, which authorizes the assumption of tradition in the Old Testament, forbids it in the case of the New Testament, except within the narrowest limits. But “the unique personality of Christ” is of all moment for the Old Testament. He spoke, as He lived and died and rose, for all time, yea, for eternity. His words on the Pentateuch, on the writings of Moses for instance, are wholly inconsistent with the so called critical view of its structure and growth. But men are so enamored of their theory that, rather than abandon it, they are willing to betray His glory. He Who could say “Before Abraham was, I am” knew well the men employed to write the scriptures, and shows Himself in the Gospels at issue with every erroneous opinion current around Him. Had it been His intention to say nothing on the points to be contested (and He knew the end from the beginning), it

was easy for Him to have avoided saying, “He (Moses) wrote of Me,” “David himself said in the Holy Spirit,” Daniel the prophet.” But rationalism is even less for Christ than superstition is; and both are enemies of the truth of God. Is the Holy Spirit too, the inspiring Spirit, to be subjected to profane limitations? That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, says He (in Matt. 8:17), citing Isa. 53:4, from a central passage of that which stands at the head of this paper. Did the Spirit of God also accommodate Himself to popular error?

These chapters are “the most important and most familiar case in which modern critics have agreed to see the work of a plurality of authors in one book” (says the Cambridge Regius Prof. of Hebrew, D.L. 25): “one of the best examples of the methods and results of biblical criticism” (26). “Let us then forget...that this writing—or rather, whether it is the work of one writer or of several, this group of writings—is attached to the book of Isaiah. Let us simply interrogate the document itself, and collect the evidence which it offers concerning its author, and the time and place and circumstances of its writing. Direct statement there is none. Very rarely does the author let his own personality appear at all. But of indirect evidence, indicating the circumstances under which he wrote, there is no lack.” This would be reasonable enough if a merely human book were in debate; it is an absurd begging of the question in an avowed prophecy. But we proceed now to weigh that which appears to him “entirely convincing.” “Jerusalem is in ruins; the temple, in which past generations worshipped, is a heap of ashes; the cities of Judah are deserted, the land is desolate [citing Isa. 64:10, 11]. Israel is in exile, suffering the punishment of its sins. Jehovah has surrendered His people to their enemies. They are being tried in the furnace of affliction. Jerusalem has drunk to the dregs the cup of Jehovah's fury. She lies prostrate in the dust. The chains of captivity tar are on the neck of the daughter of Zion. Zion is bereaved of her children, a barren exile, wandering to and fro. Her children are scattered from their home. Jehovah's wife is divorced from Him for her children's transgressions, and they are sold into slavery for their iniquities. Babylon is the scene of Israel's captivity. Babylon is the tyrant who holds Zion's children in thrall. Babylon has been Jehovah's instrument for executing His judgments, and she has performed her task with cruel delight. The exile has already lasted long. It seems to have become permanent. Jehovah sleeps. Zion fancies herself forgotten and forsaken. The weary decades of captivity are lengthening out into an eternity of punishment. But where faith and hope are strained to the point of breaking, deliverance is at hand. Jerusalem's time of servitude is accomplished, satisfaction, has been made for her ingenuity. The decree is gone forth for freedom, redemption, restoration. The deliverer is on his way. Cyrus has been raised up from the east. He is already in full career of conquest. Babylon is doomed. Her gods are to be humbled. Jehovah is about to lead forth His people in a second exodus which will eclipse the glories of the first, and to conduct them through the wilderness to their ancient home. Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and the temple restored. “What I want you to observe is this—and pray do not take the statement on my authority, but verify it for yourselves—that the prophecy does not profess to predict the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the mission of Cyrus. These things are described or assumed as existing facts. Jerusalem is destroyed, Israel is in exile. Cyrus is already triumphantly advancing from point to point. What is foretold is the speedy deliverance of the exiles from their captivity. All these data point unmistakably to the last ten years of the Babylonian exile as the time at which the prophecy was delivered. Moreover, there are indications, less definite perhaps, but tolerably convincing, which point to Babylonia as the place in which the prophet was living. He speaks in the presence of a dominant heathenism. Idolatry in all its grossness and stupid folly surrounds him. He has

watched the infatuated idolaters manufacturing their gods, and carrying them in solemn procession, and setting them up in their temples. With unrivaled eloquence, inspired by mingled feelings of pity and indignation, he contrasts the power and wisdom of Jehovah, the living God., the God of Israel, with the impotence and ignorance of these lifeless idols. The whole drift of his description makes it plain that it is idolatry in its own heathen home of which he is speaking, not the idolatry of apostate Israelites in Judah. Moreover the prophet is in closest touch and sympathy with the exiles. He is fully acquainted with their circumstances, their character, their sins, their hopes, their fears, their faithlessness, their despondency; and when we note how he unites himself with them in confession, in thanksgiving, in earnest pleading, we can scarcely doubt that he was himself one of them" (26-29).

Such is the rationalistic argument of Prof. Kirkpatrick, pleaded with greater detail by Dr. Driver in his "Introduction," 223-231. Rationalism "can scarcely doubt" its own dream. The truth of God it has lost, its reality, force, and blessing. Are not these University teachers aware that they have slipped into a similar position as an unquestionable skeptic like Mr. F.W. Newman, and on identical grounds? The difference is that he gives up the pretense of divine inspiration and rejects the claim of scripture to be God's word. They are clergymen specially because officially bound to vindicate what, in fact, they undermine.

But (apart from moral feeling and the denunciation they deprecate), what is the worth of the argument itself borrowed as it is from German neology, as this was in part from older English Deism? The earlier chapters do show that the prophet vividly realizes, not only the exile in Babylon, but the deliverance of a Jewish remnant, not only the downfall of that city and its idols under Cyrus but his decree to build Jerusalem and to lay the foundation of the temple. Men assume that a prophet was given to see nothing beyond bearing on contemporary interests! But this is beyond controversy set aside by a vision (ch. 6.) which none of them denies to be Isaiah's—his most solemn call in the year that King Uzziah died. Happily too we have an inspired comment on its bearing which no Christian can question. "These things said Isaiah, because (or when) he saw his glory; and he spake of him." When the prophet saw the King, Jehovah of hosts, he saw the glory of the Son of God, of the Word in due time to be made flesh and to tabernacle here below, full of grace and truth. The prophet as the effect of the light owns himself to be of unclean lips and surroundings, but, touched from off the altar, is cleansed, and goes with the message of judicial blindness to the people that saw not His glory when present in divine love before their eyes. Nevertheless a remnant is pledged, even when His people should be given up to utter insensibility and, as the consequence, desolation and removal from the land. Thus early was foreshown exile from Palestine, and reiterated consumption for those who should return, though not without the assurance of a holy seed. For promise cannot be broken any more than the scripture. But this early prediction in point of fact embraces not the Babylonian exile only, but troubles not yet exhausted, with a righteous remnant secured through all to inherit the promised blessing at the end.

The fact is that the maxim of the skeptics is unequivocally false. No prophecy of scripture is of its own (i.e., private or special) interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). It becomes part and parcel of God's revealed mind, Who made it not to be of isolated solution but to bear on His kingdom in Christ, on which as a whole prophecy converges. And hence the confirmation of the vision on the Holy Mount, which was an anticipative sample of that kingdom. As the will of man did not bring in How

applicable is our Lord's reply, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God!

This is remarkably attested in 1 Peter 1:10-12 too. For we learn that the Old Testament prophets sought out and searched out concerning the salvation now given in Christ, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was in them pointed to. So truly was it God Who wrought in His own certainty above all the ignorance of the instruments He was using. Nay more, it was revealed to them, that not to themselves, but to souls who centuries after believed, they ministered the things now announced in the gospel. Can any sentence be more subversive of the fundamental axiom common to all shades of unbelieving criticism? Yet the context (13) goes still farther, and proves that only at the revelation of Jesus Christ will be fully achieved that deliverance from the ruin of sin which God announced from of old. So far did prophecy stretch beyond the horizon of the prophet's day and rise above contemporary interests.

So, in the closing chapters of Isaiah, is it not superficial in the extreme to say that “they deal throughout with a common theme, viz., Israel's restoration from exile in Babylon”? On their face it is undeniable that from chapter 49. the far deeper question is broached of the Messiah laboring in vain and spending His strength for naught and vanity, the true Israel in whom Jehovah is glorified, Though man despised and the nation abhorred Him, He should be a light to the Gentiles and salvation unto the end of the earth, before the day on which kings will be Zion's nursing fathers and queens her nursing mothers, and Jehovah shall judge the oppressors of Israel and deliver themselves as the Mighty One of Jacob. Still more plainly is the stricken Messiah set before us in ch. 1., Creator yet a man, the obedient man. Most clearly and in the richest detail is He presented by the prophet in chapters 52., 53., as the propitiation for sins, on Whom Jehovah laid the iniquity of us all; not only so, but exalted, and lifted up, and very high, when the pleasure of Jehovah prospers in His hand. For then Jehovah is to divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, This points to a time of judgment and glory not yet fulfilled, but just as sure as that grace which we now know in Him to our everlasting peace and joy, unless we be mere and guilty unbelievers.

But it also refutes simply and absolutely for the Christian the self-confident argument of the “higher criticism.” For the vision of the Messiah is no less openly set forth by the prophet, than the preceding view of the Babylonish exile and the deliverer raised up from the north and the east. They do not deny this prediction of the Messiah, His sufferings and the glories that should follow them. If they did, what must be thought of them in direct contradiction of the gospel, the apostles, and the Lord Himself? They might equally argue that the prophecy does not profess to predict the mission of Christ, His humiliation, His atoning work, and His exaltation. “These things are described or assumed as existing facts,” no less than the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the mission of Cyrus. The Spirit of prophecy in living power habitually carried him who wrote, and notably Isaiah, into the time, place, and circumstances of the prediction.

This the skeptical school, most of whom deny all real prediction no less than miracle, pervert into evidence of the prophet's residence among the exiles in Babylon a few years before the return Some few like our English professors do not go so far as the rest in blank and audacious infidelity. Dr. Driver and Mr. Kirkpatrick, admitting prediction in a small degree only, will not hear that Isaiah wrote the later chapters, any more than chs. 13, 14., and others in the earlier part of the book. They adopt therefore the hypothesis of an unknown and unnamed prophet, more wonderful even

than Isaiah! when Cyrus was conspicuous and the exile drawing to an end. But the truth is that their reasoning would make the prophet to have lived in our Lord's day! to have sustained the contempt of the Jewish people and especially their religious chiefs, to have sorrowed and sympathized with the godly that believe! nay to have seen His triumph in a way not yet fulfilled, and wholly distinct from the honor and glory with which He now sits crowned on High!

It may be added that the latter section of this continuous prophecy presents, no longer Israel the privileged and responsible servant of Jehovah, guilty of idolatry and exiled in Babylon, the great source and patron of idols, but delivered for Jehovah's name-sake; nor the Righteous Servant suffering, especially in atonement, and making intercession, seeing of the travail of His soul and exalted. The final chapters show the Messiah proclaiming not only in His grace the acceptable year of Jehovah but the day of vengeance of our God, the executor of divine judgment on the quick. Yet even in that day He works marvels in the heart and conscience. of Israel, when they too are by grace acknowledged fully as Jehovah's servants, while their proud unbelieving brethren perish forever. For God is not mocked, and no flesh shall glory in His presence.. Hence, as in this part we hear of the new heavens. and a new earth, of the glorious state of Jerusalem,.—Israel, and their land, we see also that Jehovah will plead by fire with all flesh and pour indignation on His enemies, in a time assuredly not yet come. The axiom of neo-criticism is therefore demonstrably false; and the more the chapters are duly examined, the more evidently is the hypothesis cloud and not light.

The Known Isaiah, Part 2: Chapters 40-66

Leaving general remarks, let us come a little closer. There is no analogy whatever between historical books, like those of Samuel, Kings, &c., and the later prophets, as they are called. Nor does more than one account of the same event prove compilation, or lack of harmony; it is due to difference of divine design. See this conspicuously in the Acts of the Apostles, where we have the call of Paul three several times: once as the historical fact (ch. 9.), another time in the apostle's speech to the Jews (ch. 22.), and lastly when before king Agrippa and the Roman governor (ch. 26). It is all well among men to talk of discrepance making for the good faith of a compiler; but such a thought is wholly out of place and irreverent when applied to scripture. For “every scripture is inspired of God,” and one is, therefore, equally true as another, but each adapted to a special purpose of God. Contradictions are apparent only to ignorance. What. ever may be the various methods of historiography in the East or in the West, ancient or modern, we are never right if we forget that, in the Bible, we have to do with God Who cannot lie, whatever be the errata from copyists or the like, here or there; to correct or eliminate, which is the legitimate province of true criticism.

That the prophets, from whom we have words of the Lord to any considerable extent, delivered discourses from time to time, and afterward collected them into the books which bear their names, is not to be doubted; and assuredly it applies no less to Hosea and Isaiah, than to Joel and Ezekiel. When the simple order of chronology suffices, this is of course adhered to; but a deeper order is found in O.T. scriptures, as well as notably in the Gospel of Luke. Inspiration decided this: wherever it was called for, it exists; and to fail in heeding it must be a positive and fatal hindrance to just interpretation. Everywhere in the Bible divine design will be found to rule: divine we say, for it may not have been apprehended fully or at all by the writers.

Again, that an amanuensis sometimes worked instead of the inspired writer, is true in both Testaments. That when a scribe wrote, as Baruch after Jehoiakim burnt the first roll, adding many like words according to the prophet's dictation, is as simple as it is certain. But what has this to do, extraordinary as it was, with other cases having not the least analogy? “Twenty years,” a century, a millennium, can make no difference to the inspiring power of God, Who works by means, or without them, according to His sovereign pleasure and wisdom.

Thus in the New Testament we see that the apostle John wholly omits the agony in the garden, though one of the favored three so close at hand; while Matthew, Mark, and Luke, give it more or less fully, not one of whom was in any measure a witness. Similarly John alone of the evangelists heard the great prophecy on Mount Olivet, whilst he alone gives not a word of it. And why? In no case because of a first-hand knowledge or a more thorough investigation, but because of the governing purpose of God in each Gospel, which excluded in John whatever was requisite in the synoptics, both in a varying form exactly suited to each, and in all with a wisdom of which God alone was capable. Such is inspiration: the greatest contrast possible with the rationalistic effort to conceive the origin and arrangement of the books of scripture, an effort characterized by the

deadly bane of attributing to man what flows truly from God. Hence they lose His mind in the interpretation, because man, not God, is in all their thoughts.

But coming to Isaiah, we may learn much from the early chapters, indeed from the very first. The prophet's eye was given to see the things that were not actually, as though they were, a far-reaching vision into evil issues which no one else could discern, and above all into the bright day, with sure anticipation of divine blessing and glory. No doubt every discourse was given in circumstances which called for it; for God was addressing man there and then. But to limit a prophecy to its local or temporal occasion is unbelieving and unmitigated error; for God ever has in view, and in prophecy has revealed, His own glory inseparable from Christ. It is therefore, in order to meet both, a marked feature in prophecy to give the name of the prophet, and, in all but very short prophecies, to let us know not a little of his local surroundings and the time when he lived and uttered the words of Jehovah. This is distinct in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and in very many even of the minor prophets. Its importance is obvious; and the hand of the enemy ought to be as evident in those modern critics whose labor is directed, by every ingenious device, to raise difficulties and infuse doubts where the written word is plain and sure.

In chap. 1., after the prophet names himself and his object and times, he sets forth before heaven and earth the ungrateful folly and rebellious sin of Israel, and the uselessness of such chastening and humiliation as had been their portion hitherto. What availed their sacrifices, their temple service, their new moons and sabbaths, which their moral corruption and hard-heartedness made only an offense to Jehovah? As yet, however, they are urged and encouraged to repent, assured of His grace if they hearken, but, if not, of consumption by the sword. Then follows a touching plaint over their ruin; for the prophet was given to know that the people would refuse Jehovah's call. The appeal closes with the LORD of hosts executing judgment and purification, when He will restore their judges as at first, and their counselors as in the beginning, and Jerusalem will be in truth a city of righteousness, a faithful state. Zion, it is emphatically declared, shall be redeemed with judgment.

How different from the gospel dealing individually now by grace, and hence of faith! Zion's day of blessing opens with judgment, however great and real the action of divine mercy and truth and righteousness. It is the day of Messiah's power when His people shall be willing and He rules in the midst of His enemies. What blindness to overlook, even in this preface, that, as God foreknew, so He here reveals the end from the beginning! Yet it was an actual appeal to Judah in that day, though being divine for every succeeding day of Israel's sin and ruin. To reduce its character, to say only that it “was providentially designed to meet the needs of that time,” is to make it of private interpretation. While thoroughly addressed to the people's conscience and doubtless blessed to such as had ears to hear, the Spirit of prophecy stretches over all times to the day of Christ's glory in Israel, by judgment as well as mercy, restored according to God.

The prophetic strain in chaps. 2.-4. is no less instructive in another form. For here the prophet opens as he closes with unmistakable pictures of Messiah's reign in power over the earth. It is the more striking if he was led to cite Mic. 4:1-3 as the introduction; and seemingly the “And” of our ver. 2 suits a quotation only, whereas in the contemporary prophecy it is required. But in any case the day of earth's blessedness is in full sight for “all nations” flowing to the religious center, the mountain of Jehovah's house; as chap. iv. shows the Branch of Jehovah, Christ beautiful and

glorious, the remnant holy, Jerusalem purged from its blood by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, and over all the glory as a canopy, like the cloud over the tabernacle in the wilderness. More definite charges of evil both in religion and in state come in chap. 3. But. the same principle applies as in ch. 1. Blessing would follow repentance; only the prophet lets us know that, in any full measure., it awaits the day of Jehovah, and as a fact its opening divine judgments. When they are in the earth, even the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. But where is the maxim of neo-criticism in presence of the prophecy, even at the threshold?

Chap. 5. opens a new prophetic deliverance. It is evidently incomplete if taken alone; for under “a song of my beloved touching his vineyard” the faithlessness of the house of Israel is solemnly set out, notwithstanding all Jehovah's gracious care. It was so flagrant, that He could appeal to the proudest of themselves to judge in their own conscience. Judgment must ensue. Accordingly, after six successive woes from 8-24, Jehovah's hand is declared to be stretched forth unto them, so that the hills tremble and their carcasses are as refuse in the midst of the streets; and that solemn refrain of ominous chastisement begins, (ver. 25) “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” And a still heavier blow is announced (to the end of the chapter) from distant nations rushing swiftly and roaring against them, with nothing but darkness—distress—for the land, and the light darkened with its clouds. It is no less evident that chap. 6., already noticed, briefly interrupts the strain; and also chaps. 7.-9:7: so that only in chap. 9:8 do we find the resumption of the dirge begun in chap. 5., when four times is repeated the knell of coming judgment (vs 12, 17, 21, and ch. 10:4).

But a change comes for their haughtiest foe from ver. 5, when circumstances look darkest, and the answer to their cry of distress at length is heard in ver. 25 (see ch. 10:12): “For yet a little while, and the indignation shall be accomplished, and mine anger in their destruction.” The Assyrian of the past is but a type of their mighty antagonist at the close, when Israel once more shall enter relations with Jehovah, and livingly and forever. The time hastens, but is in no sense come yet; for it is immediately followed by the Messiah's manifest reign of righteousness and peace, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Thus chaps. 11., 12. are the true and bright termination of what commences so sadly in chap. 5.

But what of the intercalated three chapters and more? No mere man would have thought of it: no arrangement more at issue with literary taste or scientific skill. Chronology wholly gives way to the higher need of a design worthy of God, and hardly conceivable save in the “second cares” of the great, prophet, when not first giving out each portion, but combining them finally as his collective book according to a wisdom above his own. For chap. 6. shows Jehovah's glory rejected in Christ: a far more serious sin and of deeper consequence than their national failures and the national chastisements down to the end. In the midst of that external history came Jehovah, as in chap. 6., and incarnate, as in chap. 7. But they and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets which were read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him. The interposed portion pursues the episode of the intervening Immanuel with the assurance of total ruin for all adversaries, however girt and whatever their counsel. Meanwhile He was to be for a sanctuary to a believing remnant, but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel; and for this application we have the unerring word of the Holy Spirit in the N. T. What a key to the religious history of the Jews whose awful apostacy is sketched to the end of chap. 8. In contrast with that darkness the great light would shine in Galilee of the nations, as in fact it did.

Then suddenly, as so often in the prophets, we are transported from the grace of the first advent to the glory and judgment that will characterize the second; and the kingdom of the divine Messiah follows in connection with Israel, just as we see in chaps. 11.-12.

Here then we have a two-fold witness in this remarkable but divinely complete prophecy of Isaiah. Is it true that it was “so near to the events which it foretells?” Or is this a dream of pseudo-criticism?

The Known Isaiah, Part 3: Chapters 40-66

The second division of the book may now be compared with the assumptions of modern criticism. Its inherent unsoundness and fatal issues only the more appear, as is ever the case where the starting-point is false. We have seen that every one of the subsections of the first refutes the premise. For the historic occasion, however fit, may and does go far beyond it, and is limited to no proximate application. Instead of this, it stops not short of the grand display, not yet arrived, of the divine glory in the kingdom of the rejected Messiah. Pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic, whatever their shades of difference, are uniform in converging on this purpose—of God. Isa. 1; 2-4., 5-(6. 7.-9:7)-9-12., are not only inspired witnesses against this πρ■τον ψε■δος, but divine disproof of it, and most conclusive. For, as the rule, prophecy of scripture is constructed by the Holy Spirit to be of no such private interpretation, or self-solution. By all His prophets since time began God spoke more or less clearly of seasons of refreshing from His presence when He will send Christ, the fore-ordained for Israel, to bring in times of restoring of all things. This is the revealed truth of the N.T., which theology denies openly and everywhere, even in the less advanced disciples of Oxford and Cambridge. For these, like their more daringly skeptical German guides, are not ashamed to avow and defend the paradox that the truly prophetic character of the work gains by denying that Isaiah wrote e.g., of Babylon's fall more than a century and a half before, and by referring such predictions to some unknown prophet, a few years before the exile expired! Look at the prophets of the exilic period, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel: each having a divine lot suited to the instrument, all adapted to the varied circumstances, but none in the least like the challenged chapters of Isaiah. Modern criticism dreams of an imaginary, or at least (and contrary to all analogy) an unnamed prophet at a crisis for which grace provided amply by known prophets, and seeks to rob alike Isaiah of his brightest jewels and believers of their settled certainty. The incredulity of this school tends to shake the credit of scripture from the least thing to the greatest! And this is yet more evident when we glance at chaps. 24-27; for the last four seem the due close of this second series.

On the very threshold before the ark of Jehovah the rationalistic idol is fallen, with its head and hands cut off. Of these oracles or “burdens,” characteristically though not exclusively on the nations (as chaps. 1.-12. centered in Judah or Israel), the first contradicts flatly the neological axiom, that the situation presupposed must be that of Isaiah's age. But the prophecy itself explicitly declares the contrary. And every scripture is inspired of God. There is no real question as to the text on external evidence, any more than on internal, save for men credulous enough to believe their own capricious canon, imposed by infidelity and opposed to all possible proof. These modern critics are avowedly on the human ground of degrees of probability; faith never is, but on that of absolute subjection to scripture as the voice of God. It is false, as they argue, that it is a question between traditional views and internal evidence. Here they cannot deny that the text, to be believed and interpreted, declares unambiguously against their primary assumption. Yet so pre-occupied and blinded are they by their own tradition about a century old, that they dare to fly in the face of the original text as well attested here as in any other part of the book which they own to

be inspired. Alas! it is with the written as with the personal Word, “how can ye believe which receive glory one of another, and the glory that is from the only God ye seek not?” The authority of the ancient prophets, of the N. T. apostles of our Lord, and of the inspiring Holy Ghost, has less weight in their eyes than the conflicting hypotheses of Koppe, Doederlein, Eichhorn, Justi, and. Gesenius, of Hitzig, Knobel, Umbreit, Ewald, Kuenen, Wellhausen, and Riehm. These, with their English followers, when their scheme requires it, join hand and hand for their own thoughts in throwing overboard the word of God in the face of all true and irrefragable testimony. Infidelity is a withering and destructive evil. Let them beware lest it advance to greater impiety.

A similar principle applies to the rationalistic treatment of chap. 21:1-10. It follows a chapter unquestionably Isaiah's, as it precedes a burden of kindred character (22.) which nobody as far as I know disputes to be his. But if his, and most distinctly predicting new and special features of Babylon's fall, it uproots their foundation as to prophecy, and duly in its place follows up the trumpet blast of chaps. 13., and 14. On other grounds many of these freethinkers attribute chaps. 15., 16., to some earlier prophet! adopted and reinforced by Isaiah. Does such speculation deserve other answer than that men, without the fear of God, may think and say anything? If they trembled at the word of Jehovah, we should be spared such empty words. Again, chaps. 24-27., are attributed to a prophet distinct from him whom they style the Deutero-Isaiah, as well as from the original source of chaps. 15., 16. There is no check on these vagaries when these adventurous mariners abandon alike the captain and the chart, compass, and anchor of God's word in any just sense of these terms. Enough has been said to vindicate the prophet generally. We may now interrogate the internal evidence so recklessly misdirected by the rationalists. To the believer (and an unbeliever is out of court as an interpreter of scripture) chaps. 13., 14., are reverently accepted as Isaiah's according to the opening words; against which on the legitimate canons of textual criticism no valid objection has ever been laid by Jew or Christian, by heterodox or infidel. Not only so, if intelligent, he sees divine wisdom in the order which departed from mere chronology for the higher and graver reason of setting in the van the last and victorious enemy of Judah which was, though far later than the other adversaries, to attain an altogether new relation of imperial power as Daniel would show in his season. The comparatively distant outlook of the oracle gave way to that design. The disputer of this age seats himself on a vain bench of judgment, and, yielding to human thoughts, necessarily misses the mind of God; he lacks the obedience of faith and does without the guidance of His Spirit in subjection to His word. “The burden concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see” is undoubtedly future throughout and has no trace of allusion to the circumstances of the prophet's age, place it even as the rationalists would. The Jews are not represented as in exile; which is only prophetically involved in the prediction (14:1-3) of Jehovah's choosing not Judah only, still less a remnant, but Israel, and setting them in their own land: their hope still unaccomplished but sure, when they shall rule over their oppressors; not “servants” or bondmen “this day,” as the remnant owned solemnly in Neh. 9:36, as before in Ezra 9:9 (R. V. “are,” not “were” as in A. V.) long after the return from Babylon. The moral ground, as we learn from elsewhere, did exist. It began in the wilderness, as Amos long before told Ephraim in predicting their exile beyond Damascus; and this was no less true of Judah. But that of revolted Ephraim was precipitated by the unrepented sin of Jeroboam, with yet more flagrant results, till the Assyrian swept them away; as the fidelity of several kings of David's house was a stay for Judah, till the idolatry, rebellion, and perjury of king, priests, and people provoked Jehovah's wrath, and “there was no remedy,” and those that escaped the sword were carried to Babylon. The burden

contemplates the scene as a whole, not in the least events in progress or such as a spiritual mind might discern. It is in the strictest and fullest way predictive. There is no spirit unworthy of Isaiah, though that of the Christian was not and could not be till Christ came and the Spirit of adoption was given. The style is as noble and the imagery as bold and beautiful as in any other effusion of the very chiefest of the prophets.

It was not “alien to the genius of prophecy” even in Lev. 26, besides other horrors for the land and their cities, to warn of scattering the chosen people among the nations and the land enjoying her sabbaths, to say nothing now of Deut. 28, on which holy and genuine book of Moses the skepticism of professing Christians has laid its profane hand. In this burden God gave Isaiah not only to prophesy of Chaldean Babylon, the first of the great world-powers, as the object of hatred, overthrow, and slaughter to the ruthless Mede, the executor of divine judgment, but to see in inspired perspective the last holder of the world-powers that should successively follow Babylon, with which Israel's deliverance synchronizes. And on the face of the strain, how is it that these men, so wise and prudent, fail to see that between the fall of imperial Babylon, and the ruin of the future chief of the last empire, comes a most momentous prediction, long after the one and still longer before the other, of the perishing of that great city's very ruins?

Yet what was more improbable humanly, even if any were so credulous as to accept the figment of an unknown seer living toward the close of the exile? “It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged” (Isa. 13:20-22).

The book of Daniel (6.) proves how little Cyrus thought of destroying fallen Babylon. Even Darius Hystaspes, after its revolt and recapture, broke down only its outer walls. Xerxes, to punish the Babylonians for their resentment at his plunder of the temple of Belus, was satisfied with destroying that great building. Alexander the Great even encouraged them to rebuild what Xerxes had leveled; and his project to make Babylon the metropolis of his universal empire only fell through by his premature death. Afterward it declined under his successors, not only through their wars but the building of Seleucia, as before by the Persians Ctesiphon, not far off, expressly to drain away its still vast population; and hence Strabo in the days of Tiberius spoke of it as to a great degree deserted. So Pausanias toward the close of the first century (Arcad.) said of this Babylon, once the greatest city of all that the sun beheld, that nothing now remains but her walls. The turning its site into a park for hunting wild beasts had contributed to its rapid devastation; and the fresh bed of the Euphrates, when it was stopped and caused an enormous marsh, yet more. Still the apostle Peter directed his first epistle, if not his second, from Babylon, to the Christian Jews of Asia Minor. And Theodoret in the fifth century of our era speaks of some Jews living there; which is fully confirmed by the issue of the Babylonian Talmud thence at the end of that century or beginning of the next. Yet it is folly to deny the total ruin of the once “golden city” because of a village here and there on the skirts of that awful desolation so graphically portrayed by the prophet. It was not so with the other imperial cities; it will be so with Rome, for the Holy Spirit has so written. Only He could have given Isaiah or John to predict either.

It is pleasant to note one observation of value, which Dr. Driver states; as we too have for many years insisted in these pages, as to which many students of the prophetic word are at fault. “The prophecy (14:24-27) has no connection with what precedes. It is directed against Assyria, not Babylon” (p. 202). He does not see, though it is most important, that it is expressly placed here subsequently to mark that, when the complete fulfillment takes place, and the day of Jehovah arrives not in part but fully at the end of the age, the last Assyrian will fall after the destruction of him who finally represents “the beast” or system of power which began with Babylon. Historically it had been the inverse, for Assyria fell long before Babylon. But by and by the beast will be destroyed from above; then will Jehovah tread the Assyrian under foot on his mountains, which was not literally so of old. Compare Mic. 5 But though distinct they are connected (for there is no fresh “burden” here), but only connected so as to bring out their true order in the tremendous scenes of the latter day. The Assyrian is neither Antichrist nor the beast, but the chief of the north-eastern hordes of that day, of whom the prophets have much to say.

But we have not done with the connection. It is not to close as that of the Assyrian to fall after Babylon. “In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden,” which the Revisers rightly connect with Philistia or Palestina, rather than with the Assyrian, as did the A. V., or those who arranged the paragraphs. Whatever may have been the historical earnest in the past (and commentators, as usual, differ widely, some understanding Jewish rulers, others successive kings of Assyria and the slain Sargon followed by Sennacherib), the true aim is to place the complete destruction of the old internal enemy of Israel by Christ in line with the final judgment of Babylon and Assyria, so as to bring out Jehovah's founding Zion in that glorious day, where the afflicted of His people take refuge—Zion, the divine contrast with Babylon, Philistia, or any other Gentile boast. Compare Psa. 87, with Psa. 2; 14:7., 20., 48., 65., 76., 78., 84., 132., 146., 147., 149.

The pride of Moab is finally put down in chaps. 15. 16., whereas the throne of David is set up. See Amos 9. So in chap. 17. Damascus is to be a ruinous heap, when Ephraim too that looked for her help ceases to have power, and the mighty rush of nations interfering to their destruction is rebuked in the latter day. Then in 18. we see a land, outside the limits of the distant peoples on the Nile and the Euphrates, playing the part of protector to the Jew, a maritime power seeking to restore the chosen people in this land; but when all seems to promise good fruit, the project comes to nothing through the old jealousy and hatred of Israel; and then Jehovah of hosts undertakes and accomplishes the work Himself. For up to this point of these varied “burdens,” or that which is connected with them, all end in deliverance for Israel. Can anything be more absurd than the rationalistic idea of Ethiopia here? Cush was Asiatic as well as African, and its rivers the seat of powers so well-known and formidable to Israel. The power favorable to Israel but failing is beyond either, and left intentionally with no express explanation. The people scattered, and in that time, when all appears lost once more, brought to Jehovah and the place of His name, the mount Zion, are the ancient people. But one must not expect intelligence of His purpose in the word from those whose principle dishonors it.

The group of “burdens” (chaps. 19-23) with the immensely enlarging revelation (chaps. 24-27.) which closes them in mercy to Israel through judgment executed on earth, the heavenly places, and the dark powers of evil, has its own characteristic differences, though all without doubt from the prophet Isaiah. They are occupied with the troubles of the nations beginning with Egypt and Ethiopia; but they include in a singular way Babylon and Jerusalem itself, which evidently are

styled in an enigmatic manner and in reference one to the other (chaps. 21., 22). The solution seems to be that, though the fall of Babylon by the Medo-Persian armies is rehearsed with striking force, it implies that Jerusalem “the valley of vision” will be laid waste by the warriors of Elam and Kir when Babylon could be described as “the desert of the sea “: a fulfillment still to come for Jerusalem, though Babylon has long been so. Compare Zech. 14:2. The Assyrian is the great leader, whether historically or prophetically. The wisdom of nature failed Egypt and her allies; the independence of Durnah will not avail; nor shall Arab and Kedar escape the overflowing scourge. As Babylon fell and sunk into a desert with scarce a parallel, so Jerusalem suffers for its shameless forgetfulness of God and of their unique relation to Him; and so does the crowning Tire with its merchant princes, for Jehovah of hosts would stain the pride of all glory.

Then follows a desolation which, beginning with the land and people of God, extends to the world at large. Yet from the uttermost part of the earth songs are heard; for not only are the wicked and treacherous smitten, and the earth itself, but Jehovah will punish the hosts of the height on high, and the kings of earth on the earth: as our Lord said, “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,” and not the earth only and its rulers. And Jehovah reigns in mount Zion. The prophet accordingly breaks forth into thanksgiving (25.), and furnishes the song for that day in Judah (26.), with a final hymn (27.) when Jehovah punishes in that day leviathan the fleeing serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent, and the monster that is in the sea: the old enemy viewed emblematically as acting by political powers against God's glory in Israel.

As to not only chap. 21. but these last four chapters rationalism vents its trite and baseless objections. If Isaiah's, as there is no solid reason to doubt, its occupation is gone. The N.T. proves (in 1 Cor. 15), that the last continuous prophecy is future. For in that day the covering over all peoples will be destroyed, the first resurrection will be realized, the indignation of God against Israel over-past, Satan's bad eminence extinguished, and the outcasts once more and forever worshipping in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. If we believe the word of God, the neological hypothesis perishes in its own corruption. W. K.

Chapter 150

The Known Isaiah, Part 4: Chapters 28-35

How does rationalism fare when the next or third division of the prophecy is seriously examined? We have a series of chapters, about not Jerusalem only but all Israel on earth (28- 35.), that have the common character of dealing with the final judgments which usher in more and more brightly the everlasting deliverance and blessing. Hence any past historic circumstances appear but little, so as soon to bring into relief the grand ways of God with and for the Jews at the end of the age. In this group of “Woes” the Holy Spirit with the utmost moral propriety begins, not with the Assyrian, but with Ephraim or Samaria in chap. 28., and with Jerusalem, or Ariel the lion of God, in chap. 29. The Lord cannot overlook but must judge the evil of His own people, if He is about to put down their enemies unsparingly. The crown of pride shall be trodden down under a destroying tempest; and so it was. But even the remnant erred, priest and prophet; and self-indulgence indisposes to the word of Jehovah, let Him meet His people as He may. Whereon the prophet turns to the scornful rulers in Jerusalem who boasted of their prudent policy to escape the overflowing scourge. “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol have we made agreement” (15). But Messiah is the sole and sure foundation-stone which the Lord Jehovah lays in Zion. As he that trusteth shall not make haste, lies and falsehood will but ensure judgment, and the overflowing scourge tread those down who sought shelter in the power of darkness. How can any Christian doubt that the prophecy on the side of both good and evil looks far beyond whatever partial application it had in Isaiah's day? Nor does the N. T. (Rom. 9; 10, 1 Peter 2) intimate that all was fulfilled, because the only Man was come Who could be without impiety an object of trust. It cites what was accomplished, but leaves for a day still future Jehovah's rising up for His strange work and His unwonted task, a consumption that is determined for the whole land or earth. Even men are taught a variety of dealings for a desired end: how much more God teaches? If men were not pre-occupied, they must have perceived that this chapter implies a successful attack on Jerusalem, as well as the downfall of Samaria. What has hindered is the fatal mistake of looking only at the past, or the yet more daring result of imputing an exaggeration or error to the prophet when he predicted far more. Isaiah distinctly tells the scornful rulers of Jerusalem that the Assyrian scourge should tread them down; and the believer is sure that, as this never was the fact in the past, it must be in the future. “Scripture cannot be broken."

But the interest increases when we understand chap. 29., which unveils a subsequent picture, a second attack on Jerusalem; and when they are reduced to the lowest, instead of being trodden down, “The multitude of thine enemies shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away; and it shall be in an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited by Jehovah of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of devouring fire” (ver. 4-6). Now this goes far beyond even the blow which an angel of Jehovah dealt on the Assyrian camp of old. For two considerations distinguish the future from the past. First, scripture does not speak of more than 185,000 warriors then left dead; here it menaces with sudden destruction the multitude of all the nations that fight against mount Zion. Next, it declares that in that day the deaf shall hear and the blind see, and the meek increase their joy in

Jehovah, and Jacob shall not now be ashamed; it is what these critics call the “ideal future.” When it comes, it will be a deep and plain reality. For “so all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11). Never yet has “the altered character and temper” manifested itself in the nation, because the time is not come, though it be as sure as the prophecy is inspired. Chap. 30. is no less unmanageable on the neocritical hypothesis, with “the ideal future,” its necessary, though vague, misleading, and irreverent resource. For, if real and certain, however distant, the hypothesis falls. Read it in faith, not as a skeptic, and its entire fulfillment in the consummation of the age is in accord with the general bearing of prophecy; as “the glorification of external nature” corresponds to the new age no less than a “transformed” Israel, henceforth blessed and a blessing in Jehovah Messiah. The punishment of the Assyrian (“for the king also,” ver. 33) wholly differs from that which befell Sennacherib or his mighty men, and it awaits a corresponding foe of Israel in that day. Compare Dan. 8:23-25; 11:44, 45, Joel 3:9-17, Mic. 5:5-9, Zeph. 3:8-15, Zech. 12:9; 14:1-4. Chaps. 31. 32. confirm the believing conclusion manifestly; for Jehovah's instruction in that day (4, 5) exceeds all yet experienced, as also does Israel's renewal (6, 7). Of course chap. 32:1-8 is once more characterized as “the ideal future;” not a word about Christ and His reign, swamped under a phrase which may mean all or nothing. The truth is that this scripture, after the fall of the Assyrian, reveals the consolation of Israel in Messiah's reign, and the latter rain, or the outpouring of the Spirit, when the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted a forest. How can a rationalist face such revelations, and retain his unhallowed brief that the prophet never abandons his own historical position, but speaks from it? How God is left out is plain enough in another's words: “We will not say that prediction is impossible, or necessarily limited to vague generalities"! Could such language come from such as tremble at Jehovah's word? Their a priori principle is false and unbelieving; their arguments are not founded on a holy interrogation of the document, but a misuse of the historical starting-point, to ignore or contradict the evidence it affords that the Spirit of prophecy embraces the judgment of the quick, in part or as a whole, in order to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom on earth.

Quite in its true prophetic place, whatever the date of separate delivery, stands chap. 33. which appears to be the invasion of Gog (cf. Ezek. 38, 39.) rather than the Assyrian: the mighty ruler still farther north, who will have strengthened in vain the king of the north of Daniel (i.e. the last Assyrian of the other prophets). It is therefore as easy to confound these two (for both express the same policy), as most also identify in error the last ruler of the Roman beast with his political vassal but religious chief, the Antichrist who reigns over the apostate Jews in Palestine. “At the noise of the tumult tire peoples are fled; at the lifting of Thyself the nations are scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap, shall they leap upon it. Jehovah is exalted, for He dwelleth on high; He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.” It is likely, if not certain, that Sennacherib furnished the historic occasion for this as for the previous enemy; for as of old, so at the close both are beyond measure haughty, ambitious, all-exacting, and truce-breakers. The question is, To what, as his aim, does the Holy Spirit direct our faith? Those whose system it is to see little but the shell, cannot be expected to taste the fruit. They cannot learn God's mind who hear only an Isaiah, or a deutero-Isaiah. But it is a judgment of hypocrites in Zion (14) as well as of the last proud enemy that invades the land; and no wonder, for “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” Jehovah is judge, lawgiver, and king; He is unto Israel glorious and will save them. “Then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven

iniquity.” It is a divine forecast of Messianic deliverance and blessing here below.

In solemn contrast with this prospect is the closing call (chap. 34.) on nations and peoples, the earth and all its fullness, the world and all that comes forth of it, to that immense judgment of the nations and their armies in Bozrah and the land of Edom; with which chap. 63. may be compared. Dr. Driver ventures to tax it with “glow of passion,” recalling that which animates the prophecies against Babylon in ch. 13. and Jer. 50. 51. He too cannot rise above man smarting from some recent provocation. This, with its style, disproves Isaiah's authorship, and points to the period of the exile! God is not in the thoughts of this school, many of whom far exceed their English protɪgɪs, and are as scornful as the unbelieving rulers of chap. 28. as blind toward scripture as the deep sleepers of chap. 29., and as trustful in man's strength and wisdom as the rebellious children of chap. 30. What is this but paving the way for the apostasy that will surely come, before the Lord Jesus appears in judgment of living man? Part of that judgment is the scene here predicted in Idumea, followed immediately, and purposely without a break or a preface, by the reconciliation, not of believers only as now, but of all creation in the day of the Lord, Zion being His earthly center. Compare Rom. 8:18-23, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, Heb. 2:5, Rev. 20; 21 Our Lord, in Matt. 19:28, spoke of it as “the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory” (being now seated on His Father's throne, Rev. 3:21); also the apostle Peter as “times of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). There is an age to come before the judgment of the dead which ushers in the eternal day; and Christians are apt to think of the judgment of the living, when the Lord returns in glory, as little as the Jews did of the judgment of the dead. Both are revealed with full light in scripture; and they are distinct, though the Lord Jesus will execute both (John 5:22).

Chapter 151

The Known Isaiah, Part 5: Chapters 36-44

The historical episode of chapters 36.-39. is the fourth part of the book, and bears in an important way on what precedes and follows. For the Assyrian, who threatened Jerusalem after the extinction of the kingdom of Israel, though in no way the fulfillment of the many prophecies in all the foregoing portions of Isaiah's vision, was included in the divine perspective. Thus what was then accomplished became the earnest of all that remains to be fulfilled, much of it by express marks reserved for that day when, of all we seek out of the book of Jehovah and read, no one of them shall be missing, none shall want its mate; for His mouth, it hath commanded, and His spirit, it hath gathered, the doleful witnesses of His final judgments. One of the commonest forms of unbelief where skepticism is not extreme is to abuse the part accomplished in the past to set aside the incomparably more momentous times to come. The effect is to the last degree mischievous. The authority and truth of the divine word must be thereby undermined; because the language through such a misinterpretation seems to go far beyond the event, and has therefore to be explained away by supposed oriental-isms and the like devices, even when positive failure is not imputed. Again, on this scheme Israel loses the special hope of Messiah and His kingdom, and all the Gentiles their world-wide blessing, and creation too; not to say that the still higher purpose of glory in Christ over all things, which the church is to share with Him, is all brought to naught for souls so ensnared. For this unbelieving snare shrouds the Second man in darkness and reduces all at best to the first man, his emptiness and his doubts, his boasts and his sins. It is the enemy's work.

Hence the historical parenthesis serves the admirable purpose of enabling us now, and the godly Jewish remnant in the latter day, to discriminate between the past and the future of “the Assyrian” in the prophecy. For no instructed believer would contend that the prophet himself could then draw the line any more than the pious of his generation. He expressed the mind of the Holy Spirit Who saw to the end from the beginning and never loses hold of the real unraveling of all complications in the triumphant establishment of God's kingdom. Then Messiah appears in His power and glory, and evil in every form is judged by His hand at once mild and strong, and righteousness reigns in peace and blessing. Nor is there a weightier evidence conceivable of God inspiring the prophetic word than the fact that, while affording adequate accomplishment in the comparatively near, it commonly stops not short of what can only be fulfilled in the end of the age. All the parts of Isaiah's vision bear this witness, as do the prophets generally. But these chapters, their counterpart in 2 Kings 18-20, and more briefly 2 Chron. 32, contribute invaluable aid to spiritual intelligence, and forbid the error of assuming that all was exhausted in the overthrow of Sennacherib.

Thus reading, faith holds without question to every word in Isa. 8-9, and sees a final Assyrian at the head of peoples and far countries associated at the close to thwart Jehovah's purpose—to blot out Israel and appropriate Immanuel's land. But Immanuel! God is with us: such is the remnant's watch-word in that day, though He be for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel—the unbelieving mass. But the despised light, Jesus of Nazareth, reappears, no longer in weakness to be the holy sacrifice, but in glory to break the oppressor's rod, and the arms

of their foes shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire. And the government shall be upon His shoulder Who shall be called Wonderful, and no more “ideal King.” Nor is there need to squeeze the words of Isa. 10:28-32, any more than from ver. 12 onward, to suit Sargon or Sennacherib, as well-meaning men do; still less to subscribe the skeptical alternative, that the prophet “intends” merely to draw an effective imaginative picture of the danger threatening Jerusalem. This imagination may seem proper to Dr. D. after Ewald, Schrader, and other free-thinkers; but believers reject and resent such profanity. God does not inspire false prophecy or baseless fancies. We have also seen a similar guard in the subsequence of the Assyrian overthrow on Jehovah's mountains, to Babylon's fall in ch. 14. This is only true or even fairly explicable as future. Still plainer are chaps. 24.-26. of the second part. And the third part as a whole demands the future day for any full answer. “For a consumption, and that determined upon the whole earth,” though heard from Jehovah, awaits fulfillment; and it will be fulfilled, as surely as His mouth uttered it to and by the prophet. Jerusalem is not only to be invested but taken in part by the Assyrian of the last days (cf. Zech. 14 also); but, on his second attack after an interval to complete the capture, he not only falls but is punished condignly by divine interference, as in ch. 30. &c.

The history therefore by inspired wisdom supplies precisely what is needed,—evidence of the highest kind which enables us to discriminate what has been already accomplished from the still more momentous things to come, which can be fulfilled only by-and-by in the final downfall of the Assyrian as of every other foe, and in the triumphant establishment of God's kingdom over the earth, when converted Israel shall be delivered by the Messiah returning in judgment of their Gentile adversaries as well as of their own apostates. It is clear as light in the three scriptural accounts, each true to the divine design of the books wherein they respectively occur, that the great king never besieged Jerusalem, contenting himself with sending his servants and a considerable portion of his force from Lachish, whither Hezekiah had sent his confession and also the heavy fine imposed on him; that the Assyrian general in command (Tartan), the chief chamberlain (Rab-saris) and chief cup-bearer (Rab-shakeh) did come to Jerusalem, where the latter reviled Hezekiah, threatened the worst of siege-horrors in the ears of those sitting on the wall, and blasphemed Jehovah as if powerless like other gods; that thereon king Hezekiah and his servants rent their clothes, and, while the king humbled himself, his servants were sent to Isaiah, who gave a re-assuring answer from Jehovah to the king's petition. It is no less clear that Rabshakeh returned to his master, who had departed from Lachish to Libnah, and sent a message again to Hezekiah shorter and yet more blasphemous, and that Hezekiah spread the letter before Jehovah with prayer in the house of Jehovah, when the prophet sent to him a far fuller answer (which, as even skeptics confess, bears unmistakable marks of Isaiah's hand), that the Assyrian king should not approach the city, and should not shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a mount against it, but Jehovah should turn him back by the way he came. That very night the angel of Jehovah smote 185,000 in the Assyrian camp, “all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains.” So Sennacherib returned with shame, and (when, we are not told) was slain by two of his own sons in the house of his god.

But all this, however striking as an earnest, fails in every respect both as to Israel and as to the Assyrian, if we see not two sieges of Jerusalem in the last days. For in the first the city will be taken, so far at least as that half the city shall go forth into captivity, while the residue shall not be cut off from it. But in the second Jehovah shall go forth against those nations, the Assyrian being

their chief; how utter the confusion and ruin, many scriptures bear witness, and notably of the Assyrian consigned to the doom prepared of old, executed then, as the N. T. shows also for the Beast and the False Prophet at the end of the age.

It may be added for consideration, that the sickness which befell Hezekiah, the record of which follows in ch. 38., yields its own divine lesson. For as the two chapters before give the type of the outward deliverance (partially executed then, fully when the Lord Jesus appears in His glory), so here is the type of the inner ground of all complete deliverance in the sickness unto death of David's son, prefiguring His sufferings Who really died and as really rose from the dead, whereby Jehovah will make an everlasting covenant with Israel, even the sure mercies of David. Compare Acts 13:34, and 2 Tim. 2:8.

Hezekiah however was not the Son of promise; so that even 2 Chronicles does not pass by the sad result of a heart lifted up with pride before the princely ambassadors from Babylon. And the prophet comes to the king (ch. 39.), convicts him of the sin, and pronounces the word of Jehovah, “Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” Here then is exactly the point of departure for the last comparatively continuous division of the book, the most distinct prediction of the Babylonish captivity. Unbelief therefore must bow silently and abashed, or strangely contend that ch. 39 is not Isaiah's any more than those to the end of the book. This men who profess to be God's servants are no more afraid to do, than the wicked king of Judah to cut and burn the roll of Jeremiah.

Chapter 152

The Known Isaiah, Part 6: Chapter 40

Having now come to the main effort of skepticism against “the vision of Isaiah,” which denies to the noblest of the prophets the last and noblest portion of his prophecy, let us examine with more detail the scripture before us, and the argument of the neo-critics, if argument it can be called. For it assumes, what they ought to prove, that the prophet must have lived in the Babylonian exile while Cyrus was pursuing his career of conquest, and that the Jews there were in despair or indifferent, whom these chapters were addressed to arouse and expostulate, with announcing the certainty of the approaching restoration. It assumes that such an immersion of the prophet's spirit into the future is not only without parallel in the O.T., but contrary to the nature of prophecy. For this rests on the basis of the prophet's own age and corresponds to the needs then felt, however far-reaching into the future. Transient flights forward are allowed; but such a sustained transference to the future as Isaiah would imply for these chapters, if his, is held to be against all example, and to indicate a prophet writing toward the close of the captivity. What they call the internal evidence is their chief ground:—Jerusalem often represented as ruined and deserted, the Jews suffering at the hands of the Chaldeans, and the prospect of return imminent, with the prophet addressing them in person, as not contemporaries of Ahaz and Hezekiah, but exiles in Babylon. Minute as well as more general traits of style, and other spiritual traits are supposed to confirm the conclusion of their difference from the undisputed writings of Isaiah. But what is here given expresses their principal and common plea, whatever the points of difference otherwise.

It is well to observe, by the way, how little the question turns on profound Hebrew scholarship, which their followers everywhere parade as if it were the grand if not sole qualification for judging aright. Whereas it is certain that the stress of their hypothesis lies on that which is open to all.

Our English Professors do not go so far as some who have greatly influenced them. But the well-known F. Hitzig (“Der Proph. Jes., 1833,” a work which Dr. D. says is “the source of much that is best exegetically in more recent commentaries”) lets out the evil root of unbelief. “A prophetic prescience must be limited to the notion of foreboding, and to the deductions from patent facts taken in combination with real or supposed truths. Prophets were bounded like other men (!) by the horizon of their own age; they borrowed the object of their soothsaying (! from their present; and excited by the relations of their present, they spoke to their contemporaries of what affected other people's minds or their own, occupying themselves only with that future whose rewards or punishments were likely to reach their contemporaries. For exegesis the position is impregnable (!) that the prophetic writings are to be interpreted in each case out of the relations belonging to the time of the prophet; and from this follows as a corollary the critical canon: that that time, those time-relations, out of which a prophetic writer is explained, are his times, his time-relations; to that time he must be referred as the date of his own existence” (pp. 463-468)!!

It is hard to conceive a more infidel exclusion of God from inspiration. Believers will surely reject a canon which rests on the merest assumption, and cleave to the apostle's authoritative words, which deny that prophecy was ever brought by man's will, but men spake from God, moved or

borne along by the Holy Spirit. It is then a question of His wisdom, Who deigns to vouchsafe no little variety in His communications by the prophets. Here we are discussing not only the most copious but the most varied and comprehensive of all the O.T. company; and Isaiah had already uttered a numerous set of predictions. For these occasion was given in the moral ruin of Israel and even Judah, which faithful kings could not retrieve, however for a time a stay and means of transient blessing. But even then the prophet's word from Jehovah exposed the ever growing evil, called to repentance; and set forth assured deliverance in the end. This was not a partial return from captivity; but glory and righteousness reigning in the chosen people; and not they only, but all the nations flowing to the center of Jehovah's house established on the top of the mountains and lifted above the hills. In vain have the fathers as well as moderns become wise in their own conceits, denying the hope of Israel by-and-by to exalt Christendom now. Rationalists see that this application is groundless, and, having no faith in the true and future fulfillment, count it “ideal,” and the prophecy a mistaken dream. It would, indeed, be the grossest Orientalism to allow that the glorious hopes in Isa. 2:1-4 and 4:2.6 were realized in the return from Babylon, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, or the Jewish religion since then. How verified will every word be, when on the repentance of the Jews God sends the Lord Jesus, Whom heaven has received till times of restoring all things, of which God's holy prophets have spoken since time began! So Peter preached; so we believe. For the present, the Jews believe not; and the rationalists even less.

The fact is too, that the series of “burdens” in our prophecy opened with as exact a parallel as the case admits of in this book without going farther. For there we had the destruction of Babylon portrayed in the most vivid colors, though there was no historic basis stated in either chap. 13. or 21.; and the implacable part the Medes played in the former, not Medes only but Elam, the Persian contingent; and the destruction is on that first occasion pursued to the end in the day of Jehovah, so as to prefigure the imperial system as a whole judged forever, with the full and final deliverance of God's ancient people—the “all Israel” which shall be saved and set in their own land in that great day, as chap. 14. shows. But the leaving out of Babylon makes an irreparable gap in the circle of these “burdens “; while its judgment most properly opens Jehovah's dealings with the nations, as it first was placed in an imperial position; which in one form or another goes down to the end; and the subsequent notice of the Assyrian, in its exactly proper place (ch. 14), becomes meaningless when taken out of this connection—a mere waif or stray. Hence, these skeptics are compelled by their fatal system to deny these chapters also to Isaiah. It is ever so with scripture no less than morals: one falsehood stuck to soon calls for more to give semblance of consistency. Nothing delivers souls but the truth of God. This they do not look for, and so are in the dark. They confide in the reasonings of Koppe, Hitzig, and such like. Their sole faith is in themselves, even if they shrink from being so outspoken, and perhaps are yet unprepared for the same degree of profanity. The very small residue of faith, which Dr. D. professes in page 230 for the purpose of avoiding misconception, will neither stand in the day of trial, nor does it save his scheme from the charge of incredulity even now.

It is a lack of spiritual intelligence to expect the same method in God's inspiration of Isaiah as with Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel or any other. Each had his own individuality, as God had His special design.

Thus Jeremiah, heartbroken, did very characteristically direct his expostulation to the conscience of the Jews, “alike to king, priests, prophets, and people; as he also held out Babylon rising into its

peculiar supremacy on the fall of Jerusalem, but for its idolatry destroyed and the Jew set free by the conqueror, the type of a greater judgment and a full deliverance at the end of the age. At the same time as the moral prophet he proclaims the virtues of the new covenant for all the people restored to the land in that day. But Isaiah had a far higher flight and larger scope than Jeremiah. Yet the latter, who drank the bitter cup of Jerusalem's sorrow more deeply than any other prophet, was given to look beyond their fall to the day “when they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of those who went back to the land after the fall of Babylon, the prophetic word reveals a vast deal more, as it contemplates nothing short of a complete restoration to divine favor for the Israel of “that day.” Hence the force of “My people.” Then there will be no room for attenuating at all the consolation of the message: the appointed hardship will be over; the iniquity pardoned.

The great principles of this immense change follow. First, a spiritual preparation is announced (vers. 3-8). Now this is by all the synoptic evangelists applied to the mission of John the Baptist; and the fourth Gospel declares that the favored herald of the Messiah applied it to himself. To give all these the lie would cost the unbelieving school little, though probably their English disciples might wince. But if the inspired interpretation is to rule, the rationalist house is proved to be built on the sand. For what had the Baptist's testimony to do with the close of the exile? And who that accepts the divine authority of the N. T. can deny that the prophet does bound forward at once many centuries?—the very truth which these critics reject with one consent, for their own gratuitous assumption, which is as opposed to the prophetic text in the O. T. as to the inspired comment in the N. T.

Where again is there the faintest shadow of a restoration from Babylon in vers. 9-11? in 12-26? or in 27-31? We have indeed in Ezra the divine account of the remnant's return after the striking proclamation of liberty by Cyrus. Is it really so that they regard that little and feeble return as fulfilling, “Behold, your God! Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompence before him. He shall feed his flock as a shepherd,” &c. It was the king of Persia who took the initiative; and Ezra himself confesses later on “We (the returned Jews) are bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem” (ch. 9:9). Ezra, an inspired man, saw no such way prepared through the wilderness as corresponded with the bright promise, and would have rejected as blasphemous that the return of the remnant then was the triumphal progress of Israel's king, as a Conqueror Zionward, leading before Him His prize of war, the recovered nation itself. Never, never will this be, as the rejected Messiah told them, till they shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Alas! how different is all yet, while that word of apostate unbelief stands unjudged, “We have no king but Caesar.” More manifestly than ever are they Lo-ammi.

To the believer it is a prophecy awaiting its fulfillment. Let men beware of palming their worthless expositions on the word of our God. For the consequence of it is that those who lean on man fear not to treat His word with the contempt due only to these misreadings of unbelief. How plain to faith, that the true bearing of what is thus travestied coalesces with Isa. 25:9-12; 35; 52:7-12, 10-12, &c! How absurd to apply all to the Return!

It is quite true then that in the vision the prophet sees and hears the things to come. Even in this introductory chapter it is John the Baptist he hears, the herald of Christ; as he next in the Spirit calls on the Jews to behold Jehovah triumphing on their behalf in His day, to the shame of human presumption, and yet more of idols, to the cheer and joy and strength of His own that have no might, for His is all might, wisdom, and tender mercy.

But repentance, which John preached and symbolized in his baptism, is by the action of the word on the conscience. Thus the Spirit withers up all confidence in self; and this is as much needed by “the people” as by sinners of the Gentiles. “For all flesh is grass: surely the people is grass.” Only God's word abides forever, the incorruptible seed whereby any are begotten again through faith. This Israel will learn livingly.

Then shall they appreciate the grace of their divine Messiah. As His glory and power subserve His goodness to His people, so will they rejoice that their Shepherd is none less than Jehovah, Who counts all creation a very little thing, and the nations less than nothing. What a death-blow to a likeness of Him!—to an image graven by man! He that marshals the host of heaven, and calls each by name, gave poor Jacob his princely name; and He, far from fainting, imparts power to the faint; and they that wait upon Him shall renew strength, as Israel will in that day.

Chapter 153

The Known Isaiah, Part 7: Chapters 41 - 44:1-5

The exordium of chap. 40. laid down clearly that the pledged and stable comfort God designs for His people is inseparable from their repentance by the word and Spirit of God judging nature; as the glad tidings center in their divine Messiah, Who will feed His flock like a. Shepherd, the Ruler and Judge of all the earth, Whose wisdom and power have already shone in creation, and reduce all the nations to a cipher compared with Him, to say nothing of likening Him in their folly to a graven image, or of Israel's unbelief of His watchful eye and efficacious succor.

Chap. 41. follows this up and opens His first indictment(40-48)in the great controversy with Israel. It was the idolatry of the nations, and even of Shem's line, which gave occasion to the dealing with Abraham, chosen, called, and faithful, as the root of promise here below. So when the time came, itself predicted (Gen. 15), to deliver Israel and judge the nation which had held them in bondage, it was avowedly “against all the gods of Egypt” that Jehovah executed judgment. Israel, witness of the one true and living God, failed even under the king of peace; who went after other gods in his old age, and the kingdom was divided. Ephraim, guilty from the first of idolatry for political expediency, was at length broken in pieces that it should not be a people. Judah would follow backsliding Israel still more treacherously “till there was no remedy;” and, because of this persistent idolatry in the house of David, God gave them over to the Chaldeans and set up the imperial system of the Gentiles till the Lord appears for their judgment, and for the full and final deliverance, not of Judah only but of Israel, then to be restored spiritually as well as nationally, and ruled to the joy of all the earth by Him Whose right it is, when idolatry is judged and perishes forever. Then only and thus shall the earth be filled, surely not without the Spirit's power, with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

The return from Babylon was but an earnest of the restoration which hinges on Israel's heart turning to Christ. Then, not before, is the veil taken away (2 Cor. 3:16). When their soul loathed Him here below, His staff Beauty was cut asunder, and the covenant with all the peoples was broken; when He was bought for a slave's price and crucified, He cut Bands, and broke the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (Zech. 11). Every Israelitish hope was buried in His grave, but will rise again in Him at the allotted season: for what word of God can perish?

Meanwhile, founded on Him Who, dead and risen, is now glorified on high, the Holy Spirit is come to gather the children of God and joint-heirs with Christ into one body, the church, which is therefore a heavenly system, though for the present on earth but united to Him the Head above. Those who compose that body are accordingly called to suffer in conformity to His cross, sustained by the assurance of His love and all the privileges of possessed redemption as well as union, and waiting for the fellowship of His glory, Who is coming for us that we may be with Him where He is. Hence we stand contrasted with Israel in most momentous respects of walk and worship, privileges and hopes, as the N. T. shows fully. We may and ought to profit by such scriptures as are before us; but they treat, not of the church, but of God's ancient people, about to be swept into Babylon, and even before that captivity comforted with the assurance of deliverance

and restoration through divine mercy and power, only by and by to be adequately appreciated.

The chapter then begins with a summons, which chap. 1 attests as the prophet's style, to the islands and peoples. Jehovah deigns to plead! “Let us come near together to judgment.” It is again a question between the true God and vain images. Because His people served not Jehovah their God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore, as Moses predicted (Deut. 28), should they serve their enemies in hunger and in thirst, &c., plucked from off the land of promise,. and scattered over the earth. Accordingly Jehovah demands, Who raised up from the east him whom righteousness calleth to its foot? The God Who knew declared beforehand by His prophet. It was He indeed Who wrought as well as spoke. “He, shall give nations before him, and make him rule over kings; he shall give [them] as dust to his sword, as driven stubble to his bow. He shall pursue them and pass in safety, a path with his feet he shall not go” i.e., so should he speed. The description of the conqueror is resumed in ver. 25, as one from the north as here from the east, which singularly met in Cyrus the Persian, who welded the Medes into his kingdom before his crowning overthrow of Babylon. But he is not yet named as in the end of chap. 44. and the beginning of 45. The effort of jealous rabbis followed by some Christians to apply the earlier words to Abraham is vain. It is a prophetic challenge on His part Whose power could make His words good, in contrast with dumb and lifeless idols, to which, as tutelary deities, dread of the avenger drove the Gentiles (ver. 5-7) in their ignorance of Him Who calleth the generations from the beginning, the First and with the last.

But Israel are addressed in terms most assuring as God's servant; they were not to fear: He would uphold them, and confound all inflamed against them. Their weakness is most pointedly owned (14); yet in virtue of their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, they should thresh mountains and hills, which when scattered like chaff should leave Israel to joy in Jehovah, Who would interpose for the needy in the wilderness, even more gloriously than of old, that they might be satisfied it was His doing and even creating. And in the renewed challenge, which repeats the reference to the as yet unnamed Cyrus, the test of predicting is made most definite. “Bring forward your arguments, saith the king of Jacob.” What a witness to the Israel of that future day, that He is not ashamed to acknowledge them! “Let them bring forth and declare to us what shall happen: show the former things what they are, that we may apply our heart and know their issues or make us know things to come. Declare the things to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. Yea, do good or evil, that we may be astonished (or examine) and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: an abomination is he that chooseth you.” Then the veil is removed from the conqueror, whom God alone revealed, i.e. Who first before any other to Zion (said), Behold, behold them!

Is it not impudent unbelief, in the face of such a divine claim, for modern rationalism to found on the prophetic style, which speaks in the Spirit of the future as if the past or present, that it was written while the brilliant progress of events was going on, just before Babylon fell and the captivity ended and the return began? Nay more, the skeptical hypothesis implies knavery in the pseudo-Isaiah, and especially in him or those who put these chapters into the vision of Isaiah. It is hard to imagine a more diabolical thrust at prophecy, however covered up under soft words. Proof there is none. The reasoning simply assumes that Isaiah could not be the prophet, because the reference to Cyrus' Medo-Persian career, the overthrow of Chaldean idolatry, the fall of Babylon', and the return, argue the writer cognizant of these momentous events as on the eve of

accomplishment, the earlier of them actually a fact. That is, to any upright mind the critical hypothesis insinuates fraud.

Now the far later prophecy of Jeremiah (ch. xxv.) did define the length of the exile in Babylon as 70 years; and Daniel (ch. 9.) is declared to have learned thereby the approaching change. The sole imposture is in the critics. Those holy men of God in no way exaggerated the event, long before Isaiah, much later before Jeremiah, and recognized by Daniel, the only one really in Babylon, as just about to be. So far from elation, the last gave himself to prayer and humiliation for the sins of Jerusalem and the people. Daniel in fact did not go up with the returning remnant, learning (by a fresh prophecy on that very occasion) how far the return would be from the promised restoration, and that the Messiah, when He came after a determined interval, would be cut off and have nothing, instead of even then bringing in for Israel His righteous reign. All this is in perfect accord with the chapters before us. Ch. 41:8-20 was in no way fulfilled in the return. It is still unaccomplished. The return, important as it may have been, was a mere pledge of Israel's glorious hope; and the aged prophet showed his believing estimate of it, by remaining where he was, and received a subsequent assurance from God that, far from losing aught, he should rest and stand in his lot at the end of the days (ch. 12.) The promised blessing of the people is after unexampled tribulation, and Jehovah will make them, when truly repentant, a judicial instrument, “worm Jacob” and “mortals of Israel” though they be, to break down and scatter the proud power of all their foes to God's glory.

What confirms the truth, and disproves the wretched shallowness of neology, is ch. 42:1-4 and its certain application to the Messiah, unless we despise the inspiration of the N. T. also, and count skeptics more reliable than Matthew (chap. 12:17-21), who vouches likewise for Isaiah as the prophet. It is Jehovah's Servant pre-eminently, and beyond all comparison. Not Cyrus is here, not Israel though in ch. xli. 8 called His servant, but Christ, exclusively said (ch. 42:6) to be given “for a covenant of the people and a light of the Gentiles.” It is not an ideal figure, but the real Messiah. It was not yet the hour to lift up His voice in judgment, as the blind Jews desired, though it must have been their own destruction. Meek in heart He sought not glory but to do His Father's will, rejected by an unbelieving people, and about to go far lower to save them or any, so as to be a light to the Gentiles when Israel will have none of Him, caring for the weakest and in no way discouraged till He have set judgment, and the isles shall wait for His law, as in the day of His open power and glory, when all shall be fulfilled, not an earnest only. Then will close the former things, and a new song will be sung to Jehovah as in a new age, which neither the return nor even the first advent responded to, though the latter led to higher and eternal things not here contemplated. Idolatry still flourishes, even in Christendom. And Israel had been verily and exceedingly besotted (vers. 18-20), and therefore degraded of Jehovah to the lowest. There is no real difficulty in seeing only Israel in His blind and deaf servant, the strongest contrast with Messiah. The Revisers correct “perfect” into “at peace,” as the younger Lowth “perfectly instructed” and the elder compares “Mussulman.” It refers to their full endowment of privilege; and in no way is it moral, for they are censured and judged for their idolatry, who should have been a witness for the true and living God to all mankind. Therefore were they given over to severe chastening and humiliation.

Chap. 44. dwells on Israel's relation to Jehovah, in view not of their sins and their punishments, but of His unfailing fidelity in sovereign grace. Clearly this awaits fulfillment, as it goes far beyond any past installment. No wonder that those who adopt the fatal error of limiting prophecy to an

immediate future are incapable of seeing or expounding the truth, and must regard the inspired vision as utter exaggeration, to say the least. But the fault is solely in themselves. Jehovah will infallibly stand by Israel, and more conspicuously in the future than in the brightest memorial of the past, and bring their seed from the east and the west, from the north and the south (5, 6). This far exceeds the return from Babylon; and not Gentiles, but Israelites only are here in view.

The blind votaries of idols are once more summoned; and as Jehovah guarantees the redemption of Israel, so He reiterates the proof of a true God in His predictions, committed to them as His witnesses, and here reveals the fall of Babylon expressly, and of the Chaldeans whose cry is in the ships (14), again claiming to be Israel's king, when they had none outwardly. It is not only that the new should surpass the old, but Jehovah reveals that they may know it beforehand. To limit prophecy to its evidence when accomplished is to take the place, unconsciously, of an unbeliever. Jehovah is not silent about His people's sins: so much the more wonderful is the declaration of His full forgiveness and rich blessing for His own sake (ver. 16-28, 44:1-5). What Christian can allege that this is as yet completely fulfilled? Christendom, it is true, long gave up faith in God's mercy to Israel by-and-by, in flat opposition to Rom. 11, and many other N. T. scriptures, to say nothing of the O.T. Ancients and moderns are apt to be alike guilty of high-mindedness in this respect. God's gifts and calling abide; and Christendom will be judged, no less than Israel; but His mercy shall triumph yet. O the depth of His riches!

Chapter 154

The Known Isaiah, Part 8: Chapter 44:6 - Chapter 48

We have seen the glory of Jehovah set forth in creation and providence, but not more than in His gracious condescension and unfailing care of the people whom He chose and separated to Himself as His servant, witness of the one true and living God against all false gods and especially idols, the snare of no nation more than of Israel. This was especially seasonable, when the prophet had solemnly set before Hezekiah the ruin even of the residue who clung to David's house, when that royal stem, on which their standing and hopes depended, should be carried with all their treasures to Babylon. For on earth was no mother, no patroness, of idolatry, more ancient, powerful, or renowned than Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms.” What then seemed so much to compromise His name as that Babylon should sweep His people off the land He gave them into captivity? On the contrary it was because of apostacy from Jehovah for Gentile idols, and this at length and persistently in David's house, that Jehovah gave them up to a land of graven images where men were mad upon idols. Judah's sin became their punishment, that they might learn, both from Jerusalem and in Babylon, the brutish delusion and destructive shame of trust in gods that man made.

Hence long before the tune the prophet told them of the judgment Jehovah would visit on Babylon, by raising up one from the east and the north an avenger in righteousness. This was of so much the deeper interest to the chosen people, because its capture would open the door for their return. Yet who can overlook that the terms of the prediction, while definitely applying to both events, go on without doubt to Christ? Nor is it merely Christ in the past but in the future also, times for restoring all things, which the apostle Peter preached (Acts 3), as God spoke of them by His holy prophets since time began. It is a marked and integral part of the testimony that God herein challenges the devotees of idolatry to declare what shall happen, and things, in not the near future but “the latter end of them.”

The assumption therefore that this must have been a wise anticipation, when Cyrus was in his mid career of conquest, and a very few years before the fall of Babylon, is not alone absolutely without proof, but morally irreconcilable with the language and argument of the prophet. To suppose the union of the Medes with the Persians as an actual fact, and Cyrus already triumphant in N. W. and Central Asia, is to make the prediction a vain mendacious boast, instead of a communication divine beyond question. If it be Isaiah's, as its place professes it to be, following his humbling words to Hezekiah, what can be more forcible in establishing the claims of the one true God, raising up the avenger and unveiling the future, itself but the pledge of one still more glorious, to the Jew when the crisis so loudly called for it? Yet in doing so He laid their iniquity bare with an unsparing hand, even while He calls them to sing a new song to Himself in view of a deliverance, not yet fulfilled but sure, when the day of sovereign grace dawns on repentant Israel, renouncing their own righteousness and looking to Him Whom they pierced. Nature began with all things good from God, which man, listening to the enemy and sinning, reduced to ruin; grace begins with the ruin, gives the Second man and last Adam to bear the judgment of the sins, bring in divine righteousness, and establishes at last a new heaven and a new earth. Israel's was a similar story

over again; and so is Christendom's. In all God is faithful, above all in Christ by virtue of His person and work, Who vindicated God as to the past, present, and future; as He must reign till He has put all the enemies under His feet. When all things have been subjected to Him, then shall the Son also be subjected to Him that subjected all things to Him, that God [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] may be all in all, instead of all things being under the glorified Man in the previous kingdom.

After this richest encouragement to His undeserving people (44:1-5), He again raises His controversy with idols, and sets out the folly as well as wickedness of man's making his object of worship (6-20), with a most touching appeal to Israel, formed to be His servant; as in view of sovereign grace He will dispel their transgressions as a mist and their sins as a cloud (21-23). He asserts His frustration of lying signs and senseless diviners, while He confirms His declared counsel, saying of Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, as of the deep, Be thou dry, and of Cyrus (for now he is named), He is my shepherd and shall accomplish all my pleasure, who will say of Jerusalem, She shall be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (24-28).

So notoriously and punctually it came to pass: none need travel beyond the written word of God to learn it. Jehovah, with power supreme, has not only the knowledge of the end from the beginning, but imparts conspicuously of that knowledge for the sustenance of faith, at the very time when His people, because of faithlessness, were reduced to be no longer a vessel of His power. It was Jehovah that held Cyrus' right hand to subdue nations before him, to break in pieces the doors of brass, and to cut asunder the bars of iron. For Israel's sake He named Cyrus, though he knew not Jehovah, that men might know from east and from west that there is none beside Him. It was He that raised up Cyrus in righteousness, to build His city, and let go His captives, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts. Yet this unparalleled return of the Jew from Babylon is as evidently but the shadow of an everlasting salvation, not yet Israel's, when idols and their worshippers shall be in the dust, and in Jehovah all Israel shall be justified and shall glory; yea, and every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall swear (45).

In chap. 46 follows the utter humiliation of Bel and Nebo, chief idols of Babylon, more manifestly impotent than the beasts that bore them, unable to save, and themselves gone into captivity. Again is Jehovah contrasted in His loving patience toward Israel with the image that could neither move nor speak nor save; whereas He was giving proof, in their deep depression for their sins and especially their idolatries, that Jehovah is God, and none else, and none like Him, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the. things that are not yet done, to be shown ere long, in calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of His counsel from a far country, though Zion has still to await salvation, and Israel Jehovah's glory, which faith would never count far off.

But ere that great day the virgin daughter of Babylon must sit in the dust (ch. xlvii). Warned solemnly as no Gentile monarch had ever been, a warning recalled and interpreted by a Jewish prophet of the captivity, “the head of gold” did not take these things to heart nor remember the end thereof. Hence he that long beforehand predicted the captivity, now followed it up with Babylon's desolation to come suddenly, not knowing nor suspecting nor able to ward it off, spite of enchantments and sorceries, spite of astrologers, stargazers, and moon-prognosticators: there is none to save Babylon.

The controversy closes in chap. 48., wherein Jehovah appeals to Jacob's house, called by the name of Israel, and come forth out of Judah's waters: a remarkable description which clothes the Jews with the honored name of him, who, wrestling with God and with men, prevailed. Here again Jehovah reminds them of His declaring, the former things long ago, lest with their neck of iron sinew and their brow of brass, they should impute to their idol what the Eternal had long predicted and at last accomplished. Now He caused them to hear new things, that they might be kept, if it could be, from their perverse rebelliousness, and not be cut off but be refined in the furnace of affliction. He the First and He the Last again challenged, Which among them had declared these things? It was their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, Who, alike by this very prophecy as by others, bore divine witness to His witnesses; and by the Gentile chief He raised up against Babylon, He would wean them from futile images to the assurance of His own sovereign goodness and unmerited fidelity. For “there is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked.” And what wickedness grosser or more ungrateful in Israel than idolatry?

Yes, there is a deeper depth to devour the guilty people; and this the prophet opens as the still more awful indictment laid to their charge in the next section.

The Known Isaiah, Part 9: Chapters 49-52:12

Here the ground taken by neo-criticism is untenable self-evidently save to unbelievers. For the section of the prophecy which chap. 49 opens is beyond just question occupied with Messiah's rejection and its results. This is the second and still graver indictment alleged against the Jews; fruit of the same unbelief, though under deeper mercy despised, which had left Jehovah for idols, the charge against them in the previous section. Hence Babylon and Cyrus disappear now, as Assyria has no place in either. Nor can any statement be less accurate than Dr. Driver's (Lit. O.T 217) that “these chapters [40.-66] form a continuous prophecy, dealing throughout with a common theme, viz., Israel's restoration from exile in Babylon.” In a measure it may be accepted as applicable to the first of the three parts, though even here it falls lamentably short of its full scope. For in the very preface (chap. 40.), we have, if we accept the interpretation of the N. T. as authoritative, John Baptist's ministry, and the coming of Jehovah in the person of the Messiah, His appearing in glory and in triumph over idols, as tender and faithful as He is matchless in power and wisdom. We have also a result in sovereign grace far beyond anything realized by the returned remnant. If these men dare to say that the prophecy is false and is never to be fulfilled let them stand out as open infidels. They may not all be so; yet they are all doing the enemy's work.

The truth is that “the servant” is the key-note of the continuous prophecy. It runs through all the three divisions, each of which has its special aim and proper character. Hence in 41:8 we have “Israel my servant,” responsible to bear witness of the one Living God against idolatry, but utterly failing and therefore captives in Babylon (the ancient champion of image worship), till Jehovah raise up a deliverer from the north-east, named expressly before the section closes, His shepherd to perform all His pleasure as to Jerusalem and the temple, as well as to execute judgment on Babylon and its dark superstition. Even here, however, and in an early part (chap. 42:1-4), care was taken to point out an incomparably greater “Servant” than Israel, Cyrus, or any other, Who should come in meekness, but not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law. How different from His blind “servant” in the same chapter, abandoned to heathen spoliation for their more guilty heathenism, whatever over-abounding mercy may do another day not yet arrived!

With chap. 49 the heavier and more heinous charge is pressed. The prophet sets before us throughout the section the aggravated guilt of the returned remnant in rejecting their own, the true, Messiah. It is a striking instance of a principle common to the N. T. as well as the O., the replacement of the faithless “servant” by the faithful One, of Israel the empty vine by Messiah the True Vine, the fleshly son of God called out of Egypt by His Only-begotten in due time. Indeed it is the question for faith and unbelief between the first man and the Second, which underlies all revelation, and determines the lot of every soul before whom it comes, for not time only but eternity. Messiah takes up Israel's place, as Jehovah's servant in whom He will be glorified, but in view of His rejection says (ver. 4) “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and vanity: yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work [or wages] with my God.” The next verse is the answer and demonstrates the substitution of Messiah for Israel, not distinct only but

for the present opposed to Him. “And now saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that Israel may be gathered to him (yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God shall be my strength); and he said, It is a small thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will even give thee for light to Gentiles, to be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (vers. 5, 6). The text is here rendered in a form substantially as learned Jews prefer. What can be plainer, even if we had not the apostle's application in Acts 13, than that here we have the blessed result of the gospel for Gentiles, on the refusal of the Messiah by His own people? No doubt despising man joined the nation in its apostate abhorrence, and the cross followed; which infinite grace made the ground of salvation indiscriminate to Jew or Gentile that believed: a state of things wholly distinct from what was before the first advent and what will follow the second, when Jehovah will prove that He never forgot Zion, but at length will contend with her enemies, and save her children then repentant and looking to Him Whom they pierced. Thus verses 7, 8, quite confirm the grace now going out far and wide (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2), while the ch. passes on to the millennial rescue and exaltation of Israel on earth. All is due to the Servant, and is God's gracious use of His rejection. Meanwhile the Jew has lost Him as King in Zion; and the believer (whosoever he may be) has Him as Savior, Lord, Priest, and Head in heavenly glory.

How does the self-styled higher criticism fare before this divine light? It is really, what the cross of Christ outwardly seemed, emptiness and vanity: an unspeakably sad sight, a mob of Jewish foes inciting Gentiles against Christ and God's inspired scripture, with traitor disciples playing into their hands! May they tremble at Jehovah's word, lest that come upon them that is spoken of in the prophets, lest they perish as despisers in their inexcusable unbelief. For no canon more pervades the school than the denial of true prophecy independent of local and actual indications, and especially of any unveiling of the distant future. Hence the foregone conclusion of incredulity. The question is begged. They neither prove nor disprove. They assume as their primary principle that “to base a promise upon a condition of things not yet existent, and without any point of contact with the circumstances of situation of those to whom it is addressed, is alien to the genius of prophecy” (Lit. O.T 201). From the first prediction in the Bible to the last the very reverse is nearer the truth, allowing for the subordinate cases to which it may apply. From the great body of scriptural prophecy on the contrary is excluded private i.e. isolated solution; because it converges as the rule on the yet future kingdom when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah and His glory as the waters cover the sea. How transparently weak to deny the prophecies of Babylon or any other to Isaiah, because of a century or more, when their Great Unknown (itself the utmost folly for a prophet and opposed to all inspired facts) beyond controversy predicts the postponement of Israel's hope through the rejection of Messiah many centuries after, the consequent grace to Gentiles, and the yet unaccomplished Zion in the latter day when kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers! This rationalism is the more irrational, because, in what they acknowledge as incontestable, the leap into that future vision of glory on earth and for Israel especially, is even more detailed in chaps. 2., 4., 9., 11., 12.; so that the argument, if it is to be so called, is as illogical and capricious, as it is unbelieving.

But turning to chap. 50., we have the new controversy of God carried on still more fully and profoundly. The Messiah is set forth evidently: the hidden glory of Jehovah on one side, and on the other the humiliation in grace of the dependent and obedient Servant, so competent and ready in

love to others yet rejected and abased to the uttermost, and after all the shame and suffering helped of God and justified: a justification, which the apostle in Rom: 8. was inspired to claim for the Christian in virtue of His sacrificial death. And this wondrous but true portrait, not of some ideal personage, but of our Lord Jesus Christ, so amply and closely verified in the N. T., is presumed to be drawn by the unknown prophet of the rationalists “towards the close of the Babylonian captivity”! Not one solid reason has ever been given for the hypothesis; but if we conceive it for the moment as certified fact, what would there be but the equally sure refutation of rationalism? What bearing on contemporary interests was there just before the return, more than in Hezekiah's days when the captivity in Babylon had been announced? How these skeptics labor for the fire and weary themselves in vain, when they strive to rob Isaiah, not only here, but of such chaps. as 24.-27., and 34., 35. Assign them to whom they please, the mouth of Jehovah has uttered them, and there shall be a fulfillment in the due time: blessed they that believe, wretched beyond utterance those that render null as to themselves the counsel of God. What point of contact with the circumstances of those addressed can be adduced at one time rather than the other for such predictions? To suppose an unknown prophet of the highest rank equal to Isaiah, or superior, is itself a very unreasonable and uncalled for fancy; especially when incorporated with his writings, the greatest known. Even the shortest strain is carefully attributed to each writer; and on a human point of view, no one less needs, less admits of, a supplement than the stately son of Amoz; on divine ground, the effort savors of impiety, wholly subjective as it is. That the latter seven and twenty chapters are on the whole the grandest and most important of the book is beyond dispute. Nothing but the malignant revolutionary violence of modern infidelity accounts for the scheme; which after all leaves God's book in possession of true prediction of Christ many centuries before He came to fulfill the most momentous part, as He will surely come again to fulfill all that remains.

Chaps. 51.-52:12 apply the truth to the people of God or at least to the godly remnant of the future, regarded in their strict prophetic bearing. There is first a triple call: “Hearken to me, ye that follow righteousness” (vers. 1-3), “Listen (or attend) to me, my people” (vers. 4-6), and “Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness” (vers. 7-8); which indicate progress spiritually. Then follow three calls: first, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah” (vers. 9-16), a call for divine intervention; next, “Rouse thyself, rouse thyself standing, O Jerusalem” (vers. 17-23), an address to the city of God's choice; then a final “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion” (52:1).

Then comes the joyful message, which certainly has not the smallest relation to the plain of Shinar, but to the high lands of Palestine, as the tidings coalesce not only with chap. 40., but with 24.-27. 32.,33.,35., indeed with 11., 12., and chapters earlier still. It would appear that at this epoch of the future, Jews will be once more captives among the Gentiles, who then go out, priests and people, far more gloriously than the trembling remnant who left Babylon of old by the decree of Cyrus, or even the nation of old leaving Egypt in haste. We know from Zech. 14:2 that, just before their divine deliverance, half of Jerusalem shall go forth into captivity. But Jehovah too shall go forth and fight against those nations as when He fought in the day of battle. Alas! one cannot expect faith as to the future from those who disbelieve His word about the past. This one scripture it seemed well to cite as decisive proof of Jewish captives, just before the close of man's and the beginning of Jehovah's day.

The Known Isaiah, Part 10: Chapter 52:13 – Chapter 57

Here the antagonism of the modern critics to the truth becomes as evident as it is without excuse. Their theory totally breaks down. What historical circumstances furnished a ground for such a prediction? The critics fall back on one or other of the rival evasions of Jewish unbelief, in order to escape the varied and overwhelming proofs that the Holy Spirit sets forth the Lord Jesus in the expiatory sufferings and future earthly glory of the Messiah. Impossible to ask an accomplishment of the verses that close 52. and fill 53. more detailed or more comprehensive, more reflecting divine glory, more providing for the guilt and ruin, yet deliverance, of God's people through One Righteous Man a sacrifice for many. Every resource of hostile ingenuity in the east and in the west, of ancient times and of modern, has beaten upon this house; but it has not fallen, for it is founded on an impregnable rock, around which are strewn the dishonored remains of God's enemies.

The sole objection which has any appearance of truth is the difficulty to ignorant minds that all its scope is not yet fulfilled. But this could not be consistently with God's ways and counsels, and is the less reasonable, because of the prevalent trait of prophecy which regards the end of the age, when human departure from God meets its judgment, and righteousness shall reign universally to His glory. No display of grace can match the Savior sacrificially dying for our sins on the cross; and what display of glory to compare with Him coming forth from heaven to put down every foe and establish a kingdom which will embrace not only all the earth but all things in heaven also? Now the prophet in presenting His humiliation and especially His death as an offering for sin does not fail to speak of His exaltation and height of glory when He is no longer hid in God but manifested to the nations, to the abasement of kings, and triumphant over the great and the strong. Christ at His First advent made clear what His then work was, and what remains to be made good at His Second. So He said, “First must He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation” (Luke 17), and “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory” (Luke 24)? God's ways are not as man's, who, if he aspire however high, lies down in sorrow, and closes in death; but Christ went down the willing Victim into death and judgment, in order to bear away sins righteously and lay a basis for holy blessing even of the most guilty, never to be sullied by evil, and never to pass away; and this to the glory of God the Father.

These are Dr. D's words (p. 221): “52, 13-53, 12 deals again with the figure of Jehovah's ideal Servant, and develops under a new aspect his character and work. It represents, namely, his great and surprising exaltation, after an antecedent period of humiliation, suffering, and death, in which, it is repeatedly stated, he suffered, not (as those who saw him mistakenly imagined) for his own sins, but for the sins of others.” Is it not distressing that a man should see and acknowledge so much which applies clearly, unmistakably, and exclusively to the Lord, and yet withhold the confession of His name? Who but Christ ever suffered from God for the sins of others? The italics even are his own. Yet not a word honestly lets out the truth of the One efficacious substitute for sinners, though “it is repeatedly stated” as he does not deny but confess throughout the passage. Hence the effort to apply it to Jeremiah, or to Josiah, is as vain as to conceive the Jews to be here

so personified. They suffered for their own sins, as all scripture shows, and most justly. Nor has any nation been less patient even under God's chastenings, instead of suffering as a lamb without one spot or blemish or complaint. Even the more ancient Jewish interpretation points to the Messiah; and the evasions alluded to are modern comparatively (on the part of Rashi, D. Kimchi, Aben Ezra, as well as Saadiah Gaon and Abarbanel) through the strain of controversy with Christians. Their very Prayer-book testifies to this truth against them repeatedly.

And why is it that those baptized unto Christ and His death swerve from the evident aim of the prophecy with the more incredulous and antichristian Jews? Alas! it is the same spirit of error, the same antagonism to the truth so humbling to man, so glorifying to God and His Son. Possibly Dr. D. allows that the prophecy, though not all accomplished yet, really refers to our Lord, as the N. T. everywhere attests. But if so, where is the vaunted necessity for showing a specially suitable occasion in Isaiah's age? Where the distinct bearing on contemporary interests? Is the situation presupposed that of any O.T. prophet's age any more than Isaiah's? Is not the predicted glory based upon a condition of things existent only in Christ's life, death, and resurrection? And is not this, the necessary conclusion, destructive of the neocritical hypothesis in every form? The authoritative comment, the best interpretation, is the N. T., especially when we admit the light of the Lord's return from heaven to bless Israel and all the nations, times of restoring all things of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began.

Hence even Dr. D. cannot get rid of the impression. There is no frank confession of faith, no gratitude for mercy so rich as the prophecy expresses toward Israel, and the New Testament applies in the largest and surest way to all who now believe the gospel. Still it needs no argument to demonstrate that the atoning death of the Lord Jesus perfectly meets what was here predicted many centuries beforehand; and no Christian ought to question that the anticipated glory and blessing for the earth as its result will assuredly follow in due time, which the hulk of prophecy also awaits.

Chap. 54. looks on to that day. It was in no way applicable to the returned remnant from Babylon. The principle does apply and is applied to the grace of God bringing in so many unexpected children of Abraham as the gospel does by faith of Christ (Gal. 4). But the direct and complete fulfillment can only be as a whole, when Israel's sorrows are ended, and they are gathered and established in righteousness, as far from oppression as fear, and the Holy One of Israel shall be called indisputably the God of the whole earth. No one of intelligence will say that their bright expectation is realized; every believer may well rejoice that God will be thus gracious to Israel in a day that hastens. It cannot be till Christ comes again.

Chap. 55. opens the door of mercy to others beyond God's ancient people. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” When Jehovah intervenes to save Israel according to the prophet, it will be on principles of grace which will bless the Gentiles who feel their need and hearken to His word to the ends of the earth. It does and can not fully express the gospel now; because, for those who have been baptized and put on Christ now, there is neither Jew nor Greek, all being one in Christ; whereas in the new age Zion shall be no longer plowed nor Jerusalem become heaps, but the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills, and peoples shall flow unto it as the religious center of

the whole earth. Then the first dominion, the kingdom, shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem, as indeed Jehovah shall reign in mount Zion henceforth: a state of things incompatible with the gospel.

Chaps. 56. 57. consist of moral warnings, all the more impressed because of the grace which goes out so deeply yet so far and wide. For to grace evil is more offensive than to law which is its open condemnation. God carefully guards His grace from the imputations which fallen nature would cast on it. Hence saith Jehovah, Keep ye judgment and do justice; for any salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed. Jehovah's salvation and righteousness prove to be the opposite of a license to sin, as flesh might wish and think. The sabbath was, and will be, so much the truer a test, because it flows from divine authority simply, not from the action of conscience which of itself condemns corruption or violence apart from God's commandment. Nor need any despair, however naturally powerless or distant. But grace is large, as well as holy and searching; and His house is to be open for the prayers of all who know and rejoice in Him whom once they slighted in their ignorance.

Chap. 57. pursues the same consequences as to the Jew. In that day it will be plain beyond mistake that Israel have no impunity, as indeed they never had, however they may have nursed the fond delusion. Idolatry, strange to say, will reappear among the Jews during the end of the age, as the prophet here intimates, in a way contrasted. with the eve of the return from Babylon or since; so too the Lord warns in Matt. 12:43-45. The captivity led to the going out of the unclean spirit. from his house, and the empty, swept, and garnished state which characterized “that generation” ever since. But the rejection of the true Christ will have as its issue in the latter days the reception of the Antichrist (see also John 5:43), when the unclean spirit returns with seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Our Lord's application of the parable is indisputable: “Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” Never the unclean spirit of idolatry returned to the Jew, still less with the full power of Satan in Antichrist. But as surely as the Lord spoke, it will be at the close of the age, when this prophecy also is to be accomplished. For “the king” (ver. 9) is none other than that ominous personage who is then to be adored by the apostate people, as “idols” will also be (ver. 5). Compare Dan. 11:36-39: a prediction in the third year of Cyrus, never yet fulfilled, and expressly said to be “at the time of the end,” just before the final deliverance, blessing, and glory of Israel here below “in the glorious land.” What force does not all this give to the concluding words! “No peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” When it was idolatry only with its moral effects, it was “Jehovah” as in chap. 48:22; here, where is this darker sin of Messiah's rejection with its issues, it is “my God.”

Chapter 157

The Known Isaiah, Part 11: Chapters 58-63:6

The last section of this great prophetic discourse here opens, running down to the end, but itself consisting of subdivisions winch it is well to heed. There is first a trenchant moral appeal to the house of Jacob in their combining sins and transgressions with punctilious regard to legal ordinances, especially fasting and sabbath keeping, and yet total antagonism to their spirit (ch. 58.) There is at the close of that chapter, with Isaiah's wonted grandeur in recalling to true righteousness and the honor and blessing that would follow, the most forcible setting out of their entire corruption in chap. 59. with all the amplitude of his early style. It was their own evil that separated the Jews and their God, their sins which hid His face from them that He heard not. Thereon ensues confession of their sins, but no power to rise from their wretchedness, till Jehovah intervenes (identifying with Christ, the Redeemer, in Zion) with deliverance for the godly remnant, who according to His covenant receive His Spirit and His words for themselves and their offspring evermore.

Zion accordingly is called to arise and shine, for her light is come and the glory of Jehovah risen upon her; and this the more strikingly that darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples (60). So unfounded is the dream of Christendom that Israel's conversion is to be due to Gentile zeal or faith. On the contrary the apostacy shall first come, and the man of sin be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus slays or consumes with the breath of His mouth and brings to naught by the appearing of His advent. Both Old. and N. T. are distinct that His personal judgment of the quick inaugurates the wondrous change for the earth, when not only shall all Israel be saved (after the destruction of the lawless one and his adherents, with other foes) but nations shall come to Zion's light and kings to the brightness of her rising. The picture of the future restoration, righteous and glorious here below, and this manifestly of Jerusalem and His people (though with marked difference from the heavenly city in Rev. 21; 22) is drawn, allowing for the new connection, exactly in Isaiah's manner, serene and sublime, and wholly different from the exilic or the post-exilic prophets. To interpret it of the church is not only unintelligent, but lowers our heavenly glory with Christ; it wrongs Israel and defrauds the Gentiles as a whole, to say nothing of the lower creation which God never forgets if man does.

Chaps. 61.-63. 6 bring in Christ, not in His humiliation and atoning death, but in the incomparable grace of His first advent, and its blessed consequences not yet fulfilled to the Jews as such, and His indisputable power in judgment at the second when the day of vengeance is come. How instructive His own closing of the book in the synagogue of Nazareth, when He read only the first clause of ch. 61:2! When He returns, He begins with the day of vengeance before He gives effect to the year of His redeemed. See ch. 62:4. The Reformers were no more enlightened than the Fathers who confounded ch. 63. with 53. and the blood of the peoples with His blood.

But what we have had in this brief summary is wholly destructive of the unbelieving school. For, as we saw in the first previous or second section the Jew guilty not of idolatry only as in the past but of the rejection of the Messiah, so now the prophet treats of that pretentious but hollow Pharisaism

which has ever since characterized them, and of the sure judgment which the rejected Messiah will inflict at His coming in power and glory. Dr. D. does not venture to apply the end of ch. 59. or the beginning of ch. 63. to the first advent. Even if he could with the smallest show of justice, how would this fall in with the assumption of an unknown prophet toward the close of the captivity? He knows quite well that the moral impediments which disqualify Israel for the enjoyment of the promised blessings have never yet been removed. He knows that the unreality of their fasts and other observances continues to this day, and that the true fast, so pleasant to Jehovah, of unselfish goodness and mercy is as far off as ever, when alone He can shower His blessings on His people, and they shall build the old wastes and raise up the foundations from generation to generation, nay, delight in Jehovah Who will cause them to ride on the high places of the earth.

Not only does the apostle Paul cite the close of ch. 59. modified by Psa. 53:6 (7) to prove the future coming of the Lord to save Israel (in Rom. 11), but he quotes also the earlier verses in Rom. 3 to demonstrate their utter moral ruin as a present fact. And this he meets with the grace of God in the gospel now to every believer; as he holds out the coming of the Redeemer by-and-by, when Israel shall be restored and have the kingdom according to prophecy.

Hence these self-styled higher critics betake themselves to “the felicity of the ideal Zion of the future,” when, after a judgment to be enacted in the Jews, not in their foes only, the dark cloud of night that shrouds the rest of the world is lifted from the holy city, and light clothes Zion forever. Then they talk, or at least Dr. D. does, of “Jehovah's ideal servant” once more introduced in ch. 61., which is followed as before by the promise of Jerusalem's restoration, of the new and signal marks of Jehovah's favor resting on the restored nation, and of its own appreciation of all. Of course ch. 63:1-6 is similarly treated, as “an ideal humiliation of nations, marshaled upon the territory of Israel's inveterate foe” (Lit. of the O.T. 222).

It would be more candid to let us know whether Dr. D. believes, any more than his German forerunners, in the reality of these predictions. If he does, the critical hypothesis is ipso facto overthrown and abandoned; if he does not, its infidel and anti-Christian character is apparent. In any case, it is absurd to argue that the prophet is merely addressing “the exiles in Babylonia,” any more than “the men of Jerusalem, contemporaries of Ahaz and Hezekiah or even of Manasseh” (p. 224). All this reasoning is the pettifoggery of rationalism with not even the semblance of truth. It is impossible for any man to face any one of these sections, still less the second and the third, and to say that the prophet speaks always, in the first instance, to his own contemporaries (though they were responsible to believe as we are). Let him show, if he can, that the prophet never abandons his own historical position but speaks from it, when he predicts the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that should follow them. If by “ideal” he honestly confesses both, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.

Chapter 158

The Known Isaiah, Part 12: Chapter 63:7 – Chapter 66

Founded on the vision of the judicial vintage, we have next the prophet's intercession on behalf of the Israel of God, the godly remnant as hateful to their godless brethren after the flesh as to the nations, indeed more so. Past mercies are re-called; their relationship to Jehovah pleaded; their sins confessed. Israel had destroyed themselves by their ungrateful, persistent, and shameless iniquity. Who had called them to be His own people? He was unchanged, if Abraham and Israel could not own them. Was not Jehovah better to them, ruined as they justly were, than even all their fathers? And the supplication was deepening and more urgent through ch. 64. which brings together the beginning of their national history on quitting Egypt with still more tremendous and comprehensive judgments that open their final deliverance and blessedness under their Messiah. Faith gives power to repentance; and mercy anticipated makes guilt hateful, as its accomplishment sharpens self-judgment to the uttermost. Hence the confession with which the plea is pressed on Him Who even from of old proclaimed Himself Israel's Redeemer. All goes far beyond any historic dealings, and requires us to look to the end of the age when Jerusalem shall be no more trodden down of the Gentiles, and those with whom the prophet identifies himself abase themselves in the dust before Jehovah. “The set time” will soon come.

Chapters 65. 66. are the answer to the supplication. Far from slight of Israel, Jehovah had meanwhile been inquired of by those that asked not—been found of those that sought Him not. It is the intermediate call of the Gentiles by the gospel. “I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people that walk in a way not good, after their own thoughts.” The only true sense is that given by the apostle in Rom. 10:20, 21: “Isaiah is very bold and saith. I was found of them that sought me not, I became manifest unto them that asked not of me. But unto Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” The evasive efforts of the Rabbies, as well as of Grotius, Gesenius, Hahn, Hendewerk, &c., are deplorable. Nor need any believer wonder at Dr. D.'s silence (Lit. O.T. 223); for the inspired interpretation seals the unbelief and folly of rationalism, ever retreating from the light of God into nature's darkness. To those who accept the apostle's comment as the end of controversy, the conclusion only falls in with and confirms what we have learned by many proofs in the prophecy itself; that here we are in presence of the Jews cast off, not for their idolatry only but for their rejection of the Messiah, and of Gentiles meanwhile called by sovereign grace, before mercy intervenes at the end of the age to restore Israel, when the Gentile, not continuing in goodness but high-minded, shall become the object of unsparing judgment. And the moment hastens.

But in that day it will be made apparent even to themselves that not all are Israel which are of Israel. Mere flesh will prove vain. Jewish antipathy to idols (so strong after the Babylonish captivity, stronger still after the Roman conquest, and seemingly stronger of all in presence of Popish corruption and persecution) will yield to the latter-day apostacy, with the yet worse enormity of worshipping Antichrist, as already shown. So we find here, not without Pharisaism. But Jehovah will bring forth a seed to possess His mountains, His elect, His servants, His people that have

sought Him. Hence while those that forsake Jehovah shall be numbered to the sword, His servants shall sing aloud and triumph in the exaltation of His name. For all is to be made new, of which Jerusalem's joy is the proof and pledge, and her weeping is no more, death being the exception and then only as a curse. The connection with chaps. 11. 12. 24-27. and 35. is marked; all converge on the day when Jehovah reigns, earth is glad, and glory dwells in Israel's land.

To interpret all this of the return from the captivity is infatuation, which directly tempts such commentators to the sin of imputing exaggeration to the prophet. The root of all is the groundless limiting of prophecy to events close at hand. The truth is that the Holy Spirit, having convicted the favored people both of idolatry and of the rejection of Messiah, looks on to the catastrophe which closes their evil career, and brings out a generation to come, in the solemn end of the age. Then a voice from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompence to His enemies! There will be no more delay. But the day that sees a land brought forth, and a nation born at once in the godly Jewish remnant, whom their brethren hated and cast out for His name, shall behold Jehovah come with fire and His chariots like a whirlwind to render His anger with fury and His rebukes with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword will Jehovah enter into judgment with all flesh. It is expressly the day come for the gathering of all nations and tongues, when they shall see His glory. The restoration of His people coalesces in time with His judgment of the nations. And the blessing thenceforth of Israel is to be permanent. “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith Jehovah. so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh. shall come to worship before me, saith Jehovah: And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh” (66.)

What has all this to do with the close of the exile? The prediction of the Messiah is incomparably fuller than of Cyrus, and the setting forth of His unparalleled humiliation and sufferings as a sacrifice for the sins of His people no less plain than of His exaltation over kings and peoples, His judgment not only of the nations but of the wicked in Israel, where Jehovah's hand shall be known toward His servants as surely as His indignation toward His foes. It is merely trifling with a serious reader and with scripture to say “that these chapters [40-66.] form a continuous prophecy, dealing throughout with a common theme, viz. Israel's restoration from exile in Babylon” (Lit. O.T 217).

There are distinct themes, as we have seen, in the three sections of this great prophetic strain. All three look to the triumph of divine grace in Israel on their recognition of overwhelming sin. The first section alone (40.-48.) notices Babylon, Cyrus, and the Return; but even it goes far beyond all that was then realized. The second (49.-57.) charges the people with wickedness worse than idolatry through the game evil heart of unbelief in departing from a living God. The third and last shows the terrible result for the wicked pursued to the end of the age, when Jehovah delivers and blesses the godly with glory in the land, as He punishes signally the apostate transgressors. It will be a day of judgment and of blessing for all flesh; and it is idle to deny that it still awaits fulfillment. Compare vers. 6-9, and 15, 16.

If one believes all this, the grounds for questioning Isaiah's authorship, and imagining another unknown prophet a century after, sink into total insignificance. The mainstay of the argument is disproved and excluded. The prophecy as certainly treats of the Savior's atoning death and

exaltation in the second part as of Babylon's fall under Cyrus in the first. And the third part sets forth the judgment on the evil and the restoration of Israel, which are still future. “Where is the disputer?”

“The servant” is the key note to all three parts; and we thus learn why “the king” would not be so appropriate here. For in the first part we have Israel the responsible servant, but altogether failing; the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears, therefore become a prey and given to the robbers. Then in the second, Messiah is substituted for Israel, formed to be His servant, as indeed already said to be His elect in Whom His soul delighted. And if man despise and the nation abhor Him, and if Israel be not gathered, Jehovah has given Him to be for a light of the nations, His salvation to the end of the earth. The gathering of Israel awaits another day; and this comes out fully in the third part, where they discover their sins, and recognize in the Redeemer Who comes to Zion Jehovah's righteous Servant; and are owned themselves now at length as His servants, His elect, when He will recompense the iniquities of their brethren and of their fathers into their bosom.

It is perfectly certain that the Messiah is the King of Isa. 9:6; 32:1, and the Servant of ch. 49-53; and it is quite true that the figure of the Servant rather than of King is here required, in order to give force to these three parts of this wonderful prophecy. Isa. 11:2 and ch. 61. 1, if compared, show how the two truths meet in the power of the Spirit of Jehovah that rested on Him: a clear evidence of the unity of the entire book. It is in Him the perfection of a Servant was found in the face of contempt and hatred, suffering and death; it is through His grace that the faithless shall yet become faithful servants, in that day afflicted and contrite in spirit, and trembling at His word. They will behold the great High Priest emerging from the sanctuary. Ours is a better portion, for we in spirit follow where He is on high, believing the things which are now reported to us through those that preached the gospel to us by (4) the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven.

Chapter 159

The Known Isaiah, Part 13: Appendix

It remains to notice briefly, but perhaps sufficiently and in plain terms for the Christian, the effort to find grounds in the language of the book against its unity; which we have seen to be evident enough from its consistent scope and unequaled grandeur throughout. Here those who disbelieve and deride what they call verbal i. e. plenary, inspiration descend to points minute enough. But revelation has nothing to fear from criticism high or low, provided it be candid and comprehensive as well as complete. Reverent and believing were too much to ask; for the obedience of faith is incompatible alike with the theory and the practice of the soi-disant higher critics. They start with incredulity, latent only to themselves and their school, to end, unless grace intervene, in the depths of lawless thought and rebellion against God.

Here Professor Cheyne is more moderate than his fellows, and admits that the peculiar expressions of the later prophecies are, on the whole, not such as to necessitate a different linguistic stage from the historical Isaiah; and that, consequently, the decision of the critical question will mainly depend on other than purely linguistic considerations" (The Prophecies of Isaiah. Third Ed. p. 234). Professor Driver differs and is much more confident, though well aware that the rationalistic hypothesis used to rest mainly on its assumption that prophecy is necessarily limited to the near future: phraseology was only added as a make-weight. Indeed it was argued by some against the latter chapters that they were a studied imitation of the style of the earlier. Delitzsch, though he weakly wavered at last, never recanted the judgment that, so far as regards language, nothing in the O. T. is more finished or elevated than the disputed close of this prophecy. He used to affirm that its ethereal character was in a state of continuous formation throughout the course of all that precedes. This witness is true. Does it suit the close of this exile?

But Dr. D. (Lit. O. T. 225-227) descends to detail and points out, first, the words or forms of expression in chs. 40-66. (as some at least in chaps. 13. and 34.), not in the unquestioned writings of Isaiah; secondly, eight words alleged to have a meaning other than therein; and three other differing features of style. Now every one of these alleged peculiarities is due to the new and enlarged character of the final trilogy, which demanded more moral and spiritual expressions than the short, separate, and generally limited range comprehended in the first half of the book. So it is for God's choice of Israel and of Messiah, for praise, pleasure, goodwill, rejoicing, shooting forth, and breaking out, "thy sons" said of Zion, and the predictions of Jehovah, especially with a participle. Again, the new modifications of "isles or coasts," "naught," "offering," "justice," "breaking," and "decking," with phrases expressive of His future intervention in power of stipulated grace, ought to be no difficulty to any thoughtful mind, any more than impassioned appeals, repetitions, or omissions. To tie down such a soul as Isaiah to a servile sameness, to deny the unity of his pen because he rises to a higher strain when he is the instrument of revealing loftier hopes on a deeper basis, centering in the Messiah, and issuing in new heavens and a new earth, is a dream worthy only of an unbeliever. So the same spirit has hacked Homer; it might have split up Horace with more show of reason, had he not written his varied compositions so late in the day. Could our own poets Shakespeare and Milton, if severed from that day by a millenary or two, have

escaped the like pseudo-criticism? To set grandeur against pathos, or force against persuasion, as incompatible with one great vision, is real shortsightedness. The case called for larger and fuller ideas than in the earlier words, and burdens. Jehovah infinite and incomparable, First and Last, is exactly in due place. So is Messiah the Servant in divine grace and unparalleled suffering, after the failure of Israel the responsible servant, and the wondrous mercy which is to form a faithful remnant, His elect servants, at the end and forever through their once despised but then to be adored Messiah.

How different from Jeremiah the real prophet writing toward the beginning, to say nothing of the close, of the exile! Between him and Isaiah we do find beyond controversy the most marked differences of thought, phraseology, and style. Had the concluding portion of the prophecy emanated from a writer long after Jeremiah or Ezekiel, we should have expected differences far more decided and unmistakable, not merely because of a century later but from the throes and humiliation of a long national exile: strange circumstances for such an unparalleled flow as that of the later prophecy.

But this is not all. Not only are the words or modifications of meaning, as far as really new to the later discourse, fully accounted for by the fresh aspects of the truth revealed, so that the objections compiled by Dr. Davidson and selected by Dr. Driver are demonstrably invalid; but it has been shown over and over that there are deeply rooted similarities which bind together the first half with the closing strain. And they are exceedingly numerous and minute as well as distinctive; so as to indicate identity. Thus under the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet alone the late Mr. Birks pointed out some forty words in which chaps. 40-66. resemble the earlier prophecies, which do not appear at all, or with the slightest exception, in the writings toward the close of the exile or after it. The true inference on this ground is therefore for the unity of the entire book as emanating from Isaiah. Nor does it lie only in bare words of a peculiar and striking kind, but in characteristic phrases which bespeak our prophet's mind and manner unmistakably. There “the Holy One of Israel” occurs with great frequency, and almost equally in the first and in the second half of the book; whereas (the corresponding part of 2 Kings excepted, as being Isaiah's) we elsewhere find it but thrice in the Psalms and twice in Jeremiah. So the rarer “Mighty One of Israel” is found in both portions; elsewhere only in Gen. 49:24, Psa. 132:2, 5, as has been observed. Again, “your God” alone occurs in both, elsewhere only with “Jehovah” preceding. A still more salient instance noticed is the phrase, “Jehovah will say,” three times in the earlier prophecies (chaps. 1:11, 18; 33:10), and five times in the later (chaps. 40:1, 25; 41:21; 58:9; 67:9). This future form occurs elsewhere but once (Psa. 12:6), the past tense very often indeed. Is it not a strong mark of one hand? If any desire a fuller setting out of the testimony of the language, they may find it in Mr. William Urwick's interesting essay on “The Servant of Jehovah” (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1877), especially in pp. 29-48; where the cautiously stated conclusion is, that the linguistic evidence, viewed by itself even, does not sanction but rather forbids, the difference of date and authorship which some modern critics claim for the two portions.

Yet the difference of style and language would naturally have been most palpable, if the assumption were true that the historic Isaiah of the earlier half flourished in Hezekiah's days, the pseudo-Isaiah. of the rationalists toward the close of the Exile and after the Return. And the more manifestly so, as we have Ezekiel at Chebar, and Daniel in Shushan or in Babylon, with whose writings to compare those alleged to be written practically at the same time and place. But how

utterly different from either, Isa. 13, 14. 21, 34. or the later prophecy I contrast, not resemblance, is on the surface and underneath it. They breathe an Asiatic air, not the Hebrew of all Isaiah. The comparatively unadorned style of the statesman in one, yet announcing the kingdom of heaven to be wielded by the Son of Man, after all the imperial system has been destroyed with offshoot successors is undeniable in the one. The gorgeous imagery of the other turns the proud and idolatrous splendor of the Assyrian palaces into the service of God's throne, treating the symbols as mere attributes, and agents of Him Who sat there, then judging and leaving Jerusalem for a while (Ezek. 1-11), to return at the end of the age, and make it the everlasting seat of His presence and earthly glory (chaps. 40-48.) Both prophecies fit exactly the two writers and reflect perfectly their times and places, as they reveal the suited truth for the yet future glory of God in Israel and all the earth. And if we add the earlier prophecies of the mourning prophet who was given to see the Exile begin, and the sins and shame of the unrepentant remnant in Palestine and Egypt, the difference is complete with Isaiah, late or early, who stands alone and unapproached by any other, whether during the storm of the terrible Assyrian, or after it in days of peace and truth, with the Babylonish captivity before his eyes, and not Cyrus only as a comparatively near deliverer, but the Servant of Jehovah Who should suffer unto death for sin, but be exalted and extolled and very high, sprinkling many nations and kings abashed at His glory.

Chapter 160

The Lord's Table

The state of the church at Corinth was serious. Various disorders in doctrine and practice had crept in. Party feeling ran high in the assembly. And, amongst other vagaries, apparently not a few of the saints were publicly dishonoring the name of the Lord and virtually threatening to wreck the testimony of the church by open participation with idol-worshippers in their feasts. The apostle therefore, in 1 Cor. 10:14-22, deals with the question of the Christian's relation to outside observances of a professedly religious nature.

The apostle begins by warmly exhorting them to “flee from idolatry,” adding in that almost deferential manner which he so well knew how to blend with the dignity and authority of an inspired apostle, “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.” Proceeding then to contrast Christian and heathen feasts, he refers first of all to that part of the Eucharist, which, though not the first in the order of observance, was the fuller of grave associations. “The cup of blessing, which we bless” (in contrast with the cup poured out as a libation to the gods) “is it not the communion of the blood of Christ”? How then could this cup be a mere matter of form when it was thus significant of the closest identification with the Christ? and that too, in the exceedingly solemn moment of laying down His life on their behalf? Therefore to degrade this cup of such profound and sacred meaning, to the level of a heathen ceremony by partaking of both, was and must be fraught with the most serious consequences to themselves as well as to the public testimony of the church of God at Corinth. In fact to attempt it showed an entire misapprehension of the true characters of both acts. Neither the solemnity of the one nor the profanity of the other was before their minds; else why equalize the cups by drinking of both? For as the apostle emphatically states, “Ye Cannot (i.e. with due appreciation) drink the Lord's cup and the cup of demons.”

And if the cup of blessing was thus significant, the bread did not lack hallowed import. It was nothing short of fellowship with the body of the Christ, and at the same time it set forth the intimate unity of His saints on earth. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, [and] one body: for we are all partakers of the one bread.” Thus, however numerous the saints, their spiritual unity was acknowledged and expressed by partaking of the one loaf. The act of communion testified that the children of God at Corinth, and indeed “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2), were unified by the power of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:13), and thereby of necessity separated alike from Jews and Gentiles. What therefore could be greater inconsistency than to own this truth in the breaking of bread, and to disown the same by feasting in idol temples? It was in vain for the Corinthians to argue with a show of superior wisdom that, since idols were nonentities, to sit at their feasts was a matter of indifference and could be the source of no possible harm. True, these indecorous deities were destitute of even human power, much less divine; and the apostle implied nothing to the contrary (verse 19). But if they saw that the idols were mere puppets, he would not have them ignore those who pulled the strings. Did not the very scriptures that affirmed the nothingness of all heathen worship affirm also that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God (ver. 20, Deut. 32:17)? Satan, the prince of cheats, and his

impish subordinates held these benighted souls in the delusions of idol-worship; and should saints of God be parties to such works of darkness by so much even as their presence? It was this which troubled the apostle. “I would not” says he, “that ye should have fellowship with demons.” So much is this point insisted on that he does not mention the shameless excesses which so often attended the heathen orgies, but only unmasks the terribly evil principle underlying them, pressing the fact that, if the Lord presided at one table, demons presided at the other. And they could not be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of demons (ver. 21). If so, where was the Lord's glory? Where the claims of His holy person? Where the love and loyalty of His saints? Did they wish to provoke the Lord to jealousy by such flagrant contempt of His name? Were they mightier than the Lord? Did they expect to act so with impunity?

The term used by the Spirit of God in this connection—the Lord's table—is highly expressive. The cup and loaf are both pregnant with sacred meaning. But here we are reminded not of the memorials of His death or of that which is memorized thereby, but of the person Himself, not so much of what is on the table as of Him Who is at the table, not so much of the feast as of the Host. It is the table of the Lord. This at once stamps a divine and holy character upon the observance, despite its otherwise apparently barren simplicity. The Lord is there, and His name and person sanctify the whole.

The phrase— “the table of the Lord” —is not unknown to the O.T. In Ezek. 41:22; 44:16, Jehovah speaks of the altar of incense as the table that is before Him. Evidently this is to enforce the fact of its holiness, being in the sanctuary in His immediate presence as well as bearing the offerings made to His name. And in Malachi the phrase is again used, even more strikingly, in connection with the holiness of the altar. Jehovah there expostulates with the priests who offered polluted bread on His altar and profaned His name, saying that the table of Jehovah is contemptible (Mal. 1:7-12). It was the fact that the altar was before Jehovah and that it was called by His name, which made the desecration so terrible. And there was no excuse for ignorance of what was suited to the Lord; for His word of old had plainly forbidden that the blind, the lame, or the sick, should be offered in sacrifice (Lev. 20:11-22). This word however they had deliberately disobeyed (Mal. 1:8). And what they would be ashamed to bring to the governor, they brought to Jehovah. What was this but the most inexcusable levity in the most sacred things? It was despising His name; and therefore the burden of the word of the Lord was against Israel.

Accordingly we find that the Spirit of God to the Corinthians uses this phrase in a similar way to invest the simple supper with dignity and sanctity. When the holy character of the feast of remembrance was impugned, and the blessed institution placed on a level with an idol feast, the saints were at once reminded that the table was the Lord's table. The divine claims were revived, showing that the retrogression was owing to a want of consideration of what was due to His name.

It may be profitable here to briefly distinguish the term employed in 11:20—the Lord's supper—from the one before us, the Lord's table. While the same blessed memorial feast is referred to in both cases, it must, at the same time, be admitted by all who believe in the inspiration of the word that there can be no distinction made in scripture without a real difference. The Lord's supper must, of necessity, be the phrase most in harmony with the subject of the Holy Ghost in the eleventh chapter as the Lord's table is in chapter 10; and the subjects of the two portions are by no means difficult to distinguish. A cursory examination shows that in chap. 11

internal matter, and in chap. 10 external relationships, are discussed. In 11 the error of the Corinthian saints was as to the manner of eating the feast, but in 10 as to the character of the fellowship involved in breaking bread. The contrast in 11 is between the Lord's supper and their own, and in 10 between the Lord's table and that of demons. Eating unworthily in 11 is followed by judgment, while unholy association in 10 resulted in a ruined testimony before the heathen world. In 11 we have no word of the unity of the body which is pressed in chapter 10, but rather a concentrated enumeration of those affecting circumstances which speak so eloquently to the heart of the believer. The Lord's request on earth re-iterated from the glory—His betrayal—His last wish—His death—His coming again—all these are shown as associated with the Lord's supper. The Corinthians however (11:17-22) had allowed a social meal, the agape or love-feast, to efface all these touching reminders from the feast; and, by allowing pride and envy to work amongst them, had made it a supper of their own and not the Lord's. In fact they were eating and drinking unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, but displacing His death by petty notions of dignity and real shame. And on this account the apostle gives them a most serious call to self-examination, in order that these affronts to the Lord might not continue.

The above short consideration of these terms in their context, which is the only reliable criterion of any interpretation of scripture, shows a warranty, it is believed, for the two following conclusions:(1) that fellowship with the Lord's table and with what is opposed to His name cannot co-exist, being mutually destructive; and (2) that the Lord's supper cannot be eaten without a spiritual apprehension of what the emblems convey. Moreover, both are essential to a proper and godly participation in this incomparable feast. So that the important point to be weighed is not the possibility of having either without the other, but rather the necessity of having both, in order that this divine institution may be maintained in all its pristine sweetness and sanctity. Therefore without here entering on the question whether one can eat the Lord's supper and yet not be at the Lord's table, or, on the other hand, be at the Lord's table and yet not eat the Lord's supper—neither of which can be at all a desirable position—, let it rather be pressed on each saint to judge his own heart and his association in reference to this ordinance in the holy light of divine truth.

How grievous to call that the Lord's table which is based on man's will and not God's! Can it be right to shield an express denial of His word by the sacredness of His name, making the Lord nominally untrue to His own cause? If the presidency of the Lord is supplanted by that of a man, howsoever grave or pious, if the agency of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (1 Cor. 12:11) be forbidden save in one stereotyped direction, if godly men are excluded who cannot say shibboleth, if traitors to the Lord are allowed to mingle with the true, if, in short, the plain truths of scripture are disowned in a given assembly, are the Lord's representatives on earth justified in describing such a fellowship as the Lord's table? While fully allowing for individual faith and piety, it is surely a contradiction in terms to say that a congregation of people not maintaining the honor of the Lord's name is nevertheless sitting at His table. Are you at His table? God's word, and not your own judgment, can alone be the basis of a true answer.

And, on the other hand, to partake of the emblems, when the person of the Lord in His suffering and death is crowded out from the vision of the soul, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. And surely every saint knows by experience what little things, intruding at those holy seasons, are sufficient to shatter the precious memories of His love. Not to speak of a gaudy and impressive ritual, an

unintelligent legalism, or a cold formal indifferentism, the slovenly soul will be easily overcome by vague wanderings, vagrant thoughts and even worse, so that all sense of the sweet solemnity of the occasion will be utterly lost. Shame it is that our affections should be so sluggish. For how dead must we be if the remembrance of His woe for us fails to revive us to an earnest review of His grace? May the apostle's exhortation be ever before the saints of God: “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28).

Chapter 161

The Lord's Testimony to the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch .1

The question involved in the denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is not one of merely correct literary and historical criticism. If so, simple believers could well afford to let the critics of one school strive with the critics of the other schools, while they chose the better part of enjoying the Christ of the scriptures, Who is the theme of the Old Testament no less than of the New, and of the Pentateuch no less than of the Psalms or the Prophets. It is not however the soundness of human theories, but the character of our Lord Himself that is involved. For if Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible— “the law” —as our Lord asserted more than once, but which the advocates of “modern criticism” deny, then the Holy Son of God stands convicted of ignorance or error, if not deliberate deception. Such a horrible and blasphemous imputation to the Person of Christ, which it is painful even to repeat, needs only to be mentioned to be instinctively repudiated by every godly and devout soul. Can the saints of God allow for a single moment that He Who was emphatically the “Truth” was either imposed upon by the baseless traditions of the day, or ignorant of the true writer of the very scriptures He came to fulfill? Yet such is the daring and defiant position occupied by that which vaunts itself as “higher criticism.” And as this inflated assumption of worldly wisdom is developing in pernicious influence upon the people of God, and widening its line of attack upon all that is holy and divine, it may be profitable to briefly examine the words of Christ in reference to this subject, and also the principal arguments of those who have the unblushing effrontery to refuse to accept our adorable Lord as even a credible witness in the matter.

In the first place then it is proposed to refer to the direct statements of the Lord as reported by the Holy Ghost through the evangelists. In the latter part of John 5 the Lord Jesus is reproving the unbelief of the Jews. He points out the abundant witness to His Person and mission. John the Baptist testified to Him (verses 32-35). The character of the works He was doing in obedience to His Father testified to Him (ver. 36). The Father himself testified to Him (ver. 37). S I did the Father Himself witness from heaven (ver. 37). And the scriptures, which it was their duty to search, likewise testified to Him (ver. 39). Yet in spite of this fourfold testimony they refused to come to Him. And the Lord thereupon solemnly warns them of the gravity of such an attitude of unbelief. Not that He would accuse them of hardness of heart to His Father; but the very Moses in whom they trusted and boasted would rise up in judgment against them. “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?” (verses 45-47). Now it is submitted that the Lord here emphatically affirms that Moses under God was the author of those books commonly ascribed to him; “περ■ γ■ρ ■μο■ ■κε■νος ■γαψεν,” “for HE wrote of Me.”

In fact nothing else can be drawn from the passage. Moses, not Christ, was to be the accuser; therefore the writer, Moses, must be referred to as much as the person of Christ. Thus no room is left for the objection that Moses is here used tropically for the writings which bore his name; for if such be true in some other places, here, at any rate, Moses is expressly distinguished from his

writings. “He wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, etc.” Surely the most violent rationalist would never seriously contend for the interpretation, “the Pentateuch wrote of Me.” So that this portion appears decisive in establishing that our blessed Lord accepted and confirmed the current belief of the Jews, that Moses was God's agent in composing the Pentateuch. Compare also Mark 10:5 with 12:19.

Further, the denial of Moses as the author of the first five books robs this appeal of the Lord of its entire force. He adduces Moses, the human founder of their system of worship, as a witness to Himself. And it is well known with what reverence Moses was acknowledged by the Jews; therefore of what extraordinary weight with them would be the evidence of one who was their leader out of Egypt, and their law-giver at Sinai? And where was his testimony to be found at that late day? Nowhere but in his own writings, as our Lord plainly states. Now if it be true, as the critics dream, that the Pentateuch was fathered upon Moses, centuries after his death, how can it possibly be said that he witnessed of Christ in writings which he never wrote? But such theories are neither true nor worthy, but self-destructive; and the truth is sealed by our Lord's words before us, and expressed as the ordinary belief of every godly Jew by Philip of Bethsaida when he said “We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph” (John 1:45).

Moreover, this scripture— “he wrote of Me “indicates a unity of purpose in the writings of Moses, as well as a prophetic outlook into the future which could be nothing short of divine inspiration. However many “documents” Moses may have used in the compilation of the Pentateuch, all were coordinated to subserve one dominant purpose viz. testimony to Christ. And “if Moses testified the truth of Christ some fifteen centuries before He lived and died, he was a prophet, and inspired of God in what he wrote; and if God gave him, according to the Lord Jesus, to prophesy truly of Him, is it credible that he has written falsely of that of which even an ordinary man might have written truly? If the rationalist speaks aright, the Pentateuch is not Moses' writing, but a bundle of tales true and false, and in not one word written really of Christ; else it would be bona fide prophetic, which the system denies in principle; because true prophecy implies God's supernatural communication, and this would be necessarily a death-blow to the criticism of the rationalist.”

And the indication of this lofty object in the writings of Moses is by no means confined to these verses. The Lord points out the same thing to His disciples after His resurrection. To the dejected and sorrowful pair wending their way to Emmaus He reproachfully says, “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27). Thus the true spiritual nexus of those ancient writings, missed by the dissecting critics, is “Christ,” as another passage in the same chapter also states, “These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). Here, too, the Lord alludes to the well-known triple division of the books of the Hebrew canon, viz. the law, the prophets, and the psalms. These together comprised the “scriptures” as the next verse shows, “Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.” So that as has been said, “we may accept the Hebrew scriptures from the pierced hands of Christ Himself in resurrection:” though it is not hereby implied that His words were more true one time than another.

Other references in the evangelists also agree in teaching that our Lord added the whole weight of His authority to the generally received view of the authorship of the Pentateuch. When the rationalists of that day came to Him with their alleged difficulty about the resurrection, they said “Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die and leave his wife behind him &c.", quoting from Deut. 25:5, and manufacturing there from a highly complicated objection, as they thought (Mark 12:18-23). The Lord, at once, utterly condemns their interpretation of Holy Writ, saying, “Ye know (μ■ ε■δ■τες) not the scriptures nor the power of God.” But it is important to notice that He does not condemn them for ascribing Deuteronomy to Moses, and He did not accept their fabulous interpretation. Why should He accept their fabulous authorship, if indeed it be fabulous, as the critics groundlessly imagine?

The Lord, however, proceeding to instruct them concerning the resurrection, takes up the very one to whom they had just referred and shows that he was opposed to their erroneous and skeptical notions. Neither was there any excuse for their ignorance of this. If they had read Deuteronomy, surely they must have read Exodus which Moses also wrote. “Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham &c?” The Lord thus directly appeals to the Pentateuch as the book of Moses. And this phrase means simply the book which Moses wrote. For the word of God in another gospel, as if anticipating the mouse-holes through which the critics would fain creep, entirely forbids any thought to the contrary, such as the “book containing the law of Moses.” Accordingly in Luke we read in the same connection, “Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed in the bush, (or “the place concerning the bush.” R.V.) when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham” &c. (Luke 20:37). This indicates unmistakably that the human author was Moses, while the parallel passage in Matt. 22:31 adds a word as to the divine inspiration of the same. “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham” &c. And it should he observed that it is the written word which is thus authorized in this scripture. For though the words themselves were originally addressed by God to Moses, in the written form they are said to be addressed by God to them, being divinely preserved for the profit of all. Compare also Mark 7:10. with Matt. 15:4.

In another place also the Lord again affirms in very precise terms that Deuteronomy was written by Moses. It was this time to the Pharisees, who, though they agreed with the Sadducees as little as possible, had at any rate no difference of opinion as to owning the hand of Moses in writing the law. They came to Him temptingly with a question concerning divorce. Jesus said, “What did Moses command you?” They at once referred to Deut. 24:1. Jesus answered and said unto them “For the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this precept” (Mark 10:3-5). Language can scarcely be more distinct and definite than this. So that we can but marvel at the audacity of men professing to be shepherds of the flock of God who appear to have no compunction whatever in contradicting their Master and saying “it is certain that Moses himself could not have written the book of Deuteronomy." And again “on the dramatic hypothesis, Deuteronomy (was) not written by Moses but in Moses' name to incorporate the Mosaic tradition.” “We may suppose Deuteronomy to be a republication of the law in the spirit and power of Moses put dramatically into his mouth.”

It is hoped (D. V.) to attempt next month to point out in more detail the real character of these and similar assertions contrary to the words of our Lord.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 162

The Lord's Testimony to the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch .2

In the previous paper it was pointed out that our Lord not only frequently referred to the Pentateuch as the law of Moses, but that He unequivocally stated its writer to have been Moses (John 5:46, Mark 10:5). And surely with all simple and godly souls the word of the Lord is sufficient, but it is avowedly not so with the critics. They, forsooth, have their own opinions to maintain, and accordingly endeavor to evade the direct force of this evidence by expedients, the character of which more than strongly hints at the desperateness of their position. Their principal theories are two, and have been not inaptly described as (1) the adaptation theory, and (2) the self-limitation theory. The first of these involves an attack upon our Lord's moral character and the second upon His Person. And from this their ultimate origin is sufficiently indicated.

The “adaptation” theory, as the term suggests, asserts that our blessed Lord adapted Himself to the mistaken beliefs of those among whom He lived. It states that the Jews wrongly ascribed the Pentateuch to Moses, and that the Lord gave His verbal assent to the notion though He knew it to be false. Now, in order to show that this representation of the theory is not unjust, the following quotations are made. Referring to the words “He (Moses) wrote of Me” (John 5:46), it is said “We may regard them as an address ad hominem, as an incidental and temporary adoption of the conceptions and language of those to whom He was speaking, in relation to a subject foreign to His immediate purpose. We may understand Him as if He had said: Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for the books which, as you suppose, Moses wrote, concern Me. “He accepted, as the basis of His teaching, the opinions respecting the Old Testament current around Him; He assumed, in His allusions to it, the premises which His opponents recognized “ “It is not derogatory to our Lord's Divinity to maintain that it was necessary for Him to argue with the Jews from their standpoint without necessarily endorsing the truth of the popular opinion “ The sentiments herein expressed are by no means obscure or difficult of apprehension. The assumption common to all is, as has already been observed, that the ordinary belief of the Jews of that day in the Mosaic authorship of the first five books was quite erroneous; and further that the Lord accepted this, together with other current opinions, as the basis of His teaching.

Such a hypothesis is most serious to all who desire to he loyal to Christ; since its acceptance unquestionably casts no small slight on the moral character of our adorable Redeemer. For the Lord, in some cases, made the entire force of His argument to rest upon the fact that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. To refer again to but one instance; in John 5:45-47 the point of our Lord's remarks is that Moses witnessed to Him. He is not alluding to the scriptures as such, for this He had already done (ver. 39). But here He takes up the great lawgiver himself as a personal witness. Moses would be their accuser, and that because they believed neither him nor Christ. Truly, if they believed not the writings of him who wrote of Messiah, how should they believe the words of Messiah? Thus Moses and Christ, Moses' writings and Christ's words, are so antithetically placed that to all unbiased minds there can be no manner of doubt that our Lord meant His hearers to understand that Moses himself had testified to Him in his writings. Now, supposing it be true, as the advocates of the theory in question allege, that the Jews were all

wrong in thinking that Moses wrote the law, then we are at once forced to the abominable conclusion that our Lord (may He forgive even such a thought!) declared to them that Moses, their great leader, wrote of Him, when, at the same time, He was perfectly aware Moses did nothing of the kind. So that He, herein, resorted to mere artifice and unworthy cunning in order to win the ear of His opponents. He thus exaggerated before them the value of the testimony borne to Him and sought to take advantage of their ignorance to advance His claims. In short, if the “adaptation” theory be true, Christ is found guilty of duplicity! Where can be the reverence, not to say love, of those who brave such an issue as this? Once more the Lord is wounded in the house of His friends. Will they never cease their unholy handling of the Word of life and truth? Is it either, wise or good to seek to degrade our Lord to the level of a mere rhetorical trickster, in order to sustain what is, after all, no more than supposition? On whom then can we rely, if not on Him, Who was the Truth? And the Lord was not only the fullness of truth in His Person, but His words were the expression of Himself. As He Himself said to those who asked Him “Who art thou?” “τ■ν ■ρχ■ν ■τι κα■ λαλ■ ■μ■ν” “Absolutely that which I also am speaking to you “ (John 8:25). This is a direct reply to those who charge Him with equivocation. He was, what none ever were before or since, in exact correspondence with what His words expressed. So that all notions of “adaptation,” save that He became a man amongst men, sin excepted, amount to ignoble calumnies against His holy and blessed Person. It is incredulity.

But this theory will not bear the light of facts on record. The allegation that Christ accepted the opinions current around Him is entirely visionary and altogether opposed to the words of the evangelists. On the contrary, from the commencement to the close of His ministry, He invariably upheld the sanctity and divine authority of the law as originally given, and condemned the human fancies and speculations with regard to it which were prevalent around Him. Did He, for example, accept “the current opinions” of the rabbis as to what was or what was not permissible on the Sabbath day? Was it wise accommodation to popular views when He drove out the traders from the temple courts at the beginning as well as the end of His public life? Was it a measure of conciliation to charge the teachers of the law with “laying aside the commandment of God” whilst “holding the tradition of the elders”? (Mark 7:5-8) Do we find that in order to gain general favor He spared either the hypocritical punctiliousness of the Pharisees or the proud skepticism of the Sadducees? On the contrary, it is made manifest throughout the Gospels, that, wherever the Truth went, error was necessarily exposed. And as such was His general practice, it remains for the critics to explain why there was this exception, if indeed there is an exception, as they groundlessly imagine. Had the belief that Moses wrote the law been a blunder, it would not have been attested but would have been condemned, like their broad phylacteries and their divers washings.

But the theorists further assume, without warrant, that the “law of Moses” was the only name under which the Pentateuch would have been recognized; so that the Lord was obliged to speak thus in order to be understood. “Jesus must have alluded to the books of the Old Testament by their recognized names, just as men will always speak of the poetry of Homer, even if the composite origin of the Iliad and the Odyssey comes to be universally recognized." “Unless He had violated the whole principle of the Incarnation by anticipating the slow development of natural knowledge, He must have spoken of the ‘Deuteronomist’ as ‘Moses’ (John 5:46, 47) as naturally as He spoke of the sun rising.'" Now, it is not necessary to refer again to the applicability of the allusion in this

passage to the “man Moses,” and not to a fictitious “Deuteronomist.” But it is quite an error for Mr. G. to assume that He must have spoken in this way, as if no other term were intelligible. A very slight examination of the Gospels would have revealed that the single word “law” was well understood by the Jews to refer to the first five books, and not merely to the decalogne. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets” (Matt. 5:17). “Have ye not read in the law etc..” (Matt. 12:5). “This people who knoweth not the law are cursed” (John 7:49). If the addition of “Moses” was not necessary in these and other instances, neither was it at all necessary for purposes of distinctness. So that, if our Lord merely wished to avoid anticipating “the results of scientific inquiry or historical criticism,'' He might, when referring to the Pentateuch, have uniformly made use of the word “law,” and thereby left the question of authorship unaffected by His words, and escaped the condemnation of the critics. Neither would He, by this means, have been impaled on the other horn of Mr. G.'s dilemma; for silence on the point in question could not “have violated the whole principle of the Incarnation by anticipating the slow development of natural knowledge.” Therefore the simple truth can only be that Moses wrote the law, and the Lord confirmed the belief in the same by His authority, using such words as could leave no other impression on the minds of those who heard Him.

Another statement in connection with this theory should be pointed out because of its misleading character. Professor D. says “There is no record of the question, whether a particular portion of the Old Testament was written by Moses or David or Isaiah having been ever submitted to Him; and had it been so submitted, we have no means of knowing what His answer would have been.'' Now this is really throwing dust in people's eyes. There is good reason why no such question as “Is it true that Moses wrote the Pentateuch?” was brought to our Lord; for not even the skeptical Sadducees doubted it in that day (Mark 7, Luke 20). But though no such question was asked, the fact is affirmed under such circumstances that the testimony thereto is nonetheless certain. For instance, when the Pharisees came to the Lord with a question concerning divorce, they referred to Deuteronomy and said “Why did Moses command so-and-so?” Here was an opportunity for the Lord to have shown, if such were the case, that this permission was granted not by Moses but by the “Deuteronomist” who lived many centuries after him. However, instead of saying the “Deuteronomist because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives,” He said, confirming their own words, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts etc.” (Matt. 19:7, 8). So that, in this instance, a particular portion of the O.T. is submitted to the Lord as written by Moses; and those who have no theories to maintain, like Professor D., will surely agree that our Lord gave a verbal assent to it.

Even the advocates of these notions themselves appear to feel the insufficiency of the “adaptation” theory, and accordingly the “self-limitation” theory is also advanced. The real effect however is not the mutual support and consolidation of the theories but their mutual destruction. As the false witnesses against the Lord before the high priest were valueless because their witness agreed not together, so the critics, in their eager desire to silence the Lord's testimony against them, have overreached themselves and destroyed one another. The “adaptation” theory declares our Lord was aware that Moses was not the author of the first five books, but that He said so in deference to the teaching of that age; while the “self-limitation” theory declares that our Lord was ignorant of the true author of the Pentateuch, being restricted in His knowledge to the current opinions of the day. Thus one says He did, the other He did not know. But it is impossible for both

assertions to be right, though very possible for both to be wrong.

The following quotations give the terms of the latter theory in the writer's own words. “Now when He speaks of the sun rising He is using ordinary human knowledge. He willed so to restrain the beams of Deity as to observe the limits of the science of His age, and He puts himself in the same relation to his historical knowledge." “He never exhibits the omniscience of bare Godhead in the realm of natural knowledge; such as would be required to anticipate the results of modern science or criticism.” “Indeed God ‘declares His almighty power most chiefly’ in this condescension, whereby He ‘beggared Himself' of divine prerogatives to put Himself in our place.” “Why should it be thought that He would speak with certain divine knowledge on this matter (i.e. the authorship of the Pentateuch) more than upon other matters of ordinary science or history?

The first thought that strikes one in reading these brief extracts is the utter want of reverence displayed for the Holy Person of Whom they speak. The very attempt to limit the knowledge of “God manifest in the flesh” is, to say the very least, audacious in the extreme. And when He is thus reduced to the level of a poor ignorant Jew for the sole purpose of proving the vast superiority of nineteenth century wisdom, it is high time for such wolves to he stripped of their sheep's clothing that the flock may be warned. What more flagrant dishonor than to take advantage of His humiliation to seek to prove that His manhood was not even perfect, but could be imposed upon by the blunders of the “uncritical age” in which He lived? Have they forgotten the solemn words of the angel to Mary “That Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” Luke 1:35? Will not the remembrance of His Deity (for in spite of His lowliness He was never less than God) stay them from laying lawless and defiling hands upon His Humanity? But the fact is the intellectual pride of men will not brook the thought that even the inscrutable mystery of the Incarnation is beyond their ken. Defying the Divine utterance, “No man knoweth (■πιγιν■σκει) the Son but the Father,” Matt. 11:27, they “rush in where angels fear to tread,” proving their own folly and worse. Let them remember Kirjath-jearim. Surely this, above all subjects the most holy, demands reverence, not curiosity, faith, not speculation. Yet it is asked “why should we permit in theology what we ruthlessly exclude from every other region of science” Therefore it is sought to enlighten theology “the most difficult of all sciences” (sic) by instituting an “honest inquiry” into our Lord's knowledge as a. man. Is it any wonder that theories such as these under examination, are promulgated, when our Lord, instead of being revered as the Truth, is treated and discussed in the same manner as a fossil, a zoological specimen, or a cuneiform inscription? It really means that faith is thrown to the winds, and man's mind and will made the judge of all.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 163

The Lord's Testimony to the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch .3

Nevertheless, since the astounding fact is revealed that He, “Who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom. 9:5), was pleased to dwell among men in the “likeness of sinful flesh,” there can be but one proper attitude for the soul of man in presence of such a marvel. That attitude is to bow in adoration before such an incomparable display of grace, and to receive in humble faith whatever God has deigned to place on record in regard to it.

Now a cursory survey of our Lord's life on earth as found in the Gospels yields abundant testimony to the truth that, though He appeared among men in lowly guise, the knowledge He displayed was ever superior to what was others' and was, in itself, a sufficient proof that He must be a Divine Person. It is proposed, therefore, to cite some of the most striking of such passages, in order to show thereby that it is quite a gratuitous piece of assumption to say that our Lord was ignorant of the true authorship of the Pentateuch.

The first portion to which we naturally turn is Luke 2:4, 6. There we read that, at the age of twelve years, “They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” Afterward His public ministry was such as to cause His hearers to exclaim “Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?” (Matt. 13:54); and again, “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” (John 7:15). This shows that His knowledge was not apparently derived from the usual sources, that is, from rabbis or from writings, but was personal and intuitive. Further, His insight into men's hearts and motives (as it was said, “He heard men thinking”) is so often evidenced that even the writer of “Lux Mundi” is constrained to allow this much in a footnote, page 265. Compare Matt. 9:4; 12:25; 16:8; 22:18; Mark 12:15; Luke 9:47; 20:23.

When the Lord told Nathanael that He had seen him under the fig-tree, the guileless Israelite, accepting this proof of His Divinity, at once replied, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God” (John 1:48, 49). The testimony of the Samaritan woman concerning Him was “Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29.) Now if the Lord was thus acquainted with the past history of both Nathanael and the woman at the well, surely it is not too much to believe that He knew the history of the Pentateuch, including the name of the man used of God to pen its pages. Even a Samaritan knew that Messiah when He comes “will tell (declare to) us all things.” Think of a Christian, of a professed Christian minister, lowering Christ beneath the standard of a Samaritan woman!

Moreover, in certain cases it is to be noted that His knowledge is especially shown to be most extraordinary. When, for example, His garment fringe was touched, He immediately knew “in Himself” that virtue was gone out of Him (Mark 5:30). Similarly Mark 2:8 and John 6:61 prove that His knowledge was of no human order but divine. It is also stated that He “knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him” (John 6:64), and indeed “all things that should come upon Him” (John 18:4). He could and did indicate beforehand the

piece of money in the fish's mouth, the whereabouts of the ass's colt, and the man bearing the pitcher of water. He also displayed His knowledge of the future by predicting to His disciples, His betrayal, His denial, His crucifixion and His resurrection.

These scriptural facts are sufficient to show how utterly untrue is the statement that Christ in His Incarnation “beggared Himself of divine prerogatives." On the contrary, it is clear that it was as man He manifested omniscience, knowing equally the past, the present and the future, and thus demonstrating, beyond question, that He was both God and Man. When therefore the Son of God says that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, we dare not doubt His word. Shall not the Judge of all the earth speak rightly as well as do right? He that searcheth reins and hearts (Rev. 2:23)?

However, as might have been expected, the critics have not advanced these theories without endeavoring to fortify their position with Bible texts. It will be remembered that the Jews quoted scripture against our Lord, and so did a greater enemy for a worse purpose. Therefore it is no matter of surprise to find that it is sought to support the dogma of our Lord's ignorance in certain matters by the word of God. And it should be equally no matter of surprise to find upon examination that the passages cited refuse to yield the support claimed from them.

We are told that when our Lord “asked for information, it was because He wanted it” (Matt. 15:34, John 11:34), implying thereby that He was ignorant of what He asked about. The first reference is to the feeding of the four thousand when the Master said to His disciples, “How many loaves have ye” (Matt. 15:34)? On turning to John 6:5, 6, the unworthy inference is entirely and expressly exploded. There the Lord on a similar occasion said to Philip, “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove Him; for He Himself knew what He would do.” In the other reference (John 11:34) we have the question concerning the grave of Lazarus “Where have ye laid him”? And we are asked to conclude from it that, though the Lord became aware of the death of Lazarus without human intervention and came to awake him out of sleep (John 11:11), He was yet unaware of the whereabouts of the sepulcher! We prefer to believe that as the weeping displayed His human sympathy, so the question indicated that human interest in the departed so precious to sorrowing hearts at such moments. It is, therefore, denied that there is any ground in scripture for the assertion that when He “asked for information, it was because He wanted it,” that is, because of His own ignorance. It needs no study of Socrates to know that a question may be put for the sake of the questioned. Luke 24:18, 19 furnishes a sufficient illustration. When Cleopas said to the Unknown One, “Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?” The Unknown One, Who was none other than the Lord Jesus, said, “What things?” not assuredly because He was ignorant of His own recent sufferings, but with a view exclusively to the instruction of the two disciples.

Again we are told that the verse “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” Luke 2:52, implies that “He could not have had perfect wisdom in His childhood.” It might be retorted that this is no proof whatever that He did not possess perfect wisdom in His manhood. But the intention is to show that our Lord's knowledge was limited. Such a thought, however, is entirely foreign to the verse. The reference is plainly to that which was made apparent to an observer. An eye-witness would have marked an advance both in stature and display of wisdom. Surely it is not necessary to explain to a Professor that wisdom can only be seen or known in its exercise. So that this passage leaves altogether untouched the question as to the extent of the Lord's knowledge. It

simply informs us that as to outward appearance He was found “in fashion as a man,” and is significantly silent as to the secrets of that incomprehensible Mind.

Further: incontestable evidence is supposed to be found in Mark 13:32; concerning which, it is said, “He declared His ignorance in regard to the date of a future event." The passage is as follows: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” But even this, their citadel, yields to a careful and prayerful consideration. It is significant that the phrase, “neither the Son,” is to be found alone in Mark who writes of the Lord as the Servant-prophet. It is therefore, as such, that He declares His ignorance of what the Father had put in His own power (Acts 1:7). This should not be strange to a reader of the N.T. Luke 13:25-27 is an example of official ignorance. The master of the house says to those who have eaten and drunk in His presence “I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” The word also to five virgins will be “Verily I say unto you, I know you not” Matt. 25:12. Thus the real point of Mark 13:32, is the exclusive knowledge of God in regard to the day and hour. Even the Son, in taking the place of subjection and service, had received no direction to reveal that time. For, as He says, “the Father which sent Me gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak” (John 12:49). See also John 15:15. The true inference therefore from the passage in Mark is not the limitation of the Lord's intrinsic and divine knowledge, but of His teaching in the servant position He took for the glory of God. The propriety of the phrase, too, is striking. Seeing that the day refers to the time when the once lowly Son of Man will be manifested in glory, what more in accordance with His place of dependence than that He should be in an expectant posture till it pleases the Father to make His enemies His footstool?

In conclusion: it has been shown that the Lord's testimony to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is definite and unequivocal: and, also that the theories advanced to invalidate that testimony are purely hypothetical, having not a tittle of support from the Word of God, but tending, as all deep error does, to undermine, not scripture only, but the Incarnate Word and Only-begotten of the Father.

W. J. H.

(Concluded.)

Chapter 164

The Love of God

“The love of God “; wondrous truth! When one knows in any true measure what He is, and what we are, how much more wonderful! Here it assuredly means not our love to Him, but His to us. Had He not justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Was it not by faith, apart from works of law, and so open to Gentile no less than Jew?

It is noticeable that here first in this Epistle is there mention of God's love, and of the Spirit given to the believer, the power of enjoying that love. Assuredly this is not the manner of man, yet just as it should be. In the early chapters the apostle urges man's guilt and ruin because of his manifest evil. It is no longer a question; scripture has decided it. Every Jew was ready to admit that the condition of the Gentiles, philosophers like the rest, was desperate; but rejoins the apostle, what about your own state? If thou art named a Jew and restest on law and makest thy boast in God, and yet in fact dost transgress in this or that sort of ways, God's name is blasphemed on this very account among the heathen. Hence, as the law condemned, so the psalms and the prophets openly testify against Israel. For when the law says that there is not even one righteous, it speaks to those under the law; it is definitely and expressly therefore to the Jew; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world be under judgment to God.

But the cross of Christ, the full and flagrant proof of the world's inexcusable wickedness in unbelief, of the Jew yet more guilty than the Gentile, laid the basis by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God for a new kind of righteousness. This is God's righteousness, in contrast with man's which the law demanded but never could get from the fallen. Christ came, Jesus Christ the Righteous. “When ye have lifted up the Son of man,” said Himself to the Jews, “then ye shall know that I am He, and do nothing of Myself, but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me; He hath not left Me alone, for I do always the things that are pleasing to Him...Which of you convicteth Me of sin?” But would He be made sin for us? Would God make Him, Who knew no sin, responsible for sin, to bear its consequences as truly as if He were guilty? This is what was done, not on man's part but on God's for man, in giving His Son to die as propitiation for our sins. And this is love, not that we loved Him, which we ought to have done but did not, but that He loved us, and proved it in the death of His Son, the sacrifice for sinners, a sacrifice open to all, available for any, efficacious once and evermore for those that believe. God is just in justifying him that has faith in Jesus.

No doubt God is love, as He is light; and this appears throughout His dealings with man originally and when fallen, as well as in His ways with the chosen people, though they were under His moral government Who could by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. Still was He a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Nor had He left Himself without witness before the heathen in that He did good, and gave from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness; neither is He served by men's hands, as

though He needed anything, as the apostle preached to the Athenians, seeing He Himself giveth to all life and breath and all things; or, as our Lord taught, maketh His sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust.

But how immeasurably more is God known in His Son! There and then only did He reveal Himself as He is, far beyond His governmental dealings with a fleshly people controlled by His law, which, avowedly, made nothing perfect. Yet His full revelation in Christ brought out the utter evil of man, beyond doubt save to the blind; and the very rejection of Christ, which closed the proper probation of man by the proof of his inexcusable guilt (John 15:22-25), in the cross became under God the ground and display of sovereign grace, which saves the most rebellious, the darkest, and the vilest through faith in His Son. Truly it is God's righteousness, not man's for it only came forth in all its fullness when favored man was indisputably the enemy of God, not merely failing in his duty altogether and in every way, but hating Him when He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Alas! to proud self-sufficient man grace is more repulsive than law, because it makes nothing of his own righteousness (yea, denies it), every-thing of God's; and Christ is all, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Thereby should no flesh glory in His presence; but he that glorieth, as it is written, let him glory in the Lord. Was it not a great love wherewith God loved?

Here it is God's love not merely demonstrated to sinners as such, in the gift and death of Christ, but enjoyed and meant to be enjoyed to the full by the believer. Hence it is given as the reason which explains in general why we glory in tribulations, and in particular why hope even of God's glory does not put us to shame meanwhile. Assuredly it would if we measured its brightness with any degree of our love as we journey on. But God's love! Ah, this wholly differs. It is as perfect and unvarying as unmerited on our part, being simply and solely according to His complacency in Christ our Lord. Hence it is said to have been, and is, abidingly shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. If the gift was a transient and complete act, the result is permanent. The Holy Spirit, the divine witness of Christ and of His redemption, the power of enjoying God's love, was (as our Lord assured the disciples) to be in them and abide with them forever.

Further, that love is said to be shed abroad, or poured out, in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. Our affections are pervaded by His love, which is secured in power by the presence of His Spirit in us. And He is thus shown to be given to those who rest by faith on the Lord Jesus, the remission of their sins being by His blood. But the great unfolding of His action on individuals is only added in Rom. 8, after the experience of indwelling sin and of law, as well as our place in Christ, have been distinctly set out.

Now have you, dear reader, the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you receive God's testimony to His Son? Christ declares that he that does has eternal life (John 5); as the apostle preached that every believer is justified from all things (Acts 13). You are called on to believe this too, for your own soul. When you bow in simple faith, God's love fills your heart, not before nor otherwise. The love of Him Who gave His only-begotten Son, no less than of Him Who gave Himself for us, causes us to overflow within; and no wonder, for it is by the Holy Spirit given to us, alike springing up into everlasting life in worship, and streaming forth in witness to parched and perishing souls by the way.

Till one thus rests on Him Who for us died and rose, and on God's love Who sent Him, there may be spiritual desires, there may be an awakened conscience and piety Godward, there may be earnestness about man, blind and lost in his sins. But the gospel is God's answer in Christ to these desires of pious anxiety; it gives purification to the conscience, satisfaction to the heart, with rest in the glory of God as the assured prospect; so that we may boldly say grace, God Himself, could vouchsafe no more. His love accordingly is shed abroad in our hearts; and this could only be through the Holy Spirit given to us; not through new birth simply, but also the gift of the Spirit, when and because we are children of God. For the Spirit thus given is the seal of redemption, the. power of liberty, the witness of sonship, and the earnest of the inheritance; and He never was thus given to believers till the atoning work was done. Compare 2 Cor. 3:17, Gal. 4:6, Eph. 1:13, 14.

Chapter 165

The Measure and the Manner of God's Love

There are two beautiful sides of God's love upon which one may profitably meditate, its measure and its manner; corresponding to the words which the Holy Ghost so abundantly uses, grace and glory. In fact one might go even further than this and say, that they correspond to those suggestive expressions,—the “gospel of the grace,” and the “gospel of the glory.” Upon these two subjects our hearts indeed delight to muse the cross, leading on to remission of sins; the other—Christ risen,—leading on to the glory. The cross, and all that it was to Christ, is the measure; the glory and all that it will be to Him and us, the manner.

The evangelist cannot preach without one; the teacher opens up the other; or, if entirely for scriptural example one might name Peter and Paul, the former full of the Lord's grace, the apostle to the circumcision; the latter the apostle to the Gentiles, overflowing with the glory. The first was called by al Savior on earth, the second by the Lord from heaven, each bearing the peculiar marks of his conversion or call. One had committed to him the keys of the kingdom; and the other was entrusted with unfolding the mystery of Christ and the church.

How unspeakably grand is either subject! grace and glory. Grace leads me to the cross for the atoning work; glory introduces me thus cleansed to heaven and the throne. “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever” &c. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Here we have not only the measure, but the manner. Well might the aged apostle John, who was so conversant with each aspect of these beautiful expressions of God's heart, exclaim, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and [such] we are.” (R. V.) Behold, indeed Behold such wonder! Behold and worship!

And mark, how each aspect reflects itself upon the other. Without grace there could be no glory, and without the glory there could be no adequate answer to the grace. How like our God and Father, thus to begin and perfect, thus to lay the foundation and complete the glorious building!

Mark, too, the aspects of the various parables, how the measure and manner of love are variously illustrated. In the parable of the vineyard in Luke 20 I see the measure: “I will send my beloved Son” are the words of the Lord of the vineyard; with what result? “They cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.” How marked the contrast in Luke 4—the prodigal son: there the great thought seems not the measure but the manner of the love. “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; and let us eat, and be merry.” The first parable referred to is the Father's loss, the second is the Father's gain.

And what manner of the love there is in our Lord's words! “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” in contrast to the measure thereof expressed by Paul, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” It is these two aspects of God's love which make the full gospel, telling us of the suffering to redeem, and the consummation of redemption, sweetly blended—the cross of shame, and the crown of glory.

If we go back to the old Testament Scriptures, we find how the heart of David was penetrated, as he sat before Jehovah (2 Sam. 7), with the manner of the love made known to him there. “And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” And how we find the echo of it faintly expressed shortly after in his own dealing with Mephibosheth! “Is there yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?” Such had been, and infinitely more, the manner of Jehovah's love to himself, and such was now the manner of his love to the son of Saul. “He did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.”

Such, and transcendently more, is the measure and manner of the love held up to our view in the word of God, reaching from heaven to earth, and then again from earth to heaven. How wonderful! And as sure as Justice has been satisfied, and the measure of love exhibited at the cross; so shall the manner thereof be perfected in the glory: redemption the one, and glorification the other. The full complement of both aspects we have tit the new song, “Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and he made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever.” Here measure and manner, justice and grace, the demands of the throne, the answer of the cross, the judgment of our sins, and the Father's love and house, go together and stretch onward through that golden eternity to which we haste.

“Here His bright character is known,

Nor dares a creature guess,

Which of the glories brightest shine,

The justice or the grace.”

Chapter 166

Musical Service: Is It Right?

This tract is a plain and decided protest against the musical fashion of the day. The critical remarks are not equal to the general principles or the exhortations, for reasons already given in noticing “The Figurative Language of scripture.” Worship, says he, “is a matter of much more vital consequence than most Evangelicals seem to suppose. Let none speak or think of it, or of anything connected with it, as small or trifling. It is that in which God, the All-Great, delights. It is that which, as our Heavenly Father, He Himself seeks! It is the solemn eight-times-struck key-note of the New Covenant! Let us hear no more the vain and foolish words, ‘I like this,' or ‘I prefer that,' in connection with any of the principles or practices of Divine worship, but let us all humbly unite in offering our Father in heaven that which He so plainly told us He likes and we need.” Again, says he, “Musical service is wrong—as I. Unscriptural. II. Unreal. III. Selfish. IV. Sensuous. V. Worldly. VI. Uncongregational. VII. Unprotestant. VIII. Doing evil that good may come. IX. Injurious to the ministry.” Appendix B. shows that “there is no direct warrant for the use of instrumental music in the Church of Christ, either in the New Testament, or in any of the writings of the first three centuries.”

Chapter 167

Nabal and Abigail

1 Sam. 25

This remarkable chapter opens with the announcement of the death of Samuel and the gathering together of all Israel to lament for him and to bury him. They had, indeed, abundant cause for mourning. Although he had for some time been in retirement, yet while he lived the Spirit of God wrought in Israel, and so powerfully that Saul's messengers and even Saul himself could not resist it, however unchanged in their hearts (ch. 19:20-24).

But this link with the Lord no longer existed; and what was there left to His people of all the blessings lavished on them? Inspiration only can set before us a true picture of their condition, and Psa. 78 furnishes a very vivid one. We quote from ver. 59.

God was wroth, And greatly abhorred Israel:

So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,

The tent which he placed among men;

And delivered his strength into captivity,

And his glory into the enemy's hand.

He gave his people over unto the sword;

And was wroth with his inheritance.

The fire consumed their young men;

And their maidens were not given in marriage.

Their priests fell by the sword;

And their widows made no lamentation.”

It is a distressing scene. What more so than such a people stricken of God? The last lines disclose such a state of despair in those who were once the most honored of the nation that we cannot think they refer to the death of Hophni and Phinehas only. Saul, surely, was the author of this crowning calamity, and if so, how fatal the course of the people in choosing their own way of deliverance and desiring him, rather than the Lord, to be their king. His worst passions had been stirred by Doeg, and he summoned Ahimelech the priest and all his father's house before him on a charge of conspiracy with David. With unscrupulous ferocity he commanded this Edomite to fall upon them; “who slew on that day fourscore 1., and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.” This was not all. The man who in defiance of God's express command spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, now devoted the whole city of the priests to the sword; women, children and even sucklings were to be slain. This unlooked for and overwhelming stroke fell with all its pitilessness

on hearts already crushed by the slaughter of their husbands, and turned their sorrow to despair. They made no lamentation! And now Samuel was dead, and Saul was increasing in power, in resources and in wickedness. How feebly at best can we enter into the feelings of those in Israel who had a heart for the Lord and the things of the Lord. The glory had departed, the tabernacle was abandoned, the king was apostate, the priests were slain, the ephod, with Uri's] and Thummim, was with Abiathar a fugitive, and the prophet was dead. There was no one to offer sacrifice, no one to minister to them the word of the Lord. Could spiritual destitution be more complete, or their helplessness more manifest? But Israel, notwithstanding all their sinful failures, was still precious in the sight of the Lord, and the Psalm already quoted, when things were at the worst, breaks forth in triumphant strains (vers. 65-72), recounting the results of His intervention, and brings before us David as the hope of the nation; God's chosen king, chosen to be the deliverer and restorer, the leader and blesser of His people. At this time, however, he was in suffering and want, an outcast, fleeing before Saul in fear of his life, hunted, as he said, like a partridge in the mountains.

To see his future glory through the dark cloud of his present circumstances needed faith, and this some, as Jonathan, had. To confess him needed love, and this Jonathan had too, wonderful love; but to go forth to him, to bear his reproach and to share his sufferings, needed something more, needed a true judgment of the whole system which cast him out, whatever its present wealth and power. This Jonathan had not. At first he stripped himself for David, even to his sword and his bow; but we find him at last using his weapons in companionship with Saul, and was stripped of them by the Philistines. Solemn lesson whatever the Christian reserves for himself and the world falls into the hands of the adversary. Christ can keep for him, he cannot keep for himself (2 Tim. 1:12). Abigail in this was wiser than Jonathan.

A few touches suffice to set Nabal, her husband, before us. He was a man of great possessions, but without understanding. Spiritual destitution did not trouble him. His flocks had increased and were in safety, and these were his only care; therefore he would feast and make merry. Unwelcome as the truth was, it was none the less certain, that he owed his prosperity to one on whom he bestowed not a thought. It was characteristic of David to seek the welfare of all of Israel, and it was he who had protected Nabal's flocks from the incursions of enemies (vers. 7, 15, 16). Would he acknowledge this? Would he own his indebtedness and seek to make some return? Nothing could exceed the grace with which the claims of David were set before him. How were they met? With unmingled contempt. “Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it, unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

“How various are the passions of men which Satan can take hold of to get the better of them.. What was there in common between Saul and Nabal? What opposites they were, in disposition. Especially the one of indomitable energy and ambition, the other a common sample of inert, sordid selfishness. Yet they were united in their rejection of David. They were both indebted to him, yet they were one in their hatred of him. Is there nothing in this to remind us of Him Whose claims on men are infinite? Every possible variety of character, of position in life, of attainments, and even of religion and race, was united against Christ. As He said, “The world hath hated me.” What a power there must be behind all that is seen to bind together such discordant elements, and to maintain to

the present moment such a unity as this; a unity that is appalling to think of in the light of Calvary; a unity from which it needs omnipotent grace to detach a single soul.

Abigail, in her day, is a most interesting example of such a soul. Her firmness and decision are bright features in her character, because her relationship to Nabal made a faithful course exceedingly difficult. She could not deliver hers elf from her position, and she did not attempt to do it; but she could, and did, unequivocally manifest that the king of God's choice had the loyal allegiance of her heart. She would confess David as her lord, come what may, and such a confession of him as she made, we may safely say, is without a parallel. When she heard of him, she responded without a moment's hesitation to his claims, and sent to him a munificent offering, yet humbly owned it was unworthy of him. She bowed before him to the ground. Looking for mercy, taking upon herself her husband's iniquity, for she fully judged Nabal's conduct to be iniquitous. Then her “heart overflowed with goodly matter,” and she rehearsed the counsels of God concerning the king; for already David was king to her faith, and she magnified his work and his worth. “The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.”

Glancing a moment at Saul, she saw only “a man” whose attempts to frustrate the will of God must prove vain. David was safe, whoever might rise up against him, “bound in the bundle of life with the Lord;” while “the souls of his enemies should be slung out, as out of the middle of a sling.”

Her only request for herself was, “When the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.” There is a singularly interesting and instructive similarity between this petition and that of the dying thief to the Lord Jesus; especially as we call to mind that, to sight, there was nothing for either on which to build a hope. In both cases too, the answer far exceeded the request. In about ten days the Lord smote Nabal that he died, and David took Abigail to be his wife, to suffer with him and to reign.

Various reasons have been suggested why the history of Nabal and Abigail was introduced at this crisis in Israel. We may say, that the course of divinely given wisdom and human folly has rarely been so simply, yet so vividly, depicted; and the crisis gave occasion for this. It is also our conviction that, if Matt. 11 (a still more important crisis in Israel) were read in the light of it, there would be less difficulty in understanding ver. 12 (see margin). The law, the prophets and even John, afforded no rest; here it was the king, but the king in rejection. The precious rest of the soul was to be found in and with Him; but oh! the opposition and the hindrances (Luke 12:51-53).

Notice of

The Gospel according to Peter, and the Revelation of Peter...London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1892.

Such is the title of the newly discovered MS. as edited and lectured on respectively by J. A. Robinson, Fellow and Assistant Tutor of Christ's College, and M. R. James, Fellow and Dean of King's College, Cambridge, from the transcript published by M. Bouriant, in vol. ix. of the Memoirs of the French Archeol. Mission at Cairo. The Greek fragments are given with critical notes; and the lecturer's own English version of each. The Gospel is interesting chiefly as an instance of a spurious production of the Docetm; the Revelation, as a source of the natural dreams of heaven and hell still prevalent in Christendom, especially in the Latin body. They probably date from the second century, though the copy of the fragment found seems to have been written in the eighth of our era. Peter's Gospel is a fable to propagate the hateful heterodoxy that the Lord consisted of two persons! that the divine left Jesus on the cross!! and that the human alone remained to die!!! Not only was Atonement ruined, but the Person divided and destroyed.

This is insinuated plainly enough in the following brief extract:— “And the Lord cried aloud, saying, My strength, my strength, Thou hast forsaken me! And having said this, he was taken up.”

There also follows the figment of two men from heaven entering the grave, and three men coming out, two of them supporting the one and a cross following them!! the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but the head of the one towering up above the heavens. “And heard a voice from the heavens that said, Hast thou preached obedience unto them that sleep? And from the cross! was heard, yea.” The aim of fables like these is obvious. What a condition of rapid departure from the truth it argues when such stuff as this found currency among Christian Professors, and got the notice of leading men, not always indignant!

The Passover

It is instructive to note where the blood was sprinkled. Not at all on the fourth or lower side. Why was this? True, the blood of the lamb was not to be trampled upon; but does it seem that such is the special lesson taught by the omission? There the question was not how the blood was not to be treated by those whom it sheltered, but rather how the Israelite fared in virtue of it. The judgment of God was in question and where the blood had to be sprinkled in order to shelter from it. From what quarter was the stroke coming? Assuredly not from beneath, but from above. We know that God's relative position to man as put in Scripture is always above. Whether to judge or to deliver, He had to come down (Gen. 11:7, Ex. 3:8).

Here therefore the blood was sprinkled; where there was exposure to judgment, passing over. The lower side was the only one unexposed at all stages of the passing over; and God did not say, I will pass under you, but over you.

Further, as God is above, so is the devil helped by “all that is in the world.” See John 8:23, 44. Evil power is “from beneath.” The blood of “Christ our passover” was not shed and sprinkled to shelter the believer from the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but from the righteous judgment of God. Those Israelites very early found that the blood did not insure them against the attack of Pharaoh and his host. So is it with every believer while in the world. From God's judgment he is now and eternally sheltered (John 5:24); but so far is he from not being exposed to attacks from spiritual wickedness that God has provided a complete suit of armor for him, which only avails with prayer and dependence on God (Eph. 6:11-17). D. T.

Chapter 170

Peace

The connection or plan of peace in Luke, and the last or application to us in John also, is extremely interesting. As soon as Christ is born, the unjealous angels, delighting in the glory of God and man's blessing, celebrate His birth. They pass over man's fault which put the born Savior in a manger and are filled entirely with the divine thought in it. And what was their praise? “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men.” Such was the result in its own nature of the Savior's birth. This presence of the Lord, the fruit of infinite grace, was in itself, if received, peace and blessing—carried it necessarily in what is in itself, if received, peace and blessing—carried it necessarily in itself, and will produce it finally.

But the Lord was rejected, and, as some received Him, He had to say, “Suppose ye that I am to give peace on earth? Nay, but rather division. For, from henceforth there shall be three against two, and five shall be in one household against three.” (Luke 12)

In the end of Luke the kingdom is celebrated, which will indeed bring peace on the earth. There it is said, “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” All that God had done on earth had been marred and spoiled by Satan; and as long as the wicked spirits are in heavenly places, thus it must be. But at length there is war in heaven (Rev. 12), the devil and his angels are cast out, and there is no more place for them. Then peace comes, and in due time Satan is hound. Peace follows on earth, and this under the Lord's rule for a thousand years. Between these two we stand.

In the same Gospel of Luke the Lord comes after His resurrection, and pronounced peace of a far deeper and fuller character; not peace on earth, governmental peace, but peace made with God. He had made peace, perfect peace; so that the soul might enjoy cloudless communion with Him, all that is of this world or of this scene, as alive in it, being shut out. He had brought them, or had done what brought them, into this peace by His death; and now He pronounced it. And if we turn to John, this will shine out with the brightest evidence. The Lord had warned His disciples that He did not come to bring peace but a sword; so that the peace on earth was not there, but the fire already kindled. But He had ineffable peace of soul as not of the world; His soul was in the unclouded light of His Father's countenance. It was a link between man and God, infinite in blessing (in Him in every sense infinite, and in us objectively and as regards the power of the Holy Ghost, and as being in Him and so in cloudless light with God), no matter what the circumstances. Now Jesus through His death brings us (as being in Him and He in us) into this blessing: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you.” This is unspeakably blessed.

The peace of the Christian is not the same as being justified: “being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This must be according to His nature—hence completely what He is. This makes it very blessed, and though in us connected with our being alienated and enemies by sin, yet in itself it is only measured by what He was before sin existed—in the outgoing of His own nature in itself before sin, and we in absolute harmony with its full display and proper nature. Sin has been

the means of bringing us to know what holiness, righteousness, and love are; but they are all in God, the last is His nature. Thus, in hearing what Christ says, we learn what it is. “Peace, I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.”

Now this peace was consonance in every way with the divine nature, and the consciousness of communion with it. It rested on Him unclouded, but that was not by sins put away. It was in itself divine and, though now in man, eternal consonance. But for us it had of course to be made. He “made peace by the blood of the cross.” And this was to perfect us to the whole nature and character of God, that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and is glorified with God in virtue of that work, in which He glorified God perfectly, and in respect of what we are as sinners; but He glorified God perfectly.

Hence we are brought into this: “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” It is in the midst of evil no doubt, with conflict and warfare around, so that it has the character of peace. Still it is, and this makes it specially to be, “peace with God.” It is not as to circumstances: this is “peace of God” keeping our hearts, &c.—a blessed thing, but not so deep and direct as “peace with God” —peace with Himself, our secret with Him and His with us. I think it will turn to delight in His own glory in heaven, to which it ministers now. But here it has the character of peace with God.

Chapter 171

Peace With God

The sinner is at war with God Whose judgment he cannot but dread. He is guilty and knows it, but the effort for him to forget it always is vain, still more so to hide it from God. Even conscience recalls the sins long committed, just when the remembrance is most painful and overwhelming. Nor does the Holy Spirit fail to apply the word of God where there is an ear to hear. All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light. This aggravates the darkness, and makes evident the unbeliever's total unfitness for God's presence. For indeed His glory is the standard; and how far sinful man comes short!

But the Lord Jesus is a perfect Savior, and the only one. And as He came from God, so is He gone to God. He came down in love; He is gone up in righteousness, and between the two He could and did say, “I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:32. For He made peace through the blood of His cross. Col. 1:20. For whom did He make peace, if not for those who deeply need it? And as God sent His Son for this end, His heart welcomes the troubled penitent that looks to Him for it. Yea, God anticipates poor doubting man, and sets him at ease by gracious tidings which He now sends everywhere, preaching peace by Jesus Christ.

Of old God told His ancient people, “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They have all turned aside; they are together becomes unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” So the apostle quoted from Psa. 53 and others, and from Isa. 59. Is it not as true of you in Christendom? Are you not as bankrupt in righteousness, in spiritual intelligence, in any real care even about God? Nay, it is true of all that they have swerved, and together been unprofitable in His sight, and not even one practicing good. Nor is there a member of man's body untainted by corruption or violence. What then but destruction and misery in such ways, and peace's way unknown? Ah! how true that no fear of God is before men's eyes.

But why perish in your sins? Why persist in guilty wretchedness, when God is calling to you, and calling you to Himself? The apostle in 2 Cor. 5 declares that God was in Christ reconciling, not worthy men, nor His ancient people, but the “world” to Himself; nay, more, not reckoning unto them their trespasses. May you believe it! He represents himself and others laboring in the gospel as ambassadors on behalf of Christ. For the counsel of peace is between Them both, Who would win you from the enemy and sin and its judgment, that you might have peace with God. We beseech you, says he, Be reconciled to God. Him Who knew no sin, Christ, He made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. There is no barrier on God's part, and He declares that in the cross of Christ He has made full provision for you, spite of all your evil. If you bow as a sinner and call on the name of the Lord, God assures you that Christ took your place in divine judgment of sin there to give you His place in righteousness and glory.

Thus the ground of peace, for the soul that is troubled before God, is Christ the propitiation for sins (1 John 2:2) Him therefore has God forth a propitiatory or mercy seat through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25). You might, as you are, justly dread His judgment seat. But divine grace has interposed, after the sins, and before the judgment. Oh, trifle with neither! Unbelief will not save but destroy you. Hear His word and believe Him now. “Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6) For all that believe Christ bore the sins in His own body on the tree; and you may draw near in faith to God's own presence, for the veil is rent, and the blood is upon the mercy seat and before it. And why was the blood sprinkled seven times before it (Lev. 16), if not to give complete assurance to him that thus and now approaches God in the true sanctuary?

No wonder that you, believing God's testimony concerning His Son, are entitled to peace, to peace with Him now and evermore, Undoubtedly your sins were many and great, yourself unworthy and sinful. But the Son of Man, it is written, came to seek and save that which is lost. Salvation is therefore yours if on the warrant of God's word you believe on Him. It is all well if your soul has been deeply concerned as you weighed your evil life in God's sight. But no such exercises can ever give you peace; any more than the harrowing of a field can itself yield a harvest. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can avail for you. But if we believe God's estimate of His blood as in Rom. 3, Rom. 4 points us to his resurrection as God's proof of our justification. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Justification comes out of faith, not out of works of law. The soul is justified on that principle, and on none other. But having been thus justified, we know that the burden of guilt is rolled away by a divine work brought home to us, and “we have peace with God.” It is through Christ alone meritoriously, but it cannot be ours save by faith. Believing, we have peace with God.

So Christ, with His death in view, left peace as His legacy to His own (John 14:27); and as He promised, so He performed (John 20:19, 21), on the resurrection day saying, “Peace be unto you.” He repeated it, both for their own souls, and for His work as His envoys to others. Without peace resting on God's word we cannot enjoy our real relationship as children of God, nor can we draw near to worship the Father in spirit and truth; the conscience is unpurged, and the affections have no due exercise, To have peace with God is the normal privilege of a Christian.

Chapter 172

Ploughing, Sowing, Reaping

“The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing” (Prov. 20:4). “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns” (Jer. 4:3). “And they that were ready, went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matt. 25:10-12).

1. Plowing. The Lord God had cursed the ground after Adam sinned, and declared to him that it was only by toilsome cultivation it would yield him food.

“In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread” (Gen. 3:19). So man has found it ever since. The despicable character described at the head of this paper, the sluggard, because of slothfulness, would not attend to the cultivation of his field—for he had a field. “I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had covered the face thereof; and the stone wall thereof was broken down” (Prov. 24:30, 31). This observant passer-by must have noticed the sluggard's field in summer time, as the thorns and nettles were growing vigorously: a poor look-out for its owner at the approaching harvest. His neighbor's field had a very different appearance. A fine crop of grain covered its face, proving the truth of Prov. 28:19, “He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread.” The slothful man had missed his season. In winter he ought to have been up and plowing his field, that the frost and cold winds might temper and pulverize the broken clods, to prepare a good seed bed. When he should have rooted out the nettles and thorns, he had been folding his hands to sleep.

It was cold, and he would not plow. Because he did not plow, he could not sow. And because he did not sow, he had nothing to reap but thorns and nettles, winch were only fit for the fire.

As it is naturally, so it is spiritually. Man's heart is, to say the least, a fallow field, which must be broken up, before the seed of the word of God can be sown there, and become fruitful. Thus the Lord calls “the men of Judah, and Jerusalem” to “break up their fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”

So, in Jer. 4:14, we read, “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.” “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word” (Isa. 66:2). Again the Lord went into the synagogue, at Nazareth, and read from the book of the prophet Isaiah, “He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,” &c. (Luke 4:18). The preparatory work this needed the slothful man would not do. Sinners had rather not have their hearts broken. It is humbling and painful work. They resist the plow-share in the conscience; and prefer to be let alone in their sins. So of old, when the apostle Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee” (Acts 24:25). The powerful appeal of the apostle to the conscience of Felix was felt, but not responded to. The plow-share was refused, the heart left unbroken. Felix's present associations were more

pleasant to him, than thinking of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. “Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.”

Then, again, ling Agrippa listens with intense interest to the pointed dealing of the apostle Paul with his heart and conscience. “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.” Here surely is a more advanced case than Felix's; for there was in king Agrippa, at any rate, intellectual faith in the prophets; but with what result? “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:27, 28). The word “almost” or “in a little degree” reveals, that the work was not thorough. Not so in Acts 2, when the apostle speaks to conscience-troubled souls. “Men (and) brethren, what shall we do?” So Saul of Tarsus, when the Lord appeared to him on the way to Damascus, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” See too the prodigal, and the publican of the parables, and the penitent robber on the cross.

The heart was broken. Repentance, self-judgment before God was there: fit state for the reception of salvation by grace, through faith of the gospel.

2. Sowing. In Matt. 13 the Lord describes the various kinds of ground upon which the seed of the gospel fell. The sower goes forth to sow. It is not required of him to pick out, and discriminate as to the nature and fitness of the soil upon which he must scatter the seed. He sows the whole field. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He was not stinted for seed; and he is quite aware that all the seed sown will not produce fruit. Yet he sows it everywhere. The crop depends upon the state of the land where the seed falls. Figures may not hold good in every detail, but there is analogy in the wayside hearers to the sluggard's field. Both were unbroken uncultivated plots. The slothful man who refused to plow his field is described as a “man void of understanding.” So in Matt. 13 the Lord describes the way-side hearers in the same language “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not” (ver. 19).

On the stony ground the seed germinates, yet is there no deepness of earth, not much breaking up there; and in consequence all withers away when trial and persecution come.

The roots of the thorns were left in the third plot, although it would appear that their tops had been cut off. They should have been rooted up. It was sowing amongst thorns contrary to the word of God by Jeremiah, which we have looked at. Yet it was not the responsibility of the sower to root up the thorns. There might be an apparent clearing, but the roots remained of worldliness, cares, riches, and pleasures. Such were men like Demas and others. Very different was Barnabas, “a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.” The work was in dealing with the root. Not that the evil in the heart was exterminated, or non-existent; but it was judged in divine power, and a new nature given, as well as the Holy Spirit. Only the good ground matures a crop; and that in quantity, not the same in all, but “Thirty, sixty, and one hundred fold.” The good ground was not “fallow ground,” but broken up. The Lord's explanation is, “He that heareth the word and understandeth it” (ver. 23). In the corresponding parable of Luke it is “believing and being saved.” Both are true. It is the opposite to the way-side hearer and the slothful man. What is it here to “understand?” It is the perception, that the word of the kingdom or of God is what the soul needs. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). If one may so speak, God in the gospel says to the sinner, I know your need: you are lost; but I have given My Son to save you. The broken-hearted sinner understands this, and welcomes Christ. The seed falls into the good ground, and brings forth fruit. In Luke 8:15 we have the explanation of the good ground given:—

“That (seed) on the good ground are they which, in a honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.”

It is not meant here, that the heart was without sin, but that it realized and owned its sin, like the publican, “God be merciful to me, a (the), sinner.” No man is honest in the sight of God, who does not feel and own his sin. The fallow ground is thus broken up, and the word of salvation is received, and held fast, and with patience the fruit is brought forth.

3. Reaping. On this one need not say much. As there is a time for everything under the sun, so then a time to plow, a time to sow, and a time to reap.

Yes, assuredly, the harvest is coming. The end of the age approaches. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” The cry has gone forth, “Behold the bridegroom. Go ye out to meet him.” This is the immediate and first great event. Are you ready, my reader, for Him? With lamp trimmed and lighted, and oil in your vessel to sustain the light, waiting for your Lord? Then you will go in, and the door will be shut. But what of others? They are left outside. They “beg in harvest and get nothing.” Was the slothful man “void of understanding?” So we’re these foolish virgins, in neglecting the oil essential to sustain the light of their lamp. Alas! it could not abide without oil. “Our lamps,” exclaim they, “are going out.” Hope dies within them, as they realize their fatal want; and, solemn thought, the Lord in that day refuses their cry, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.” “I know you not” is His answer. So at the end of the age (Matt. 13:41), “The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those that do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” The wheat is gathered into the barn, after the tares are gathered in bundles to be burned (ver. 30). Solemn warning! may we, being instructed, understand the word.

G. R.

Chapter 173

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 42-44

The second collection of the Psalms begins here and closes with Psa. 72 It is characterized by the prevalence of “Elohim,” as the first by that of “Jehovah “: not of course that Jehovah is absent from Book II. or that Elohim is lacking in Book I., for both occur where they are required in these books; but that the predominance of each divine term appears as just stated. Of this a comparison of Psa. 14 with Psa. 53 is a striking illustration to the sober enquirer. Yet in Psa. 14 “God” is used thrice appropriately; in Psa. 53 it is uniformly and with no less propriety “God,” and in no case Jehovah.

The reason underlying this difference is not the superficial assumption of two authors thus distinguished, which Psa. 14 dissipates as mere windy talk, but that the second book contemplates the Jews as driven from Jerusalem, and the house of God then in possession of His enemies both Gentile and Jewish. Those whose cry to Him is given in these psalms of book II. are no longer in the enjoyment of the ordinary privileges of the covenant through the apostacy of Jewish as well as the oppression of Gentile foes. Hence they are cast on the Unfailing faithfulness, mercy, and goodness of God. Thereby a deepening work goes on in their souls, as they learn more of what God is intrinsically when His outward blessings are cut off and the worst evil seems to prosper; and this most painfully to them, in the circumcised still in Jerusalem, under the man of sin seating himself as God in the temple of God.

Hence we may notice that the sons of Korah appear first in the inscriptions, though there are many of David, that most fertile of singers and with the most varied experience expressed in his songs; and Asaph is not wanting, though abundant in book 3 where a few psalms for the sons of Korah come in before the end. It suffices here to recall the awful crisis in Israel's history when Korah's sons were saved so as by fire. Compare Num. 16 with Num. 26:11. Mercy that day gloried against judgment, as it will in the future when the power of evil appears so overwhelming that judgment might appear the sole possible issue. If testimony fails to Jehovah for the present, God cannot cease to be God and infinitely good; and who more suited to sing than the delivered sons of the rebellious Levite? So it was in a measure in David's time, when most clouded; so it will be in days to come, when all things come out definitively and fatally for man on earth, before the Man of Peace reigns over it publicly in power.

In harmony with this peculiarity even Messiah is acknowledged in this book as “God,” and His throne as forever and ever, Psa. 45:7 (6); yet the same psalm both before and after fully shows His manhood, and consequently both blessing and anointing by God. This may be a difficulty to an unbeliever; it is the essential truth of His person to every Christian's heart. But as a whole it is a clear anticipation of His Messianic victories and reign, yet suitably to the book of which it forms a part. So Most High occurs in Psa. 46; for His supremacy is before the heart at that fearful time when “God” is the sole refuge, no matter what the desolations, no matter how the nations rage. In the psalm following Most High is coupled not with El, but with Jehovah, and this a call to all the peoples, though “God” is still the prevailing term.

So it is even in the touching psalm of Messiah's sufferings (69): He begins with “God” and ends with “God,” though Jehovah occurs with the usual fitness. It is even so in the closing psalm “of Solomon,” the beautiful melody for the millennial day, when “the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” Christ had sorrows set forth in Psa. 69, no less than in Psa. 22 which is the characteristic psalm of His sufferings suitable for book 1. As Christians we are entitled to enter into His mind in both; but it ought to need no argument to prove that the latter has a closer application to ourselves (especially in vers. 22-24, A. and R. Vv.); whereas Psa. 69 passes by our present blessing, and anticipates the judgment of His foes and God's saving Zion and building the cities of Judah, when heaven and earth praise Jehovah, the seas and everything that moved.) therein. The death and the resurrection of Christ do not appear in this book; but in Psa. 68 is His exaltation on high that He might dwell among the rebellious: what grace to them what glory His!

Psalm 42

“To the chief musician. Instruction. For the sons of Korah. As the hart longeth after the brooks of water, so my soul longeth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been food for me by day and by night, whilst they say unto me all the day, Where [is] thy God? These things I remember and pour out my soul within me, how I passed with the crowd, and went on with them to the house of God, with the voice of singing and praise, a festive multitude. Why art thou cast down, my soul, and disquieted within me? Wait for God, for I shall yet praise him [for] the help [or, health, lit. salvations] of his countenance. My God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore do I remember thee from the land of the Jordan and the Hermons, from mount Mizar. Deep calleth to deep at the noise of thy cataracts; all thy breakers and thy rollers are gone over me. By day Jehovah will command his lovingkindness, and by night his song shall be with me, a prayer unto the God of my life! I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of mine enemy? With a sword in my hones mine oppressors have reproached me, when they say unto me all the day, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Wait for God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God” (vers. 1-12).

Psalm 43

“Judge me, O God, and plead my cause with an ungodly nation; from a man of deceit and iniquity deliver me. For thou art the God of my refuge; why hast thou cast me off? Why do I walk mourning under the oppression of the enemy? Send out thy light and thy truth: they shall lead me, they shall bring me unto the mountain of thy holiness and unto thy tabernacles. And I will go unto the altar of God, unto God the gladness of my joy; and I will give thanks unto thee on the harp, O God, my God. Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Wait for God, for I shall yet praise him, the help of my countenance, and my God” (vers. 1-5).

These are clearly companion psalms, and so under one title. The prophetic aspect is the remnant cast out or fled: compare with Matt. 24:15 et seqq., Mark 13:14 &c., Joel 2:17. The historic occasion was when David and his faithful following abandoned Jerusalem under Absalom's conspiracy. The closing days of our Lord had in the highest degree this character, though modified by other considerations; for what sorrows had not He, the Holy One of God? Yet the former of the twain is more general and looks at Gentile enemies as much as or more than any; whereas the force of the later psalm is the complaint against the Jews as “an ungodly nation.” Professedly holy (in the sense here of piety from being the object of divine mercy), they had none; they were now goi lo-chasid. How true, yet how bitter, that the driven out godly ones should so speak to God of the chosen people! And so in fact it will be. The one psalm without the other could not adequately express the grief of the remnant at this juncture, when the Antichrist sets up the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary, instigated and protected the Beast (or Emperor of the Western powers). See Rev. 13 The thirst here is to drink once more of the waters, whence the abominable amalgam of Gentile self-will and Jewish apostacy had driven them out; so they confidently expect from God Who cannot deny Himself, and loves His people.

Psalm 44

“To the chief musician. For the sons of Korah. Instruction. O God, with our ears have we heard, our fathers have declared unto us the work thou didst work in their days, in the days of old. Thou by thy hand didst drive out the Gentiles, and plant them; thou didst evil to nations, and didst spread them out. For not with their sword did they inherit the land, nor did their arm deliver them; but thy right hand and thine arm and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst pleasure in them. Thou [art] he, my King, O God; command deliverances [lit. salvations] for Jacob. By thee will we push down our adversaries; in thy name will we tread under foot them that rise up against us. For not in my bow will I trust, and my sword shall not save me. For thou hast saved us from our adversaries, and those that hate us thou hast put to shame. In God have we praised all the day, and we will give thanks to thy name forever. Selah.”

“But thou hast cast off and put unto shame and goest not forth with our hosts. Thou had made us turn back from the adversary, and those that hate us have spoiled for themselves. Thou givest us as sheep [for] food, and among the Gentiles hast Thou scattered us. Thou sellest thy people for naught [lit. without wealth], and hast not increased by their price. Thou settest us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to those that are around us. Thou settest us a by-word among the Gentiles, a shaking of the head among the nations. All the day my shame [is] before me, and the confusion of my face hath covered me, for the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth, because of the enemy and avenger. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, and we have not been false in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, nor hath our step declined from thy path, that thou hast broken us in the place of dragons [or, jackals] and hast covered us with death-shadow. If we have forgotten the name of our God and have stretched out our hands to a strange god, will not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart. For because of thee are we killed all the day; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake: why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast not off forever. For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth to the earth. Arise, a help unto us, and redeem us because of thy mercy” (vers.. 1-27).

From their now outcast condition, which they knew to be just, they cry to God, Who had done all the good their fathers had ever experienced; and God abides the same, he is their God.

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 45-49

The first group continues to 49 which is a sort of homily concluding them. As the saint in the extreme trial endured could only look to God as his King (44:5), here we have the prophetic intervention immediately following. It is of course in the Messiah that the kingdom of God is anticipated. His personal grace is celebrated; His divine nature and glory, at the very time that He is anointed by God as man above His companions; for such He has and will have. But it is His triumph and rule and association with the godly Jews, no longer cast out of all but honored beyond all that had been in the psalmist's days of Israel; and Jerusalem is no longer trodden down by Gentiles, no more desolate and sitting on the ground, but the city of righteousness, the faithful city, the queen at Messiah's right hand in fine gold of Ophir. The virgins her companions are presumably the cities of Judah; and the peoples to give thanks forever are the nations of that future day in relationship with the Jews. It is in no way the Bride, the Lamb's wife in heavenly glory. (Rev. 19-22)

Psalm 45

“To the chief musician upon Shoshannim [or lilies]; for the sons of Korah; instruction, a song of loves. My heart hath overflowed [with] a good matter; I am declaring my works to the king: my tongue [is] the pen of a ready writer. Thou hast been very fair above the sons of men; grace hath been poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee forever. Gird thy sword upon the thigh, O mighty one, thy glory and thy majesty; and [in] thy majesty ride prosperously for the cause of truth and meekness of righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows [are] sharpened—the peoples fall under thee—in the heart of the king's enemies. Thy throne, O God, [is] forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness [is] the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy. companions. Myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, [are] all thy garments; from palaces of ivory stringed instruments have gladdened thee. Daughters of kings [are] among thine honorable women; at thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the king will greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him. And the daughter of Tire with a gift, the rich of the people, shall entreat thy face. All glorious [is] the king's daughter within; of gold embroidery [is] her clothing: in needlework she shall be led to the king; the virgins after her, her companions, shall be brought unto thee. They shall be led with rejoicings and gladness; they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons, thou shalt set them for princes in all the earth [or, land]. I will make mention of thy name throughout all generations; therefore peoples shall give thee thanks forever and ever” (vers. 1-18).

Psalm 46

This is the calm but joyful answer to the taunts of all their foes without who asked, Where is thy God? Their refuge and strength, their refuge in distress very readily found, God is owned Most High and Jehovah of hosts, the God of Jacob, but God as He is in His own nature exalted among the nations and in the earth.

“To the chief musician, for the sons of Korah, upon Alamoth, a song. God [is] to us a refuge and strength, a help in distresses exceedingly found. Therefore will we not fear in changing of the earth and in moving of mountains into the heart of the seas. Its waters roar, they are troubled; the mountains tremble with its pride. Selah. [There is] a river; its streams make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God [is] in her midst: she shall not be moved: God shall help her at the dawn of morning. Gentiles raged, kingdoms were moved; he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Jehovah of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] a refuge unto us. Selah. Come, behold the works of Jehovah, who hath set desolations in the earth; he breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear; he burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the Gentiles; I will be exalted in the earth. Jehovah of hosts [is] with us, the God of Jacob [is] a refuge unto us. Selah” (vers. 1-12).

Psalm 47

Here there is more: a call to all the peoples who seek association to join in their triumph and joy, but the deep sense that it is God Who has rights and glory on the earth; and therefore all is of grace to those whom He loved, and for whom He chose their inheritance. It is the millennial day which faith sees and sings.

“To the chief musician, for the sons of Korah, a psalm. Clap your hands, all ye peoples, shout unto God with voice of rejoicing. For Jehovah Most High is terrible, a great king over all the earth. He destroyeth peoples under us, and nations under our feet. He chooseth our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he hath loved. Selah. God hath gone up with a shout, Jehovah with the voice of a trumpet. Sing praises unto God, sing praises unto our king. For king to all the earth [is] God; sing psalms of instruction [or, understanding]. God hath reigned over the Gentiles, God hath sat down upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the peoples are gathered together [with] the people of the God of Abraham; for unto God [belong] the shields of the earth; he hath been greatly exalted” (vers. 1-10).

Psalm 48

The remnant rise in the expression of their faith and can now begin with Jehovah, as they see the vision of Zion in its beauty and glory, and all confederacies confounded, yea, vanished away. It is an advance even on the last. The glory of the king penetrates as it were place and people. So predicted Isa. 2; 60; Mic. 4; 5, Zech. 14.

“A song, a psalm for the sons of Korah. Great [is] Jehovah and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, the hill of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth [is] the mount Zion, [on] the side of the north, the joy of the great king. God hath been known in her palaces as a refuge. For lo! the kings met, they passed through together, they saw, so they wondered, they were terrified, they fled in alarm. Trembling seized them there, pain as of one bringing forth. With an east wind thou hast broken the ships of Tarshish. As we have heard, so we have seen, in the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish her forever. We have meditated, O God, on thy mercy in the midst of thy temple. According to thy name, O God, so [is] thy praise unto the ends of the earth; of righteousness is thy right hand full. Mount Zion rejoiceth, the daughters of Judah exult because of thy judgments. Surround ye Zion and encompass her; count ye her towers. Set your heart to her rampart; consider her palaces, that ye may recount it to the generation following. For this God [is] our God forever and ever; he will direct us until death” (vers. 1-15).

Psalm 49

This is a word of exhortation founded on the moral truth of the crisis just surveyed. The Jews understood not God's ways more than the Gentiles, and hence the abominable amalgam at the end of the age which is fast approaching. Both idolize present wealth and power, ease and honor: God will be in the thoughts of neither. But as a vapor all passes away that is not of God and in God and with God, and nothing is apart from Christ. Only God can and does raise from the dust of death; and as we know this now for heaven, so the godly Jews at the close will learn and preach as here for the earth, the honored ones to welcome Him when He comes to take Zion and all the earth.

“To the chief musician, for the sons of Korah, a psalm. Hear this, all ye peoples, give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth speaketh wisdom, and the meditation of my heart [is] understanding, I incline mine ear to a parable, I open upon a harp my riddle. Why should I fear in days of evil? The iniquity of my supplanters surroundeth me, those trusting in their wealth and boasting themselves in the multitude of their riches. In no way can a man redeem a brother, nor give to God a ransom for him (and precious [is] the redemption-price of their soul and it hath ceased forever), that he should still live forever and not see corruption [or, the pit]. For he seeth [that] wise men die; together the fool and the brutish man perish and have left their wealth to others; their inward [thought is] that their houses [are] forever, their dwelling-places to generation and generation; they have called their lands after their own names. But man in honor abideth not; he hath become like the cattle; they have been cut off. This their way [is] folly for them; yet those who come after them will take pleasure in their words. Selah. Like the sheep are they laid in Sheol: death feedeth upon them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; but their comeliness is for Sheol to consume, that there be no dwelling for it. Surely God will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol, for he will take me. Selah. Fear not when a man becometh rich, when the glory of his house increaseth. For he taketh not all this away when he dieth; his glory shall not descend after him. Though he blessed his soul in his life (and men will praise thee when thou doest good to thyself), it [his soul] shall go to the generation of his fathers: they shall never see light. Man in honor and not understanding becometh as the cattle that perish” (vers. 1-21).

Chapter 182

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 50-54

A new series appropriately follows in this cluster of Psalms, which opens with God's summons of His people to judgment; and this calls forth the remnant's confession of corruption and blood-guilt, in both acknowledging the insufficiency of legal sacrifice and offering without brokenness of spirit and confidence in divine grace. In Zion we have an instruction that takes the shape of a plaint against their violent and deceitful oppressor with the assurance of his destruction on God's part, Who will deliver and bless His godly ones in His lovingkindness forever. Then comes the moral exposure of the lawless one, but in terms which the apostle in Rom. 3 applies to those under the law; for indeed the Jews as a mass will be first as their chief, the son of perdition; and the heart of a sinner, where not law only but Christ in grace is abandoned, is no better than an Antichrist; and this is morally true since the cross and the rejection of the gospel. The sense of this in the remnant turns by the Spirit into desire for Israel's salvation when God has scattered the bones of the foes who beleaguered the object of His choice. In Psa. 54 the Spirit of Christ identifies the godly with Himself in resting every expectation on the name of God when covenant mercies are gone; but the end is thanksgiving to Jehovah when He has delivered the godly Jew out of all trouble in the displayed judgment of his enemies.

“A psalm of Asaph. God (El), Elohim-Jehovah, hath spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God will come and not be silent: a fire before him shall devour, and around him it shall be tempestuous. He calleth to the heavens from above and to the earth to judge his people. Gather unto me my saints making my covenant by (over) sacrifice. And the heavens declare his righteousness, for God [is] judge himself. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify unto (against) thee: God, thy God, [am] I. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices and thy burnt offerings continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, [nor] he-goats out of thy folds. For mine [is] every beast of the forest, cattle upon a thousand hills; I know every bird of the mountains, and the wealth of the field [is] mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for mine [is] the world and its fullness. Shall I eat the bulls (strong ones), and drink the blood of he-goats? Sacrifice unto God thanksgiving and pay unto the Most High thy vows: and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and the), shalt glorify me. And to the wicked God saith, What [is it] to thee, to declare my statutes? And thou hast taken my covenant into thy mouth, and thou hast hated correction, and hast cast my words behind thee. When thou saweth a thief, thou didst take pleasure in him, and with adulterers [was] thy portion. Thy mouth thou hast sent (let loose) unto evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sitteth, thou speakest against thy brother; against thy mother's son thou utterest slander.

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether like thee. I will reprove thee and set (them) in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, forgetters of God (Eloah), lest I tear in pieces, and there be no deliverer. He that sacrificeth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth [his] way will I show the salvation of God” (vss. 1-23).

Psalm 50

“To the chief musician a psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he went unto Bathsheba. Be gracious unto me, O God, according to thy mercy; according to the multitude of thy compassions blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sins. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is continually before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and have done the evil in thy sight (eyes); that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be near when thou judgest. Behold, in iniquity was I born, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou hast desired truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden [part] thou wilt make me to know wisdom. Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; thou wilt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Thou wilt make me to hear joy and gladness; the bones thou hast broken shall rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create for me a pure heart, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from thy presence, and the spirit of thy holiness take not from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and let a free spirit uphold me. I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall turn unto thee. Deliver me from blood, O God, God of my salvation; my tongue shall celebrate thy righteousness. O Lord, thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare thy praise. For thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it; in burnt offering thou dost not take pleasure. The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit; a heart broken and contrite, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; thou wilt build the walls of Jerusalem. Then thou shalt delight in sacrifices of righteousness, burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar” (vss. 1-21).

Plainly these two psalms are closely bound together, though the first is a public and general summons, the second a private and personal confession, which at the end the godly remnant will take up as their own in view of corruption and the blood shedding of the Messiah, the great transgression. Real godliness is requisite, not sacrifice, in the former; in the latter not sacrifice but genuine repentance. Ceremonial observances are in vain, when God judges us even on the earth, yet more for eternity. Boasting of the law serves only the more to condemn the sinner

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Psalm 52

“To the chief musician upon Mahaleth; a psalm of instruction of David, when Doeg the Edomite went in, and told Saul and said to him, David went to the house of Ahimelech. Why boastest thou thyself in evil, O mighty man? The mercy of God [is] all the day. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, as a sharp razor, working deceit. Thou hast loved evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking righteousness. Selah. Thou hast loved all words of destruction, O tongue of deceit. God shall also destroy thee forever; he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of tent, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah. The righteous also shall see and fear, and laugh at him. Behold the man (strong one) that made not God his strength, but confided in the abundance of his riches; he strengthened himself in his wickedness. But for me, I [am] like a green olive-tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise thee forever, for thou hast done [it], and I will hope in thy name, for it is good before thy saints (vss. 1-9).

As we had the saints brought to renounce ceremonies as a substitute for righteousness and repentance, now we have the treacherous enemy portrayed, and the saints in their helpless exposure suffering, but delivered by the destruction that falls on the Edomite at the end, when good shall flourish like the olive and give thanks forever.

Psalm 53

“To the chief musician upon Mahaleth; a psalm of instruction of David. The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They have corrupted themselves, they have done abominable iniquity; there is none doing good. God looked down from the heavens upon the sons of man to see if there were one understanding, seeking God. Every one hath departed; together they are become corrupt; there is none doing good, there is not even one. Have not the workers of iniquity known, eating my people [as] they have eaten bread? They called not upon God. There have they greatly feared [where] no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee. Thou hast put [them] to shame, for God hath rejected them. Who will give; out of Zion the salvation of Israel? When God turneth the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad” (vss. 1-8).

This is the great folly of man, but most guiltily among the Jews, denying Him to Whom we owe all, Who had above all chosen and favored them. Their fear is to come, whatever their contempt and hatred of God's people now. As for the righteous, they had no reason to fear: God's judgment will fall when least expected. And His word proclaims it across the ages.

Psalm 54

“To the chief musician upon Neginoth (stringed instruments); a psalm of instruction of David, when the Ziphites went in and said to Saul, Is not David hiding himself with me? O God, by thy might judge (vindicate) me. O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors sought after my soul; they set not God before them. Selah. Behold, God [is] a helper for me; the Lord. [is] with them that uphold my soul. He will requite the evil to my adversaries: in thy truth cut them off. With a freewill offering I will sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O Jehovah, for [it is] good. For out of trouble, he delivered me; and mine eye hath looked (seen its desire) upon mine enemies” (vss. 1-9).

The name of God (Elohim) will be everything in that dark hour to the godly Jews in the latter day, when they find themselves driven away by their apostate brethren amalgamated with the lawless Gentiles, and Antichrist at their head. God's. name is the revelation of what He is, and to this they cling in faith, when they have lost all else. As they besought by it, so they will give thanks and praise it when it emerges as Jehovah (ver. 8), in the power and glory of His day when His hand makes good what His mouth had spoken.

Chapter 187

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 55-58

These psalms continue in various forms the feelings produced by Christ's spirit in circumstances which look on to the last crisis when the godly Jews suffer from Antichrist and his partisans, especially in Jerusalem and the land. David had these trials in the case of Absalom, and Ahithophel; our Lord far more deeply through the treachery of Judas. But the Spirit of prophecy links all that is past with the coming hour, when the outward oppression and inward apostasy bring the sense of evil at its worst on the true-hearted Jews; and God is more and more looked to as the result, not man or circumstances, not only to sustain the sufferers in patience, but to bring in deliverance and blessing in power.

Psalm 55

“To the chief musician, on Neginoth (stringed instruments): an instruction of David. Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not thyself from my supplications. Attend unto me and answer me. I am restless in my plaint and moan, because of the noise of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they cast iniquity upon me, and in anger they persecute me. My heart is pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Who will give me a wing as the dove? I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would flee far off, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from stormy wind, from tempest. Swallow up, O Lord, divide their tongues; for I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they surround it upon its walls; and iniquity and mischief are in its midst. Mischiefs [are] in its midst; and so oppression and deceit depart not from its streets. For [it was] not an enemy reproached me: then I had borne [it]; neither did he that hateth me magnify [himself] against me: then hidden myself from him; but thou, a man mine equal, mine intimate, my familiar! we who together sweetened counsel, in the house of God we walked in the throng. Let death seize on them, let them go down alive [to] Sheol. For evils [are] in their dwelling, in their midst. As for me, unto God will I call; and Jehovah will save me. Evening and morning and noon I will complain and moan; and he will hear my voice. He redeemed my soul in peace from the war against me, for many were [contending] with me. God will hear and answer [afflict] them—he that is seated of old, Selah—who have no changes and feat not God. He put forth his hands against those at peace with him; he profaned his covenant. Smooth was the butter [words] of his mouth, and war his heart; his words were softer than oil, and they [were] drawn swords. Cast upon Jehovah thy burden (what he giveth thee), and he will sustain thee; he will not suffer the righteous one to be moved. And thou, O God, wilt bring them down to the pit of corruption: men of blood and deceit shall not live out half their days. But for me, I will trust in thee” (ver. 1-24).

It was an awful time for a godly Jew to feel and to say that the wilderness was better than the city; but so it is here. The worst was within, in the nearest circle. How Christ was moved at this, John 13 testifies. But it looks onward to a day of more literal and wider accomplishment. In all their affliction He was afflicted. Divine judgment alone will solve and fulfill all.

Psalm 56

“To the chief musician, as the silent dove of the distant, Michtam; when the Philistines took him in Gath. Be gracious unto me, O God; for man would swallow me. up; all the day fighting he oppresseth me. They that lie in wait for me would swallow [me] up all the day, for many fight proudly against me. The day I am afraid I will trust in thee. In God will I praise his word. In God have I trusted, I will not fear: what can flesh do unto me? All the day they wrest my words; all their devices [are] against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they mark my steps while they wait for my soul. Shall they escape iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God. Thou, countest my wanderings: put my tears in thy bottle; [are] they not in thy book? Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day I shall call: this I know, for God [is] for me. In God will I praise [the] word; in Jehovah will I praise [the] word. In God have I trusted, I will not fear: what shall man do unto me? Upon me, O God, [are] thy vows: I will render thank-offerings unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: [wilt thou] not [deliver] my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living” (ver. 1-14).

This is a distinct advance on the overwhelming anguish of the preceding psalm, where the cry to God comes late, and confidence is attained only at the close. Here the soul begins with an appeal to His mercy; and enemies are in view, without the aggravated bitterness of traitors in those who were once near friends. The haughty fighting of foes threw him in the day of his fear on God, and, what is more, on His word as especial ground of praise. All this our Lord knew more calmly and profoundly; and this is our portion, the, clearer to us as impressed with His name, as the Spirit is given us to make it good. But the godly Jews will also know what God's word is in their day of supreme trial when imposture and blasphemy succeed existing incredulity and superstition.

Psalm 57

“To the chief musician; Al-tascheth (destroy not), of David, Michtam, on his fleeing from Saul in the cave. Be gracious unto me, O God, be gracious unto me; for my soul [is] trusting in thee; and in the shadow of thy wings will I trust until mischiefs (or calamities) shall pass. I will call unto God most High, unto God that perfecteth for me. He will send from the heavens rand save me (he that would swallow up reviled! Selah). God will send His mercy and His truth. My soul [is] in the midst of lions; I will lie down with those on fire, the sons of men, their teeth spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be exalted above the heavens, O God, above all the earth thy glory! A net they prepared for my steps; my soul was bowed down; they digged a pit before me they fell into the midst of it. Selah. Fixed [is] my heart, O God, fixed my heart: I will sing, yea I will sing psalms (play). Awake, my glory! awake, lute and harp! I will wake the dawn (or with it). O Lord, among the peoples, I will give thee thanks. For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be exalted above the heavens, O God, thy glory above all the earth!” (ver. 1-12).

In this psalm, the evidently close companion of Psa. 56, the progress of soul in confidence is more complete. It is no longer the plea, “for man would swallow me up,” but the quiet assurance, “for my soul is trusting in thee.” And God's word was not praised in vain. Intervention from heaven is counted on, God's loving-kindness too and truth, with the grand result of His exaltation above the heavens, and His glory above all the earth. All things work together for good to those that love Him, as the godly remnant will; and as we do now by grace.

Psalm 58

“To the chief musician, Al-tascheth, of David, Michtam. Silence indeed! do ye speak righteousness? Do ye judge equitably, sons of men? Yea, in heart ye work iniquities; in the earth ye weigh the violence of your hands. The wicked are estranged from the womb; they err from the birth (belly), speaking lies. They have poison after the likeness of the poison of a serpent, as the deaf adder which stoppeth its ears, which will not hearken to the voice of enchanters, of one charming charms most wise. O God, destroy their teeth in their mouth; shatter the great teeth of the young lions, O Jehovah. Let them melt away as waters, let them go away. He will send his arrows as at those cut off. As a snail melteth, let them pass; as abortion of a woman, let them not see the sun. Before your pots feel a thorn, whether green or burning, he will whirl them away. The righteous one shall rejoice, for he hath seen vengeance; his steps he shall wash in the blood of the wicked one; and a man shall say, Surely the righteous one has fruit; surely there is a God judging in the earth” (ver. 1-12).

Here we have the solemn warning of the righteous, and the call of God to execute that judgment on the living wicked which will deliver the godly Jew of the future and clear the earth for the reign of Him Who is alike Son of David and Son of man, and with divine complacency as He is Son of God, yea the true God and Eternal Life. It is inconceivable that any unprejudiced mind could fail to see that the psalm, the due sequel of those before it, expresses not in the least the sentiments proper to those that now confess the Divine Savior and are therefore the sharers of His long-suffering grace toward the evil and injurious, but the desire for long-slumbering and righteous vengeance of God on the iniquity that will then rise to a prouder lawlessness than ever. The time for patience will then he past; and most holy will it be for those who then fear God and are in the secret of His ways to pray for His judgment on His and their enemies (they are in truth the same). And the time is at hand; and the Spirit gives them to anticipate it, whilst preserving them from carnal measures. Even a tear of the eye God puts into His bottle, as the figure is, and His vows are on them—they are consciously devoted to Him. They look for His exaltation above the heavens, for His glory above all the earth; but this, not as Christians do by being gathered together to Christ on high, but by His crushing destruction of the wicked here below, who would have swallowed them up. Lions they may be, and with the poison of serpents; yet they melt as snails when He appears in His glory, and the sword that proceeds from His mouth prepares the scene for the throne of His glory over the earth. Israel will be the vessel of God's earthly righteousness in that day; as we ought to express the grace and glory of Christ in heaven now. Hence the godly Jew rightly utters his satisfaction at the terrible things in righteousness with which the God of their salvation will answer their prayer.

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 59-63

The next two psalms are part of the group which began with 55., itself closely following in spirit those that precede, in which we do well to trace the varying shades of iniquity in their enemies which by the Spirit of Christ had a blessed counterpoise in God's ways toward them, as we see historically in David with his adversaries within and without. All things work together for good to those that love God, though we by grace learn in light what the godly Jews spell out in the dark. God is the defense, “the God of my mercy.” Evil never improves but grows worse till divine judgment. And God is right in our defeat, for evil is then in us even if unperceived: else He would uphold the banner He has given us. He cannot sustain pride in His people but dependence only. Even so faith looks to God and will surely receive His deliverance.

Psalm 59

“To the chief musician, Al-tashheth (destroy not), of David, Michtam, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to put him to death. Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God; set me on high from those that rise up against me. Deliver me from doers of iniquity, and save me from men of blood. For, behold, they laid wait for my soul; strong ones assemble against me: not my transgression, not my sin, O Jehovah. Without iniquity they run and set themselves: awake to meet me, and see. And thou, Jehovah, God of hosts, God of Israel, arise to visit all the Gentiles; be gracious to no traitors of iniquity. Selah. Let them return at the evening, let them howl like the dog, and go around the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords [are] in their lips; for who heareth? But thou, Jehovah, wilt laugh at them; thou wilt mock at all the Gentiles. His strength! I will watch for thee, for God is my high place. The God of my mercy will come to meet me; God will make me gaze on mine enemies. Slay them not, lest my people forget; scatter them in thy power and bring them down, O Lord our shield. The sin of their mouth [is] the words of their lips; and they shall be taken in their pride, and for cursing and falsehood they will tell. Consume in wrath, consume [them], and let them be no more; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob to the end of the earth. Selah. And at the evening let them return, let them howl like the dog, and go around the city. They shall wander for food; if they be not satisfied, then they tarry all night (or murmur). And for me, I will sing of thy strength, and will in the morning shout for joy of thy mercy; for thou hast been a high place to me, and a refuge in the day of trouble to me. O my strength, unto thee will I sing psalms, for God is my high place, the God of my mercy” (verses 1-18).

As it is the Gentiles or heathen who are here before the heart, Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel, is also the God of his mercy, his gracious God. To the ends of the earth is anticipated His rule in Jacob. To faith overwhelming danger is the signal for triumph.

Psalm 60

To the chief musician, on Shushan (lily) of testimony, Michtam of David to teach; when he strove with Syria of Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and smote Edom in the valley of salt, twelve thousand. O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast rent us, thou hast been angry; turn again to us. Thou hast made earth (or the land) to tremble, thou hast rent it: heal its breaches, for it shaketh. Thou hast shown thy people hard things, thou hast made us drink the wine of reeling. Thou hast given to those that fear thee a banner to be raised because of the truth. Selah. That thy beloved may be delivered, save [with] thy right hand and answer me (or us). God hath spoken in his holiness: I will exult; I will divide Shechem, and the valley of Succoth will I mete out. Gilead [is] mine, and mine Manasseh, Ephraim the strength of my head, Judah my lawgiver (or scepter?). Moab [is] my washpot; on Edom will I cast my shoe; on me, Philistia, shout aloud. Who will bring me [to] the city of defense? Who hath led me up to Edom? (Is it) not thou, O God, (who) hast cast us off and didst not go forth, O God, with our hosts? Give us help from trouble, for vain [is] man's salvation. Through (lit. in) God we shall do valiantly; and he will tread down our troubles" (ver. 1-14).

In this fine psalm, the fitting close of its series, God's temporary rejection of His people is felt and acknowledged frankly. Yet they cleave to His calling them, and while justifying Him in His displeasure and sore chastening, they see, for those that fear, a banner to be raised for truth which He gave them. Hence their bold challenge even in their lowest state, as well as their identification with the whole elect nation and all the land. The God who restores is the more surely theirs against all their foes and oppressors; and man once leaned on is seen to be but vanity.

Psalm 61

“To the chief musician, on a stringed instrument, of David. Hear, O God, my cry; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth I will call unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: to a rock higher than I thou wilt lead me. For thou hast been a refuge unto me, a tower of strength from before the enemy. I will sojourn in thy tent forever, I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows, thou hast given the inheritance of those that fear thy name. Thou wilt add days to the days of the king; his years shall be as many generations (lit. generation and generation). He shall abide [sit] before God forever: mercy and truth afford; let them preserve him. So I will sing psalms to thy name forever that I may pay my vows from day to day” (ver. 1-9).

Here it is the soul more than the people and their enemies. And though the heart is overwhelmed, the cry is to God. From the end of the earth is strange and sad for a Jew, but makes no difference to God, Whose chastening is accepted, and His leading to a Rock higher than himself is counted on. He cannot fail, though His people have. Nor does the Spirit look for a refuge only but “the king,” not as erst to be rejected, but to abide forever. So will the godly praise His name forever, performing vows day by day.

Psalm 62

“To the chief musician, on Jeduthun, a psalm of David. Only on God [is] my soul silent; from him [is] my salvation. Only he [is] my rock and my salvation, my high place; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will ye set upon a man? will ye murder, all of you, one like a wall inclined, a fence thrust down? Truly from his dignity they consult to thrust; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, and in their inward part they curse. Selah. Only on God be silent, my soul, for from him [is] my expectation. Truly he [is] my rock and my salvation, my high place; I shall not be moved. On God [rests] my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, my refuge [is] in God. Confide in him at every time, O people; pour out before him your heart: God [is] a refuge for us. Selah. Truly vanity [are] sons of man, a lie are sons of man; in a balance they go up, less than vanity together. Confide not in oppression, and in robbery be not vain; if riches increase, set not your heart [on them]. Once hath God spoken; twice have I heard this, that power [belongeth] to God. And to thee, O Lord, [belongeth] mercy; for thou wilt render to a man according to his work” (ver. 1-13).

Thus, as is well known, this psalm divides into three strophes, each opening with “only” or truly, and the first and second ending with Selah. Throughout God alone is declared worthy of trust. Unworthy objects are exposed in the last, where God is shown emphatically worthy.

There is manifest progress in Psa. 62 as compared with its forerunner. The soul learns to be silent or still, as well as to call on God importunately. It distrusts its own activity, and is assured that God's will alone is good. Only He therefore is looked to; no deliverance from another quarter would satisfy. Mercy, power, and justice are His.

In the psalm that follows the soul rises higher still as we may clearly see.

Psalm 63

A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, my God (El) [art] thou; early will I seek thee. For thee thirsteth my soul, for thee longeth my flesh, in a land dry and weary without water, so as I have beheld thee in the holy place, to see thy power and thy glory; for thy mercy [is] better than life; my lips shall praise thee. So will I bless thee in my life, in thy name will I lift up my hands. As [with] marrow and fatness thou wilt satisfy my soul; and [with] lips of rejoicings will my mouth praise thee. When I remember thee upon my bed in night watches, I will meditate on thee. For thou hast been a help, and in the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice. My soul cleaveth after thee; thy right hand maintaineth me. And they to ruin are seeking my soul; they shall go into the depths of the earth. They shall be given up to the power of the sword (lit. they shall pour him out into the hands of the sword); a portion of foxes they shall be. And the king shall rejoice in God: every one that sweareth by him shall glory, for the mouth of those that speak falsehood shall be stopped" (ver. 1-12). Higher than this, in its kind, no soul can go, though the covenant blessings cannot be enjoyed far from the city and the sanctuary. But the blessedness of God is enjoyed as never before, the Giver Himself; when the righteous are outside the prostitution of His gifts. Our Lord knew this, as no man ever did. Even deliverance is not sought; and the thirst is not of the desert but of the soul after God, and this too to see His power and His glory where He revealed Himself. A dry and weary land only brings out the more the longing for God fully manifested. It is meanwhile what the apostle calls joying or glorying in God (Rom. 5), and in the close what the Lord desires for us in John 17:24. When the Bride and Lamb's wife is glorified, she rejoices that she has in fact the glory of God (Rev. 21:11), in the hope of which we now exult.

Chapter 198

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 64-67

The first of these psalms appears to close the series wherein is set out the iniquity, of the adversaries against those who look for Christ, the godly Jewish remnant. The three following portray their feelings as having in the Beloved a plea for deliverance which waxes stronger and clearer by His Spirit working in them according to the word provided for their souls.

Psalm 64

“To the chief musician, a psalm of David. Hear, O God, my voice in my meditation; from fear of the enemy, thou wilt preserve my life. Thou wilt hide me from the secret of evil-doers, from the tumult of workers of iniquity, who have sharpened like the sword their tongues, have bent their arrow, a bitter word, to shoot in the secret places at the perfect; suddenly they will shoot at him and fear not. They will strengthen for themselves an evil matter; they concert to hide snares; they have said, who will see to them? They devise iniquities: We are ready [finished]! a well-devised device! and man's inward (thought) and heart [is deep. But God shall shoot at them: with an arrow suddenly the wounds have been theirs. And they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue against them; all that see them shall flee away. And every man shall fear, and they shall declare God's doings, and his work they shall understand. The righteous one shall be glad in Jehovah, and trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory” (ver. 1-11).

Thus the godly are consoled by the assurance of God's sudden and retributive judgment of their enemies, who are here described not as reprobates only but as malicious against the righteous, plotting and conspiring; but suddenly God's judgment falls, others fear as they behold God's doing, and the righteous rejoice in Jehovah Who has thus appeared at length in vindication of His name.

Psalm 65

“To the chief musician, a psalm of David, a song. To thee waiteth praise, O God, in Zion, and to thee shall vow be paid. Hearer of prayer, to thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities [lit. words or matters of] have been far too strong for me: our transgressions, thou wilt purge them. Blessed [he whom] thou wilt choose and bring near: he shall dwell in thy courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, thy holy temple. Terrible things in righteousness thou wilt answer us, O God of our salvation; confidence of all the ends of the earth and sea, afar off; establishing mountains by his strength, girded with power, stilling the roar of seas; roar of their waves, and the tumult of peoples. And those inhabiting the uppermost parts shall fear because of thy signs; the outgoings of morning and evening thou wilt make to shout for joy. Thou hast visited the earth and watered it; greatly wilt thou enrich it; the river of God is full of water; thou preparest their corn, for so thou preparest it (the earth). The furrows thou dost water, thou dost break down its ridges; with showers thou wilt soften it; its springing thou wilt bless. Thou crownest the year [with] thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. They drop [on] the pastures of the wilderness, and the hills are girded with joy. The sheep-walks are clothed with the sheep, and the valleys are covered with corn; they shout for joy, yea, they sing” (ver. 1-14).

Here the positive side of blessing is before the heart; for to Jewish thought the people and the land (and indeed all the earth) are blended in their expectations of goodness at length triumphant. And terrible things in righteousness are not absent, even if the joyous change be more prominent. Not such is our proper but heavenly hope in the coming of our Lord Jesus; it is to be with Himself in the Father's house, though we surely love His appearing and expect to be manifested with Him when He is manifested in glory. Our hope is to be translated to heaven, as Christ ascended, apart from all judgment of the world, in which the Jew shall be involved but delivered out of it, when the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Psalm 66

“To the chief musician, a song, a psalm. Shout aloud to God, all the earth, sing forth the glory of his name, make his praise glorious. Say to God, how terrible [are] thy doings; in the greatness of thy strength shall cringe to thee thine enemies. All the earth shall worship thee and sing psalms to thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah. Come and see the works of God, terrible in dealing toward the sons of men. He turned sea to dry land; through the river they will pass on foot; there will we be glad in him. He ruleth by his might forever; his eyes over the Gentiles watch; let not the rebels exalt themselves. Selah. Bless, ye peoples, our God, and make the voice of his praise to be heard, who setteth our soul in the life and hath not given our foot to be moved. For thou hast proved us, O God, thou hast assayed us as silver is assayed. Thou hast brought us into the net, thou hast put pressure upon our loins, thou hast caused men to ride on our heads; we went into the fire and into the waters, and thou hast brought us into abundance. I will go to thy house with burnt offerings, I will pay to thee my vows, which my lips uttered and my mouth spoke in my distress. Burnt offerings of fatlings will I offer up to thee with incense of rams, I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. Come, hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. I called to him [with] my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I had regarded iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. Verily God hath heard, he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed [be] God who hath not turned away my prayer nor his mercy from me” (ver. 1-21).

It is the godly Jew anticipating deliverance after the sorest but justly inflicted trials. But God is faithful, and proved so at the close Who had of old redeemed them from Egypt.

Psalm 67

“To the chief musician, on Neginoth (stringed instruments), a psalm, a song. God be gracious to us and bless us; cause his face to shine upon us (Selah), that thy way may be known in the earth, in all Gentiles thy salvation. Let the peoples give thee thanks, O God, let all the peoples give thee thanks. Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy, for thou wilt judge the peoples equitably, and the nations on the earth, thou wilt guide them. Selah. Let the peoples give thee thanks, O God, let all the peoples give thee thanks. The earth hath yielded its increase; God, our God, will bless us; God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him” (ver. 1-8).

Here the wonder is how any believer can fail to see that the Jew praising God's grace at length delights in the blessing of the Gentiles, all of them, whether in association with Israel or outside. Not only shall Ephraim not envy Judah, and Judah not envy Ephraim; but far from them in that day an atom of narrowness toward the nations. Their heart is enlarged by God's mercy to themselves. If the casting away of Israel was the world's reconciling as now, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?

Chapter 203

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 68-69

The first of these psalms fittingly, as regards those we have seen, and splendidly sets forth the glory in which the rejected Christ makes good the purposes of God with His people and Zion as the earthly center, but from above; and hence appropriately cited by the apostle in Eph. 4. There is also an allusion full of interest to Num. 10:35, but with a notable difference. Moses before Israel in the wilderness said, Rise up, Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. Here it is Elohim. Each is precisely right, and Elohim as little in keeping for Moses as Jehovah for the psalm, which has Elohim throughout as the expression of faith for a day of confusion when covenant was not enjoyed, anticipating God's intervention in Christ from on high after He had suffered to the uttermost. Indeed the psalm abounds in divine titles, as Jah, Adonai, El, Shaddai; but the staple unequivocally is Elohim, and Jehovah is only used for His dwelling on Zion when power and grace meet for His people blessed evermore under Messiah and the new covenant. Sheer spiritual ignorance invented the will-o-the wisp of Elohistic and Jehovistic documents: evidently inapplicable here, really everywhere, in no case giving a key to the mind of God as the truth does.

Psalm 68

“To the chief musician, of David, a psalm, a song. Let God arise, and his enemies be scattered, and those that hate him flee from before him. As smoke is driven, thou wilt drive away; as wax melteth before fire, the wicked shall perish from before God. And the righteous shall be glad, they shall exult before God and rejoice with gladness. Sing unto God, sing praises to His name; cast up a way for him that rideth in the deserts: his name [is] Jah, and exult before him. A father of orphans and a judge of widows [God is] in the habitation of his holiness. God maketh the solitary to dwell in houses; prisoners he maketh to come forth in prosperity: surely rebels dwell in a parched land. O God, in thy going out before thy people, in thy marching in the desert (Selah), the earth trembled, yea the heavens dropped from before God, the God of Israel. A rain of free gifts thou, O God, didst pour; thine inheritance, even when wearied, thou didst establish. Thy flock hath dwelt in it: thou wilt provide in thy goodness for the wretched, O God. Adonai giveth the word: a great host [are] the (women) publishing. Kings of hosts flee, flee, and the housewife divideth the spoil. Though ye lie among the cattle-pens (or ash-grates), [ye shall be like] wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it snoweth in Zalmon. A mount of God [is] mount Bashan; a mount of peaks [is] mount Bashan. Why, mounts of peaks, look ye with envy on the mount God desired for his dwelling; yea, Jehovah will dwell [there] forever. God's chariots [are] two myriads, thousands multiplied: Adonai is in them, [as in] Sinai in the sanctuary. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts in man, yea, rebels also, to dwell [there], Jah Elohim. Blessed [be] Adonai day by day loading us, the God (El) of our salvation. Our God (El) is a God (El) of salvation; and to Jehovah Adonai [belong] the issues from death.

Surely God will smite the head of his enemies, the hairy scalp going on in his guilt. Adonai said from Bashan, I will bring back, I will bring back from the sea, that thou mayest dip thy foot in blood, the tongue of thy dogs its portion from enemies. They saw thy goings, O God, the goings of my God, my King, in the holy place. Before went singers, behind players, in the midst of maidens playing on timbrels. In assemblies bless ye God Adonai, [ye] from the fountain of Israel. There [is] little Benjamin their ruler, princes of Judah their council, princes of Zebulon, princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength. Strengthen, O God, what thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem kings shall bring tribute to thee. Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, the crowd of bulls (strong), with the calves of the peoples, [each] crouching with pieces of silver. Scatter the peoples delighting in war. Princes shall come from Egypt, Cush shall haste to stretch out her hands to God. Kingdoms of the earth, sing ye unto God, praise Adonai (Selah), him that rideth on the heavens of old. Lo, he uttereth his voice, a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength to God: his excellence [is] over Israel and his strength [is] in the skies. Terrible [art thou], O God, out of thy holy place; the God (El) of Israel, he giveth strength and might to the people. Blessed [be] God” (vers. 1-36).

Here, where things are out of course, God is counted on, and this by the intervention in heavenly power of Him whose rejection was the fullest evidence of the state of the Jews as well as of man.

But He Who had obeyed to the cross and thus glorified God to the uttermost was exalted in the place of indisputable power and glory, and would thence make good the choice of Zion as His earthly dwelling and center, the deliverance and blessing of Israel, once and alas! still “rebellious,” the overthrow of every enemy, even of such as led all captive, to the joy and well-being of all the earth. It is “the regeneration” in prospect.

Psalm 69

“To the chief musician, on Shoshannim (lilies), of David. Save me, God, for the waters have come unto [my] soul. I sink in a deep place of mire where is no standing. I am come into depth of waters, and the flood hath overflowed me. I am wearied in my calling, parched is my throat, failed are mine eyes, while waiting for my God (Eloah). More than the hairs of my head [are] those hating me without cause, strong my destroyer, mine enemies of falsehood: what I took not away, then I restored. O God, thou knowest as to my foolishness, and my trespasses from thee are not hid. Let not those be ashamed in me that wait on thee, Adonai Jehovah of hosts, let not those be disgraced in me that seek thee, God of Israel. For on account of thee I have borne reproach; disgrace hath covered my face. A stranger I am become to my brethren, and an alien to my mother's sons; for the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of those reproaching thee fell on me. And I wept, in the fasting [was] my soul; and it was for reproaches unto me. When I made my clothing sackcloth, I too was to them for a proverb. Those that sit at the gate talk of me, and [I am] songs of drinkers of strong drink. But as for me, my prayer [is] to thee, O Jehovah; (give) an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of thy mercy answer me, in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me from the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those hating me, and from the depths of waters. Let not a flood overflow me, and let not the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut its mouth upon me. Answer me, O Jehovah, for good [is] thy mercy; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn unto me"; and hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am troubled; speedily answer me. Draw nigh to my soul, redeem it; because of mine enemies, ransom me. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my disgrace; before thee [are] all mine adversaries. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am overwhelmed, and I looked for mourning, and there is none, and for comforters, and found none. They gave me also gall for my food, and in my thirst they made me drink vinegar. Let their table before them become a snare, and when at peace a trap; let their eyes be dark from seeing, and their loins continually cause to swerve. Pour upon them thine indignation, and let the heat of thine anger overtake them. Let their habitation be desolate, and in their tents be no dweller. For whom thou hast smitten they persecute, and to the grief of thy wounded ones they talk. Add iniquity unto their iniquity, and let them not come into thy righteousness; let them be blotted from the book of life, and with righteous ones let them not be written. But I [am] poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me on high. I will praise the name of God with a, song, and I will magnify him with thanksgiving. And it shall please Jehovah more than an ox, a bullock horned [and] hoofed. The meek have seen [and] are glad; ye that seek God, your heart shall live. For Jehovah heareth the needy, and despiseth not his prisoners. Let heaven and earth praise him, seas and everything moving in them. For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, and they shall dwell there and possess it. And the seed of his servants shall inherit it, and the lovers of his name shall dwell in it” (vers. 1-37).

Whatever be the intrinsic glory of Christ, all scripture shows that His sufferings are the ground of His exaltation. So it is here. This psalm tells of His sufferings, though in a way evidently distinct from Psa. 22, where divine abandonment crowns all, as here human evil is prominent and calls for

judgment, instead of the grace which is the answer in the former. But He was afflicted in all their affliction, as says the prophet. David was the occasion, but the Spirit of Christ enters into all their wrong doing, not only to vindicate God but to give expression to the confession of the godly remnant, who will thus pour out their heart in the latter day, when His wrath shall fall on their oppressors and betrayers.

Chapter 206

The Psalms Book 2: Psalms 70-72

As the psalm which presents the exaltation of Christ is followed by that which expresses His humiliation and sufferings, leading to judgment on His adversaries and the deliverance of His people and land, so here we have the final group, which begins with His Spirit characterizing those who looked to Him and were willing to follow in His steps with a heart devoted to their blessing in Jehovah's time and way. Psa. 70 goes on with this faithfulness throughout Israel's history (personified in David's) and the conviction with prayer that He will not forsake them when He is most needed (71.), and closes with the millennial reign of David's greater Son, the Messiah, to Whom God gives His judgments, and Who will glorify Him on the throne as He had in His rejection (72.).

Chapter 207

Psalm 70

“To the chief musician, of David, to bring to remembrance. O God, to deliver me, O Jehovah, to my help, make haste. Confounded and ashamed be those that seek after my soul, driven back and brought to dishonor be those that delight in evil to me. Turned back for a reward of their shame be those that say, Aha, Aha! Let all those that seek thee be glad and rejoice in thee, and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified! But for me, I am poor and needy; O God, make haste unto me. Thou [art] my deliverer and my help. O Jehovah, tarry not” (vers. 1-6).

Psalm 71

“In thee, Jehovah, do I trust; let me never be ashamed. Deliver me in Thy righteousness, and set me free; incline to me thine ear and save me. Be to me a rock of dwelling for continual resort; thou hast commanded to save me; for my rock (crag) and my fortress thou [art]. O my God, deliver me from the hand of the wicked, from the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou [art] my hope, O Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth. On thee have I been stayed from the womb; from my mother's bowels thou didst take me out; of (in) thee [is] my praise continually. As a wonder I have been to many, and thou [art] my strong refuge. My mouth shall be filled with thy praise, thine honor, all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; when my strength faileth, forsake me not. For mine enemies speak against me, and those that watch for my soul consult together, saying, God hath forsaken him: pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver. O God, be not far from me; my God, hasten to my help. Ashamed, consumed, be the adversaries of my soul; covered with reproach and dishonor be those that seek evil to me. And for me, continually will I hope and will add to all thy praise. My mouth shall declare thy righteousness, all the day thy salvation; for I know not the numbers. I will go in the might of the Lord Jehovah; I will recall thy righteousness, thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto do I show thy wondrous works. Yea, also until old age and gray hairs, O God, forsake me not, until I show thine arm to a generation, thy might to every one that is to come. And thy righteousness, O God, [is] very high, thou who hast done great things, O God, who [is] like thee? Thou who hast made us (or me) see many distresses and evils, wilt turn and make us live, and from the depths of the earth wilt turn and bring us up. Thou wilt increase my greatness and surround me with comfort. Also on my part I will thank thee with the psaltery, thy truth, O my God; I will sing psalms to thee with the harp, O Holy One of Israel. My lips shall exult when I sing praises to thee; and my soul which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day; for they shall be ashamed, for they shall be confounded, that seek evil to me” (vers. 1-24).

Psalm 72

“Of Solomon. Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness, unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness and thine afflicted with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the hills in righteousness. He will judge the afflicted of the people, he will save the sons of the needy one, and will crush the oppressors. They shall fear thee with the sun and before the moon through all generations. He shall come down as rain on mown grass, as showers a watering of the earth (or land). In his days shall a righteous one flourish, and much peace till the moon [be] no more. And he shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the end of the earth. Before him shall bow down dwellers in the desert, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Kings of Tarshish and of the sea-coasts shall bring an offering; kings of Sheba and of Seba shall bring near a gift. Yea, all kings shall bow down before him; all the Gentiles shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy that crieth and the afflicted that hath no helper. He will have pity on a poor and needy one, and the souls of the needy will he save. From fraud and from violence will he redeem their soul, and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live; and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; and prayer shall be made for him continually: all the day shall he be blessed. There shall be abundance handful) of corn in the earth, on the top of the mountains: the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish as the grass of the earth. His name shall be forever; before the sun shall his name be continued: and they shall bless themselves in him; all the Gentiles shall call him blessed. Blessed [be] Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel alone doing wondrous things. And blessed [be] the name of his glory forever; and let all the earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended” (vers. 1-20).

Chapter 210

The Psalms Book 3: Psalms 73-75

The third division or book is externally marked by but one Davidic psalm, all the rest, it would seem, being attributed to other inspired writers; internally by a larger character as compared with I and II, where, as we have observed, the Jews proper were before us in sufferings or anticipated glory, the first as still having access to the sanctuary in Jerusalem, the second as fled from it on the setting up of the abomination of desolation. Thus the prophetic spirit is fully maintained. They are no more of their own isolated solution than any other prophecy of scripture. But the collection on which we now enter manifests the larger sphere of Israel, and accordingly looks at the Gentiles in a more extensive way as envious and hostile to the people and the land because of the divine favor shown. A remnant of Ephraim are in the land, but the great national foe, the Assyrian, is yet in power and antagonism; and Messiah personally is not prominent as in both the books before. But the name of Jehovah rises increasingly for their hearts, at the close fully.

The opening utterance as usual gives the keynote. It is God good to “Israel,” but only “to such as are pure in heart” —gracious to His people as a whole, and so known by those that honored Him as a God of judgment. But the trial produced by the prosperity of the wicked, while judgment is not yet executed, is vividly expressed, and the secret only known in His presence which gave the clue and turned all for good. Why the Revised Version repeats the error of the Received in ver. 24 is hard to understand, if one knew not the force of habit. The mistranslation is probably due to Christian prejudice overriding the correct Israelitish hope. Yet it overthrows our real privilege. For those put to sleep by Jesus will God bring with Him; so that when Christ, our life, shall be manifested then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory. Whereas it is after the glory that God will receive Israel. Compare Zech. 2:8.

Psalm 73

“A psalm of Asaph. Truly God [is] good to Israel, to the pure of heart. And for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the arrogant (fools), seeing the peace of wicked (men). For there are no bands in their death, and their strength [is] fat.

In the hardship of man they are not, and with mankind are not smitten. Therefore hath pride enchained them, a garment of violence covereth them. Their eyes stand out with fatness, the imaginations of heart overflow. They mock and speak wickedly, oppression from on high they speak. They set their mouth in the heavens, and their tongue walketh in the earth. Therefore his people turn hither, and waters in fullness are wrung out to them. And they say, How should God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these [are] wicked and prosperous forever; they increase in substance. Truly in vain I have cleansed my heart and washed my hands in innocency; and [while] I was smitten all the day, and my rebuking (was) at the mornings. If I have said, I will declare thus, behold, I have offended the generation of thy sons. When I thought to know this, a hardship it [was] in mine eyes until I went into the sanctuary of God (El): I consider their end. Truly thou settest them in slippery places, thou hast caused them to fall into ruins. How are they become a desolation in a moment! They have passed, consumed with terrors. As a dream on awaking, so, O Lord (Adonai), in arising, wilt thou despise their image. For my heart was grieved and I was pricked (in) my reins; and I was brutish and knew nothing: a beast I was with thee. Yet I [am] continually with thee: thou hast holden my right hand. By thy counsel thou wilt guide me, and after glory wilt receive me. Whom have I in the heavens? and beside thee have I no object of desire in the earth. My flesh and my heart faileth; rock of my heart and my portion [is] God forever. For, behold, those far from me shall perish; thou hast destroyed everyone whoring from thee. And for me, it is good to me to draw near to God: I have set in the Lord Jehovah my refuge to declare all thy works” (vers. 1-28).

Psalm 74

“Instructed, of Asaph. Why, O God, hast thou cast off forever? smoketh thy wrath against the sheep of thy pasture? Remember thine assembly thou hast purchased of old, thou hast redeemed, [as] rod of thine inheritance, this mount Zion thou hast dwelt in. Lift up thy steps unto the perpetual ruins, all the enemy hath ill done in the holy place. Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thy place of assembly: they have set their signs as signs. One is known as raising up axes on the thicket of trees; and now its carvings together they strike down with hatchet and hammers. They have set on fire thy holy place; to the earth they have profaned the tabernacle of thy name. They have said in their heart, Let me destroy them together. They have burnt all God's (El) places of assembly in the land. Our signs we see not; there is no more a prophet, and with us [is] none knowing how long. How long, O God, shall an adversary reproach? shall the enemy despise thy name forever? Why drawest thou back thy hand, thy right hand? from the midst of thy bosom consume them. Yet God [is] my King of old working deliverances in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; Thou didst break the heads of dragons on the waters; thou didst crush the head of leviathan—gavest it as food to a people dwelling in the wilderness. Thou didst cleave fount and torrent, thou didst dry up rivers ever flowing. Day is thine, yea, thine, night. Thou didst prepare light and sun; thou didst set all the borders of earth; summer and winter, thou didst form them. Remember this: an enemy hath reproached, O Jehovah, and a foolish people have despised thy name. Give not up the soul of thy turtle-dove to the wild beast (or greedy herd): forget not the life (or company) of thy poor forever. Have respect unto the covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the dwellings of violence. Let not the oppressed return ashamed; let poor one and needy one praise thy name. Arise, O God, plead thy cause; remember thy reproach from the fool all the day. Forget not the voice of thine adversaries: the tumult of those that rise up against thee goeth up continually” (vers. 1-23).

Psa. 74 is thus occupied with the external enemies, though the inner oppressor is also noticed, in remarkable contrast with the more spiritual dealing of God with the soul, set out in the Psalm before it which introduces the book. Outwardly things look at their worst, ravage unchecked, desolation of the sanctuary, roaring in the assemblies, man's sign the only sign apparent everywhere, and no voice even from God, not a prophet, nor one knowing how long. Yet faith owns God “my King” from of old, and the mighty deliverances, and pleads at length, “Remember this: an enemy hath reproached, O Jehovah,” rising up to the covenant name, as the poor remnant were His turtle dove.

Very distinct, yet in appreciable sequence, is the faith in the following psalm where Messiah's intervention is anticipated, and His upright judgment at the set time. He alone of men could speak of establishing the pillars of the earth or even land; He alone will cut off all the horns of the wicked or exalt those of the righteous.

Psalm 75

“To the chief musician Al-tashheth [destroy not], a psalm of Asaph, a song. We give thanks to thee, O God, we give thanks, and near [is] thy name: thy wonders declare [it]. When I shall reach the set time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I have established its pillars. Selah. I said to the fools, Be not foolish, and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn. Lift not up your horn on high, speak not with arrogant neck. For not from east, nor from west, nor from south [lit. wilderness] [is] lifting up. For God [is] judge; one he putteth down, and lifteth up another. For in Jehovah's hand [is] a cup, and the wine foameth, it is full of mixture. He poureth out of it: surely the dregs of it all the wicked of the earth shall drain-drink. And I will declare forever, I will sing psalms to the God of Jacob. And all the horns of the wicked will I cut off; the horns of the righteous shall be exalted” (vers. 1-11).

Chapter 214

The Psalms Book 3: Psalms 76-78

The first of these psalms sets forth that it is in Judah and Israel God is to be known, in Zion and in Salem, Psa. 75 having disclosed Messiah the executor of divine judgments in the earth, by which the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. It is the age to come, and characteristically different from Christianity, which calls out souls that believe by grace from the world to Christ in heaven, soon to reign with Him in glory. To be a nationalist is for the Christian beneath his heavenly calling; for the Israelites, at least such as are of a pure heart, by-and-by it will be consistent and have the sanction of God. Now it is forgetfulness of Christ's sufferings and of the glories after these. Heaven is our true father-land.

Psalm 76

“To the chief musician on Neginoth, a psalm of Asaph, a song. God [is] known in Judah, great his name in Israel; and in Salem his pavilion and his dwelling-place in Zion. There he broke the fiery shafts of the bow, the shield and the sword and the battle. Selah'. Glorious [art] thou, excellent, more than the mountains of prey. The strong of heart have been spoiled, they have slumbered their sleep; and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both chariot and horse [are] cast into a dead sleep. Thou, terrible [art] thou; and who shall stand in thy presence when once [in] thine anger? From the heavens thou didst cause judgment to be heard; the earth feared and was still, when God rose for the judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. For the fury of man shall praise thee; the remainder of furies wilt thou restrain [or ingird]. Vow and pray to Jehovah your God: all around him will bring a present to the fear [or him that should be feared]. He will cut off the spirit of princes, terrible to the kings of the earth” (vers. 1-13).

The second of these psalms is an inward dealing suited to that day of distress when God will have heart-searching in His ancient people before their complete deliverance. The remembrance of the past may produce anguish in the present but gives hope for the future. God's way is in the sanctuary as well as in the sea; and faith lays hold of both. For the Christian, it is the settled favor and everlasting deliverance in Christ, dead, risen, and ascended, that we rest on. But the Israelite, if he looks on His way in the sanctuary, enjoys the wonders of His arm; if he turn as a man to His way in the sea, he has to acknowledge that His footsteps are not known.

Psalm 77

To the chief musician, on Jeduthun, a psalm of Asaph. My voice is unto God, and will cry; my voice [is] unto God, and he will give ear to me. In the day of my distress I sought the Lord (Adonai); my hand was stretched out in the night and slacked not; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God and was disquieted; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes watching, I am troubled and cannot speak. I consider the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night; I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit maketh diligent search, Will the Lord (A.) cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Hath his mercy failed forever? hath [his] word come to an end from generation to generation? hath God forgotten to be gracious? or hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I said, This is mine infirmity: the years of the right hand of the Most High, the deeds of Jah I will remember; for I will remember thy wonders of old. And I will meditate on all thy work and muse on thy doings. O God, in the sanctuary [is] thy way: who [is] a great God like God? Thou [art] the God (El) working wonders; Thou, hast made known among the peoples thy strength. Thou hast with [thine] arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they trembled, yea, the depths were troubled. The thick clouds poured out waters; the skies sent out a voice, yea, thine arrows went abroad. The voice of thy thunder [was] in the whirlwind (or circuit); the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook. In the sea [is] thy way, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps were not known. Thou hast led, as the sheep, thy people by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (vers. 1-21).

The last of these three is alike full, beautiful, and important. It sets out the total failure of Israel under governmental dealings. Law, no matter what the long-suffering goodness that accompanies it, can only issue in the ruin of sinful man. Sovereign grace alone avails. The testimony Jehovah raised in Jacob was excellent, the law He set in Israel holy and good; but what could either avail, the people being what they were? “As many as are of works of law are under curse.” Gal. 3. It is but a ministry of death and condemnation. Real and stable blessing turns on God and His grace. Do what He would in nature or law, Israel brought Him but shame and misery on themselves. Then did He choose Judah, Zion, and David, the pledge and security of ultimate blessing and triumph, when the children shall indeed learn to profit by their fathers' failure, the final and everlasting passage from flesh and law to the true Beloved and the grace that brings salvation.

Psalm 78

“An instruction of Asaph. Give ear, my people, to my law; incline your ear to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings from of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide [them] from their sons, telling the generations to come the praises of Jehovah, and his strength, and his wondrous works which he wrought. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to make them known to their sons, that the generation to come might know, sons to be born, who should rise up and tell their sons, and they might set their hope in God, and not forget the deeds of God (El), and keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set (prepared) not their hearts, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God (El). The sons of Ephraim, armed bowmen, turned in the day of battle. They kept not God's covenant and in his law refused to walk; and they forgot his deeds and his wondrous works which he caused them to see. In the sight of their fathers he wrought wonders in the land of Egypt, the field of Zoan. He clave the sea and caused them to pass through and made the waters to stand as a heap; and he led them with a cloud by day and all the night with light of fire. He clave rocks in the wilderness and gave drink as the depths abundantly, He brought streams from the rock (crag) and caused waters to come down like the rivers. Yet they still went on to sin against him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert (dry); and they tempted God in their hearts by asking food for their lust (souls). And they spoke against God; they said, Shall God be able to furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, and waters gushed out, and streams overflowed; can he give bread also, or provide flesh for his people? Therefore Jehovah heard and was wroth; and fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also went up against Israel; because they believed not in God and trusted not in his salvation. Yet he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven, and he rained upon them manna to eat, and had given them the corn of the heavens. Man did eat the food of the mighty; he sent them provision to the full. He led forth the east [wind] in the heavens, and by his strength guided the south [wind], and he rained flesh upon them as dust and winged fowl as sand of the sea, and let it fall in the midst of the camp round about their habitations. And they did eat and were well filled. He brought to them their desire. They were not estranged from their desire; their food [was] yet in their mouths, when God's anger went up against them and slew their fattest and smote down the chosen of Israel. For all this they sinned still and believed not in his wondrous works; he consumed their days in vanity, and their years in terror. When he slew them, then they inquired after him, and turned and sought God (El) eagerly. And they remembered that God [was] their rock, and God Most High their redeemer. And they flattered (enticed) him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongue. And their heart [was] not firm with him, nor were they steadfast in his covenant. But he mercifully forgave iniquity, and destroyed not, and often withdrew his anger and could not arouse all his wrath; and he remembered that they [were] flesh, a wind passing and not coming again. How oft did they rebel against him in the wilderness and grieve him in the desert? And they turned again and tempted God (El) and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, the day when he delivered them from oppression, he who set his signs in Egypt and

his wonders in the field of Zoan, and turned their rivers to blood, and their streams that they could not drink. He sent among them dog flies, and they devour them; and frogs, and they destroy them. And he gave their increase to the caterpillar, and their labor to the locust. He killed their vines with the hail, and their sycamore trees with the frost, and delivered their cattle to the hail and their flocks to the lightnings. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and distress, by sending angels of woes. He made a path for his anger, he withheld their soul from death, and their life he gave over to the pestilence; and he smote every first-born in Egypt, the first fruits of vigor in the tents of Ham. And he made his people go as the sheep, and guided them as the flock in the wilderness; and he led them safely, and they feared not; and the sea covered their enemies. And he brought them to the border of his holiness, this mountain His right hand purchased, and drove out before them nations, and allotted them by a line for an inheritance, and caused the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. But they tempted and resisted God Most High, and kept not his testimonies, and revolted, and dealt treacherously like their fathers; they were turned like a deceitful bow. And they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. God heard and was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel; and he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, his tent he pitched among men, and gave his strength into captivity, and his beauty into the oppressor's hand. And he gave over to the sword his people, and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their chosen, and their maidens were not praised in song; their priests fell by the sword, and their widows wept not. And the Lord (Adonai) awoke as a sleeper, as a mighty man shouting aloud from wine; and he smote his adversaries backward and put them to everlasting reproach. And he rejected the tent of Joseph, and the tribe of Ephraim did not choose; and he chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which. he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high [places], like the earth he founded forever. And he chose David his servant, and took him from the sheepfold; from behind suckling Lewes] he brought him to feed Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance. And he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and in the skill of his hands he led them" (vers. 1-72).

Chapter 218

The Psalms Book 3: Psalms 84-85

These psalms beautifully follow up the moral instruction of Psa. 78, for the whole people's interest Godward. In the first, Psa. 79, we have the desolating ruin of the city and the sanctuary, when the overwhelming scourge falls on Jerusalem as in Isa. 10; 28, Zech. 14:1, 2, and other scriptures. It sets before us the feelings and prayers of the righteous Israelites after the first Gentile siege which is partially successful, and before their leader, the king of the north, comes up a second time for his and their total destruction, Dan. 8; 11, &c.

Psalm 79

“A psalm of Asaph. O God, Gentiles are come into thine inheritance, the temple of thine holiness have they defiled, they have laid Jerusalem in heaps. They have given the dead bodies of thy servants for meat to the birds of the heavens, the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of the earth. They have shed their blood, as the waters, round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury. We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a mockery and derision to those round about us. How long, Jehovah? wilt thou be angry forever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out thy fury upon the Gentiles that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that called not on thy name. For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation. Remember not against (for) us iniquities of forefathers; let thy tender mercies speedily come to meet us, for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the sake of the glory of thy name and deliver us, and forgive our sins because of thy name. Why should the Gentiles say, Where [is] their God? Let there be known among the Gentiles in our sight (eyes) avenging of thy servants' blood that is shed. Let the prisoner's sighing come before thee; according to the greatness of thine arm, preserve the sons of death; and render to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom their reproach wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. And we, thy people and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks forever; we will show forth thy praise to all generations” (vers. 1-13).

The second is a turning of their eyes upward to the Shepherd of Israel, and a binding together of their hopes as His people with the ark of the covenant as of old in the wilderness; owning His just anger, whilst entreating that His face may shine, and, most strikingly, that His hand may be upon His right hand man, and upon Adam's son Whom He made strong for Himself.

Chapter 220

Psalm 80

“To the chief musician, on Shoshannim-Eduth (Lilies, a testimony) of Asaph, a psalm. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph as the sheep, dwelling [above] the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh arouse thy might and come for our salvation. O God, restore us, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall he saved. Jehovah God of hosts, how long wilt thou (will thine anger) smoke against the prayer of thy people? Thou hast caused them to eat bread of tears and to drink tears a large measure. Thou hast made us a strife to our neighbors, and our enemies mock among ourselves. O God of hosts, restore us, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. A vine out of Egypt thou broughtest: thou didst drive out Gentiles, and didst plant it. Thou preparedst [space] before it, and it took deep root and filled the land. Mountains were covered with its shadow, and its boughs, cedars of God (i.e., vast). It sent out its branches unto the sea and its shoots unto the river. Why hast thou broken down its fence, so that all who pass by the way shall pluck it? The boar out of the forest wasteth it, and the wild beast of the field feeds on it. O God of hosts, return, we pray; even from the heavens and see, and visit this vine, even the stock which thy right hand planted, and the plant (son) thou madest strong for thyself. [It is] burned with fire, cut down: at the rebuke of thy face they perish. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man thou madest strong for thyself. So will we not go back from thee. Revive us, and we will call upon thy name. Restore us, O Jehovah God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved” (vers. 1-20).

Next comes the psalm of new year's day, when the trumpet sounds not for alarm but joy, the joy of gathering the people at the new moon. The full moon will shine in due time. This is the new moon after a long eclipse. Now Israel will receive and reflect light afresh from the Lord. It is clear progress as compared with the preceding psalm. It was Israel that would not hearken, Israel that would none of Jehovah. Oh, had they, how soon would He have subdued them, and blessed themselves in the grace that brought them out of Egypt, till at Sinai they preferred to stand on law, and fell as all must who so pretend!

Psalm 81

“To the chief musician, upon the Gittith, Asaph. Sing aloud unto God our strength, shout aloud unto the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with psaltery. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the set time, on our feast day. For this [was] a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. He appointed it a testimony in Joseph when he went forth over the land of Egypt, [when] I heard a language (lip) I knew not. I removed his shoulder from the burden; his hands were freed from the basket. In the distress thou didst call, and I delivered thee, I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Hear, O my nation, and I will testify unto thee, O Israel, it thou wouldest hearken unto me. There shall no strange god be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any foreign god. I [am] Jehovah thy God who brought thee up from the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people hearkened not to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to the revolting of their heart, that they might walk in their own counsels. Oh that my people would hearken unto me, that Israel would walk in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of Jehovah should have submitted to him, but their time would have been forever. And he would have fed them with the finest (fat) of wheat, and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (vers. 1-17).

The psalm that follows meets another difficulty of that day in particular. God is seen arising to judge the judges. How long His poor people had suffered oppression! Alas, Jewish rulers were no more righteous than Gentile! The rejection of Messiah proved His people inexcusably and excessively hostile to God. Judgment is at the door.

Psalm 82

“A psalm of Asaph. God standeth in the assembly of God (E1); he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly and respect the person of the wicked? Selah. Judge the poor (man) and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. They know not, nor do they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are moved. I said, ye [are] gods, and all of you sons of the most High; but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O Clod, judge the earth, for thou shall inherit all the Gentiles” (vers. 1-8). Here it is not only those who had authority from God warned of His judging, and the Spirit in Israel calling on Him to arise for it, and those who had His word threatened with a fall like to mere men as alike without real understanding; but we have the last great confederacy, of which the Assyrian is the head, according to the prophets generally and here expressly named with others too familiar to the ancient people of God. It is by the final execution of judgments on the earth, however, overlooked by Christendom, and despised or censured by the vain mind of the flesh, that the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness and know the name of Jehovah. But thus shall they at the end of the age know that “Thou, Thy name Jehovah only Thine, art Most High above all the earth.” The Name regains its power for Israel's heart. Psa. 83 “A song, a psalm of Asaph. O God, keep not silence; hold not thy peace and be not still, O God (El). For behold thine enemies make a tumult, and those that hate Thee have lifted up the head. Against thy people they devise secret craft and consult against thy hidden ones. They said, Come, and we will cut them off from [being] a nation, and let the name of Israel be remembered no more. For they have heartily consulted together; against thee do they make a covenant: the tents of Edom, and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagarenes; Gebal and Ammon and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tire; Asshur also is joined with them; they are an arm to the sons of Lot. Selah. Do to them as [to] Midian, as [to] Sisera, as [to] Jabin, at the river Kishon. They were destroyed at Endor; they became dung for the ground. Make their nobles as Oreb and as Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah and as Zalmunna; who said, Let us take to our inheritance the habitations of God. O my God, make them as the whirling thing, as stubble before the wind, as fire will burn a forest, and as a flame will set mountains on fire. So pursue them with thy tempest and with thy whirlwind trouble them. Fill their faces with shame, that [and] they will seek thy name, O Jehovah. They shall be ashamed and dismayed forever, and they shall be confounded and perish. And they shall know that thou alone, whose name [is] Jehovah, [art] Most High above all the earth” (vers. 1-19). Hence in the next psalm the joy of dwelling where Jehovah of host dwells, of the living God in His courts fills the heart with blessedness in contemplation; as also the blessedness of going there for those on the way: all summed up in the blessing of trusting Jehovah of hosts. Psa. 84 “To the chief musician, on the Gittith, for the sons of Korah, a psalm. How lovely [are] thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of Jehovah; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God (yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest where she layeth her young), thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my king and my God. Blessed they that dwell in thy house! they will be still praising thee. Selah. Blessed the man whose strength [is] in thee, in whose heart [are] the highways! Passing through the valley of the weeping (Baca), they

make it a well-spring; yea, early rain covereth [it] with blessings. They go from strength to strength; [each] will appear before God in Zion. O Jehovah, God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts [is] better than a thousand; I had rather be at the threshold in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For a sun and shield [is] Jehovah God; grace and glory will Jehovah give, no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly O Jehovah of hosts, blessed the man that trusteth in thee!" (vers. 1-13). The following psalm, 85, looks rather at the blessing of the land and people than at the religious center of Jehovah's name or the way thither. Deliverance from external foes attests the people's forgiveness, and leads them to seek all favor in that place of blessing, above all in hearing what the God Jehovah may speak; for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints, publicly and individually, though they need to watch against folly, as becomes those who by grace now understand. It is instructive to note how truly the psalm speaks of Israel as contrasted with church or Christian blessedness. "Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land," not that we may "ever be with the Lord" in risen heavenly glory, as we rightly hope. But for them, as for us, it is the righteousness of God that gives stability, not their own (though they will be righteous then) but his, or more strictly have Jehovah their righteousness. Thus only are mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace embrace, as we now know in Christ yet more gloriously.

Chapter 223

Psalm 85

“To the chief musician, for the sons of Korah, a psalm. Thou hast been favorable, O Jehovah, to thy land; thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob; thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath; thou hast turned from the fierceness of thine anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine indignation toward us to cease. Wilt thou be angry with us forever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger from generation to generation? Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Show us thy mercy, O Jehovah, and grant us thy salvation. I will hear what the God Jehovah will speak; for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation [is] near those that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Jehovah also will give good; and our land shall yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set his footsteps in the way” (vers. 1-14).

The Psalms Book 3: Psalms 86-89

It may be noticed that the name of God rises to its covenant character toward the close of Psa. 83, and for anticipated enjoyment in that relationship, whether in His house or on the way there and for the land, in the two psalms that follow for the sons of Korah. Jehovah still appears in Psa. 86, but Adonai enters much into “the player of David,” which entreats and counts on His grace, being as good as He is great, Whom all nations shall worship, coming before Him. But this glorifying of His name is not without a token for good shown His beloved to put His haters to shame. Israel cannot enter on their promised blessings save through judgments on the quick.

Psalm 86

“A prayer of David. Incline thine ear, Jehovah, answer me; for I [am] poor and needy. Keep my soul, for I [am] godly. O thou my God, save thy servant that confideth in thee. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for unto thee do I call all the day. Gladden the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, [art] good and forgiving, and great in mercy to all that call on thee. Give ear, O Jehovah, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my distress I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me. There is none like thee among the gods, O Lord, and there are none like thy works. All Gentiles whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou [art] great and doest wondrous things; thou [art] God, thou alone. Teach me, O Jehovah, thy way, I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. I will thank thee, O Lord my Savior, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name forever. For thy mercy [is] great unto me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. O God, proud men rise against me, and an assembly of violent [men] sought my soul and set thee not before them. But thou, Lord, [art] a God (El) merciful and gracious, slow of rage and great in mercy and truth. Turn unto me and be gracious to me; give thy strength to thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid. Show me a token for good; and my haters shall see and be ashamed, because thou, O Jehovah, hast helped me and comforted me” (vers. 1-17).

As Christ the Lord is the sole key to the preceding psalms, which bring together Israel poor and needy looking to Him, and all nations coming to worship before Him, so it explains the divine spring of Israel's patriotism. For all others it is self, the first man. Mere justice might and must have cut all down: grace counts that This man was born (not crucified!) there. But grace indeed can recall many an elder that obtained a good report through faith. Zion is Jehovah's foundation, He loves its very gates. In vain do the seats of the world's power, wisdom, and wealth, exalt themselves.

Psalm 87

“For the sons of Korah, a psalm, a song. His foundation [is] in the mountains of holiness. Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the tabernacles of Jacob. Glorious things [are] spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those that know me. Behold Philistia, and Tire, with Cush: this [man] was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, [This] man and [that] man was born in her: and the most High himself shall establish her. Jehovah will count, in inscribing the peoples, This man was born there. Selah. And singers as well as pipers (or dancers) shall say, All my springs [are] are in thee” (vers. 1-7).

Next follows a psalm of profound sorrow and sense of wrath with no glimmer of light beyond the opening words. Israel to be blessed must pass through this, and have Christ's Spirit and sympathy with them in it. What could law do for those under it but press its terrors unto death?

Psalm 88

“A song, a psalm, for the sons of Korah. To the chief musician, upon Mahalath and Leannoth, an instruction of Heman the Ezrahite. O Jehovah, God of my salvation, [by] day have I cried, and in the night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee; incline thine ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh to Sheol. I am counted with those that descend to the pit, I am as a man without strength: among the dead free, as the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more, and they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the pit of abysses, in dark places, in depths. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted [me] with all thy breakers. Selah. Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me, thou hast made me abomination to them: [I am] shut up and cannot come forth. Mine eye wasteth because of mine affliction. I have called on thee, O Jehovah, every day, I have stretched out my hands toward thee. Wilt thou do a wonder to the dead? shall shades (Rephaim) arise? shall they praise thee? Selah. Shall thy mercy be declared in the grave? thy faithfulness in destruction (Abaddon)? Shall thy wonder be known in the darkness? and thy righteousness in a land of forgetfulness? But for me, I cry unto thee, O Jehovah, and in the morning my prayer corneth before thee. Why, O Jehovah, dost thou cast off my soul? Hidest thou thy face from me? Poor [am] I and expiring from youth; I have borne thy terror; I am distracted. Thy fierce angers have come over me; thy terrors have cut me off, they have surrounded me like the water all the day, and they have closed in upon me together. Thou hast put far from me lover and associate; mine acquaintances [are] darkness” (vers. 1-18).

In striking contrast, but morally connected closely with the preceding tone of depression and wrath under law, is the last psalm of this book; which is the expression of mercy and faithfulness in Christ, the object and securer of divine promises and especially of those to David. It was the dark night; now comes the dawn of the day when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings for the afflicted righteous, and He shall tread down the wicked as ashes. For it is in no way the gospel of grace, but the kingdom displayed in power and justice by Jehovah-Messiah on the earth.

Psalm 89

“An instruction of Ethan the Ezrahite. I will sing of the mercies of Jehovah forever, with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness [from] generation to generation. For I said, Forever shall mercy be built up; thou wilt stablish thy faithfulness in the heavens. I have made a covenant with mine elect [one], I have sworn to David my servant. Forever will I stablish thy seed, and build up thy throne [from] generation to generation. Selah. And the heavens shall confess thy wonder, O Jehovah, and thy faithfulness in the congregation of the saints. For who in the sky can compare with Jehovah? [who] among the sons of the mighty (pl.) can be likened to Jehovah? God (El) [is] greatly to be feared in the council of the saints and terrible above all those around him. Jehovah God of hosts, who [is] like thee, strong Jah, and thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest in the pride of the sea, in the arising of its waves thou stillest them. Thou hast crushed Rahab as a slain [one]; with the arm of thy strength thou hast scattered thine enemies. Thine [are] the heavens, yea, thine the earth; the world and its fullness, thou hast founded them. The north and the south, thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon triumph in thy name. Thine [is] an arm with might, strong is thy hand; exalted is thy right hand. Righteousness and judgment [are] the foundation of thy throne, mercy and truth go before thy face. Blessed the people that know the joyful shout! Jehovah, in the light of thy face they walk. In thy name they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness they are exalted. For thou [art] the honor of their strength, and in thy favor our horn shall be exalted. For to Jehovah [belongeth] our shield, and to the Holy one of Israel, our king. Then thou spakest in vision of thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon a mighty one, I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found David my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him; with whom my hand shall be established, yea, mine arm shall strengthen him. No enemy shall exact upon him nor son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his adversaries before him, and will smite his haters. And my faithfulness and my mercy [shall be] with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. And I will set his hand in the sea, and in the rivers his right hand. He shall call upon me, My father [art] thou, my God (El) and the rock of my salvation. And for me, I will make him first-born, most high to kings of earth. My mercy will I keep for him, and my covenant [shall be] fixed for him. And I have set forever his seed, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they profane my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod and their iniquities with stripes. But my mercy I will not utterly take from him, nor belie my faithfulness; nor will I profane my covenant, nor change what is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn in my holiness, I will not lie to David; his seed shall be forever, and his throne as the sun before me, as the moon is established forever, as the witness in the sky [is] firm. Selah. But thou hast cast off and rejected; thou hast been wroth with thine anointed one; thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast broken down all his hedges, thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin. All that pass by the way plunder him; he is become a reproach to his neighbors. Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries. Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword, and hast not made him stand in the battle. Thou hast made his brightness to cease, and his throne to the earth thou hast cast down. Thou hast shortened the days of his youth, thou hast

covered him with shame. Selah. How long, O Jehovah, wilt thou hide thyself forever? Shall thy wrath burn as fire? Remember as to me what [is] life. Wherefore hast thou created all sons of man (Adam) vanity? What man (geber) liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of Sheol? Selah. Where [are] thy former mercies, Lord, thou swarest to David in thy faithfulness? Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants—I bear in my bosom all the mighty (or many) peoples—[with] which thine enemies have reproached, O Jehovah; [with] which they have reproached the footsteps (heels) of thine anointed one. Blessed be Jehovah forever. Amen and Amen" (vers. 1-53).

Chapter 229

The Psalms Book 4: Psalms 90-94

The fourth book (Psa. 90-106) has its own distinct lineaments, which discover inspiration in their order, as a whole, as well as in the contents of each: only spiritual ignorance can fail to see both. Psa. 90 is the suited introduction and finds its place here rather than in any other among the 150. Historically it would precede all probably; for there is no substantial ground for doubting that Moses was the writer according to its title. Adonai is owned as Israel's dwelling-place in all generations, from everlasting to everlasting El, turning weak man (enosh) to dust, and saying, Return, sons of men (Adam). He is the God of creation and of providence. But faith, that owns man's transient littleness and the power of the divine displeasure, can also say, Return, Jehovah: how long? Their prayer rises that Jehovah's work may appear to His servants; and His majesty on their sons. Psa. 91 introduces Messiah owning Jehovah, the God of Israel, as His God, Whose is supreme power and faithfulness; and hence delivered at length and set on high. Then in Psa. 92 the true sabbath is anticipated when man's days are over; and 93 opens with the glorious word, “Jehovah reigneth,” notwithstanding all the roaring waves of creature opposition; while the godly acknowledge that, when judgment then returns to righteousness (how divorced in this age!), the throne of wickedness cannot be joined to Him, but the wicked shall be cut off in their own evil. Those that follow are so plain as to need no remark now; they, too, could be nowhere else with propriety. Who ordered all this consecution so strong, subtle, and instructive? A greater than man, whoever the instrument may have been.

Psalm 90

“A prayer of Moses the man of God. O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before mountains were brought forth, and thou gavest birth to earth and world, thou [art] God (El). Thou makest man to return to crumbling, and sayest, Return, sons of men. For a thousand years in thine eyes [are] as yesterday when it passeth, and a watch in the night. Thou sweepest them away: a sleep are they. In the morning as grass changeth, in the morning it flourisheth and changeth; at the evening it is mown and withereth. For we decay in thine anger, and in thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret [sins] in the light of thy face. For all our days are turned away in thine anger: we spend our years as a thought. The days of our years! in them [are] seventy years, and if by strength eighty years, even their pride [is] trouble and mischief, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger, and, as thy fear, thy wrath? To number our days thus make [us] know, and we will acquire a heart of wisdom. Return, Jehovah: how long? and repent as to thy servants. Satisfy us in the morning with thy mercy, and we will rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad like the days that thou hast afflicted us, like the years we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy majesty unto their sons. And let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us, and the work of our hands established upon us; even the work of our hands establish it” (vers. 1-17).

Psalm 91

“He that dwelleth in covert of the Most High abideth in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Jehovah, My refuge and my fortress, my God; I will confide in him. Surely He shall deliver thee from the fowler's snare, from mischief's plague. With his feathers shall he cover thee, and under his wings shalt thou trust: a shield and buckler [is] his truth. Thou shalt not be afraid for terror by night, for arrow flying by day, for plague walking in the darkness, for destruction walking at noon. There shall fall at thy side a thousand, and a myriad at thy right hand; to thee it shall not come nigh. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the requital of wicked [men]. Because thou hast made Jehovah, my refuge, the Most High, thy habitation, no evil shall befall thee, and no plague shall draw near thy tent. For his angels he will charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; upon [their] hands they shall bear thee, lest thou strike against the stone thy foot. On lion and adder thou shalt tread; thou shalt trample young lion and dragon. Because he hath set his love on me, I too will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he knoweth my name. He shall call me, and I will answer him; with him for my part I [will be] in trouble; I will deliver him and glorify him. Length of days amply will I supply him, and show him my salvation” (vers. 1-16).

The N.T. clearly intimates that Messiah takes this place under the Most High and the Almighty, identifying both with the Jehovah God of Israel in the face or Satan's evil and power. It is a sort of dialog in which Messiah in ver. 2 answers the apothegm of ver. 1 and assures Israel of deliverance in 3-8. Then Israel rejoices in 9-13, and Jehovah puts His seal to it in 14-16.

Psalm 92

“A psalm, a song, for the sabbath day. [It is] good to give thanks unto Jehovah, and to sing psalms unto thy name, O Most High, to show in the morning thy mercy and thy faithfulness in the night, on decachord and on psaltery, on a meditation (higgaion) with a harp. For thou, Jehovah, hast gladdened me by thy work; in the doings of thy hands I will triumph. How great are thy works, O Jehovah! Very deep are thy thoughts. A brutish man knoweth not, and a fool doth not understand this. When wicked [men] spring up as grass and all the workers of iniquity flourish, [it is] for them to be destroyed forever. And thou, Jehovah, [art] on high forever. For, lo, thine enemies, Jehovah—for, lo, thine enemies—shall perish; scattered shall be all doers of iniquity. And my horn shalt thou exalt like a buffalo's; I shall be anointed with fresh oil. And mine eye shall look upon my watchers; mine ears shall hear of those rising against me—evil-doers. The righteous one shall spring up as the palm, as a cedar in Lebanon shall he grow. Planted in Jehovah's house, in the courts of our God, they shall spring up. Still shall they bear fruit in old age; fat and green shall they be; to show that Jehovah is upright, my rock, and no unrighteousness in him” (vers. 1-16).

How suitable this song will then be needs no comment here. Blessing on earth follows judgment.

Psalm 93

“Jehovah reigneth; [in the] majesty he is clothed, [in the] strength he girdeth himself: yea the world is stablished, it shall not be moved. Fixed [is] thy throne of old: from eternity [art] thou. The floods (rivers) lifted up, O Jehovah, the floods lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. Above the voices of many mighty waters, breakers of the sea, mighty is Jehovah on High. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, forever” (to length of days) (vers. 1-5).

This psalm again is so plain that only superstition or skepticism can mistake its import.

Psalm 94

“O Jehovah God, to whom vengeance belongeth, O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth; render desert to the proud. Jehovah, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? They prate, they speak arrogantly; all the workers of iniquity boast themselves. They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. And they say, Jah shall not see, nor shall the God of Jacob consider. Consider, ye brutish among the people, and fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that disciplineth the Gentiles, shall he not correct—he that teacheth man knowledge? Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man, that they [are] vanity. Blessed [is] the man whom thou disciplinest, O Jah, and teachest out of thy law that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. For Jehovah will not cast off his people, nor will he forsake his inheritance. For judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. Who will rise up for me against evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless Jehovah [had been] my help, my soul had soon dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Jehovah, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by statute? They gather themselves against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But Jehovah hath been my high tower, and my God the rock of my refuge. And he hath brought upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own evil; Jehovah our God shall cut them off” (vers. 1-23).

It is the cry of a righteous remnant anticipating and longing for the establishment of Jehovah's righteous rule on the earth, as the preceding psalm proclaimed the great principles succinctly: Jehovah reigning, not Satan as now (John 14:30, 2 Cor. 4:4, Eph. 2:2; 6:12); His testimony very sure, before His power is displayed superior to all opposition; holiness becoming His house forever on earth as well as in heaven. This draws out the appeal for His vengeance on the evil then undisguised towering to heaven and blasphemers in pride; and its folly is exposed before their brethren that believe not. But their own hearts take the comforts of His discipline, as yet in vain for the Gentiles, but in faithful keeping for His own. The return of righteousness to judgment is assured if He reign, and the impossibility of fellowship between Himself and the throne of iniquity. Such will be the blessedness when He brings in the First-begotten into the habitable earth; and such in view of it the earnest prayer of the godly Israelite. W. K.

Chapter 235

The Psalms – Book 4: Psalms 95-100

These six Psalms may be viewed as completing the group which began with 93; yet of themselves they make an evident and well-ordered progress. The first of the six (95) summons the people of God, in the Spirit of prophecy which animated the godly, to rejoice in Jehovah no longer to be hidden but revealed in Christ Who brings in salvation, glory, and rest; but no blessing is without hearing His voice. In the second the summons goes forth beyond Israel to the nations and peoples; as the third is the new song that is sought. The fourth demands a new song of Israel; and the fifth is the answer. This is completed by Psalm 100, which expresses Israel in the joy of grace, while owning their own portion, inviting all the earth to shout aloud to Jehovah, and with enlarged hearts welcoming into His grates with thanksgiving those whose approach they used jealously to fend off.

Psalm 95

“Come, let us sing aloud to Jehovah, let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his face with praise, let us shout aloud to him with psalms. For Jehovah [is] a great God (El), and a great King above all gods. In his hand [are] the deep places of the earth, and the strength of mountains [is] his; whose [is] the sea, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry [land]. Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker; for he [is] our God and we people of his pasture and sheep of his hand. To-day if ye hear his voice, harden not your heart like Meribah, like the day of Massah, in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me,—also saw my work. Forty years long was I disgusted with the generation and said, A people erring in heart [are] they, and they have not known my ways, so that I swore in mine anger that they shall not come into my rest” (vers. 1-11).

It will be noticed how Jehovah is worshipped as the Creator but the God of Israel; then a warning is given from the unbelief of their fathers in the wilderness. Their failure from of old will not debar them from His rest to-morrow, only unbelief to-day.

Psalm 96

“Sing ye to Jehovah a new song, sing to Jehovah, all the earth. Sing to Jehovah, bless his name, proclaim his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the Gentiles, his wonders among all the peoples. For great [is] Jehovah and exceedingly to be praised, to be feared he above all gods. For all the gods of the Gentiles [are] idols (nothing), but Jehovah made the heavens. Honor and majesty [are] before him; strength and beauty in his sanctuary. Give to Jehovah, ye families of the peoples, give to Jehovah glory and strength; give to Jehovah the glory of his name, bring an offering and come to his courts. Bow down to Jehovah in the majesty of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the Gentiles, Jehovah reigneth! Yea, the world is established, it shall not be moved; he will judge the peoples in equity. Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad; let the sea roar and its fullness; let the field exult and all that [is] in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest shout for joy before Jehovah, for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth” (vers. 1-13).

It is “ye” here to the nations, not “us” as in the preceding psalms. Yet Jehovah holds to His ordered place on earth, and the people are invited to the courts of His sanctuary, then indeed a house of prayer for all the peoples.

Psalm 97

“Jehovah reigneth; let the earth rejoice, let the many islands be glad. Cloud and darkness [are] around him, righteousness and judgment the foundation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his foes round about. His lightnings lightened the world; the earth saw and trembled. Mountains melted like wax before Jehovah, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. Ashamed be all that serve graven images and boast themselves of idols! Worship him, all ye gods (angels, as in Ps. 8)! Zion heard and rejoiced, and Judah's daughters were glad, because of thy judgments, O Jehovah. For thou, Jehovah, [art] Most High above all the earth, thou art exceedingly exalted above all gods. Lovers of Jehovah, hate evil! He keepeth the souls of his saints (pious ones), from the hand of the wicked ones he delivereth them. Light [is] sown for the righteous one, and gladness for upright in heart. Be glad in Jehovah, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness (vers. 1-12).”

Such is the song in reply. It is the earth rejoicing through the execution of divine judgments because Jehovah reigns in that day. And Zion rejoices on hearing, and Judah's daughters; a blessed trait in it, for naturally how different had all been! So the heavens here declare Jehovah's righteousness; the earth certainly was far from it, though we, Christians, know it still more gloriously in Him Who is on the Father's throne.

Psalm 98

“Sing ye to Jehovah a new song, for he hath done wonders; his right hand hath wrought salvation for him, and the arm of his holiness. Jehovah hath made known his salvation; in the eyes of the Gentiles he openly showed his righteousness. He remembered his mercy and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout to Jehovah, all the earth; break forth and sing for joy, and sing psalms. Sing psalms to Jehovah with a harp, with harp and voice of psalm; with trumpets and sound of cornet shout before the King Jehovah. Let the sea roar and its fullness, the world and those dwelling in it; let floods clap hand, let mountains sing for joy together before Jehovah, for he cometh to judge the earth; he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in equity” (vers. 1-9).

This is the call on Israel for a new song, though all the earth is to shout to Jehovah thereon, as Zion was glad when all the peoples saw His glory to the shame of idolatry. Here the sea too, the world, the rivers, and the hills all rejoice at His coming to judge the earth, Who is Jehovah the King.

Psalm 99

“Jehovah reigneth; let the peoples tremble. He sitteth [above] the cherubim; let the earth be moved. Jehovah [is] great in Zion and he [is] exalted above all the peoples. They shall praise thy great and terrible name; holy [is] he! and the king's strength loveth judgment. Thou hast established equity; thou hast wrought judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt Jehovah our God and worship at his footstool: holy [is] he! Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those calling on his name, they called unto Jehovah, and he answered them. In a pillar of cloud he spoke unto them; they kept his testimonies, and the statute he gave them. Jehovah, our God, thou answeredst them; a forgiving God (El) wast thou to them and taking vengeance on their doings. Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at the mountain of his holiness; for holy [is] Jehovah our God” (vers. 1-9).

This is Israel's song in answer. Jehovah is great in Zion, and executes judgment and righteousness in Jacob. He sits between the cherubim. All the peoples therefore are to praise His name. As in the early days of the people, so yet more at the end of the age will He answer those that call on Him, while punishing their doings; not then one or two here and there, but “so all Israel shall be saved.” “Thy people also shall be all righteous” in that day. Jehovah's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear.

Psalm 100

“A psalm of thanksgiving. Shout to Jehovah, all the earth. Serve Jehovah with joy, come before him with singing. Know that Jehovah he [is] God; he made us, and not we, his people and sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise; give thanks to him, bless his name. For Jehovah [is] good; forever [is] his mercy, and his faithfulness from generation to generation” (vers. 1-5).

Here Israel calls to universal thanksgiving; no churlishness to the Gentile more. Jehovah's mercy enjoyed makes His people bountiful.

Chapter 242

The Psalms Book 4: Psalms 101-104

The previous group of psalms anticipated, in the Spirit of Christ, the revelation of Jehovah to the joy of His people, and the nations, and indeed all the earth. The last of them witnesses the deep change by divine grace when Israel will welcome the Gentiles to His courts, not only without jealousy but with all their heart. A fresh cluster follows now, the first of which (Psa. 101) introduces the Messiah again; but now, as the true David and Solomon too, singing of mercy and judgment on taking His house and kingdom to be ordered in righteousness unswervingly.

Psalm 101

“A psalm of David. Of mercy and judgment I will sing; unto Thee, Jehovah, I will sing praise. I will behave myself wisely in an upright way: when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house in uprightness of my heart. I will set nothing of Belial before mine eyes; I hate the doing of those that turn aside (or of apostasies); it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: evil [thing, or person] I will not know. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him I will cut off; the lofty of eyes and wide of heart, him will I not suffer. Mine eyes [shall be] on the faithful of the land to dwell with me; he that walketh in an upright way shall serve me. He that doeth guile shall not, dwell within my house; he that speaketh falsehoods shall not be established before mine eyes. Morning by morning (in the mornings) will I cut off all the wicked of the land, to destroy from the city of Jehovah all doers of iniquity’ (ver. 1-8).

The next psalm is as full of interest as of moment incalculable. It is the scripture quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:10-12) to prove that the O.T. regards the Son as Jehovah, Psa. 45 having just before been alleged in proof of His Godhead, and in both psalms by the God of Israel Himself. Yet it is Messiah's depth of humiliation which gives occasion to this expression of His divine glory. Out of that depth the Son contrasts His own wasting away in trouble with the permanence of Jehovah, and the certainty of Zion's rise from ruin, and the fulfillment of hope in the glorious morrow when the peoples shall be no longer scattered but gathered to serve Jehovah. But when Messiah renews His cry of sorrow, the Father declares that the Holy Sufferer is, no less than Himself, Jehovah the Creator, Who will change the creature as He made it, and is destined yet to have the sons of His servants abiding and their seed established before Him. The comment of inspiration is as wondrous as the psalm; none but the Holy Spirit could have given either.

Psalm 102

“A prayer of the afflicted one, when he is overwhelmed and before Jehovah poureth out his complaint. Jehovah, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me; in the day of my distress incline unto ins thine ear; in the day I call, answer me speedily. For my days have ended in smoke, and my bones are burned as a fire-brand. My heart is smitten as the grass and dried up; for 1 forget to eat my bread. From the voice of my groaning my bone cleaveth to my flesh. I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am become as an owl of desolate places; I watch and become as a sparrow upon a housetop. All the day mine enemies reproach me, and they that are mad against me swear by me. For I have eaten ashes like the bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down. My days [are] as a shadow inclined, and for me, I am withered as the grass. But thou, Jehovah, forever abidest, and thy memorial from generation to generation. Thou wilt arise—wilt compassionate Zion, for [it is] time to be gracious to her, for the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones and are gracious to her dust. And: Gentiles shall fear Jehovah's name, and all kings of the earth thy glory. For Jehovah hath built Zion, he is seen in his glory, he turned unto the prayer of the destitute one and despised not their prayer. This shall be written for an after generation, and a people to be created shall praise Jah. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from the heavens hath Jehovah beheld the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose the sons of death, to declare in Zion Jehovah’s name and his praise in Jerusalem, when nations are gathered together and kingdoms to serve Jehovah. He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days. I said, O my God (El), take me not away in half of my days: in generation of generations [are] thy years. Of old hast thou founded the earth, and heavens [are] the work of thy hands. They shall perish, and thou shalt stand; and all of these as the garment shall wax old; as the vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou, [art] the same (He), and thy years shall have no end. The sons of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee” (vers. 1-29).

The psalm following is the fruit of blessing in the Israel of God in that day. For them, as for us now, Messiah's sufferings produced endless praise. It begins with the individual, as always, “even every one that is written among the living.” It follows up the forgiveness of all iniquities with the healing of all diseases; for the age to come will enjoy the full power of Messiah, of which miracles (when He was here or afterward) were but samples. Then it rises to His ways as well as acts, not as of old partially made known, but attested in all the extent and display of His kingdom. For it is not only Jehovah's mercy from everlasting to everlasting on those that fear Him, but His throne is established in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all. Hence His angels, His hosts, and all His works are to bless Jehovah everywhere; and as his own soul commenced, so it concludes. Could this psalm be with such propriety anywhere but here, immediately after Psa. 102? Inspiration arranged as well as wrote; the profit of both incredulity loses through vain confidence in man and his thoughts.

Psalm 103

Of David. Bless Jehovah, my soul, and all within me, [bless] his holy name. Bless Jehovah, my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from the pit; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thine adornment (soul?) with the good: thy youth is renewed like the eagle. Jehovah doeth righteousnesses and judgments for all oppressed. He maketh, known his ways unto Moses,— his acts unto the sons of Israel. Jehovah [is] merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. Not always will he chide, nor retain [anger] forever. He hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For, as height of heavens above the earth, his lovingkindness is mighty over those that fear them. As far as east from west, he hath put far from us our transgressions. As a father's pity on children (sons), so hath Jehovah pity on those that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, mindful that we [are] dust. Man! his days [are] like grass; as a flower of the field, so doth he flourish. For a breath passeth over him, and he is not, and the place thereof shall know him no more. But the mercy of Jehovah [is] from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear him; and his righteousness [is] to sons of sons, to those that keep his covenant, and to those that remember his precepts to do them. Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over the whole. Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, mighty in strength, doing his word, hearkening to the voice of his word. Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts, ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless Jehovah, all his works in all places of his realm. Bless Jehovah, my soul” (vers. 1-22).

Lastly, comes the connected and dependent outburst of praise, with a precisely similar preface, and here therefore in due place. The theme is Jehovah supreme over creation, the chiefdom in Col. 1:15 asserted of Christ, and this on evident and conclusive ground, because by (4) Him were created all things (τ■ π.), those in the heavens and those on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, the whole of them has been created through Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and the universe by Him subsists together. As the preceding psalm celebrates what Jehovah-Messiah is to Israel, from the individual widening out and upward, so this definitely views creation blessed after long bondage and groaning vanity through sin, but now delivered through the Second man. So the scriptures show, when sinners shall be consumed out of the earth and wicked persons be no more: a result which rationalism, abusing the gospel of grace, deprecates irreverently and unintelligently as a “glow of passion"; for man, not God, fills their mind to the exclusion of His glory. But in the end of the age the tares shall be rooted out, instead of growing together with the righteous as now. And this is most just and due to God: even those punished will own it in that day.

Psalm 104

“Bless Jehovah, my soul. Jehovah my God, thou art very great. Honor and majesty hast thou put on, wearing light as the robe, spreading heavens as the curtains; who frameth his chambers in the waters, who maketh clouds his chariot (vehicle), who walketh on wings of wind; making his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire. He founded earth on its bases: it shall not be removed ever and ever. With the deep as the garment thou didst cover it; upon the mountains stood waters; at thy rebuke they fled, at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away—mountains rose, valleys sank, unto a place which thou hast founded for them: thou hast set a bound that they may not pass, that they return not to cover the earth. He sendeth springs into the valleys: between mountains they go; they give drink to every beast of the field: wild asses quench their thirst. By them birds of the heavens dwell; from among branches they give voice. He watereth mountains from his chambers; from fruit of thy works is the earth satisfied. He causeth to grow grass for the cattle and herb for service of man, to bring forth bread from the earth and wine that gladdeneth man's heart, to make face shine with oil; and bread upholdeth man's heart. Satisfied are Jehovah's trees, cedars of Lebanon which he planted, where small birds nestle: [for] stork, firs [are] her house. The high mountains [are] for the wild goats, crags a refuge for the rock-badgers. He made moon for seasons; sun knoweth its down-going. Thou settest darkness, and it is night, wherein every beast of the forest moveth forth: the young lions roar for the prey, and for seeking their food from God (El). The sun ariseth, they retire and lie down in their lairs. Man goeth forth unto his work and unto his service until evening. How manifold are thy works, O Jehovah! in wisdom hast thou wrought them all; the earth is full of thy riches. Yonder [is] the sea, great and wide (of hands), moving things there and without number, living creatures small and great. There ship go; this Leviathan thou hast made to play therein. All of them wait on thee to give them food in its season. Thou givest to them, they gather; thou openest thy hand, they are satisfied with good; thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou withdrawest their breath, they expire and return unto their dust; thou sendest thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the ground. Let Jehovah's glory be forever; let Jehovah rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth, he toucheth mountains, and they smoke. I will sing unto Jehovah while I live, I will sing psalms unto my God while I have being. My meditation on him will be sweet; I will rejoice in Jehovah. Sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and wicked men shall be no more. Bless Jehovah, my soul. Hallelujah (praise ye Jah)” (vers. 1-35).

Chapter 247

The Psalms Book 4: Psalms 105-106

This book closes with the next two psalms which are an evidently antithetical pair, each by a different route tending, and contributing, to the end of the Lord, His mercy in saving Israel to His own praise. The one recounts the good ways of Jehovah in grace with His people according to His promises, that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws; the other confesses the evil works of Israel in ungrateful forgetfulness, rebellion, and idolatry. Yet Jehovah's ear is open to their repentant cry, as His hand to deliver; hence their prayer to “Jehovah our God,” “Save us,” and “gather us from among the Gentiles” to give thanks to His holy name and to triumph in His praise, as will surely be at the end of this age.

Psalm 105

“Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name; make known his acts among the peoples. Sing unto him, sing psalms (or play) unto him; talk of all his wondrous works. Glory in his holy name; glad be the heart of those that inquire for Jehovah. Seek Jehovah and his strength, inquire for his face continually. Remember his wondrous works which he hath done, his miracles and the judgments of his mouth, O seed of Abraham his servant, sons of Jacob, his chosen (ones). He, Jehovah, [is] our God; in all the earth [are] his judgments. He remembered forever his covenant, a word he commanded to a thousand generations which he ratified (cut) with Abraham, and his oath to Isaac, and he confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel an everlasting covenant, saying, To thee will I give the land of Canaan, lot (line) of your inheritance, when they were even to be numbered as a few and sojourners in it. And they walked from nation to nation, from a kingdom to another people. He suffered no man to oppress them and reproved kings for their sakes, [saying] Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. And he called a famine on the land; every staff of bread he broke. He sent a man before them; Joseph was sold for a slave. They hurt with the fetters his feet; [into] iron went his soul, until the time his word came; Jehovah's saying tried him. A king sent and loosed him, a ruler of peoples, and set him free. He made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possession, to bind his princes at his pleasure (soul) and make his elders wise. And Israel came [into] Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in Ham's land. And he fructified his people greatly and made him stronger than his enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants. He sent Moses his servant, land] Aaron whom he chose. They set among them wads of his signs and wonders in Ham's land. He sent darkness and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. He turned their waters to blood and killed their fish. Their land swarmed with frogs in their king's chambers. He spoke, and dog-flies came, lice (or gnats) in all their border. He made (or gave) them storms of hail, flames of fire in their land; and he smote their vines and fig trees, and broke the trees of their border. He spoke, and locusts came and canker worm, and there was no number; and they devoured every herb in their land and ate the fruit of their ground. And he smote every firstborn in their land, firstfruits of their strength. And he brought them out with silver and gold, and there was not among their tribes a stumbling [one.] Egypt was glad at their departure, for their fear fell upon them. He spread a cloud for a covering and fire to give light [by] night. [The people] asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with bread of heaven. He opened a rock, and waters gushed forth; they ran in the dry places, a river. For he remembered his holy word [and] Abraham his servant; and brought forth his people with joy, his chosen with shouting. And he gave them lands of Gentiles, and they inherited the nations' soil, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-48).

Psalm 106

“Praise ye Jah (Hallelujah). Give thanks unto Jehovah, for [he is] good, for his mercy [is] forever. Who shall tell the powers of Jehovah—shall utter all his praise? Blessed they that keep judgment, he that doeth righteousness at every time. Remember me in the favor of the people, visit me with (in) thy salvation; to look on (in) the good of thy chosen, to rejoice in the joy of thy nation, to glory with thine inheritance. We have sinned with our fathers, we have been perverse, we have done wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt understood not thy wonders; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but rebelled at the sea, at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make known his power. And he rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; and he made them walk through the depths as the wilderness. And he saved them from the hater's hand and redeemed them from the enemy's hand. And waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. Then (and) believed they his words, they sang his praise, They hasted, they forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel, and lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God (El) in the desert. And he gave them their requests, and sent leanness into their soul. And they were envious of Moses in the camp, of Aaron, saint of Jehovah. Earth openeth and swalloweth up Dathan, and covereth Abiram's company. And a fire burneth in their company, a flame consumeth wicked ones. They make a calf in Horeb and bow down to a molten image, and change their glory for the likeness of an ox eating grass. They forget God (El) their Savior that did great things in Egypt, wondrous works in Ham's land, terrible things at the Red Sea. And he said he would destroy them, had not Moses stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying. And they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word, but murmured in their tents; they did not hearken to Jehovah's voice. And he lifted up his hand to them, to make them fall in the wilderness and to make their seed fall among the Gentiles, and to scatter them in the lands. And they joined themselves to Baal-Peor and ate sacrifices of dead (beings). And they provoked him by their actions, and the plague broke out among them. Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment, and the plague was stayed. And it was reckoned to him for righteousness to generation and generation for evermore. And they angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account; for they provoked his spirit, and he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. They destroyed not the peoples as (which) Jehovah said to them; but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their doings, and served their idols, which became a snare unto them. And they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. And they were defiled in their doings, and went a whoring in their actions. And Jehovah's anger was kindled at his people, and he abhorred his inheritance, and he gave them into the Gentiles' hand, and over them ruled! their haters, and their enemies oppressed them, and they were bowed down under their hand. Many times he delivereth them, and they rebel in their counsel and were brought low by their iniquity. But he regarded them in the distress when he heard them cry. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies, and he gave them compassion before all that took them captives. Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles to give thanks unto thy holy name,

to glory in thy praise. Blessed [be] Jehovah God of Israel from the everlasting and into the everlasting! And let all the people say, Amen Hallelujah (Praise ye Jah)" (vers. 1-48).

In Psa. 105 only divine goodness appears to Israel, and His judgments on their enemies, ending in Hallelujah. In Psa. 106, which begins and ends with Hallelujah, we have, only Israel's bad ways confessed and divine mercy on their cry, as the ground for salvation and deliverance from among the Gentiles to triumph in Jehovah's praise.

Chapter 250

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 107-110

This, the last, book into which the psalms are not merely divisible but actually divided, supposes the people of God once more in the land, for the display of God's purpose and ways in Messiah's kingdom after being called to sit at God's right hand, characterized by His law written on their hearts. It ends with nothing but praises. How could it be otherwise when Rev. 11:15 is fulfilled?

Psalm 107

“Give ye thanks to Jehovah, for he [is] good; for his mercy [is] forever. Let the redeemed of Jehovah say [so], whom he redeemed from the oppressor's hand, and gathered them from the lands, from east and from west, from north and from south (sea). They wandered in the wilderness, in a desert way; no city of habitation they found. Hungry, and thirsty also, their soul fainted in them, and they cried unto Jehovah in their distress: out of their strait he delivereth them. And he led them by the right way to go to a city of habitation. Oh that [men] might give thanks to Jehovah [for] his mercy and his wonders to the sons of men! For he satisfied the craving soul, and filled with good the hungry soul.”

“Dwellers in darkness and death-shade, bound in affliction and iron, because they resisted the words of God (El), and despised the counsel of the Most High; therefore (and) he bowed down their heart with labor; they stumbled, and there was no helper. And they cried unto Jehovah in their distress: out of their straits he saveth them; he bringeth them out of darkness and death-shade, and their bonds he rendeth. Oh that [men] might give thanks to Jehovah [for] his mercy and his wonders to the sons of men! For he broke the gates of brass and cut off the bars of iron.”

“Fools, by their way of transgression, and by their iniquities, are afflicted; all food their soul abhorreth; and they draw near to the gates of death. And they cried unto Jehovah in their distress: out of their straits he saveth them; he sendeth his word, and delivereth them from their destructions. Oh that [men] might give thanks unto Jehovah [for] his mercy and his wonders to the sons of men! And let them sacrifice sacrifices of praise and declare his works with singing.”

“They that go down to the sea in the ships, that do business in great waters, they saw Jehovah's works and his wonders in the deep. And he said, and there arose tempestuous winds, which lifted up its billows: they rise [to] the heavens, they sink [to] the depths; their soul melteth with evil; they reel and stagger like the drunkard, and all their wisdom is confounded. And they cried unto Jehovah in their distress, and out of their straits he bringeth them. He stilleth the tempest, and their billows are silent. And they are glad because they be quiet; and he guideth them to the haven of their desire. Oh that [men] might give thanks unto Jehovah [for] his mercy and his wonders to the sons of men! And let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the session of the elders.”

“He turneth rivers to a wilderness and water-springs to a thirsty ground, a fruitful land to saltness for the wickedness of those dwelling in it. He turneth a wilderness to a pool of water and a dry land to water-springs. And he settleth there hungry [men], and they establish a city of habitation, and sowed fields, and planted vineyards, and gained fruits of increase; and he blessed them, and multiplied greatly and their cattle he doth not diminish. And they were diminished and brought low from oppression, evil, and sorrow. He poureth contempt upon princes, and made them wander in a waste without a way. And he set high the needy one from affliction and made families like the sheep. The upright shall see and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop its mouth. Whoso [is] wise and observeth these things, even they shall understand the mercies of Jehovah” (vers. 1-43).

Israel affords the great object-lesson of man's folly and distress in the land and out of it, as on the sea, crying to Jehovah and heard in His unfailing mercy, at last delivered from the enemy and gathered out of the lands on every side (not a few Jews from Babylon merely) to enjoy the kingdom. It is in no way the church blessed with Christ in the heavenly places, though the church may well profit from all and enjoy the truth and the mercy it describes.

Psalm 108

“A song, a psalm of David. My heart [is] fixed, O God: I will sing and sing psalms (? play), yea, my glory. Awake, O (the) lute and harp: I will wake the dawn, I will give thee thanks among the peoples, O Jehovah, and I will sing psalms to thee among the nations. For great from above the heavens [is] thy mercy, and unto the lands thy truth. Be exalted above the heavens, O God, and thy glory above all the earth. That thy beloved ones may be delivered, save with thy right hand and answer me (or us). God hath spoken in his holiness: I will exalt, I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead [is] mine, Manasseh mine, and Ephraim [is] the strength of my head, Judah my lawgiver; Moab [is] my wash-pot; at Edom will I cast my shoe; over Philistia will I shout. Who will bring me [to] the strong city? Who did (or will) lead me even to Edom? Hast thou not cast us off, O God? and wilt thou not, O God, go with our hosts? Give us help from distress, for (and) vain is man's salvation. In God we will do mightily (make strength); and he will tread down our adversaries” (vers. 1-14).

This Psalm consists of the latter halves of Psa. 57 and 60. with variations. The deliverance, though really of God, is not yet complete; and this is looked for.

Psalm 109

“To the chief musician, a psalm of David. God of my praise, be not silent; for the mouth of the wicked one and the mouth of deceit are opened against me with a lying tongue. And [with] words of hatred they have surrounded me and have fought against me without cause. For my love they are mine adversaries, and I [am] player; and they set upon me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Appoint over him a wicked one, and let an adversary stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him go out guilty, and his prayer be for sin. Let his days be few, let another take his office; let his sons be orphans, and his wife a widow. And let his sons be vagabonds (wandering wanderers), and beg and seek [God] out of their desolations. Let an exactor ensnare all, that he hath, and strangers plunder his labor. Let there be none extending mercy to him, nor any one gracious to his orphans. Let his posterity (latter end) be cut off; in a generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with (to) Jehovah, and his mother's sin not be blotted out. Let them be before Jehovah continually, and let him cut off from the earth their memory: because he remembered not to show mercy, but (and) pursued the poor and needy man, and one broken in heart, to slay [him]. And he loved cursing; for (and) it came to him: and he delighted not in blessing: so it was far from him. And he put on cursing as his garment, and it came like the water into his midst, and like the oil into his bones. Let it be to him as raiment he weareth, and for a belt let him continually be girded. This [is] the wages of mine adversaries from Jehovah, and of their speaking evil against my soul. But thou, Jehovah Lord, do with me for thy name's sake; because thy mercy [is] good, deliver me. For me [I am] poor and needy, and my heart wounded within me. Like a shadow at its stretching out I am gone; I am tossed like the locust. My knees totter from fasting, and my flesh faileth from fatness (oil), and I have been a reproach to them; they see me, they shake their head. Help me, Jehovah my God; save me according to thy mercy. They shall know that this [is] thy hand; thou, O Jehovah, hast done it. Let them cease, and bless thou: they have risen up and shall be ashamed, and thy servant be glad. Mine adversaries shall be clothed with dishonor, they shall cover themselves with their shame as the mantle. I will give great thanks to Jehovah with my mouth; yea, I will praise in the midst of many. For he standeth on the right hand of the needy to save [him] from those that judge his soul” (vers. 1-31).

The Psalm is applied authoritatively to Judas, but clearly includes the wicked like him, treacherous to the Messiah in the past and especially in the future to those who have His spirit. In the following we have the glorious answer of Jehovah on behalf of the despised.

Psalm 110

“A psalm of David. Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a stool for thy feet. Jehovah shall send the rod of thy might out of Zion: rule in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people offer themselves willingly ([are] voluntary offerings) in the day of thy power, in ornaments of holiness. From the womb of the dawn to thee [is] the dew of thy youth. Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou [art] priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand hath smitten kings in the day of his anger. He shall judge among the Gentiles; he hath filled with corpses, he hath smitten the head over a great country. From the brook in the way he will drink; therefore will he lift up the head” (vers. 1-7).

Chapter 255

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 111-118

The next three psalms are plainly a trilogy in suited succession, following up that which set out the exaltation of Messiah on high and the coming day of His power out of Zion. The first two of the three are acrostics, but all are the praises of Jah (Hallelu-jah) for the deliverance of His people by Messiah.

Psalm 111

“Praise ye Jah. I will give thanks to Jehovah with a whole heart in council of the upright and congregation. Great [are] Jehovah's works, sought out by all delighting in them. Honor and work [are] His majesty, and his righteousness standing forever. A memorial he made for his wonders: gracious and merciful [is] Jehovah. Food (prey) he gave to those fearing him; he will remember forever his covenant. The power of his works he hath shown his people, to give them a heritage of Gentiles. The works of his hands [are] truth and judgment; all his precepts, sure, settled forever and ever, done in truth and uprightness. Redemption he sent to his people; he commanded to everlasting his covenant: holy and fearful [is] his name. Fear of Jehovah [is] the beginning of wisdom; good understanding [belongs] to all doing them [i.e. his precepts]; his praise standeth forever” (vers. 1-10).

Jehovah's works, not here in creation but on behalf of His people, are celebrated: great in themselves; powerful in their effects; permanent in result. How different are man's! Wise is the fear of Him; and His praise abiding.

Psalm 112

“Praise ye Jah. Blessed [is] the man fearing Jehovah, in his commandments delighting greatly. Mighty on the earth shall be his seed; the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches [shall be] in his house, and his righteousness standeth forever. There ariseth in the darkness light for the upright: gracious and merciful and righteous [is he]. Good [is] the man gracious and lending; he will sustain his matters with judgment. For he shall not be moved forever; for everlasting remembrance shall be a righteous one. Of evil tidings he will not be afraid; fixed [is] his heart, confiding in Jehovah. Settled [is] his heart, he will not fear until he look upon his oppressors. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness standeth forever, his horn shall be exalted with glory. The wicked (man) shall see and be vexed; he shall gnash his teeth and melt away: the desire of wicked (men) shall perish” (vers. 1-10).

Next to the intervention of Jehovah comes the character, as well as the blessing under His government, of the man that fears Him. It is not the Christian even now blessed in heavenly places, enjoying full favor, yet suffering on earth, and waiting for Him Who will have us with Himself in the Father's house. It is the anticipative sketch of the righteous Israelite in the kingdom.

Psalm 113

“Praise ye Jah. Praise, ye servants of Jehovah, praise the name of Jehovah. Blessed be the name of Jehovah henceforth and to everlasting. From sun-rising unto its setting praised be Jehovah's name. High above all Gentiles [is] Jehovah, his glory above the heavens. Who [is] like Jehovah our God, that dwelleth on high, that seeth deep (or, humbleth himself to see) in the heavens and in the earth? He raiseth from the dust the poor one; from the dung-hill he lifteth up the needy, to set with rulers, with nobles of his people. He maketh a barren one of the house glad mother of its sons. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-9).

Here the scope is manifestly wider. Israel may be Jehovah's earthly center, but His name shall be praised from east to west, from that day and evermore. Who is like to Him, and to Him as thus displayed in His ways with His poor people, no longer in the dust but exalted, no longer barren but the glad mother of sons? Hallelujah!

Psalm 114

“When Israel went out of Egypt, Jacob's house from a people of strange speech, Judah was (for) his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. The sea saw and fled, the Jordan turned back; the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. What ailed ([was] to) thee, thou (the) sea, that thou didst flee? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back? Ye mountains, skipped ye like rams? ye hills like lambs? At the presence of the Lord tremble, O earth, at the presence of the God (Eloah) of Jacob, turning the rock [into] a pool of water, the flint to a spring of water” (vers. 1-8).

It is not only Jehovah's glory above the heavens, yet stooping to look on the lowliest here below, as proved in Israel; the sea, the river, the mountains, and the hills, the earth, all teach from before Him, Who will be to Jacob all He was of old and more. His power in goodness is unfailing.

Psalm 115

“Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, for thy truth. Why should the Gentiles say, Where pray [is] their God? And our God [is] in the heavens: all that he pleased he did. Their idols [are] silver and gold, work of hands of man. A mouth have they, and they speak not; ears they have, and they hear not; a nose have they, and they smell not; their hands, and they feel not; their feet, and they walk not; they mutter not with their throat. Like them are those making them, every one who confideth in them. O Israel, confide in Jehovah: he [is] their help and their shield. House of Aaron, confide in Jehovah: he [is] their help and their shield. Ye that fear Jehovah, confide in Jehovah: he [is] their help and their shield. Jehovah hath remembered us; he will bless, he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless them that fear Jehovah, the small with the great. Jehovah will add upon you, upon you and upon your sons. Blessed [are] ye of Jehovah, Maker of the heavens and the earth. The heavens [are] heavens for Jehovah, and the earth he gave to the sons of man. The dead praise not Jah, nor any going down in silence. But we will bless Jah henceforth and for everlasting. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-18).

Then the wonders of Jehovah will no longer puff Israel up. They will need no humiliation more, being truly humble in that day. Jehovah's name is all henceforth; and His “mercy” takes precedence, instead of boasting in “truth” because peculiarly theirs. This does but increase their loathing of idols, so long their snare. But if they forgot Jehovah, He remembered them; and that day is a day of blessing for Israel's house and for Aaron's and for fearers of Jehovah, the small and the great. But it is for the living on earth, though heaven and earth shall be in harmonious blessing and for evermore. Children of God are we now called, and such we are; His sons, with the Spirit of God, crying, Abba, Father; and we look up to heaven as our home because it is Christ's, having the cross meanwhile on earth. Here are we shown a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we all shall be changed. Even now are we, Christians, “heavenly,” and we shall put on the image of the Heavenly at His coming.

Psalm 116

“I love Jehovah, for he hath heard my voice, my supplications. For be inclined his ear unto me, and I will call [upon him] in my days. Bands of death compassed me, and straits of Sheol seized me: I found trouble and sorrow; and on Jehovah's name I call; I pray, O Jehovah, deliver my soul. Gracious [is] Jehovah and righteous; and our God [is] merciful. Jehovah keepeth the simple. I was brought low, and he saved me. Return to thy rest, O my soul.; for Jehovah hath death bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling. I will walk before Jehovah in lands of the living. I believed, for I speak; as for me, I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste (alarm), All mankind [are] false. How shall I requite to Jehovah all his bestowals upon me? I will take the cup of salvation (s) and call on the name of Jehovah. I will pay my vows to Jehovah, yea in the presence of all his people. Precious in the eyes of Jehovah [is] the death of his saints. Yea, O Jehovah, for I [am] thy servant, I [am] thy servant, son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. To thee will I sacrifice the sacrifice of praise, and on Jehovah's name will I call. My vows to Jehovah I will pay, yea before all his people, in the courts of Jehovah's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-19).

Here we see the loving kindness of Jehovah (Who is therefore loved) in delivering the simple ones, the righteous remnant from under the shadow of death that oppressed them, the truth of which so habitually applies to the suffering Christian (2 Cor. 4), and not merely at a special time as Jacob's hour, when he is to be delivered out of it. The “haste” is not carnal precipitancy, but of such alarm as would make one hurry away at once. Comfort comes, but Jehovah is trusted in faith, which is better still. The end is praise of Jah.

Psalm 117

“Praise ye Jehovah, all ye Gentiles; laud him, all the peoples. For his mercy is powerful over us, and the truth of Jehovah [is] for everlasting. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1, 2).

It is a short psalm out of a large heart. Grace enjoyed goes out toward others, yea to all. So will Israel then sing. What a contrast with their narrowness of old! So Jehovah's mercy and truth will work in that day to His praise on earth. We see how beautifully these three psalms ending in Hallelujah follow Psa. 114 (Jehovah's intervention as when He brought Israel out of Egypt through the desert), which is preceded by the three psalms beginning with Hallelujah, as the last of these indeed both begins and ends.

Psalm 118

“Give ye thanks to Jehovah, for he is good; for his mercy [is] forever. Let Israel now say, that his mercy [is] for everlasting. Let Aaron's house now say, that his mercy [is] for everlasting. Yea, let those that fear Jehovah say, that his mercy [is] for everlasting. From the strait I called upon Jah; Jah answered me in a (the) large place, Jehovah is for me: I will not fear; what can man do unto me? Jehovah [is] for me among my helpers, and I shall look upon my haters. [It is] better to confide in Jehovah than to trust in man; [it is] better to confide in Jehovah than to trust in rulers. All Gentiles compass me; in Jehovah's name [I say] that I will cast them off; they compass, yea they compass me; in Jehovah's name [I say] that I will cast them off. They compass me like bees; they are quenched as a fire of thorns; in Jehovah's name [I say] that I will cast them off. Thou didst thrust sore (thrusting) at me that I might fall; but Jehovah helped me. My strength and song [is] Jah; and he is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation [is] in the tents of the righteous: Jehovah's right hand doeth valiantly. I shall not die but live and declare the works of Jah. Jah hath chastened me sore, but hath not given me to (the) death. Open ye to me gates of righteousness: I will enter into them; Jah will I thank. This [is] Jehovah's (to Jehovah) gate; the righteous shall go into it. I will give thee thanks, for thou hast answered me and hast become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected hath become (for) head of the corner. From Jehovah is this; it is wonderful in our eyes. This [is] the day Jehovah hath made: we will rejoice and triumph in it (or, in him) Jehovah, oh! save, I pray; Jehovah, oh! prosper, I pray. Blessed [be] he that cometh in Jehovah's name. We have blessed you out of Jehovah's house. Jehovah [is] God (El) and hath given us light: bind the sacrifice (feast) with cords up to the altar's horns. Thou [art] my God (El), and I will give thee thanks; O my God, I will exalt thee. Give ye thanks to Jehovah, for he [is] good; for his mercy [is] for everlasting” (vers. 1-29).

It is the end of the age which will vindicate the God of Israel. Till then appearances are adverse to His name and His people; and faith alone gains the victory unseen, which then will be manifest to every eye. All men may oppose meanwhile, and never more than at the close; Satan too may deceive and destroy as far as he can; and God may chastise one sorely but for good: Christ knew all this exceptionally, and much more than is here in view. But the end is blessing and glory, not for us only on high as we know from elsewhere, but for those who will enjoy the kingdom on earth, when it is no longer man's but Jehovah's day. What a blank must be in the outlook of all Christians, who leave out such a scene for the glory of the once humbled but now exalted Man! Then He shall sit on His own throne, as distinct from the Father's, before the eternal state. It is the age to come, on which almost all prophecy converges.

Chapter 264

The Psalms Book 5: Psalm 119:1-88

This psalm is not more remarkable in its structure than in its moral beauty—the expression of the law written on Israel's heart, after God's intervention to restore them to the land, yet before their complete deliverance. Each section consists of eight verses marked successively by each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in due order, all dwelling on the virtues of divine revelation as made known to the chosen people: law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, and word generally.

Aleph. “Blessed [are] the perfect in the way, that walk in Jehovah's law. Blessed [are] they that observe his testimonies, that seek him with a whole heart. Yea, they practice no wrong, in his ways they walk. Thou hast commanded thy precepts, to keep (them) diligently. Oh, that my ways were established to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed in my looking to all thy commandments. I will give thee thanks with uprightness of heart, in my learning the judgments of thy righteousness. Thy statutes I will keep: forsake me not utterly” (vers. 1-8).

All here is introductory and general: the return after wandering and sorrowful experience; Jehovah's laws written within under the new covenant.

Beth. “By what shall a youth cleanse his path? By taking heed (to keep it) according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee; let me not wander from thy commandments. In my heart have I laid up thy saying, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed [art] thou, Jehovah: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. In the way of thy testimonies have I rejoiced as over all wealth. In thy precepts I will meditate and regard thy paths. In thy statutes I will delight myself; I will not forget thy word” (vers. 9-16).

Here is the washing of water by the word, God purifying the heart by faith even where natural energy might be strongest.

Gomel. “Grant unto thy servant I shall live, and I will keep thy word. Open mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law. For me I [am] a sojourner in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me. My soul breaketh with longing for thy judgments at every time. Thou hast rebuked proud men, accursed, that wander from thy commandments. Roll from me reproach and contempt, for thy testimonies I have observed. Princes also sat and at me talked; thy servant doth meditate in thy statutes. Thy testimonies also fare] my delights, my counselors (lit. men of my counsel)” (vers. 17-24).

Jehovah's goodness is asked according to and in His word, the delight and guide of the Israel of God, whosoever might despise.

Daleth. “My soul cleaveth unto dust: quicken me according to thy word. My ways I declared, and thou answeredst me: teach me thy statutes. The way of thy precepts make me understand, and I will meditate in thy wonders. My soul droppeth for sorrow: raise me up according to thy word. Way of falsehood remove from me, and thy law grant me graciously. Way of faithfulness I have chosen;

thy judgments have I held (or set [before me]). I have cleaved unto thy testimonies: Jehovah, put me not to shame. The way of thy commandments I will run, for (or when) thou wilt enlarge my heart" (vers. 25-32).

The heart prefers abasement from and with God to ease without Him, but looks for enlargement to do His will with alacrity.

He. "Teach me, Jehovah, the way of thy statutes, and I shall observe it [unto the] end. Make me understand, and I will observe thy law and will keep [it] with a whole heart. Make me go in the path of thy commandments; for therein I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to gain. Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity; in thy way quicken me. Set up thy saying for thy servant, who [is devoted] to thy fear. Turn away my reproach of which I am afraid, for thy judgments [are] good. Behold, I have longed for thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness" (vers. 33-40).

The need of Jehovah's teaching in order to obey and be kept is here spread before Him.

Vau. "And let thy mercy, Jehovah, come to me, thy salvation according to thy mind. And I will answer my reviler a word; for I confide in thy word. And take not out of my mouth the word of truth utterly, for I have hoped in thy judgments. And I will observe thy law continually forever and ever. And I will walk at large; for thy precepts have I sought. And I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not he ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved, and I will lift up thy commandments which I have loved, and I will meditate in thy statutes" (vers. 41-48).

The taste of the grace of Jehovah, of His salvation as he expresses it, is next craved for courage and fidelity.

Zaire. "Remember for thy servant the word on which thou hast made me hope. This [is] my comfort in mine afflictions, for thy saying hath quickened me. Proud men deride me exceedingly: from thy law I swerve not. I remembered thy judgments of old, Jehovah, and have comforted myself. Indignation seizeth me because of wicked men forsaking thy laws. Thy statutes were songs in the house of my sojournings. I remember in the night thy name, Jehovah, and observe thy law. This hath been to me, because thy precepts I observed" (vers. 49-56).

"The word" is owned as hope and comfort in the midst of pride and ungodliness; His name gives motive to obey.

Cheth. "Jehovah [is] my portion, and I have tried to keep thy words. I have sought thy: face with a whole heart: be gracious to me according to thy saying. I have thought on my ways, and; turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I hasted and delayed not to keep thy commandments. Cords of wicked men surrounded me: thy laws I have not forgotten. At midnight I rise to give thanks unto thee because of the judgments of thy righteousness. A companion am I to all who fear thee, and to those who keep thy precepts. Of thy mercy, Jehovah, the earth is full; thy statutes teach me" (vers. 57-64).

Here the heart rises to Jehovah Himself; so that wicked men's bands were powerless to make the law forgotten, and he saw His mercy everywhere.

Teth. “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, Jehovah, according to thy word. Goodness of judgment and knowledge teach me, for in thy commandments I believe. Before I was afflicted I went astray, and now thy saying I keep. Good [art] thou and doing good: teach me thy statutes. Proud men have forged falsehood; with a whole heart I will observe thy precepts. Fat as the grease is their heart: I delight myself in thy law. [It is] good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth [is] better to me than thousands of gold and silver” (vers. 65-72).

It is a soul profiting by affliction, and confiding all the more in Jehovah, to learn His statutes, better than thousands of gold and silver.

Yod. “Thy hands made me and fashioned me: make me understand, and I will learn thy commandments. Thy fearers will see me and be glad; for I have hoped in thy word. I know, Jehovah, that thy judgments [are] righteousness, and [in] faithfulness thou hast afflicted me. Let, I pray, thy mercy be for my comfort according to thy word to thy servant. Let thy compassions come to me, and I shall live; for thy law [is] my delights. Let proud men be ashamed; for [with] falsehood they perverted me: I will meditate in thy precepts. Let them turn unto me that fear thee and know thy testimonies. Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed” (vers. 73-80).

Jehovah is looked to as a faithful Creator, and those that fear Him counted on. As He afflicted for good, so would He show lovingkindness.

Caph. “My soul fainteth for thy salvation; in thy word do I hope. Mine eyes fail for thy saying, so that I say (saying), When wilt thou comfort me? For I am become like a wine-skin in smoke; thy statutes I forget not. How many (lit. like what) [are] thy servant's days? When wilt thou execute judgment on my persecutors? Proud [men] dig for me pits, which (or who) are not according to thy law. All thy commandments [are] faithfulness: [with] falsehood do they persecute me. Help me. They had almost consumed me in the earth (or land); but I did not forsake thy precepts. According to thy mercy quicken me. I will keep the testimony of thy mouth” (vers. 80-88).

Here the prayer is instant, as the iniquity grows apace, and weakness is realized in the severest trial. It is not the hope of the Christian, who like Christ will go on high; but deliverance, as Israel expect and will have, by judgments executed manifestly on the enemy.

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 119:89-176

Lamed. “Forever, Jehovah, thy word is settled in the heavens. To generation and generation [is] thy faithfulness. Thou hast established earth, and it hath stood. For thy judgments, they stand to day, for the whole (or universe) [is] thy servants. Unless thy law [had been] my delights, then should I have perished in mine affliction. Never will I forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me. I [am] thine: save me, for thy precepts I have sought. For me have waited wicked men to destroy me: thy testimonies I attend to. To all perfection I have seen an end: exceeding broad [is] thy commandment” (vers. 89-96).

The stability of Jehovah is seen on high; His purpose emanates thence infallibly, but establishes earth too, the universe being His servant. Then its moral power is owned, and by it the conviction that the soul is His, attending in the midst of malice to His testimonies, and in the sense of total failure feeling the all-embracing value of what expresses His mind.

Mem. “How I love thy law! all the day have I meditated on it. Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies, for it [is] ever mine. More than all my teachers I have understanding: for thy testimonies [are] my meditation. More than aged men I understand, for thy precepts I have observed. From every evil path I withheld my feet, that I might keep thy word. From thy judgments I have not departed, for thou hast taught me. How sweet to my palate are thy sayings! more than honey to my mouth. From thy precepts I understand; therefore I hate every path of falsehood” (vers. 97-104).

Here it is love of Jehovah's law, leading to meditation, and with blessed results in wisdom and morally.

Nan. “As a lamp to my feet [is] thy word, and a light to my path. I have sworn, and will perform, to keep thy righteous judgments. I was afflicted exceedingly: Jehovah, quicken me according to thy word. Accept, I pray, Jehovah, the free-will offerings of my mouth, and teach me thy judgments. My soul [is] in thy hand continually, yet (and) I do not forget thy law. Wicked men laid a snare for me, yet (and) from thy precepts I strayed not. I inherit thy testimonies forever, for they [are] my heart's rejoicing. I incline my heart to do thy statutes forever [to] the end” (vers. 105-112).

In this stanza the light of the word for himself is acknowledged, and its judgments for wickedness.

Samech. “Double-minded men I hate, and thy law I love. My hiding-place and my shield [art] thou: in thy word I hope. Depart from me, evildoers; and I will observe the commandments of my God. Uphold me according to thy saying, and I shall live, and let me not be ashamed of my waiting. Uphold me, and I shall be saved, and I will lock in thy statutes continually. Thou settest at naught all wanderers from thy statutes; for a lie [is] their deceit. [As] dross thou causest to cease all earth's wicked ones: therefore I love thy testimonies. My flesh shuddereth for fear, of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments” (vers. 113-120).

Wavering and evil-doing are deprecated as heartily as Jehovah's law is loved. But the need of being sustained is expressed, as on the other hand Jehovah's summary dealings with the deceitful and wicked; for indeed He is to be feared.

“I have done judgment and righteousness: leave me net to mine oppressors. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not proud men oppress me. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation and for thy righteous saying. Do with thy servant according to thy mercy, and thy statutes teach me. Thy servant [am] I; give me understanding, and I shall know thy testimonies. [It is] time for Jehovah to act: they make void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold and above fine gold. Therefore all precepts [as to] all I count right; every path of falsehood I hate” (vers. 121-128).

Hence he looks for Jehovah to act, not only on His servant's behalf but in vindication of His law.

Pe. “Wonderful [are] thy testimonies: therefore doth my soul observe them. The opening of thy words enlighteneth, giving understanding to simple ones. I opened my mouth, and panted, for I longed for thy commandments. Turn unto me and be gracious to me, as [thou art] wont to lovers of thy name. Establish my steps in thy saying, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Redeem me from man's oppression: and I shall keep thy precepts. Let thy face shine on thy servant and teach me thy statutes. Streams of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law” (vers. 129-136).

The intrinsic and real efficacy of Jehovah's revelation is here expressed, with the spiritual desire created by it.

Tzade. “Righteous [art] thou, Jehovah, and upright thy judgments. Thou hast commanded thy testimonies [in] righteousness and exceeding faithfulness. My zeal destroyeth me, because my adversaries have forgotten thy words. Thy word [is] exceedingly pure; and thy servant loveth it. Little [am] I, and despised; thy precepts I do not forget. Thy righteousness [is] an everlasting righteousness, and thy law truth. Distress and anguish seized me; thy commandments fare] my delights. Righteousness [are] thy testimonies forever: give me understanding, and I shall live” (vers. 137-144).

Here the righteousness of Jehovah's judgments and testimonies predominates, which he forgot not, if others did.

Koph. “I have called with a whole heart: answer me, Jehovah; thy statutes I will observe. I have called on thee: save me; and I will keep thy testimonies. I anticipated the twilight [of dawn] and cried; for thy words do I wait. Mine eyes anticipate the watches to meditate in thy saying. Hear my voice according to thy mercy; Jehovah, according to thy judgment quicken me. Pursuers of mischief are nigh; from thy law they are far off. Near [art] thou, Jehovah, and all thy commandments [are] truth. Of old have I known from thy testimonies that thou hast founded them forever” (vers. 145-152).

Dependence is the great resource in the evil day, and indeed always, with confidence in Jehovah, but according to His word.

Rash. “See mine affliction and deliver me; for thy law I do not forget. Plead my cause and deliver me: with thy saying quicken me. Far from wicked men [is] salvation, for thy statutes they seek not. Thy tender mercies [are] many. Jehovah; according to thy judgments quicken me! Many [are] my

persecutors and mine oppressors; from thy testimonies I decline not. I have seen treacherous dealers and was disgusted, who kept not thy saying. See how I love thy precepts; Jehovah, according to thy mercy quicken me. The sum (head) of thy word [is] truth; and every judgment of thy righteousness [is] forever" (vers. 153-160).

If persecutors are more felt, so are Jehovah's judgments on behalf of faithfulness as well as life in power.

Schin. "Princes persecuted me without cause, but (and) at thy word my heart is in awe. For me, I [am] joyful over thy saying as a finder of great spoil. Falsehood I, hate and abhor; thy law I love. Seven [times] in the day I praise thee for the judgments of thy righteousness. Great peace have the lovers of thy law, and they have no stumbling-block. I hope for thy salvation, Jehovah, and thy commandments I do. My soul keepeth thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I keep thy precepts and thy testimonies, for all my ways [are] before thee" (vers. 161-168).

This stanza goes farther: awe at Jehovah's word, yet joy in what he says. Fruit of loving the expression of divine authority, praise rises fully, and peace without stumbling. Obedience is deepened by having all our ways out before Him.

Tau. "Let my cry come near before thee, Jehovah; according to thy word give me understanding. Let my supplication come before thee; according to thy saying deliver me. My lips shall utter praise, for thou wilt teach me thy statutes. Let my tongue answer thy saying, for all thy commandments [are] righteousness. Let thy hand be for my help, for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation, Jehovah; and thy law [is] my delights. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me, I have wandered like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for thy commandments I do not forget" (vers. 169-176).

It is the worthy end of a psalm most instructive in experience for the individual and the nation.

Chapter 266

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 120-134

The next group is clearly defined, the fifteen psalms of degrees or the goings up. That of (or by) Solomon occupies the central place, two on either side are expressly of David, as others perhaps such as Psa. 132 where it is not said. Some conjecture a late date for most, or all, because they are supposed suitable to be sung during the return from Babylon. The truth is that they look onward to the restoration of Israel in the latter day and are thus truly prophetic; the language, as the hope, is far beyond anything realized in the post-exilic return.

Psalm 120

“A song of the ascents. In my trouble I sailed unto Jehovah, and he answered me. Jehovah, deliver my soul from a lip of lying, from a tongue of deceit. What shall be given unto thee, what shall be added unto thee, O tongue of deceit? A mighty one's arrows sharpened, with coals of broom-plant. Alas for me, that I sojourn [in] Mesech I dwell with the tents of Kedar! Long (much) hath my soul dwelt for her with a hater of peace. For me [I am] peace; and when I speak, they [are] for (the) war” (vers. 1-7).

It is the situation amid threatening foes north and south, from whom deliverance is sought. There was “the liar,” the antichrist, on one side; on the other, the hordes of the great external enemy. The last days are unmistakable here.

Psalm 121

“A song of the ascents. I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: whence shall my help come. My help [is] from Jehovah, Maker of heaven and earth. May he not let thy foot be moved; may not thy keeper slumber. Behold, the keeper of Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Jehovah [is] thy keeper; Jehovah [is] thy shade upon thy right hand. By day the sun shall not smite thee, nor moon by night. Jehovah will keep thee from all evil, he will keep thy soul. Jehovah will keep thy going out, and thy coming in, henceforth and forever” (vers. 1-8).

Jehovah now at length is Israel's help, and keeper, Who slumbers not nor sleeps, in all circumstances and forever.

Psalm 121

“A song of the ascents: of David. I was glad in those saying unto me, To Jehovah's house we will go. Our feet are standing in thy gates, O Jerusalem—Jerusalem, that is built as a city which is compact together, whither tribes go up, tribes of Jah: a testimony unto Israel to give thanks unto Jehovah's name. For there are set thrones for judgment, thrones for David's house. Pray for Jerusalem's peace: may they prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy bulwark, prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, let me speak, Peace [be] within thee. For the sake of Jehovah's house, our God, I will seek thy good” (vers. 1-9).

It is the joy of worship in the place where Jehovah's eyes rest continually.

Psalm 132

“A song of the ascents. Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as eyes of servants unto hand of their masters, as a handmaid's eyes unto her mistress's hand, so [are] our eyes unto Jehovah our God until he be gracious to us. Be gracious to us, Jehovah, be gracious to us, for greatly are we filled with contempt. Greatly is our soul filled with the scorning of those at ease, the contempt of the proud” (vers. 1-4).

It is the remnant of Israel staying no more, like the proud and ungodly mass, on him that smote them, but on Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and this in truth.

Psalm 124

“A song of the ascents: of David. If [it were] not Jehovah who was for us, oh! let Israel say—if [it were] not Jehovah who was for us in man's rising up against us, then they had swallowed us up alive in the kindling of their wrath against us. Then the waters had overflowed us; the stream had passed over our soul. Then had passed over our soul the proud waters. Blessed [be] Jehovah who gave us not a prey to their teeth! Our soul is escaped as a bird out of fowler's snare. The snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help [is] in Jehovah's name, who made heaven and earth” (vers. 1-8).

This is the outburst of Israel's praise when just delivered from that which seemed, to all but faith, the overwhelming power of man bent on their destruction.

Psalm 125

“A song of the ascents. Those confiding in Jehovah [are] as mount Zion; it cannot be moved, it abideth forever. Jerusalem! mountains about her, and Jehovah around his people henceforth and forever. For rod of wickedness shall not rest on a lot of the righteous, in order that the righteous may not put their hands unto iniquity. Do good, Jehovah, to the good and to those upright in their hearts. And those that turn to crooked ways will Jehovah lead forth with the workers of iniquity. Peace [be] upon Israel.” {vers. 1-5.)

Here is expressed the peaceable fruit of righteousness for those exercised by the supreme trials of that day.

Psalm 126

“A song of the ascents. When Jehovah turned the turning of Zion, we were like dreamers. Then was filled our mouth with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing; then said they among the Gentiles, Jehovah hath done great things with them. Jehovah hath done great things with us: we are joyful. Turn, Jehovah, our turning as streams in the south. Those that sow with tears shall reap with rejoicing. Surely (going) he shall go and weep, bearing a load of the seed; surely (coming) he shall come with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves” (vers. 1-6).

The return of Zion becomes the pledge and cry for the return of Israel, and the blessed Sower in sorrow shall yet reap in joy.

Psalm 127

“A song of the ascents: of Solomon. If Jehovah build not a house, in vain toil its builders in it; if Jehovah keep not a city, in vain watcheth a keeper. [It is] in vain for you rising up early, sitting up late, eating bread of (the) sorrows: so he giveth unto his beloved sleep. Behold, Jehovah's inheritance [are] children (sons), the womb's fruit [is] a reward. As arrows in a mighty man's hand, so are sons of (the) youth. Blessed [is] the man who hath filled his quiver with them. They shall not be ashamed when they speak with enemies in the gate” (vers. 1-5).

All of blessing turns on Jehovah, on Jehovah-Jesus. When Israel welcomes and depends on Him what fruitful showers! “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children” as in Psa. 45 so here. Solomon had an earnest and might well sing in the Spirit; yet his was not the rest of God.

Psalm 128

“A song of the ascents. Happy [is] every fearer of Jehovah, that walketh in his ways. Labor of thy hands when thou shalt eat, blessed thou and well with thee: thy wife as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house; thy sons as plants, of olives around thy table. Behold that thus shall be blessed a man fearing Jehovah. Jehovah shall bless thee out of Zion; and see thou (in) the good of Jerusalem all thy life's days: and see sons of thy sons. Peace be upon Israel.” (vers. 1-6)

It is millennial blessedness on earth, when Christ reigns and blesses out of Zion. To interpret it of heaven or the church is to deny the kingdom.

Psalm 129

“A song of the ascents. Much have they afflicted me from my youth, oh! let Israel say; much have they afflicted from my youth; yet have they not prevailed against me. Upon my back plowers plowed; they made long (to) their furrows. Jehovah [is] righteous; he hath cut asunder wicked [men's] cord. Ashamed and turned backward be all that hate Zion. Be they as grass of housetops which withereth before it is plucked up; wherewith a mower filleth not his hand nor (and) a sheaf binder his bosom; neither do those that pass by say, Jehovah's blessing [come] unto you: we bless you in Jehovah's name” (vers. 1-8).

It is a psalm of painful and touching interest as to Israel's enemies, whose will was in their sufferings, however deserved. They hated Zion which Jehovah chose and loved; and their desolations were as cruel as fruitless, being in vain to destroy, as the end will show in that day.

Psalm 130

“A song of the ascents. Out of the depths do I call on thee, Jehovah. Lord, hear (in) my voice; let thine, pars be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If thou, Jah, shouldest mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand? But with thee [is] the forgiveness that thou mayest be feared. I wait for Jehovah; my soul waiteth, and for his word I hope. My soul [hopeth] for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning—watchmen for the morning. Hope, Israel, for (or in) Jehovah, for with Jehovah [is] the mercy, and plenteously with him ransom; and he will ransom Israel from all his iniquities” (vers. 1-8).

It is the new ground of divine mercy, and so of forgiveness for the generation to come.

Psalm 131

“A song of the ascents: of David. Jehovah, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I meddle (walk) with [things] great and with [things] too wonderful for me Surely, (if) I hate stilled and quieted my soul, as a weaned one upon its mother; as the weaned one [is] my soul upon me. Hope, Israel, for (or in) Jehovah henceforth and forever” (vers. 1-3).

This is the moral accompaniment of faith in mercy. Hope in Jehovah supplants self-confidence ox looking elsewhere,

Psalm 132

“A song of the ascents. Jehovah, remember for David all his humiliation; how he sware unto Jehovah, vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob: I will not (if I) come into my house's tent, nor go up on my bed's couch; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, until I find a place for Jehovah, tabernacles for the Mighty One of Jacob. Behold, we heard it in Ephratha; we found it in fields of forest. Let us go to his tabernacles; let us bow down at his footstool. Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, Thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine Anointed. Jehovah hath sworn to David [in] truth; he will not turn from it: of the fruit of thy body (belly) will I set upon thy throne. If thy sons will keep my covenant and my testimony that I will teach them, their sons also shall sit upon thy throne forever. For Jehovah hath chosen (in) Zion; he hath desired [it] for his dwelling. This [is] my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it; her provision will I abundantly (or, surely) bless; her poor I will satisfy with bread; and her priests I will clothe with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make David's horn to bud, 1 have ordained a lamp for mine Anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; and on him shall his crown flourish” (vers. 1-18).

The Anointed is here, typified by David and Solomon, to reign as surely as He suffered. His rest in Zion has yet to be accomplished. It is not the Father's throne, any more than headship of His body, but the kingdom by and by, where the answers of grace exceed the desires of faith.

Psalm 133

“A song of the ascents. Behold, how good and how pleasant [is] the dwelling of brethren also together. Like the good oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, Aaron's beard, that cometh down to his garment's hem; like dew of Hermon that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion; for there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore “(vers. 1-3).

There is unity of blessing, in that Hermon's dew will fall on Zion.

Psalm 134

“A song of the ascents. Behold, bless Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah, that stand in Jehovah's house in the nights. Lift up your hands [in] the sanctuary (or, in holiness), and bless Jehovah. Jehovah bless thee out of Zion, Maker of heavens and earth” (vers. 1-3).

It is no longer Sinai, the mountain of the people's responsibility, but Zion, the seat of royal grace, after the fleshly king's ruin also. Under the true King and the faithful Priest praise unceasing rises, even in the nights. How should it be otherwise when Christ establishes the blessing on the overthrow of the enemy?

Chapter 280

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 135-139

Now follow a few psalms less closely connected, though the second may be regarded as an answer to the first. The third stands comparatively isolated, yet in its evidently right place. The fourth, instead of, (like it) recalling the shame and sorrow of the Babylonish captivity, is an avowed thanksgiving to Jehovah, not only for His word, but for His everlasting loving-kindness. These are all judicial, and apply during the crisis which marks the incoming of the new age. The fifth or last expresses the deeper work of self-judgment before the inescapable presence of Jehovah; yet it looks the more for His slaying the wicked (the judgment of the quick and of the dead), while baring the heart now in order to be thoroughly proved and led in the way everlasting. The last two are Davidical, as are the seven that succeed.

Psalm 135

“Praise ye Jah. Praise ye the name of Jehovah; praise, ye servants of Jehovah, standing in Jehovah's house, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise ye Jah, for Jehovah [is] good; sing psalms to his name, for [it is] pleasant. For Jah hath chosen Jacob for him, Israel for his peculiar treasure. For I know that Jehovah [is] great, and our Lord more than all gods. All that Jehovah delighteth in, he doeth in the heavens and in the earth, in the seas and all depths; who causeth vapors to ascend from the end of the earth; lightnings for the rain he maketh, bringing the wind out of his stores; who smote Egypt's firstborn from man to beast; who sent signs and wonders into thy midst, O Egypt, on Pharaoh and on all his servants; who smote many Gentiles and slew strong kings, (to) Sihon king of the Amorites, and (to) Og king of (the) Bashan, and (to) all the kingdoms of Canaan. And he gave their land an inheritance, an inheritance to Israel his people. Jehovah, thy name [is] forever; Jehovah, thy memorial [is] to generation and generation. For Jehovah will judge his people, and for the sake of his servants will repent. Idols of Gentiles [are] silver and gold, works of man's hands. A mouth have they, and they speak not; eyes have they, and they see not; ears have they, and they hear not; also there is no breath in their mouth. Like them are those that make them—every one confiding in them. House of Israel, bless ye Jehovah; house of Aaron, bless ye Jehovah; house of Levi, bless ye Jehovah; ye that fear Jehovah, bless Jehovah. Blessed [be] Jehovah out of Zion, inhabiting Jerusalem. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-21).

It is instructive to compare ver. 13 with Exodus 3:14 with Deut. 32 The psalm anticipates the proximate accomplishment of both to Jah's praise.

Psalm 136

Give thanks to Jehovah, for [he is] good, for his mercy [is] forever. Give thanks to the God of gods; for his mercy [is] forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that alone doeth great wonders; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that by understanding made the heavens; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that spread the earth upon the waters; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that made great light; for his mercy [is] forever: the sun for rule in the day; for his mercy [is] forever; the moon and stars for rule in the night; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn; for his mercy [is] forever; and brought Israel from their midst; for his mercy [is] forever; with strong hand and with outstretched arm; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that divided the Red Sea into parts, for his mercy [is] forever; and made Israel pass in its midst; for his mercy [is] forever; and shook off Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that led his people in the wilderness; for his mercy [is] forever. To him that smote great kings; for his mercy [is] forever; and slew famous kings; for his mercy [is] forever: (to) Sihon, king of the Amorites; for his mercy [is] forever; And (to) Og, the king of (the) Bashan; for his mercy [is] forever; and gave their land for an inheritance; for his mercy [is] forever; an inheritance to Israel his servant; for his mercy [is] forever; who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy [is] forever; and rent us from our adversaries; for his mercy [is] forever; giving bread to all flesh; for his mercy [is] forever. Give thanks to the God (El) of the heavens; for his mercy [is] forever' (vers. 1-26).

Very impressive is this answering song of thanks, with a refrain so suited then to Israel. He Who is pleased to dwell at Jerusalem in that day is the "God of the heavens," not merely of the earth (Gen. 14:19).

Psalm 137

“By rivers of Babylon, there we sat; also we wept when we remembered Zion. On willows in its midst we hung our harps; for there our captors asked us words of song, and our spoilers mirth, [saying] Sing to us from a song of Zion. How shall we sing the song of Jehovah on a strange ground? If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget [its skill]. Let my tongue cleave to my palate—if I do not raise Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, Jehovah, to Edom's sons the day of Jerusalem, who said, Raze, raze, down to its foundation. Daughter of Babylon, the desolated, happy he that rendereth to thee thy measure thou didst mete to us. Happy he that taketh and dasheth thy babes against the rock (crag)” (vers. 1-9).

Very different were Babylon and Edom, both the enemies of Zion, one to humble her for her sins, the other hating her for divine favor, alike to suffer before Zion's joy, who must sorrow till then and not sing.

Psalm 138

“Of David. I will thank thee with all my heart; before the gods I will sing psalms of thee. I will bow down toward the temple of thy holiness and will thank thy name for thy mercy and for thy truth; for above all thy name thou hast magnified thy saying. In the day I called, and thou didst answer me, thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul. All kings of the earth shall thank thee, Jehovah; for (or when) they have heard the sayings of thy mouth. And they shall sing in the ways of Jehovah; for great [is] the glory of Jehovah. For Jehovah [is] exalted, yet he seeth the lowly, and the proud he knoweth from afar. If I walk in the midst of distress, thou wilt revive me; upon the wrath of mine enemies thou wilt stretch forth thy hand, and thy right hand shall save me. Jehovah will perfect as to me: Jehovah, thy mercy [is] forever; forsake not the work of thy hands” (vers. 1-8).

It is Jehovah's faithfulness to His sayings, His mercy in this respect which Israel proved experimentally, and all kings of the earth celebrate in that day. What a change from this day of delusion and infidelity, to which the Jew contributes so largely!

Psalm 139

“To the chief musician: a psalm of David. Jehovah, thou hast searched me and known [me]. Thou knowest my sitting and my rising; thou understandest (to) my thought afar off. Thou siftest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue—behold, O Jehovah, thou knowest all of it. Behind and before thou hast beset me and laid thy hand upon me. Knowledge too wonderful for me! It is high: I cannot [rise] unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? and whither flee from thy face? If I ascend the heavens, there [art] thou; and make my bed [in] Sheol, behold, thou [art there]; I will take wings of dawn, I will dwell in the utmost end of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. And I say, Surely darkness shall cover me, and light about me [is] night; even darkness hideth not from thee; and night shineth as the day: as the darkness, so the light. For thou hast possessed my reins; thou didst cover me in my mother's womb. I thank thee, because I am fearfully, wonderfully, made: wonderful [are] thy works, and my soul knoweth [it] right well. Not concealed were my bones from thee, when. I was made in the hiding-place, embroidered in earth's lowest parts. Thine eyes saw mine unformed substance, and in thy book were all of them written, days they were fashioned when (and) not one [was] among them. And to me how precious [are] thy thoughts, O God how strong their sums! Would I count them, they are more than the sand: I awaked and [am] still with thee. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked one, O God! and ye men of blood, depart from me. For they speak of thee with intent, and take [thy name] in vain, thine enemies. Do not I hate those that hate thee, Jehovah? And those that rise against thee, do not I loathe? (With) perfect hatred I hate them; for enemies they are to me. Search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me, and know my thoughts. And see if a way of grief [be] in me, and lead me in a way everlasting” (vers. 1-24).

The execution of external judgment when Christ takes the world-kingdom (Rev. 11) does not hinder the inner work for the faithful Jew, who here tells out his confidence in the heart-searching of Jehovah. This recalls not only His own omnipresence and omniscience, as the faithful Creator, but His thoughts about us. For truly His complacency is in men, not angels: the Christ was to be man, though Son of the Highest. Therefore he as a godly Jew heartily goes with the vengeance to fall on the wicked, while he desires yet more God's searching of himself lest any grievous way should be found in him.

Chapter 286

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 140-145

From the heart-searching, yea God-searching, of the heart in the last psalm, we turn to a group of five, rising from a cry for full deliverance by executed judgment to anticipated thanksgiving in Psa. 145, a millennial strain, followed by varied and ceaseless praises to the end of the book.

In Psa. 140 the “evil man,” if defined, seems to be Antichrist; the “man of violence” rather the external enemy, the Assyrian. Proud or high ones here are ungodly Israelites.

Psalm 140

“To the chief musician: a psalm of David. Deliver me, Jehovah from the evil man; from the violent man thou wilt preserve me, who devise evils in heart; all day they gather wars. They whet their tongue like a serpent: adder's poison [is] under their lips, Selah. Keep me, Jehovah, from the wicked one's hands; from the violent man thou wilt preserve me, who devised to overthrow my steps. Proud ones hid a snare for me, and cords; they spread a net by the way-side (hand); traps they set for me, Selah. I said to Jehovah, my God (art) thou: give ear, Jehovah, to the voice of my supplication. Jehovah Lord (Adonai), strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle (armor). Grant not, Jehovah, the wicked one's desires; his device further not: they exalt themselves. [As for] the head of those around me, let the mischief of their lips cover them. Let burning coals be cast upon them; let them fall into pits, that they rise not. A man of tongue shall not be established in the earth (land); a man of violence, evil shall hunt him to ruin (destruction). I know that Jehovah will maintain the poor one's cause, the right of the needy. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to thy name, the upright shall dwell (sit) in thy presence” (vers. 1-14).

This is pursued for the soul's profit that all said and done may be to and in the favor of Jehovah, apart from the dainties of evil doers, and accepting rebuke from the righteous; so that when judgment falls some may hear and live.

Psalm 141

“A psalm of David. Jehovah, I have called on thee: hasten for me. Give ear to my voice, when I call unto thee. Established he my prayer [as] incense in thy presence, the lifting up of my hands [as] the evening oblation. Set a guard, Jehovah, at my mouth; watch over the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to an evil matter (word), to practice practices in wickedness with men doing iniquity; and let me not eat of their dainties. Let a righteous one smite me—a kindness; and rebuke me—a chief oil: let not my head refuse; for even yet prayer [is] in their calamities (or injuries). Thrown down by means (hands) of the rock are their judges; and they shall hear my words, for they are sweet. Like one cleaving or splitting on the earth, scattered are our bones at Sheol's mouth. For unto thee, Jehovah Lord, [are] mine eyes; in this I trust: pour not out my soul. Keep me from the power (hands) of the traps they laid for me, and from the snares of the doers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall together into their own nets, while for my part I escape” (vers. 1-10).

The next is didactic and a prayer. Wickedness in power casts the righteous on Jehovah alone. How often precious, and proved by how many! Yet, while originally David's faith, it will apply fully in the future crisis of Israel.

Psalm 142

“An instruction of David when he was in the cave: a prayer. [With] my voice to Jehovah I cry; [with] my voice to Jehovah I make supplication. I pour out in his presence my plaint; my distress in his presence I show. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, thou knewest my path. In the way that I go they hid a trap for me. Look on the right hand and see: there is none that knoweth me. Refuge hath failed me: there is none caring for my soul, I cried unto thee, Jehovah; I said, Thou [art] my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison that I may give thanks to thy name. The righteous shall compass me round, for thou dealest bountifully with me” (vers. 1-8).

The following is deeper still: not only none else but Jehovah, but self abandoned. No righteousness can stand judgment, but his is the righteousness of God by faith. Confidence is in grace. So the godly Jew will feel and say in that day.

Psalm 143

“A psalm of David. Jehovah hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications; in thy faithfulness answer me, in thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with thy servant, for none living shall be just in thy presence. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath crushed to the earth my life; he hath made me dwell in dark places, like those long dead. And overwhelmed in (on) me is my spirit, in the midst of me desolated is my heart. I remembered days of old; I meditated on all thy doings; on the work of thy hands I muse. I spread my hands unto thee; my soul like a weary land [thirsteth] for thee, Selah. Hasten, answer me, Jehovah: my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, and I shall not be like [those that] go down to the pit. Cause me to hear in the morning thy mercy, for in thee do I confide; make me to know the way that I should go, for unto thee I lift up my soul. Deliver me from mine enemies, Jehovah; unto thee have I hidden. Teach me to do thy pleasure for thou [art] my God; let thy good spirit lead me in a land of evenness. For thy name's sake, Jehovah, quicken; in thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble. And in thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all oppressors of my soul; for I [am] thy servant” (vers. 1-12).

The psalm that follows blesses Jehovah in confidence and bright expectation. Why should man (Adam), son of enosh, weak and faint, stay blessing through divine judgment? For so Israel always expects, whatever the mercy also. The Christian stands in grace and looks into heaven, to which he belongs as in Christ. This psalm looks for judgment, not the gospel.

Psalm 144

“Of David. Blessed [be] Jehovah my rock, training my hands to fight, my fingers for the battle. My mercy and my fortress, my high place, and my deliverer for me; my shield and he in whom I trust, the subduer of my people under me. Jehovah, what [is] man, that (and) thou shouldest know him, son of man, that thou shouldest think of him? Man is like the breath, his days as a shadow passing by. Jehovah, bow thy heavens and come down; touch (on) the mountains, and they smoke. Lighten lightnings, and scatter them; send thine arrows, and discomfit them. Stretch (send) thy hands from above; rescue me and deliver me out of great waters from hand of aliens (sons of strangeness); whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand [is] a right hand of falsehood. O God, a new song I will sing to thee; with a ten-stringed lute will I sing psalms to thee, the giver of salvation to the kings, the rescuer of David his servant from an evil sword. Rescue me and deliver me from hand of aliens, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand [is] a right hand of falsehood; that our sons [be] as plants grown up in their youth, our daughters as cornerstones hewn the fashion of a palace; our granaries full, affording from kind to kind; our sheep bearing thousands, bearing ten thousands in our fields; our oxen laden; there is no breach and no loss, and no outcry in our streets. Blessed the people to which [it is] thus! Blessed the people whose God [is] Jehovah” (vers. 1-15)!

Next comes “Praise” or the new song purposed in Psa. 144, an alphabetic construction, omitting Nun (the Hebrew N).

Psalm 145

“Praise of David. I will exalt thee, my God, the king, and I will bless thy name forever and ever. In every day will I bless thee, and will praise thy name forever and ever. Great is Jehovah and to be praised exceedingly, and his greatness is unsearchable. Generation to generation laudeth thy works, and thy mighty deeds they declare. The majesty of the glory of thine honor, and the words of thy wonders, I will meditate; and the strength of thy terrors they shall tell (say); and thy greatness, I will declare it. They shall utter the memory of thy great goodness, and thy righteousness they shall sing aloud. Gracious and merciful (is) Jehovah, slow to anger and of great mercy. Good (is) Jehovah to the universe (all), and his tender mercies [are] over all his works. All thy works shall give thee thanks, Jehovah, and all thy saints shall bless thee. They shall tell (say) the glory of thy kingdom and speak of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty deeds, and the glory of the majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom [is] a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion through all generations. Jehovah upholdeth all that fall and raiseth all the bowed down. The eyes of all wait on thee; and thou givest them their food in its season. Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the pleasure of every living thing. Righteous [is] Jehovah in all his ways, and gracious in all his works. Near [is] Jehovah to all calling on him in truth. The pleasure of those that fear him he will do; and their cry he will hear and save them. Jehovah keepeth all that love him, and all the wicked he will destroy. Jehovah's praise shall my mouth forever speak; and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever” (vers. 1-21).

Chapter 293

The Psalms Book 5: Psalms 146-150

The final praises of Jah in five strains close the book. It may be noticed that creation and Israel here and elsewhere in the O. T. answer to the new creation and the church in the N. T. The Septuagint attributes the first three to Haggai and Zechariah, Psa. 147 being divided.

Psalm 146

“Praise ye Jah. Praise Jehovah, O my soul. I will praise Jehovah while I live; I will sing psalms to my God while I have my being. Confide not in nobles, in a son of man in whom is no salvation. His spirit goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his purposes perish. Blessed he, whose help [is] Jacob's God (El), whose hope in Jehovah his God, who made heavens and earth, the sea and all that [is] in them; the keeper of truth forever; doing judgment for the oppressed, giving bread to the hungry. Jehovah looseth the prisoners: Jehovah openeth [the eyes of] the blind; Jehovah raiseth the bowed down; Jehovah loveth the righteous. Jehovah keepeth strangers; orphans and widows he upholdeth; and the way of wicked ones he maketh crooked. Jehovah reigneth forever, thy God, O Zion, generation to generation. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-10).

The praise of Jah, Jehovah, Jacob's God, is urged, in contrast with men, not only as Maker of heaven, earth, the sea, and all in them, but as the sure moral Governor, only to be proved and displayed perfectly in that day when Zion is the earthly center.

Psalm 147

“Praise ye Jah, for [it is] good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant; comely [is] praise. Jehovah buildeth Jerusalem; Israel's outcasts he gathereth; the healer of the broken. hearted, and binding up their wounds. Counting the number of the stars, to them all he giveth (calleth) names. Great [is] our Lord, and of much power; his understanding is infinite. Jehovah lifteth up the humble; he casteth down the wicked to the earth. Respond to Jehovah with thanksgiving, sing psalms unto our God with harp. He covereth the heaven with clouds, he provideth for the earth of rain, he causeth mountains to bring forth grass, giving to cattle their food, to young (sons of) ravens which cry. Not in strength of the horse doth he delight, not in legs of (the) man taketh he pleasure. Jehovah taketh pleasure in those fearing him, in those hoping in his mercy. Laud Jehovah, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy sons in, thy midst. He maketh thy border peace, with the fat of wheat satisfieth thee. He sendeth his saying earth [ward]; with speed runneth his word. He giveth snow like the wool, scattereth hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth his ice like morsels: before his cold who can stand? He sendeth his word and melteth [them], he causeth his wind to blow—the waters flow. He showeth his word to Jacob, his statutes and judgments to Israel. He dealt not thus with any living nation; and judgments, they know them not. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-20).

Incomparably greater things are before Israel than the work of Nehemiah for the returned remnant, though to speak of this may have given occasion to their glorious hope, inseparable from the Messiah and the kingdom and all Israel then to be saved. Then indeed it will be Jehovah building Jerusalem and gathering Israel's outcasts far beyond the little provisional mercy to the Jews from Babylon. And He is competent Who makes the world, yea the universe, delights most of all in the lowly that fear Him, and shows Jacob His word, Israel His judgments; He thus owned no other nation.

Psalm 148

“Praise ye Jah, praise ye Jehovah from the heaven; praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye Zion, all his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and the waters that [are] above the heavens. Let them praise the name of Jehovah, for he commanded, and they were created; and he established them forever and ever, and he gave a decree which shall not pass. Praise Jehovah from the earth, ye sea-monsters and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind doing his word; the mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle, creeping thing and bird of wing; kings of earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of earth, young men and also maidens, old men with youths; let them praise the name of Jehovah. For exalted [is] his name alone, his honor above earth and heaven. And he lifted up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, even for Israel's sons, a people near to him. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-14).

Here praise is called for from the heaven, and every one and thing connected, the praise of Jehovah's name; so from the earth and all below, rising up to the kings and all peoples, of every age, sex, and degree, to praise His name set in His people, His holy or godly ones, beyond question Israel's sons. The church reigns with Him Who reigns over all the rest, the universe.

Psalm 149

“Praise ye Jah; sing ye to Jehovah a new song, his praise in the congregation of godly ones. Let Israel rejoice in his Maker, let Zion's sons rejoice in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance; with timbrel and harp let them sing psalms to him. For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people; he honors the humble ones with salvation. Let godly ones exult in glory; let them shout for joy upon their beds, exaltations of God (El) in their throat and a two-edged sword in their hand, to do vengeance on the Gentiles, punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-9).

Here it is expressly a new song for Israel, no longer enemies as touching the gospel, no longer only beloved for the fathers' sake, but a congregation of pious ones, Zion's sons rejoicing in their King. Their position is judicial on earth; but we who believe without seeing Christ have our joy in His heavenly grace and glory.

Psalm 150

“Praise ye Jah, praise ye God (El) in his sanctuary, praise him in the expanse of his power. Praise him in his mighty acts; praise him for his abundant greatness. Praise him with blast of trumpet; praise him with lute and harp; praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with instruments and pipe; praise him with loud symbols; praise him with high-sounding (hearing) cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise Jah. Praise ye Jah” (vers. 1-6).

Thus fitly ends this inspired collection of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, in a grand chorus of praise on this long travailing but soon to be delivered and rejoicing earth, when the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come.

No apology is offered for the close rendering of the Hebrew, often no doubt uncouth to western ears. The aim of a version for public use is wholly different. But the more literal reflection is also full of interest and instruction to those who would weigh the form as well as the substance of the inspired word, whether Old or New; and this is what has been essayed here, however inadequately. W. K.

Chapter 299

Recent Explorations in Bible Lands

This pamphlet is the reproduction of a supplement to the sixth revised edition of Dr. R. Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible. It is now issued with a Map and an Index, and will be found useful as a Bible-class help, or for private study. It contains copious references to many recent works not generally accessible, and here impressed into service. Thus much useful and interesting information is condensed into small space and ready application. Necessarily the knowledge is of an external kind. Light in the interpretation of scripture depends on our subjection to the Holy Spirit's use of the word in glorifying Christ.

Chapter 300

Justified by Faith

"How should a man be just with God?" Solemn question! To which man can give no satisfactory answer. If righteousness rule, love is annulled; if love govern, righteousness is swamped. Man can devise no way which does not sacrifice the one to the other. The anxious soul is thus left a prey to fear, apt to drown his doubts in religious efforts if not in the pleasures of sin for a season. Self is unjudged, and conscience unpurged; God unknown, Christ a mere make-weight or help and an impossible example. In such a state (and nothing is more common even in Christendom), the very gospel is turned into a law more galling than that of Moses; and some souls sink into indifference or despair, whilst others clothe themselves with the rags of their own righteousness, to find out too late that they are naked in God's sight.

Christ, Christ's redemption, alone meets the dilemma, alone puts in their true places God and man, guild and judgment, peace and holiness. Without Him all for the sinner is a hopeless chaos of contradiction. By Christ's death, as God is glorified, so remission of sins is proclaimed to man: mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.

But man, hitherto living to himself and without God, even if an observer of forms and duties, is summoned to believe the gospel, not merely that there is grace and truth in Christ, but to believe o nHim and His work for his own soul before God. This necessarily involves repentance toward God, as indeed is often expressly insisted on (Matt. 21:32, Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 17:30, 20:21). The word of faith, which we preach, says the apostle, is "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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10). His words in Rom. 4:23-25 set the truth in the clearest light. "Now it was not written for his (Abraham's) sake that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead, Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith," &c.

None need ask language more precise, none can desire more authoritative. It is scripture (2 Peter 3:15, 16); and scripture is the word of God, whatever the human instrument, communicated by the Holy Spirit for permanent use, written not for their sakes only to whom it was originally given, but for us also. Being God's word, it binds the conscience of every man whom it reaches: his abuse of it, his refusal to heed it, will but aggravate his condemnation. Caviling will not blot out his sins nor rescue him from the wrath to come. Faith is the reception of God's word, and now pre-eminently of His message to every man, the gospel of His grace. We are called to believe that God raised Jesus our Lord from among the dead—Jesus expressly declared to be given up for Our offenses and raised for our justification or justifying. The efficacious work was entirely on God's part. We had contributed alas! our trespasses: He gave up His Son Who suffered for them, Just for unjust, and raised Him from the dead, the sure proof that the sacrifice was wrought and accepted for those that believe. Do you ask further demonstration? Rom. 8:34 adds, "Who is even at the right

hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." His resurrection and glory on high are the answer, not only to His person but to His work, glorifying God as to sin and suffering for our sins. God is righteous in thus raising and glorifying Him. But His righteousness avails much more, and justifies him that believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

Here is the blessed ground of the gospel. Fallen and guilty, man has no righteousness for God (Rom. 1, and 2.). But God justifies freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Who bore the judgment of our sins on the cross, and now risen declares the believer free. Hence it is "by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." It is open "to all," but for this very reason far worse off with God is he who rejects Christ and the gospel of God. He who believes on Him is justified, yea is made God's righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). He is justified by faith. There is no other way. It is not a process going on, but a fact accomplished and made known by that surest of testimonies—God's word. For He loves that we should know what Christ has done for us, and what He can afford to give in consequence. If we believe in Him, He would not have us doubtful, or burdened, but enjoying the inestimable favor of being justified in His sight. It is the fundamental blessing, anticipated in the Psalm (32.), accomplished in Christ, and proclaimed in the gospel.

It is "upon all them that believe." The weak believer as well as the strong, may rest on the Savior, Whom God set forth a propitiatory, or mercy seat, by faith in His blood. And why was the blood sprinkled seven times before it, if not to furnish the fullest confidence to every soul that believes? The veil is now rent; all is manifest, not only your sins in the light of the cross, but the blood upon the mercy seat, the witness of atonement forever accepted. For God has before Him, not your sins, but the blood that cleanses from every sin.

More than that, it was to declare God's righteousness; and this doubly. It was first to vindicate in the prætermission or passing over of the foregone sins in the forbearance of God. How else could He have dealt as He did with such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with crowds of others named and unnamed of old? But it is also to show His righteousness in the present time when He sends the glad tidings to all the world, to bear fruit and grow in all that hear and know the grace of God in truth. For it is no longer His ancient people under the law, but the gospel sent to all; no longer man's righteousness claimed, to convict of sin and powerlessness and ruin, but God's righteousness in Christ's death, that Himself might be just and justifier of him that has faith in Jesus.

Therefore, as the apostle triumphantly challenges in Rom. 8:33, "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" Christ Jesus by His suffering work alone accounts for it. For our sins afforded righteous ground against us; but Christ bore them in His body on the tree, as His resurrection proves them to be altogether and righteously gone. It is God's righteousness, as the Epistle to the Romans lays down, not only to raise Him from the dead, but to justify all who believe in Him. His righteousness goes far beyond, even to heavenly glory for Christ and Close that are His. But here the Holy Spirit urges the foundation alike for God and for the soul through faith. May it be your portion, dear reader, through sovereign grace!

Chapter 301

Reconciled to God

Reconciliation with God is a rich result of the gospel. It is equally simple and sure. In the nature of things God alone can be the unerring judge of it. He accordingly bears witness to it as a spiritual fact due to the death of Christ, and true of every believer. The guilt and the enmity were entirely in us, as we were naturally. In His love God intervened on our behalf when we lay in our sins, evil, helpless, hopeless. He intervened in His Son Who died for us that we might be justified in virtue of His blood; for He sent Him as propitiation for our sins. No other way could glorify Him or justify us. Here only is love conciliated with justice; but it is God's love and God's righteousness, for in us, ungodly and sinners, was neither. Therefore it is for His glory, and according to His grace, and hence not of works but of faith, that no flesh should glory, but “he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” So speak both Old and New Testaments.

What can be plainer than the testimony of scripture? “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by (or, through) the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10). The Holy Spirit presents the efficacy of Christ's death unambiguously, that the believer may give to the winds his fears and treat his doubts as of the enemy. God's love is the source of the blessedness; Christ's death guarantees it as not only of grace but righteous. Only so is God just and justifying him that has faith in Jesus. Thus is the alienation met holily. Divine love laid the sins on the head of the sole adequate Victim; on Him, not on the sinner, was our evil judged unsparingly by God; and the glad tidings of that mighty work He sent far and wide, that through Christ's name everyone that believeth on Him should receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

Only with remission there is far more. As we read here, the believer is “reconciled to GOD.” Not that God was alienated; for He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. But He abhorred, and cannot but judge, sin. Therefore must the Son of man be lifted up. “Christ died for us,” that we, not our sins, might be spared; that our sins, not ourselves, might be put away from before God; that we might be reconciled to God, and expiation be made for our sins. Christ has effected both for every believer; yea, He has wrought a work of such God-glorifying and infinite value, that God can righteously send a message of reconciliation into all the world and to all the creation. And on what a wondrous basis! Him Who knew no sin He made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Undoubtedly, when a soul repents and believes the gospel, there is a marked moral change. Faith knows God and Him Whom He sent as never before, and by the Holy Spirit cries, Abba Father; while repentance means a real self-judgment in the sight of God. But reconciliation goes farther, and is the establishing of a new, near, and known relationship of favor with God according to the purposes of His grace and through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now that Christ is come and the will of God done, all that raised a barrier and provoked flesh is gone by our death with Christ; and we are His Who is risen, that we may bear fruit unto God, and serve in newness of spirit, not in oldness of letter.

When Christ appears and the revelation of the sons of God takes place, the creation (which, as the apostle tells us, is now groaning together and travailing in pain together) shall be delivered. It is now in the bondage of corruption as it shared the consequences of Adam's fall, its head. But the Second man, as He now delivers those who believe in Him, will by-and-by deliver creation also into the liberty of the glory we shall then have. Before He comes in power and glory, it is ours, to enjoy already, as creation cannot, the liberty of grace. In that day God will reconcile to Himself through Christ all things (having made peace by the blood of His cross), whether the things on earth or the things in the heavens. But it is all-important to know that, whatever we may once have been in the sad and wicked past, God has now reconciled us in the body of Christ's flesh through death (Col. 1:21, 22). Impossible to do more for our souls now than He has already done in Christ, always supposing that we believe in Him and continue in the faith grounded and settled.

Do you believe now, dear reader? Is it your peaceful, settled, assurance from day to day, that you are thus “reconciled to God”? It could be the portion of none without the perfect and accepted work of Christ; whereby, as Heb. 10:10 tells us, we have been sanctified once for all. Nay more, by that one offering He has perfected forever (i.e. without a break) the sanctified (ver. 14). It is God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18). It is therefore as complete as is due to His person and His work. Believing that God is thus good to you now in His Son has a powerful effect on the inner man, its affections and its mind, as well as the outer ways and words, the whole life. But reconciliation is God's work in setting us who believe in our right relationship to Him, sins forgiven, ourselves justified and standing in His favor as His beloved children. Without Christ's death for us it was impossible for sinful man to be thus blessed. But if by grace I believe on Him, all is mine, as God's word declares. If then your soul rests on Him, on God's testimony to Him and His work, be assured that you are reconciled to God. What God reveals, we receive without doubt in Christ's name.

Chapter 302

Results of the Cross to Faith

How divinely precious for the heart of the simplest saint of God, to be enabled through His word to rise to His mind! Thus one learns that He Who alone is the Blesser does no less delight in blessing, not only refreshing us with His love, but bringing us by Christ's blood without a spot and in perfect peace into His presence, the holiest of all. It is here we learn something of the results of the cross not only in the blotting out of all our sins, so hateful in the sight of God: but in the positive efficacy of the sacrifice which fits the believer for heaven as truly as it has glorified God about sin.

In Christ God found His highest delight and expressed it over and over again. But sin was not judged till the scene of His own Son made sin on Calvary's cross, at which the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, and the very sun shrouded itself in darkness. It was indeed the long-looked-for hour that stands alone in all time, yea, eternity, when the atoning work of Christ was accomplished, never again to be repeated.

God was herein glorified even as to sin, and He gave the immediate pledge of His entire satisfaction, in rending the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom. By the cross any and every soul that believes His testimony to the work of His beloved Son is called to see the blood on and before the mercy seat. By His blood peace is made and himself meet to enter His holy presence, in the full rest of God's estimate of eternal redemption. To faith not only sin and death but His judgment were met in Christ's death; and the glorious triumphs which crowned the ascended Lamb were given and made known to us. Thus by grace we can now take up the language of the hymn and sing,

“We triumph in thy triumphs, Lord:

Thy joys our deepest joys afford;

They taste of love divine.”

The gospel goes out to every creature under heaven proclaiming God's righteousness to all, and upon all that believe. But how unutterably solemn also is the cross for this Christ-rejecting world, already judged and only awaiting the day of its execution. Then will be the day of the Lord, when everything will give place to the One Who alone is worthy, alone able to rule with equity and govern in righteousness to the glory of God the Father.

In answer to the cross all things in heaven and in earth will be reconciled to God; and the universe will be suited to Him and the redeemed above and below. Then will Psa. 68; 72; 85; 103 etc., and Isa. 11; 35; 65; 66, etc. be realized and displayed not in spirit only but in full result. “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” This and much more than it we through grace already know in Christ's work for God's glory and our souls; but even Israel and the nations in that day shall know it beyond all question, and every creature of God enjoy the effects of His mighty deliverance when the sons and heirs of God are revealed in the likeness of His resurrection glory without a shadow to intervene. It is only as we keep this blessed

hope and the appearing of the glory before our hearts in communion with Himself, that we can rise above the seductions of this present evil age and the trying circumstances of the wilderness through which we pass, so as to bring glory to Christ's peerless name. “For if we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified together.” We cannot serve God and mammon.

But He knows we are weak, faulty, and needy, however blessed in Him. We cannot do without Him. Therefore has God provided and revealed a throne of grace, to which we are invited to come boldly, that we may obtain mercy and find grace for seasonable help. For He has been ever gracious, and He gives more grace, and this liberally and without upbraiding, so that we are thus enabled to go on our way rejoicing. E. P.

Revelation 2-3

Note this immensely important principle: the church judged by the word; not the church a judge. The church (I use the word designedly here, as used to claim this authority) cannot be an authority when the Lord calls me, if I have ears to hear, to hear and receive the judgment pronounced by Him on it. I judge its state by the words of the Spirit, and am bound to do so. It cannot therefore be an authority on the Lord's behalf over me in that state, Discipline is not in question here (as in Matt. 18:17), but the church as wielding authority.

Recent Works on the Revelation and Prophecy

Dr. M.'s contribution is the bulkiest contribution of the three vols., and it Claims the respect due to one of the Revision Committee on questions of text and translation. But the author belongs to the nebulous school of Apocalyptic interpretation, of whom Dr. Hengstenberg was the most prominent exponent abroad, and perhaps Dr. P. Fairbairn at home. In their hands the prophetic word ceases to be a lamp and is reduced to vapor; and Dr. M. seems to yield to none in excessive allegorizing. He allows that the book is not the tangled enigma but its solution; but, when we listen, the oracle is dumb or gives an answer of inanity. The precise aim of every part of the book is lost, from the seven churches of chaps. ii. iii. to the New Jerusalem of chaps. 21., 22.

His verbal criticism of chap. 1. is precarious. For even if we adopt the dubious “loosed” instead of “washed” in ver. 5, the one yields no more than the other “deliverance from the power of sin.” Both readings, whatever the word and figure employed, express rather clearance from our sins, not deliverance from the power of sin, as in Rom. 8 and elsewhere. Nor can one conceive less propriety in this connection than rendering ■ν by “in,” and the very unwarrantable doctrine that “the blood of Christ is living blood,” with the wretched confusion betrayed in the words that follow, “and in that life of His we are enfolded and enwrapped, so that it is not we that live, but Christ liveth in us” (p. 7). No doubt he follows in the wake of a more eminent theologian who has slipped by sound and sentiment into error unworthy of any sober Christian. For it is “shed” (not living) blood which avails sacrificially; the life given us is that eternal life which was ever in the Son. “Living blood” to this end is unknown and opposed to scriptural truth.

The next remark on “a kingdom, priests” &c., are equally unfounded. Nowhere in scripture does “kingdom” refer to victory over foes. It is a collective singular, and in apposition, an individualizing plural. Indeed Rev. 5:10; 20:6, should guard from all misunderstanding, though no doubt the abstract, or rather collective, unity has here its proper force, from which “conquering their spiritual enemies” is remote. It is an emphatic expression of royalty, which looks on to reigning with Christ. The attempt to refer it to reigning now falsifies all the truth of our present relations so carefully stated in the N. T.; for undeniably we are called to suffer with Christ, by-and-by to reign with Christ when He sits on His own throne. Of all this Dr. M. seems so profoundly ignorant, that his exposition is worse than worthless.

Hence, almost all laid down throughout as to Christ and the church being opposed to the truth, the character of the book is wholly misapprehended, and its contents are misapplied. Take what is said of Christ's titles in p. 8. His ascension and heavenly glory are not in question, but what He, the Faithful Witness, and Firstborn of the dead, will be and do as the Ruler of the kings of the earth, when the taking of the inheritance becomes the point. At present the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ are in course of calling. The book is so essentially judicial that the Lord is seen as Son of man judging the churches, preparatory to its main action, “the things which shall be after these,” from ch. iv. to the end.

But Dr. M.'s laxity even in ch. i. is inexcusable. He opens (p. 1) with the just though obvious remark that “The first chapter of the Revelation introduces us to the whole book, and supplies in equal measure the key by which we are to interpret it.” How does he use this key? He does not appear to understand the import of or from the excluded TE of the Received Text in ch. 1:2, that “all, (or whatsoever) things he saw” answers to and qualifies “the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Certainly he interprets “the Lord's day” (p. 13) in the strangest way of “the whole of that brief season which was to pass before the Church should follow her Lord to glory.” No idea is more arbitrary here, no time less congruous with the voice sending messages to the then seven churches in Asia, or even to what they might represent. And what ground has he for speaking of “that brief season” as if this were an admitted fact? Where is “that brief season which was to pass” even once spoken of? Yet more, what authority, what plea ever so feeble, for regarding it as “the Lord's day”? That “the first day of the week,” marked as it was by the risen Savior, distinguished as it is by the Holy Spirit in the Epistles, should be at length stamped by a term used only in the N. T. of the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:20), is very intelligible—; as it certainly was so understood and is applied as we know almost from that day to this. And this falls in with the usage of prophets to give the date as well as the place of the visions. For surely, with an actual locality stated, an ideal date is unexampled, not to say senseless. And a future “brief season” could not be that on which John saw and wrote as here recorded. Of course it is well known that some such notion has been put forward by two or three individuals before; but so unreasonable an hypothesis should not have been reproduced by a sensible scholar, who had time to weigh all.

Again, the representative view of the seven churches, besides their primary historical bearing, is allowed; but the strikingly peculiar character of each forbids the notion “of the whole Christian church in all countries of the world and throughout all time” (p. 14). What thus seeks to comprehend everything ecclesiastical means nothing, like the rest of this vague work. The truth communicated by the apostle is quite lost from first to last. Dr. M. plays a part to the Apocalypse pretty much as Philo's allegories to the Pentateuch.

The landmarks furnished by chap. 1:19 cannot be slighted with impunity: “write therefore the things which thou sawest (the Lord just seen), and the things which are (the seven churches or their angels addressed in chaps. 2., 3.), and the things which shall come to pass (not exactly 'hereafter' which might be indefinite, but) after these things,” i.e. after the existing church-state. This line of demarcation is violated by Dr. M.'s words, and indeed by his exposition as a whole. “They are the things which are, and they are types of the things which shall come to pass hereafter” (1:36). Not so: the seven churches may be representative of salient phases of the church as long as a church-state subsists here below, but do not typify “the things which shall be after these things,” which cannot begin till “the things which are” conclude. That is, Rev. 4 to the end of the visions in 22. supposes the churches gone. So in these chapters we hear no more of the church in any shape, but of Israel, and of Gentiles, or persons set apart to blessing from their midst, and separate, not merged in one body as the church is characteristically.

As to all this new condition to come, of which the book treats after the early chapters, the exposition is dark as midnight. Hence the transfer of the saints to heaven as seen from chap. 4. and onward is in no way appreciated, any more than God's dealings on earth as in chap. 7. Yet the twenty-four enthroned elders are confessedly viewed as representative of the glorified Church (p. 69). When the vision therefore is accomplished, the church will be glorified on high; and

glorification supposes the body raised and changed. Hence from the first mention to the last these elders are no more added to than diminished. They are complete symbolically, before the seals are opened, the trumpets blown, and the vials or bowls poured out; under all which we find quite a new character of dealing on God's part, with Jewish and Gentile saints, distinct one from the other, instead of united in a body which excludes such fleshly differences now.

But the ultra-figurative or mystic system of Dr. M. forbids his learning or teaching aright; and it is hard to conceive, if it were God's purpose, on the removal of the glorified church to heaven, to reveal fresh work with Jews or Gentiles as such, how this could be intimated by the prophet. Facts are dissipated into mist, and dates are no less indefinite, no matter what God's care to declare their order, or duration. “We are not to imagine (!) that the seals of chap. vi. follow one another in chronological succession, or that each of them belongs to a definite date!” This is to efface the express word of God, first, second, third, fourth, &c. It is due solely to misinterpretation. So too the effort from the Gospel of John to find the “one flock” in the sealed remnant of Israel. If the elders represent the church glorified above, how intelligible it is that God's mercy visits His ancient people, and gathers out from the nations, for His glory on the earth in due time! The assumption that the sealed 144,000 are the universal church is refuted by the vision following of the countless multitude out of the nations, no less confidently predicated of the same church. The truth is that, the elders being seen in the same vision (the acknowledged symbol of the church in heaven), these two companies cannot be so legitimately, but are rather the pledge of future mercy for the earth, and in two plainly contradistinguished forms of Israel and the Gentiles respectively.

This may suffice for the Expositor's Bible as far as the Revelation is concerned. Very different is W. R.H.'s “Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which is an animated and interesting unfolding of the book, for the most part correct. The “Scroll of Time” by J. A. S. looks at the dispensations of God with a chart, of which we have had not a few, on lines almost traditional, but with special reference, as his title-page says, to the Book of Revelation and other prophecies. But Mr. S. is not cautious enough. Thus he fancies “the beast” or Western Emperor may have Byzantium or Constantinople; and he confounds the king of the north with Gog, Prince of Rosh, &c. The policy of Gog and of the Assyrian is the same, but they are distinct; as are on the other side “the beast” and the Antichrist. Thus the king of the North shall be “mighty, but not by his own power.” This is not said or true of Gog who is his support, as “the beast” is of the false prophet.

Chapter 305

Righteousness and Love

There is variety in divine love as expressed in the scriptures. In John 3 we have God's love to the world, shown in the gift of His only begotten Son; in Eph. 5 Christ's love to the church, for which He gave Himself; and in 1 John 3 the Father's love to His children begotten of Him. And there is variety also in the scriptures in the truth concerning ourselves: in the epistles of Paul we are members of Christ's body, linked to Him Who is upon the throne; in Peter's epistles we are strangers and pilgrims passing through the world to our inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading; while in John's inspired writings we are children of God, brought into relationship with Him. This is what is so sweetly expressed here, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.” We are not yet displayed as such to the world; for that we wait. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know what we shall be, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Wondrous thought! “Predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

Meanwhile we are unknown by the world, even as He was unknown. We wait for the display of our sonship, but not for the consciousness of it. “Now are we children of God,” of this we are assured. Faith can always say, “we know;” faith deals with divine certainties. Conformity as seeing Him reminds one of 2 Cor. 3:18, “we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

This however is moral, and now: we find His image stamped upon us in measure as we gaze upon Him there in glory. 1 John 3:2 is future, goes beyond the moral aspect, and includes the body, for this shall be changed and fashioned like unto His own body of glory. And this when we see Him.

Now our apostle begins to be practical, and what more practical epistle than this? “Every one that hath this hope on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” Practical exhortations follow in a very similar way in chaps. 1. and 2. First, we are told that the Eternal Life which was with the Father has been manifested unto us, and we are called unto fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and this in the light, even as God is in the light. Then, after the added word as to the provision grace has made in case of sin, the Spirit begins to be practical, and says, “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” So here, we are told of our hope, and then are reminded of the purity that becomes us in view of it. How can I hold the hope without purifying myself? Is it possible to cherish the thought that I am soon to be like Him, without having the desire to be like Him morally in measure now? Remark, Christ is the standard of purity, even as He is pure. Christ is always God's standard; God sets no other before His saints. In chap. 2. we are to walk even, as He walked. In chap. 3:16 His is the standard of love, and here He is the standard of purity. In fact, if I want to know how to display the divine nature of which I am a partaker, I must look at Him in Whom it is perfectly seen.

And if I purify myself even as He is pure, I must not practice sin; and sin is here presented in a solemn light, it is lawlessness. What a serious consideration for the Christian! We are sanctified to obedience, we are called to do the will of God, but when we sin, we commit lawlessness; that is,

we work out our own will. Moreover, two important reasons are given why we should not sin. “He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin.” If I really believe that my sins caused His manifestation and death, I shall hate sin, and, on the other hand, knowing that sin is contrary to His nature (and we are partakers of that nature), I see the inconsistency of such a course. It is not he that professes, but he that practices, that is really born of God. “Little children, let no one deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.” Righteousness, practical righteousness, is what God expects to see displayed in those who profess to be born of Him. “If ye know that He is righteous, yet know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.” It is only by actions that we demonstrate to which family we belong: “in this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil.” The Lord ruled in John 8 that we are the children of him whose works we do. The Jews in that chapter boasted that they had Abraham to their father; but the Lord, while admitting them to be Abraham's seed, disowned them as children of the man who rejoiced to see His day and who saw it and was glad. “If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham; and subsequently, He plainly said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”

But a second text is added in our chapter. “He that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” Here we get a rapid transition from righteousness to love. Is it possible we may be mistaken as to the first test? We may, because of our imperfect discernment, mistake at times moral uprightness for the righteousness which is the result of being born of God; but we can scarcely err as to love. Find a man merely morally upright, and does he love the brethren?

Far from it. But the man born of God does; he that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him. Love becomes a proof to others (vers. 10), and a proof to myself (ver. 9). To what extent are we to love? “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren “; and this because they are brethren. Yet lest we get merely sentimental in our expressions, the apostle adds, “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, shut up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him?” For we may never have opportunity to demonstrate our love by the laying down of life, but in the other way opportunity occurs every day. Do we embrace it? (Gal. 2:10). It is striking to observe how love to the brethren and hatred from the world are connected here. “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you, &c.” The same thing is observed in the Lord's own teaching in John 15. In ver. 17, He commands His own to love one another, and proceeds in ver. 18, to speak of hatred from the outside world. All the love we find in the present world is that which we show the one to the other. From the world which gave the Lord only a cross, we expect nothing but hatred, rejection, and scorn; in the holy circle of the family of God we expect to find love, and that after a divine pattern. The order however is divine, righteousness first, then love.

W. W. F.

Chapter 306

Ritualistic Misuse of Incarnation

To make the blessed truth of Incarnation (the source indeed of all our blessings) to be, not the display of divine life as of God Himself in man, but in that state the medium of communication to others as imparted to humanity, as a reconstructing of it in this form (declaring that rationalism, or the power of the human spirit, is the only alternative), is apostacy from the true foundations of Christian truth and a denial of the real effect of the fall, of the condition of the sinner under it, and of the true need of the death of Christ in order to our participation in life. “Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you,” that is, you cannot be associated with Him living. It is a Savior by means of death that will introduce you to God.

I am aware that it is urged as regards baptism, that by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. Now, in the first place, the one body into which they are baptized here is the unity of the church; and the truth is that 1 Cor. 12:13 does not speak of baptism by water but very definitely of baptism “with the Spirit.” “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (cf. John 1:33.) This, we know, was accomplished at Pentecost. When Cornelius is called by grace, he receives the Holy Ghost as they did at the first-called baptism of the Spirit (Acts 11:16), and thereon is baptized or received into the visible church on earth. In 1 Cor. 12 the subject expressly treated of is spiritual power, πνευματικ■, the baptism of the Holy Ghost by which, the Head being exalted on high, all are brought into the unity of the same body, and exercise the gifts through the Spirit given to members of the body.

Baptism by water is nowhere spoken of as engrafting into the unity of the body. The Lord's Supper is the expression of this truth though not of this alone. We are all one body, for we are partakers of that one bread (loaf). But no such thought is connected with baptism. It is simply death and resurrection, terms applicable to individuals. We are baptized to His death, buried with Him by baptism to death. It may be the natural consequence of putting on Christ, but the act is individual: the individual puts on, Christ. It is the sign of his regeneration in the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby he is received into the visible church of God on earth. We learn in the case of Samaria that those thus received had not yet received the Holy Ghost, and Simon Magus never did though baptized; as Cornelius receiving the Spirit as the seal of faith was the warrant for his being publicly received by baptism.

Besides then its connection with the fundamental doctrine of the necessity of redemption, and of our total ruin by sin, the truth that death must come in, in order to our union with Christ, is clearly established by the characteristic institutions of the Christian religion. And it is shown that it is not by a rectifying of the old man, in connection with the filling humanity with divine power and grace by the incarnation when Jesus was in the likeness of sinful flesh by which we are regenerate in union with the Lord Christ. It is by the establishment of a new man, of which the pattern in power of life is in Christ risen and glorified, to Whose image we are to be conformed; and that consequent not only on His living in the likeness of sinful flesh (though sinless), but in His being “for sin” a sacrifice for it), so that by His death sin in the flesh was condemned (Rom. 8:3). The law of the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, thus risen from the dead, freed us from the law of sin and death. Hence, having Christ for our life, we reckon ourselves dead and do this one thing—press toward the mark of our calling on high. The effect is the walk of a heavenly man, such as Christ was on earth, because we are in Him Who is in heaven. It is when He was raised from the dead and set in heavenly places, far above all heavens, and filling all things, that He was given to be Head over all things to the church, His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

This is the question:—Is redemption the necessary ground of our living association with the Lord Jesus Christ? Ritualism is merely the old effort of Judaism against the doctrine of Paul—the doctrine of a full salvation through a dead and exalted Savior. The not thus holding the Head, as risen with Christ, is the cause of insisting on ordinances, as though we were alive in the world in connection with the old man, that is “in the flesh,” and not as risen before God in the Spirit. J.N.D.

Chapter 307

Ruin and Glory

The church was called to glorify Christ: “I,” says He, “am glorified in them.” But many antichrists, the falling away, and the man of sin, are the result. Even in early days “they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ.” It is the last time, says John, and Jude declares the objects of judgment were there; as Paul warned that after his departure grievous wolves were to enter in, and, of those then, men to arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Again, in the last days perilous, or grievous, times should come, evil men and imposters waxing worse and worse. If the Gentile continued not in God's goodness, which he surely has not, he should be cut off, as the Jew before (Rom. 11) But Christ will come for His own, yea, to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all those that believed. The church has fallen, like man, like Israel, like the world-power; but grace will produce and perfect its own work. Christ's building (Matt. 16) will be complete and perfect, and manifested in glory; as man's building (1 Cor. 3:12-15) has been ill-done and corrupted, and will come under the severest of judgments (Rev. 17; 18)

Chapter 308

Salvation, Service, and Rest

The salvation of these Thessalonians is clearly stated in the first verse of our chapter. They were “in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Divine association was established. They were made partakers of the divine nature, and were children of God. They knew the Father, and were in Christ also by the Holy Spirit. Of them, as of all that are in the simple yet full standing of Christians, it could be said, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Salvation this is indeed, rich and complete: grace could do no more for believers here below.

How then had they received that wondrous salvation? The apostle Paul was accompanied by Silas, whom he had chosen as his companion in this second circuit of service from Antioch; and both had been commended by the brethren there to the grace of God (Acts 15:40, 41). After calling at Derbe, Lystra, and Philippi, &c., they come to Thessalonica; and in the synagogue of the Jews Paul reasoned with them out of the scriptures “three sabbath days,” “opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, Whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” In Acts 17:3 we have a short, but very comprehensive, epitome of the apostle's discourses during these three sabbaths in the synagogue. First, that “Christ must needs have suffered,” as Psa. 22 Isa. 53 and many other scriptures would prove most clearly that the Messiah should suffer. Second, that He must rise again from the dead: Psa. 16:9-11 gives this very certainly, and is so used by both Peter and Paul in the earlier chapters of the Acts. Third, both are true only of “this Jesus, whom I preach unto you.”

The effect of these discourses of the apostle was, that “some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout (or worshipping) Greeks, a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few” (ver. 4).

The decisive moment had come. The believers were manifested, and identified themselves with Paul and Silas, joining themselves to them, or “consorting” with them. Like the two disciples to whom John Baptist says “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:36), they followed Jesus, and consorted with Him that day. So it is ever, when Christ is preached. The unbelievers are manifested too, who beset the house of Jason, where the apostle Paul and his companion were staying, “assaulting it.” Therefore the brethren send them away to Berea. Thus through the apostle's preaching Christ unto them, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, were those who believed the gospel in the synagogue brought into God's salvation. He speaks of this in 1 Thess. 1:5, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” And no wonder. It flows from a divine Savior and His perfect work of reconciliation to God (Eph. 2:16, 17; Col. 1:22).

Now comes service. Salvation is first; service second. It is false and fatal to depart from this order; alas! it is far too common.

Their faith was divinely active, and known far and wide by the proofs to be seen of all. “From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything” (ver. 8). They had “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (ver. 9). Marvelous change before all who knew them as pagans! Nor was it thus proved before men only, but to the joy of the apostle's heart, so that they became ensamples to all believers round about them. They received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost, and became imitators of the Lord and His servants. Such was the manner of entering in Paul and Silas had unto them. What a distinct and blessed testimony in service! would to God, it was always so with the faithful.

Such was the very clear and unmistakable proof, to all men, of the remarkable change which had been wrought by God's power through the gospel, among souls for the most part heathen till now; and a bright example to all believers in the neighborhood. The apostle's heart rejoices and is filled with thanks to God alway for them. “We give thanks to God for you all, making mention of you in our prayers”

(ver. 2).

But more than all, there was the character of their service, which the apostle points out in the third verse. “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” Faith is properly energetic and active. It must, so to speak, do something for God, Who had done all in Christ for them. There had been faith in God. They had believed in “Him Who had raised up His Son from the dead,” “even Jesus our deliverer from the wrath to come” (ver. 10). What could they now do for Him? They could serve Him There was labor too; yea, “the labor of love.” And what can sustain in labor like love? Divine love sustains the servant.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.” Here all was fresh, and love is the mainspring and power, with faith simple and hope bright and enduring. Thus the work became a labor of love, for “love never faileth.” There might have been work and labor kept up mechanically when faith decayed, and love cooled down, and hope was no longer enduring. Alas! so it was late in the day at Ephesus (Rev. 2:2-4). “I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have (somewhat) against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Much yet remained good. Here we have work, labor, and patience; judicial zeal too, in the rejection of what was false and evil. They could not bear evil, they had tried and refused all high pretenders, and judged according to God. This was right in its place.

What of the power and mainspring which should have given character and real power to the whole, and joy to the Lord's own heart Who saw to the bottom of all? “Thou hast left thy first love.” What was the real difference between the spiritual state of these old Ephesian saints, and those young believers in Thessalonica? In the latter “at the fresh springs” it was a work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope. In the former were works, toil, and patience, but “first love was left.” There was joy for the heart of the apostle Paul in the “labor of love,” and thanks to God continually for their loving labor. Where was joy for Christ in all that the Ephesians were doing, when first love was gone? May we take heed, and “repent and do the first works.” Such then was service; but the

rest was in prospect, and they were giving diligence to enter into it (Heb. 4:9-11). The Lord was coming, and they were waiting for Him daily, and had been ever since the day of their conversion. They had “turned from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son, from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (verses 9, 10). The rest is with Christ in glory. Clearly the apostle had preached the Lord's second coming, as well as the first, in the synagogue at Thessalonica. It is part of the gospel testimony, not to believer only, but to unbeliever also, who must see His appearing in that day; and thus they knew it on God's authority, and looked for Himself from heaven habitually whilst still working for Him. They needed further instruction as to its manner, with regard to those who had fallen asleep in Him This he gives them in chap. 4. in its details as to those who sleep, and those who are alive and remain. The rapture will be simultaneous, for all will together meet the Lord in the air, and be forever with Him. Blessed hope, and most sanctifying truth, as we see throughout both of these Epistles! Here, at the end of our chapter, language could not be plainer or more explicit for babes in the faith. They were to wait for “His Son from heaven even Jesus,” our deliverer from the wrath to come. It cannot be wrested to mean death, or any other event. It was Christ Himself that they waited for from day to day. In chap. 2. ver. 19, we read “For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” Again, chap. iii. 13, “To the end He may stablish your hearts, unblameable in holiness, before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” Chap. we have already noticed briefly. Lastly, chap. 23, “Your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Everywhere His advent is pressed. I do not at present go into the second Epistle; but, the Lord willing, I may at another time attempt to distinguish a little between His coming and appearing or day. May we serve God, and wait for Jesus from heaven. G. R.

Chapter 309

Saul

1 Samuel 14

To the professing church the history of Saul affords an instructive lesson. In it we may learn something of the conduct of the flesh when, under the most favorable circumstances, it takes the lead among the professed people of God. Far happier would it be to trace the way of the Spirit in a man subject to the will of God; but Saul reigned before David. We have already noticed that his first act, when confirmed in the kingdom, was an open transgression of the commandment of God to tarry for Samuel, and a public display that he could be independent of Him and could fulfill his kingly duties without the counsel of the Lord communicated through him. The impatience of the flesh and its desire to be unfettered in its operations thus early displayed themselves, and were accompanied with an astonishing want of conscience and with no little hollowness of heart.

At the very time when Saul was setting at naught the word of God by His prophet, he went forth to meet and salute (bless) him, apparently well satisfied with himself for showing him this outward honor. The immediate and solemn reproof which he received, the judgment that was at once pronounced on him, “thy kingdom shall not continue” (13. 13-14), are surely warnings against a too common lack of reverence and godly fear. What must it be to go ostensibly to meet and bless the Lord while living and acting contrary to His revealed will?

If Saul would not humble himself at this reproof (and there does not appear a sign of it), and if he would not take a true measure of his solitary helplessness brought about by his disobedience, the Philistines did. They could desire nothing better than for such a man to be the captain over Israel. They could ravage the country with impunity, and did at once send out spoilers in all directions; so that caves and thickets, rocks and pits, were sought for as shelter by the majority of Saul's trembling followers. The few that were left were disarmed, the king and his son only being allowed to retain their weapons. Was this in contempt? It might be so; but the over-ruling hand of the Lord brought blessing out of it for His afflicted people. Their enemies might safely trust a man after the flesh with a sword; it was another thing to leave one in the hand of a man after the Spirit, a man of simple faith, who looked not at the strength of the foe but up to God. Such was Jonathan, the reserve of grace for the hour of need. To him the Philistines were but “the uncircumcised” who had no connection with the Lord; and apart from Him all mere creatures are “as void as air.” He believed that the Lord would work for Israel, for it had pleased Him to make them His people, and there was no restraint to Him to save by many or by few. A sword in the hand of such a man (like the word of God in the hands of those who know it and use it as the sword of the Spirit) was mighty through God to the overthrow of these powerful foes. Accompanied by his armor-bearer only, he advanced upon them, and they fell before him. “And there was trembling in the host: the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked; so it was a very great trembling.”

And where was Saul? Where the flesh always is, not in the secret of the Spirit at all. Jonathan's action was altogether irregular according to nature. “He told not his father.” Significant words! He sought neither the sanction nor the co-operation of the flesh. Saul felt it, no doubt, and we fear,

from subsequent events, only waited his time to resent it, and to assert his authority; for the natural heart can be cruel when its pride is wounded. In the meanwhile he could not fail to perceive that the energy of faith had brought Jonathan into a place which officially belonged to him, and the flesh is sensitive as to the maintenance of official importance. He must therefore do something; so he said to Ahiah, “Bring hither the ark of God,” as if, like Hophni and Phinehas, he could dispose of it as he pleased. Boldness to take and use the most sacred things, not as truly caring for them, but to cover ambition with the semblance of devotion, is as marked a characteristic of the flesh as its unwillingness to be subject to the word. But mark his inconsistency. When the ark was brought to him, he turned as quickly from it as from Samuel. Hearing the noise in the host of the Philistines increase, he said to the priest, “Withdraw thine hand.” The service was a short one; his impatience made it so. If the rout of the Philistines were complete before he arrived on the scene, he would have no opportunity to signalize himself. It is painful to make these discoveries in another; but they help us to form a truer judgment of ourselves. We greatly need to see self stripped of every disguise, but as it really is, and to get distinctly God's judgment of it, which has never changed. We may be sure that the lowest estimate of oneself fitly accompanies the highest enjoyment of Christ; so that repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ go and grow together.

Saul and his followers came to the battle (14:20), and we can now learn what help the flesh brings to those who are engaged in conflict with the enemies of God and His people. His first act was to put a curse on any man of Israel who should eat any food until the evening: a more effectual way of weakening them he could not devise. Jonathan discerned at once, on hearing of it, that his father was not acting in concert with the mind of God, that he was troubling and not helping them. Whence came this decree? From the written word of God defining the duties of a king in Israel (Deuteronomy 17.)? It was opposed to the spirit of it. From Samuel? He never consulted him. From the priest before the ark? He would not wait there for an answer. Confessedly it was to serve his own ends— “That I may be avenged on mine enemies.” Self was the glass through which, unhappily, he saw everything; and instead of his enemies receiving hurt, they profited by this anathema to make good their retreat; and the whole weight of it fell on Jonathan, “who heard not when the charge was given, and who put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth.” When has an anathema of the flesh not fallen on the spiritual? and when has there been a greater display of religiousness than when enforcing it? Saul made a great show of zeal for God in passing the death sentence on his son; but the people intervened and rescued him. They said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day.” Saul was saved from a great sin, but at the expense of his authority.

Humbled for the moment by his subjects and a check put upon his will, his day of probation is prolonged, and gleams of sunshine pierce through the gathering clouds. The people share in the blessing; for the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. Their brave stand also for the servant of God is not forgotten. Saul is strengthened to deliver Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them. “He fought against them on every side, and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.” We have here a lesson that the natural mind fails to understand. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.” Whenever manifest blessing attends a work, the natural conclusion is that the doer of it is approved of the Lord. Facts ought to make us

slow in coming to a judgment. The Lord delivered Israel twice out of the hands of the Syrians by Ahab after he had driven out Elijah at the instigation of his wife Jezebel; and Saul here gained victories over his enemies after his evil course with Samuel and Jonathan. While thankful for blessing, the Lord in these cases takes us behind the scenes, to teach us that we must fail if we judge after the sight of our eyes or the hearing of our ears. Nothing relieves us from judging everything by the word of God and the Spirit.

The last words of the chapter disclose the real state of Saul's heart at this very time; “When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.” He hoped in this way to establish himself in the kingdom which he had forfeited. by his sin, and to aggrandize himself and his house in the view of the people, In the case of David, those who came to him were drawn by love. Not so with Saul, “he took them unto him.” He made great preparations for future service; but the final proof made by the Lord of the quality of his work disclosed its utter worthlessness. All was for self-exaltation, or fleshly importance, obtained by fleshly means, and imposing only on those who were of fleshly mind. To the remnant, whom the Lord was preparing to welcome the king after His own heart, all Saul's glory was nothing, and all his rewards were nothing (22:7). They turned their back on everything to share exile and privation with the son of Jesse. To be with him outweighed for them all the glitter of Saul's court and surroundings. This was the work of God, and so David owned it (1 Chronicles 29:11-13). It brought around him, as another has said, “an army of heroes.” As a type of Christ and of those who “go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach,” what lessons are these!

The next chapter is a most serious one as to Saul, while Samuel's inspired utterance as to obedience, strikingly put into rhythmical form, makes it of imperishable value to us; but we must reserve our notice of it, if the Lord will, for another paper.

Chapter 310

Saul: The Third Sign and the Test

1 Samuel 10:5-8

No one can carefully read Samuel's description of the third sign without being impressed with the importance of it. The former were remarkably suggestive, and if the force and application of them had been understood by Saul they were calculated to furnish him with needed and valuable instruction for the new and important position which he was thenceforth to occupy. But the last was more than this. It was accompanied with a marvelous gift of power—the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Such a gift to such a man invites inquiry; may we enter upon it with unquestioning faith in the inspired record. It will not he without profit to have our attention directed to the amazing extent of privilege and blessing that has been bestowed on men, and, as to themselves, bestowed in vain. The same gift was conferred on Balaam. The Spirit of God came on him, his eyes were opened, he had the knowledge of the Most High and saw the vision of the Almighty (Num. 24), yet the darkness of his soul was not reached by all this light. We are solemnly warned against his doctrine, his error and his way, and he perished with the enemies of God. coming to the time of our Lord, we have the case of Judas Iscariot whose privileges exceeded all that ever went before him. Prophets and kings desired to see those things which he saw, and to hear those things which he heard, but were not so favored: he was also numbered with the apostles and obtained part of the ministry, preaching the kingdom of God and working miracles, yet he was guide to them that took Jesus, and afterward destroyed himself. Still later after the descent of the Holy Spirit, we find some who were made partakers of the Spirit and shared in other Christian privileges, yet, notwithstanding all, fell away and crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6).

These are serious cases and are made known to us for a serious purpose. The void that sin has made in the soul cannot be filled by the richest and the most abundant gifts, short of Christ, and heart-belief in Him. A man may be enlightened, have tasted of the heavenly gift, been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and yet fall away. He may preach with the gift of Paul, but, if that be all, his gift and the exercise of it will not save him (1 Cor. 9:27). As Rutherford said, “Preaching is not Christ,” though it may be about Him; and Matthew Henry, “Saul prophesying among the prophets is Saul still.” However great the difference in dispensational gifts and blessings, it will be found that the grand essential for man remains the same all through. Not light, nor even power will suffice, though both are needed. From Abel onward the great concern of the soul can only be met and answered by the Lamb of God and faith in Him. As John Forster said, “I only found relief from poignant sorrow and anxiety on account of my sin by placing a simple reliance on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for acceptance before God “; and the most gifted must come to this, or be a stranger to true peace.

“Of sinners chief—what but the blood

Could calm my soul before my God?”

We do not forget that our subject is Saul, but to refuse the further light afforded us in later scriptures would be to deprive our inquiry of all point and application to ourselves and our times. There are, it is to be feared, those who like to bear the Christian name, to share in Christian privileges and even aspire to Christian offices, without true conversion to God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore of great moment to know to what lengths the flesh can go, to have before us examples, such as those already quoted, men upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came, men who have had the gift of prophecy and who have preached to others, yet were not saved. “The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Heb. 6). The showers which fall on both do not change, but do make manifest the true nature of the soil. In David, upon whom the Spirit of the fjord came (1 Sam. 16:13), we have an example of fruitful ground; in Saul, of a barren waste.

But let us apply ourselves to the facts as narrate After leaving Rachel's sepulcher, Saul might have been reminded that, though now an anointed king, he was but dust, a Benoni, the son of his mother's sorrow, and that God alone could make him a Benjamin, His instrument of power; but after parting with the three men going up to God to Bethel, who could have taught him to put his trust in the God of Jacob, ever faithful to all His promises, he is brought to the hill of God, and there (remarkable spot) he finds the Philistines securely entrenched. He is thus face to face with the difficulties before him, for the people had desired a king to fight their battles and the Lord had given him to be their captain, to deliver them especially out of the hand of the Philistines, their bitterest as well as their strongest enemies. He could well have done it, had he proved obedient; for here, in the sight of the foe, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he is at once seen prophesying with the prophets, with all the accompaniments of joy and triumph, the psaltery, the tabret, the pipe and the harp: the battle was the Lord's, therefore he might well rejoice, for then the victory was sure. To awaken faith in his soul, speedy proof of this was afforded him. When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead sought deliverance from Nahash the Ammonite, in the energy of the Spirit he called out the people, led them victoriously against the enemy, and rescued Jabesh. That he was a gifted man was thus put beyond question, and nature will appreciate gift. He was admired of all, was at once confirmed in the kingdom, and he and all the men of Israel rejoiced together greatly (11.). With Samuel only was there reserve. He was not carried away by the popular enthusiasm, and the Lord sent thunder and rain in wheat harvest to confirm His word of warning (12.).

The period of the judges was now closed. The king superseded the judge, but any attempt to set aside Samuel as the prophet-mediator would be contempt of the supreme authority of Jehovah, and of the provision of sovereign grace when sin had brought the nation to ruin, its priesthood gone and the glory departed. The word of the Lord was explicit as to this. Saul was to tarry for Samuel till he should come to offer the sacrifices and show him what he should do. Though his office and his gift were unchangeable, he was not independent to use them as he pleased. Samuel was the one link remaining of connection with God. It was given to him to draw near to the Lord on behalf of the people and to communicate His will—a type in this of Christ. Were they to have a king who should do his own will in worship and service? David was a man after God's own heart. Why? Not because he was a prophet, how far from it! But because the Lord had said of him, “he shall

fulfill all My will" (Acts 13:22). Saul, alas, was not this. He did his own. A more serious lesson can hardly be read to these who are in office or have gift in the church, for none are in greater danger of trenching on the mediatorship and authority of Christ; but a great house has diverse vessels in it, so we read in 2 Tim. 2:20. The office may be honorable, and the gift undeniable; but what is the vessel, and for whose use? The test is needed, and it is a serious one.

It was all well outwardly with Saul at first, but at length the impatience of the flesh refused restraint. His religion could do without Samuel, and he kept not the commandment of the Lord. He thought, doubtless, to cover his willfulness by a show of piety, but it was a bandage for his own eyes only. Samuel's question, "What hast thou done?" showed that he was not blinded by it. Mere religiousness may make a man satisfied with himself, as Adam with his apron of fig leaves; but this question must come sooner or later, "What hast thou done?" and then all is upset. Saul's miserable pleading for an unlawful sacerdotalism was of no more avail than Adam's wretched device of laying the blame of his conduct on his wife (13.).

The contrast in the next chapter is striking and beautiful. On the one hand we see exalted position, gift, numbers, religiousness and assumption. On the other two men out of the whole tribe of Israel relying on the strength of the Lord alone (14: 6), united in His name and going forth in the mighty energy of faith to attack and overcome the Philistines, and to recover from their hand the possessions given of God but of which they had robbed them. That there were but two is an indication of the low condition of the people, but it had been lower. The first chapter of this book reveals yet greater weakness. Hannah was alone and in reproach; around her was either spiritual deadness or shameless wickedness, while judgment from the Lord, dishonored in His sanctuary, was impending. It was at such a moment that it pleased God to reveal Himself by a name which He had not taken before, or rather, which is not found before in the scriptures. The time was come for such a revelation of the divine glory, so suited to encourage the faith of the weak in the presence of adverse power. Hannah was the first that we read of who cried to the Lord as Jehovah Tzebaoth (the Lord of hosts or armies, 1:11). David also met and overthrew Goliath in the might of that name (17: 45), and looking forward to the final triumphs of Jesus in the earth, where He was crucified, in the spirit of prophecy, and in the loftiest strain, he applied it to Him in Psa. 24

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates!

Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors;

And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?

Jehovah Tzebaoth,

He is the King of glory."

How perfectly this ray of the divine glory shines now in the face of Jesus Christ, those who are oppressed may learn in a remarkable passage in James. "Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Yes, the labor question is before Him, and the balance of justice is safe in His hands. Be patient, Christian, His coming draweth nigh. As Jehovah Tzebaoth He heard Hannah's cry, so He hears yours. "Jesus Christ is

the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

But as to Saul, had he any real knowledge of the glory of the Lord or care for it? Who can seriously consider His course, and that last sad scene on Mount Gilboa, and entertain a hope of him? The events of his life are vividly portrayed by the Holy Spirit. They were "written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4); and here "our" is emphatic: we need them therefore. W. B.

Chapter 311

Saul's Rejection of the Word of the Lord

1 Samuel 15

“When God Himself speaks, all the reasonings and imaginations of men must be silent. Everything may deceive—who can venture to deny it? But the word of God never deceives.” Important truth, and needed, for most certainly “God will be justified in His sayings and overcome when He is judged.” Will man implead his Maker and think to carry his cause? In view of the destruction of Sodom by fire, Abraham said, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” And Paul, when writing, not of temporal visitations, but of the final judgment when heaven and earth shall flee away and the award be eternal, added, “We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth.” Men reason from human feelings, but (quoting again) we ask, “Has God ever suffered Himself to be hindered in executing His righteous threats by what men call love?” Was not Saul rejected because of his rejection of the word of the Lord, the righteous sentence pronounced by Him on the Amalekites, and sparing, when he was commanded to spare not? And are we to judge these ways of the Lord by our feelings, thoughts, and standards? Let us consider the facts. “Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment.” This was certainly true of the Amalekites.

The Lord had delivered Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, and had brought them to Himself. Never were they nearer to Him. The pillar of cloud and of fire, the manna from heaven, and the water from the rock were visible proofs of it; yet it was at that time that the Amalekites sought their injury, and this from real hatred to them as the people of the Lord, for they could reap but little advantage from their attack. It was made in the presence of “the glory,” a wicked insult to God, a lifting up of their hand against His throne (Ex. 17:16, marg.). It was both cowardly and cruel, for they fell upon all that were feeble and hindmost and when they were faint and weary. The righteous sentence went forth at once against them, and was subsequently written, the people they had wronged being appointed as ministers of judgment (Deut. 25:19). Thus the Lord made His people's cause His own. To touch them was to touch the apple of His eye.

Dean Milman may be right in saying that the Amalekites were the most harassing of Israel's foes; but he was scarcely so in adding, “It was a cruel but inevitable policy to carry a war of extermination into their country.” Saul last his kingdom and was rejected of the Lord, not because of a mistaken policy in sparing Agag and the best of the spoil from destruction, but for disobedience to an express command. “Now go,” said the Lord of hosts, “and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”

No truth is more clearly revealed in scripture than that the Lord put the sword of judgment into the hands of Israel and commanded them to use it with unrelenting severity in certain cases (Deut. 20:10-18). It was an honor conferred on them to execute the judgment written, and this will yet be true of them again, strange as it may sound in our ears (Zech. 9; 10; Psa. 149:6-9, and col. freq.). How different now! Those who have been led to discover in Jesus a Savior, to know the ransom of their souls by His blood, and to receive in Him risen and glorified the free gifts of righteousness

and eternal life, are made God's ministers of love, of mercy, and of grace to a rebellious world. The same Divine Lawgiver who, in perfect harmony with the dispensation of the law, said to Saul, “Utterly destroy, and spare them not,” now, in the day of salvation, says to His redeemed, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you” (Matt. 5: see also Romans 12:17-20,

1 Thess. 5:15, 1 Peter 3:9). This is the superlative honor put upon those that are Christ's, and to hear these sayings of the Lord and not to do them is to be like unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Rejection of any of the words of the Lord will assuredly entail loss. The path of obedience in every dispensation is not only the safe path, but the path of present blessing and future glory. The believer is saved, for he has received the word of the truth of the gospel; but let him not stop there. Having life, he is to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. He may lose his crown, though not his soul. To receive Christ is everything now; and as Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord, so the Holy Spirit by the word deals unsparingly with all that is of the flesh in Christians (Gal. 5:17).

In this final test of Saul it is important to observe that there were no difficulties in the path of obedience. The resources at his command were abundant, and the victory was an easy one. The temptation to disobey came wholly from within.

The commandment tested his heart, and it is the heart that the word of God lays bare. As for actions, how many in Saul wore a fair appearance! At first he was modest and humble, little in his own sight, and he ascribed his victory over the Ammonites to the Lord. When “the sons of Belial” insultingly opposed his elevation to the throne, he controlled his feelings and “held his peace “; and afterward, when he was urged to use his power and put them to death, he refused, “For,” said he, “to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.”

Indeed most of his expressions savored of piety and his doings of religion. On his introduction to David, when he was refreshed and relieved by the music of his harp, he loved him greatly, and desired of Jesse that he might remain with him; and these memories seem never to have left him. How well, to almost the last, he knew David's voice; and how deep was his remorse in the cave of Engedi when with tears he confessed to him, “Thou art more righteous than I... The Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done to me this day.” And so we read that immediately after his anointing, when he left Samuel to return home, he “was turned into another man,” not only gifted to rule and made valiant in war as became a king, but his whole character got a religious tone. In this latter respect it is one of the most solemn examples, in the most solemn examples in the Old Testament, of what is described in 2 Peter 2:20-22, as true of some in Christendom; and as Saul, more than most, brought ruin on Israel, so have these caused the most mischief in the church. Mere change of character, even when accompanied with forms of piety, is of no account with God so long as the gospel of his grace is not received by faith in the heart. In is a totally different thing when it is.

When that gospel is an implanted word (logos emphutos), not received naturally, but implanted by the Spirit, is believed as the word of God, and is rooted in the heart, then the reformation is radical, permanent, and saving (James 1:21, 1 Peter 1:23, Matt. 13:23). The mind is renewed, the truth is in the inward parts, Christ is received, the soul is saved.

Saul's extreme deadness of conscience is one among many proofs that he was never really converted to God. He never received with meekness the implanted word, but was to the last a rejecter of it, turning at last to witchcraft and necromancy. When Samuel was grieving over him, and spending the whole night crying to the Lord because of his sin, he was setting up “a place” —that is some memorial of his victory—but like Absalom's pillar, a monument to himself (15:12; 2 Sam. 18:18, R.V.). So, when the prophet came to announce to him the judgment of God on his rebelliousness, he boldly met him with a blessing and said, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord” — “a benediction and a falsehood in a breath.”

So callous had he become that he seemed surprised to hear that rejecting the word of the Lord was sin, that “rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry;” and when this was pressed, he, although the king, pleaded his fear of the people! and thought to cover his robbery of the spoil by saying that they took of it to sacrifice unto the Lord.

It was but too evident that, with all his show of religion, the word of God had no place in his heart, and nothing remained for Samuel but to pronounce the sentence passed on him; and never did a judge set before a convicted criminal his guilt in clearer terms. And with what effect on Saul? When everything was at stake with him for time and eternity, when there was no hope save in taking his true place as guilty, self-ruined, and helpless, and seeking mercy of the Lord, he thought only of his position in the world. “I have sinned” he said, “yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel.” Oh! this fatal lust of the praise of men. How many are the souls that have been eternally ruined by it! (John 5:44.)

Chapter 312

The Saviour of the World

The Samaritans besought the Son of God to abide with them, and there He did abide two days (ver. 40). What confidence on their part! what grace on His! Others more favored, who despised them, besought Him with one consent to depart from them (Luke 8:37). Who else are recorded as ever preferring such a request for His presence? But those who asked received a blessing both now and evermore, as faith in Him ever does. “And many more believed because of His own word, and said to the woman, No longer because of thy speaking do we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Truly a noble and most suited confession! No Jew did or could then have uttered it. It was God choosing the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame the wise; it was God choosing the weak things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the ignoble things of the world and the despised God chose, the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are; so that no flesh should boast before God.

It was an anticipation worthy of His personal dignity, which faith saw and testified, as grace created and sanctioned it. The Son of God is recognized in the fullest sphere of divine mercy. It is the more striking because He had maintained the place God had given the Jews as compared with Samaritan pretension. As surely as He was the Messiah, so salvation is of the Jews. But the Jews, blinder than their blind whose eyes He so often opened, were rejecting Him through trusting their own thoughts and indulging their own will. And the rejected Messiah, about to taste its bitterness to the uttermost, was displaying grace and truth open to any needy soul, and pressing home the reality of that need, that He might bless according to the love of the Father. His own word deepened the conviction which the woman's testimony had awakened; and the faith of the many that believed expressed itself in the confession, “This is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Was it not all worthy of God and His Son? The sin of His ancient people, in despising the grace of the Messiah because He did not come in power and glory to exalt their nation and confound their foes, only gave occasion to more grace. But the Samaritans believed without a miracle, and entered into the blessing all the more deeply. They take their own place. not a word of rivalry with the Jew. They were sinners: Jesus is the Savior. They were of the world. And “this is indeed the Savior of the world.” God saves not because we deserve, but because He, Jesus, does; and we believe on Him.

As long as the Jew was under probation, this could not be manifested. But one of the peculiarities of the Gospel of John (and each has its special design, not merely from the writer's style, but from the particular purpose of the inspiring Holy Spirit) is that the Jews received not Christ, as we learn, from the very first. Hence a larger and deeper scope of blessing begins to shine through the clouds, even before the Lord's public testimony and right through it. This chapter is an unmistakable witness.

And is it all nothing to you, dear readers? Is not this, and more than this, expressly written that “ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through (in) His name”? John 20:31. Is it in vain that the Holy Spirit has perpetuated for you the grace that reached the many Samaritans? Or are you disposed to follow the proud and stiff-necked Jews in nullifying as to yourselves the counsel of God? If so, beware of perishing, as they did.

Beyond doubt, as all scripture declares, whatever be the grace of God, you forfeit it by unbelief. It is of faith that it might be according to grace. It is here you have sinned, and now you must be saved; and there is no means other than believing on Jesus. You in Christendom have heard more than either the Jews who refused, or the Samaritans who believed. And whoever you are, whatever you may have been, their testimony is for you, for anyone: “This is indeed the Savior of the world.” Such is the spirit of the gospel that went forth in due thee to all the creation, as the Lord came expressly to call not righteous men, but sinners. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4, 5). Were it otherwise, no sinful roan could be justified. Whereas, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” It is the distinctive blessedness that God loves with no motive in the object loved, but because He is love. Hence says the apostle, “God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

And as the Samaritans at the beginning were divinely led to own the Savior of the world, so the apostle John in his First Epistle, avowedly written for the dangers and evils of the last time, repeats the testimony when unfolding the love of God superior to all changes. “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). Yes, but how am I to receive certainty for my own soul? “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (ver. 15). It is the Spirit of God anticipating conscientious difficulty and satisfying the just desire of assurance from above in one who might otherwise be overwhelmed with the sense of sin. One cannot too much judge one's self, provided that along with it there is no distrust of grace. The person and the work of Christ account for salvation and the highest privileges to him that believes, were he chief of sinners. God puts all honor on the name of His Son, whether in blessing the believer or in punishing the unbeliever by-and-by.

To believe God's testimony is the first of duties, and Christ is the object of that testimony. So, when the trembling jailer at Philippi fell down before Paul and Silas, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The way is simple, the warrant sure, the salvation rich and full. The call of God is to believe on His Son, the Lord Jesus; the result is salvation for all that believe, the house no less than its head. Hence it is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ: loving one another follows, as He gave us commandment. But it is in vain to urge love, holiness, or aught else, till we believe on Him.

Chapter 313

Distinctive Blessing on Obedience

It is ever important to distinguish things that differ, particularly in the things of God, as Timothy was enjoined by the apostle to rightly divide the word of truth. Seeing too that responsibility flows from privilege, the blessing of the latter should be known, so that the former should be intelligently entered into and carried out. The truth of this is clearly shewn in the earthly people of God, from whom with God's blessing an instructive lesson may be gathered. Distinctive privilege and blessing, in its manner and continuance, is set forth in Deut. 11, where Moses, in verses 10-12, contrasts Egypt from whence they came out with Canaan into which they were going. In the former the seed sown was watered with the foot, as a garden of heros; but the latter was a land of hills and valleys, drinking water of the rain of heaven, a land moreover that Jehovah cared for, having His eyes always upon it "from the beginning of the year unto the end." The distinction was therefore most marked; in the one was application to human means by which fruitfulness came, whereas the other wholly depended upon its supply from heaven. The rain must come from above to water the land, and this the Lord made dependent upon the people's obedience, who were to "hearken to His voice and obey His commandments," yea they were to love and serve Him.

Obedience therefore was the appointed means for the giving of the early and later rain, which was most needful for the continuance and enjoyment of their blessing. The book of Deuteronomy significantly sets forth the mind of the Lord as to the people's conduct in the land, and is rightly termed the book of obedience. Hence the needed word "Take heed to yourselves" lest strange gods, and other things rather than Jehovah, His land, and His things, should have any place with them, and thus involve judgment; a special form of which shut up the heaven, and witheld the rain, so that blessing ceased. How important therefore to yield an obedience, consistent with their given position, and privileges; to remember the word of the Lord, in the confidence of His promised care, crowned with the truth that the eyes of the Lord would be always upon the land. Surely such a promise implied no failure of blessing, if the people answered to their privileges, assured that He is ever faithful to His own word. But alas! the scriptures give unmistakable testimony, that the break-down is ever with man, and that all blessing dependent on him fails from Eden onward.

The brightest day that Israel ever knew was when Solomon their king sat on the throne, certainly as to manifested glory and blessing, despite the recorded fact, that continuous failure and unfaithfulness had previously marked them; not least in the time of the Judges, when the enemy frequently possessed the produce of their land, whereas abundance in peace and liberty, was enjoyed in Solomon's day. He, and not David, was favored to build the house of the Lord, where the ark of the Lord found its resting place, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. It was then that Solomon was told that the name of the Lord would be in and His eyes upon the house. Thus a double privilege so to speak comes out, not only the Lord caring for the land, but dwelling in His house. In 2 Chron. 6 is given the wonderful prayer of the king, in relation to the Lord dwelling in His temple. Among the many things anticipated by him, as a resource in failure, he in verses 26 and 27 speaks of heaven being shut up, and no rain, because of their sin, adding "If they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin," Jehovah would hear, and send needed

rain from heaven.

Thus Deut. 9 is bound up with 2 Chron. 6 as to the land and the house of the Lord; Moreover, obedience finds its central place in Israel's king, who is enjoined to walk before the Lord, according to all His commandments, otherwise the throne, temple, and land, would be destroyed. All their privileges were thus linked up with obedience, yet coupled with a gracious resource, should failure come in, a resource which, it is evident, they failed to use in time of need. Not only did Solomon sadly fail, but most of the kings after him, particularly those of Israel, so that the time came for the heaven to be shut, and the rain to cease. King Ahab committed the crowning sin leading up to this, for he not only married Jezebel, but reared an altar for the worship of Baal. At this crisis, the prophet Elijah appears to Ahab, with the solemn words “As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” 1 Kings 19:1. Such a judgment wrought sorrow and desolation in the land, but with no lasting effect upon king or people, notwithstanding the public witness Jehovah gave to Himself by Elijah, to the overthrow of Baal and his worshippers. Though recovered for a time, Israel and their kings (and in the end Judah also) sank deeper into sin, with no true self-judgment, or turning to the Lord, so that they were finally carried captives into a foreign land; thus ending their Canaan blessing, under given responsibility.

Thanks to an ever-faithful God, blessing lost through Israel's unfaithfulness, only made way for the unconditional promises, and unfailing resources, of Jehovah, both as to the people, and the land. Though Israel became barren and destroyed herself, hope still remained in Him, Who was first in His promise, but last in fulfillment; yea it was at last that God sent His Son, whilst as to purpose, He was first. The two samples in promised blessing as to the land and throne were unconditionally given, before the responsibility of Deut. 11 or 2 Chron. 6 For by Abraham and David, Jehovah had declared, that the land should be possessed, and the throne filled so as never to be lost, or to pass into Gentile hands. This most assuredly awaited the coming of Him, Who was Abraham's seed, and David's Son, though as to His person, it was before the former, and the root, yet no less the offspring, of the latter; the One in, and by Whom, the land should he possessed, with all its promised blessing and fruitfulness. This, Gen. 12; 15 and 22. plainly state, that Abraham's seed should possess the land; no less does a failing David anticipate and speak of One infinitely beyond his typical son Solomon, when “The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without cloud, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” 2 Sam. 23:3, 4.

If Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus specially as Israel's Messiah, the true son of Abraham and of David, Luke also blessedly speaks of what the angel Gabriel stated. “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:32, 33. Thus all real interest blessing invests itself in Him Who was presented to the nation according to promise and prophecy, the One to Whom at Jordan's banks the heavens were opened upon Whom the Spirit descended and abode upon, Him, and the Father's voice said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” But as in the past, there is persistent failure as to such distinctive privilege, for they not only refuse to own their Messiah, but finally they join together saying, “This is the heir; come let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” Matt.

21:38. Not one only, but all the Gospels, bear witness to the rejection of Christ the beloved Son of God; for in answer put to the final question of Pilate, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? they all say unto him, Let Him be crucified.”

Thus the cross terminated hope of blessing for God's earthly people, on the ground of their responsibility, involving them in a judgment infinitely greater than shutting heaven in Elijah's day. But the cross fully proving the guilt of Israel (no less of man generally) has manifested fully what God is in infinite love and grace. For there the question of sin was raised by forever settled by His beloved Son, Who by the grace of God tasted death for every man. The sin of man, and its alone remedy, found an answer at the cross, where Jesus by His death and shed blood not only secured the glory of God, and eternal salvation, but laid a holy and righteous basis for all blessing, both for the heavens and the earth. Notwithstanding all the past, crowned with the hatred and rejection of God's Christ, all blessing lost by Israel and man will be established and more than made good, in and through Him now exalted, with other blessed purposes before Him in the hour of His absence. Yet the apostle Peter declared, that God shall send back Jesus “whom the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution of all things.” For to Him, as the apostle Paul states, are given the sure mercies of David. Already, therefore, is the future of Israel and the land clearly made known, when infinitely more than was enjoyed in Solomon's brightest day will be realized under Him, Who will not only reign gloriously in Jerusalem but from the river unto the ends of the earth. In that day will righteousness and judgment be united, and Israel brought under their new covenant blessing, when Jehovah will blot out their transgressions and remember their sins no more. Indeed it will be said of them, “Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever.” Isa. 60:21. Then blessing will flow from the throne of the true David, causing mountain, hill and valley, to yield abundantly; yea, “the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains shall drop sweet wine,” and Jehovah's unfulfilled promise will be realized, “I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.” See Amos 9:13-15. Thus Israel will be securely blessed, having been made willing in the day of Jehovah's power, and fitted for an obedience in character with their distinctive blessing. The glorious privileges for Israel and the earth, recorded in Psa. 72, will be entered upon, when the prayers of the typical David will be ended; and the long rejected Messiah will reign gloriously to the joy and satisfaction both of Israel and the nations, for “All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.” Then will happy and blessed Israel answer to the words “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him and bless his name, yea “; in grateful obedience they will worship continually; saying, “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen.”

G. G.

Scripture Imagery: 87. Israel's Diet

In regard to the quadrupeds selected and rejected then we can see a fair evidence of a spiritual application, but that may not be quite so obvious in regard to the fish and birds.

A fish to be accepted must have both scales and fins. The scales were considered by Agassiz to be of sufficient importance to form a basis on which to distinguish the different species, and this basis has been generally accepted. They form a bright, strong, flexible, defensive armor, and may remind one of Eph. 6:11. With this armor the fish are more hardy, and less liable to be injured and influenced by passing external impressions. The fins are serviceable for balancing, guiding and staying. (Of course all fish swim through the water by means of the tail, therefore fins can—in a way—be done without, as far as mere progress goes.) In addition to this the fins are rudiments of higher powers. We see this in the development of the pectoral fins into a kind of limb in the climbing perch, and into a kind of wing in the flying gurnard and Exo Volitans. Fins consequently suggest a nature which has poise and self-control, and has also in itself the impulses and rudiments of faculties which belong to a higher existence, a life in a celestial sphere. We need not believe in the evolutionary dogma, that one animal changes into another just because it has rudiments of faculties which that other possesses, any more than that a kettle will ultimately become a teapot because it has a spout: still there is a relationship between the wing and the fin which is traced back even to the saurians of the paleozoic times, and there is an embryo wing implanted even in the most unlikely places, as in caterpillars. The human caterpillar, feeling his proneness, sighs, “O that I had wings like a dove!” Some day perhaps, when he has passed through the chrysalis stage, they will come.

The birds of prey are excluded—"... the vulture and the kite after his kind, every raven after his kind.” These feed not only on death like the carnivora, but on corruption. This is the nature that finds delight in the contemplation and appropriation of what is not only dead but foul and putrid. But is there any such nature? Unfortunately we know too well that there is, and when we stand outside the cage of a bird like the African “Sociable Vulture,” and see it plunge its reeking beak in some loathsome carrion, we are apt to wonder what enjoyment it finds in that. But this is typical. There are European Sociable Vultures as well who feed on garbage, it may be.

All of this description are unclean, whether they are characterized by power and dignity like the eagle, cruelty like the hawk, impudence like the cuckoo, or the ponderous and shallow gravity, the stupid wisdom, of the owl. “I don't believe,” said Fox, “any living man is half so wise as Lord T—— looks.” Amongst them all there is none so impressive looking as the owl—to those that do not know that his omniscience is only parochial; that his attitude of grave impartial rebuke is only the fear to commit himself; that his preference for the twilight is not because he loves meditation (for he is only dozing when he looks so thoughtful), nor because of his exceptional devoutness, but simply because he is always confused by the daylight. His demeanor of calm disparagement does not mean a bit that he is superior in sanctity to everyone else: it only means that he thinks himself so. It is the general censoriousness which characterizes this predaceous nature. We can forgive

him much on account of his purblindness, but surely it is going too far when, like the mantis religiosa, he spells “pray” with an “e,” instead of with an “a.”

A habit of inherent fault-finding is one of the most commonly known features of this nature and one of the most rapidly developed. But it finds faults not so much from a desire to correct them as that, from a natural aptitude, it looks for them in every direction (except inwardly). It loves to pick up morsels of evil from all sides, and whilst shaking its head over them and appearing to condemn them, quietly puts them in the mouth, masticates and ruminates them. Finally, whatsoever things are untrue, whatsoever things are dishonest...unjust...impure...unlovely and of bad report; if there be any vice; if there be any blame, the carrion-feeding nature thinks on these things. The elements of all these evil tendencies are of course in each of us. But if we have also been granted new natures, we have the power to “reckon dead” and “make no provision for the flesh.” Was not old Ulysses right (to speak as a man) when he smote down the scurrilous Thersites with rough blows, and Achilles when he slew him?

But oh, for the wings of the dove “covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold!” “Though we have lien among the pots” yet may we be so. “Not as a raven but a dove The Holy Ghost came from above,” —that wisdom which is from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. It is simple concerning evil, wise concerning that which is good. Far from the carrion-feeding natures, it rejoices not in iniquity, but in the truth, imputes no evil but hopes all things and believes all things. Nay, even when the evil is unquestionably there, it is slow to see it, as to which we read even of the Most Blessed, that if He should mark iniquities who shall stand; that He had not seen iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel... (though there was little else there). The Lord, I think, would be well pleased to see more of the same nature in us all; that we might have dove's eyes and not vulture's. Thus the Bridegroom says, “Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks!”

In general too, all creeping things—all crawling, prone, and groveling natures—are rejected. But if they “had legs above their feet to leap withal upon the earth” like the locusts, they were accepted. For these had an inherent power that could overleap those earthly obstacles that the absolutely prone nature is stopped by. “If you cannot plow through the log,” Abraham Lincoln used to say, “plow round it.” It is better still when there is that inward faculty, which he himself possessed so largely, that enables us to rise over it.

J.C.B.

Chapter 315

Scripture Imagery: 88. Lepers and Leprosy

Pursuing the subject of the natures of creatures in Lev. 11, we have man brought before us in the succeeding chapters. In the twelfth we find him to be of such a nature—shapen in iniquity... conceived in sin— as to require that there should be a sin offering even in connection with his birth, before he had committed any action good or bad, and then under the figure of the leper we have a truly frightful picture of that which a sinful man may become.

This horrible and melancholy disease is not, I think, so much a type of sin in general—other diseases typify that—but of some of the worst forms of sin, especially in respect of its loathsomeness and corruption, its contagion and its impossibility of cure, save by the direct power of God.

That the type is of this character, and not, as has been so frequently supposed, a type of sin in general, is shown by the fact that the leper is invariably shut out from the camp. Now “the thought of foolishness is sin;” but it would be very wrong to suppose that one should be shut out of the assembly for that or any such offenses as those for which milder forms of discipline are prescribed. On the other hand the apostle refers to various kinds of sin with which if professing Christians were corrupted, they were not to be kept company with, not so much as to be eaten with. Thus Peter, guilty of an error of judgment and a lapse of moral cowardice that even such a wise and brave man at times falls into, commits a most sectarian offense in refusing to associate with certain Gentiles. He is rebuked, but it would have been outrageous to expel him from the assembly for that. Whereas the incestuous man in the church at Corinth they were peremptorily commanded to put away from amongst them; and the same extreme treatment was necessary in cases where the corruption was of a spiritual rather than a moral character, as with the blasphemers Hymenus and Alexander; or where it was of a doctrinal character, as for instance in the case of the Nicolaitanes, Spinitualism, Blavatskyisin, &c.

This action has to be taken, not from harshness and severity, but because of the corrupt and deadly nature of the contagion. There is place enough indeed for compassion and sorrow. The subjects of such disease—whether spiritual or physical—are of all the afflicted race of mankind the most to be pitied. There is no condition more terrible except one; and that is the condition of those who could shut a leper out of the camp, or a sinner out of the church without sorrow and reluctance. Angels must look on such beings as these with indignation, and devils with complacency.

But is the thing itself so very bad? for so many are constantly saying that the disease is not infectious or contagious at all. At St. Kitts they thought so till lately when they find the number of lepers nearly doubled in the last few years through their being allowed to pass to and fro amongst the people. So now there is “great alarm” and will probably be a reaction toward stringency like the reactions in former centuries, when there were laws such as those in Scotland, where one who escaped from a leper asylum was hanged or buried alive. M. Pasteur lately said that the Swedish Dr. Hankel had found the microbe; but two years ago at a meeting of the Epidemiological Society,

high medical authorities, speaking in vigorous terms of warning as to the increase of the disease in India and England, brought in two London lepers and showed the leper germ in their saliva by a microscope. Dr. Thompson, who had had charge of a leper hospital, said his experience satisfied him that the disease was contagious. Other authorities testified to the same effect. Pere Damien, it is said, received the disease through flies settling on a part of his head where the flesh was abraded. In Robben Island they distinctly traced the contagion in the cases of two boys lately. That is a terrible place, Robben Island. Conceive an abode of maniacs, convicts—half of whom are murderers—and lepers. “We passed through one ward, and then another and another,” says a visitor. “Here one could see a poor fellow sitting huddled up on his bed, ceaselessly rocking himself to and fro to ease the pain.... A truly awful sight was a poor man with both eyes gone... In a corner, working quietly was a leper tailor....”

In dealing with the matter, the first thing necessary is to prevent contagion and therefore anything resembling the disease was regarded with suspicion and the patient for a time secluded. While things are even doubtful, it is so desirable to be on the right side that a state of quarantine is requisite. Precise and elaborate tests were given by which to distinguish the disease from ailments which resembled it in appearance. These are detailed, but the importance of the inquiry hinders them from being trivial. A mother sometimes looking at her sick child, will feel her heart beat with a suffocating anxiety as she watches the doctor examining the little pimples upon it. If they are rose-colored, it is only chicken-pock; if they are red colored it is the smallpox. The mark of leprosy is at first the “white bright” spot It doesn't look at all so bad in beginning. The Roman poet had a good deal of reason for saying that, if Sin were only to be seen in her natural deformity, instead of being disguised with all false attractions, men would hate her instead of loving her (though I think this is chiefly true at first; after awhile all her foulness does not repel). Leprosy does not look at all bad—at first.

There must be the utmost deliberation and care in judging. It is either malice or wicked thoughtlessness to attach so horrible a stigma, whether in a physical or spiritual sense, without entire certainty. When the professing church shut out Arius (notwithstanding his eloquence and accredited piety), I believe it was entirely right. When it shut out men like Luther and Wesley, it discredited itself and not them. The same is true as to private judgments. The main test of leprosy was that, whereas the other ailments tended to become better and more restricted as they were watched and cared for, leprosy always tended to become worse and to spread. Everyone who has noticed the course of leprous and zymotic morals or doctrines will recognize the accuracy and importance of the similitude.

Bacon says it is of the philosophia prima that, whereas in medicine when a disease is at its height, it is less likely to be communicated than when it is in progress, so also in morals, when a man's life is quite abandoned in wickedness, his example is much less likely to be pernicious than the example of one in whom vice has not yet extinguished all the good qualities. Macaulay, while objecting to this being regarded as a first principle, says that it is a” very happy similitude.” Undoubtedly the principle illustrates the striking verses in Lev. 13 where it was commanded that when “the leprosy covers all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head to his foot,... the priest shall... pronounce him clean.” It was on the distortion of a principle like this that the Spartans used to thoroughly intoxicate their slaves in order that their children, seeing them in their debasement might be shocked and repelled. Had they however only partially intoxicated them,

their children might have been only amused and attracted.

Scripture Imagery: 89. Provision for the Leper

It seems pitiless to put the leper out from the camp, but in reality it is in pity that it is done, pity to others. Moreover there are some evidences that God has a special consideration for the dreadfully unfortunate creatures thus expelled from the company of their fellows, and that—on some occasions at least—He reveals Himself in an especial nearness to the Banished, as in the case of that ecstatic vision to the exiles of Judah in the forty-fifth Psalm. And here is matter for thought: “Where God can go, I may go,” say some; but no; not always. To go there may mean defilement to the disciple, but He can no more be defiled by any contamination than the sunbeams which fall on the pestilent swamp. The Lord who touched the lepers without contracting defilement goes where and does what He pleases: we should go where and do what we are told.

But we have not learned the first rudiments of Christianity if our sympathies do not go out after the outcast and afflicted, to pray and desire that their way may be through darkness to light, through sorrow to joy, through misery to God. How must the celestial light of the gospel seem to shine with unutterable brightness in a place like the Leper Settlements in Molokai or Robben Island, like a constellation in the blackness of a midnight sky. These poor wretches who have no hope on earth have appeared to be especially ready to welcome the proffer of hope for a future life, and divine sympathy. The four lepers shut out of Samaria reached the spoil first after all, and became privileged ambassadors: the ten lepers of Samaria lifted up their blighted eyes and saw One approaching them whom the princes of the earth shall seek in vain. There may be more compensations than we know of in some of these afflicted lives, especially if we join on time to eternity, for the one is not complete without the other.

Here is a chord sounded in the bass,—discordant, jarring, wailing, repelling... Wait, till we sound this treble chord with it... Ah, that is different; now it is a complete concord; the higher clef is joined on to the lower, interblends with it, explains and harmonizes it. The celestial answers to the terrestrial and resolves its wailing discords. It may be that the higher chord is a long and weary time withheld... and meanwhile the jarring and wailing goes on, “No one so utterly desolate, But some heart, though unknown, Responds unto his own:

“Responds—as though with unseen wings

An angel touched its quivering strings;

And whispers in its song,

Where hast thou stayed so long?”

When shall we cease to reason within ourselves as though time were all and death ended all. It transfigures everything to lengthen our view and widen our horizon, to see that eternity is joined on to time, that our journey does not cease at the cold disconsolate wharf, but stretches out beyond over the illimitable and infinite sea. In the poem beginning “La tombe dit A. la rose,” the grave inquires of the flower what becomes of all the “tears” that fall upon her bosom in the dawn, and the

rose replies that she transforms them into a perfume “d'ambre et de miel.” She demands then what the grave does with all those who fall into its ruthless maw, and the grave says he transfigures them into celestial spirits. Death does not end all. It is merely the line which comes between the bass and treble clefs.

Is there not a special design and appeal of the heavenly invitation to those who have a miserable destiny in this world? “The poor have the gospel preached unto them.” Christ is specially at home in the Lazarettos. He can contract no contamination and His sympathizing words give present consolation and future hope. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. I think of the times when the Black Death, the Plague, and Cholera stalked, grim and ghastly, through the habitations of men, and of the red cross painted on the plague-stricken houses, with the words “Lord have mercy upon us” underneath; and think how strange it is that this Roman gibbet, once the infamous symbol of a penal death, should be now a universal symbol of sympathy and mercy. What misery has it covered through the long dark ages! What consolation it has yielded! I cannot easily forget what a Negro once told me of the Christian leper assemblies in the West India Isles; what solace it is to them in all their misery to have a hope and portion in Christ; how they fulfill His dying request to eat bread and drink wine together in remembrance of Him; how the bread had to be broken and placed on the wrists of some, because their hands were gone!...

Resuming consideration of the matter typically, we find that God has made especial and elaborate arrangements to meet the desperate need of persons in this terrible condition. There were four things required, namely, Healing, Pardon, Cleansing, and Consecration. As to the first, men have tried many things but there seems no authentic case of real leprosy cured by human means on record. Dr. Koch's injections are the latest means used in Robben's Island, but without the slightest success. We think we know everything now that they tell us that the white blood-corpuscles or phagocytes eat up the disease germs. We have only to increase the number of phagocytes and disease is killed; yet somehow men still suffer and die. Nor would we in any way undervalue the skill and service of those who have advanced the medical science in the van of all the others; but simply say that leprosy, or sins of leprous types, God alone has been able to cure, and—so far as we at present know—God alone by direct power ever will be able to cure.

But there was much more besides curing. “This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall go forth out of the camp. . .”

It is not a thing that is to take place in heaven by-and-by, but now and here (as to the antitype). “And behold if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper.” Then succeeds a long and elaborate, though happily familiar and well-understood, series of types; concerning which it is perhaps simplest to say that when our blessed Savior stretched out His hand and touched the leper with the words “I will, be clean,” He fulfilled them all and supplanted them all.

Peace with God is a state of mind in the unclouded consciousness of what God is (but necessarily according to His nature) to us according to the value of Christ's work, and in Him.

There is another order of peace from the conformity itself to this nature—a subjective peace. “The mind of the Spirit is life and peace.”

Chapter 317

Scripture Imagery: 90. Provision for the Leper (Continued)

In accordance with the principles already referred to, there was a special provision made for the leper, even in respect of his cleansing and consecration. Besides the usual sin, trespass, and burnt offerings required by others, there was the impressive and expressive ceremony of the Two Birds. By the command of the priest these birds were taken, and one of them “killed in an earthen vessel over running water.” That is—of course the death of Christ “come in the flesh,” —the earthen vessel,—and in inseparable connection with the living “water of the word.” Birds pertain to the ethereal sphere; that is to say, the highest conception of His being and personality is required in such a case as that before us. Of course it is always the same Christ in absolute perfection that is our atonement in fact, but the different values of the figures used indicate the different degrees of estimation in which His work is held by persons of different capacities. The poor man, that is, the man with a poor capacity and apprehension, brought a handful of meal that was his apprehension of Christ—very meager the rich man brings a bullock; that is his apprehension of Christ, a far higher degree of estimation. A great difference in apprehension but no difference whatever in application, for in each case the infinite merits of the infinite Savior apply. This difference of capacity to apprehend is often caused by the sense of the evil of sin being weaker in one than in another. The poor woman in Luke loved much, for she felt that she had been forgiven much; “but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little”.

In the leper's case it is not so much amplitude of apprehension as altitude of apprehension that is contemplated. It is the soul from out of its dungeon in the deepest abyss of human woe looking up and apprehending the advent of the heavenly Christ in His most celestial aspect, imprisoned and dying in the “earthen vessel,” —albeit over running water,—and the cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop—that is to say, all that pertains to the glory, majesty, and ambition—and even the humility—of the world, dipped in the blood, buried in the grave of Christ.

Happily that is not all, or it were but a dead hope. The priest takes in his hand, with the cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, the second bird, the living bird; and plunging them all under the blood of the dead victim, he sprinkles the leper seven times there from—thus identifying him in the most solemn and awful way with the whole of these transactions. He then lets the living bird loose in the open field, and the leper is. pronounced clean. The meaning of all this is very obvious. It is the death and resurrection of Christ. In the slain bird He is delivered for our offenses; in the freed bird He is raised again for our justification. It is liberty out of condemnation. The idea of setting birds free in order to express deliverance from captivity,—as, for instance, the lazzaroni of Naples did in honor of Nelson after the battle of the Nile, by which conflict they considered their liberties secured,—is a very old and well-known one. In this case, the bird being dipped in the blood of the slain one is identified with it. It is in a sense the same bird. It is the same Savior risen again from the dead, and the fact is full of infinite meaning. Yet unfortunately how few give it consideration. How few consider what is implied by the resurrection of Christ, “for if Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins;” there is no justification., nor is there assurance that the sacrifice is sufficient and acceptable, nor that there will ever be any resurrection at all.

Yet how many Christians there are who see only the slain bird, who stop at the cross and do not go forward to the opened sepulcher; and in consequence of this do not see how great and thorough their deliverance has been. That is why at the beginning the apostles used to preach “Jesus and the resurrection.”

The details are then given of the cleansed leper's consecration. He is the only one except the priest concerning whom such particulars are given. He is submitted to the action of water (the word), of blood (the Atonement) and of oil (the Holy Ghost) The water goes all over him. The blood is put on the tip of his right ear, the right thumb, and great toe, and then the oil on the same places, signifying that all that pertains to his actions, “walk,” and receptivity should be in accordance with the solemn ordeal through which he has passed—should be such as is not unbeseeming to one who has been cleansed by the blood of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Noblesse oblige. For the future his position demands of him a certain course of action, attitude, and thought. No blood is put upon the head but the remainder of the oil is poured thereon. “The head of every man is Christ,” and when Christ personally is typified, He is anointed without blood, for He was personally sinless and needed no expiation. Thus when the High Priest is separately consecrated, he is bathed and then directly the oil is put upon him in the same way as, when our Lord was baptized in the Jordan, He was “anointed by the Holy Ghost” by the immediate descent, in the form of a dove, of the divine Spirit. Had it been anyone else, atonement (either typically or otherwise) would have been required before the anointing could take place.

Thus is the leper raised from the very lowest depths of human misery to the highest altitudes of divine felicity, the variety and extremity of his need only serving to disclose—in a way that nothing else could—the exhaustless affluence of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

(continued from page 45.)

Chapter 318

Scripture Imagery: 91. The Two Goats

One of the incidental proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures is the way in which the precepts and commands are intermingled with the principles and historical circumstances whence they originally sprang. In that way not only is avoided the monotony, which is the bane of classified theology, but the ethical lessons are conveyed gradually and are impressed mnemonically by the context; whilst the precept throws light on the principle and the principle on the precept, the book interpreting and illustrating itself; as Giuliani used to say that Dante was his own interpreter, “Dante spiegato con Dante.” If the Bible had been constructed by professional theologians, it would have had a methodical arrangement like their own writings, no doubt,—doctrines here, history there, precepts somewhere else—all neat, symmetrical, and useful as a kitchen garden. Whereas it has been arranged more in the way in which God makes a continent, with a gigantic appearance of disorder which becomes more and more orderly and magnificent as we view it from higher and more comprehensive standpoints. Moreover, it is more difficult to avoid meeting the precepts when they are everywhere interspersed with the text.

After dealing in Leviticus with the subject of the leper, where human nature is shown in its most repulsive forms, we find some chapters of precepts which show by implication what horrible things it is capable of doing, and these are immediately connected with the atonement in the important and well known sixteenth chapter. They were very real sinners, these Israelites, these men for whom the atonement was provided. But, thank God, the atonement provided is very real too. And that is the difference between a divine gospel and a human religion. The human inventions are so grotesquely inadequate, inconsistent, and inconsequent, that they are seldom or never meant to be taken seriously. The reply of the ancient oracle (which fairly represents popular religion in all ages) is that men “To the pure precincts of Apollo's portal” must “come pure in heart, and touch the lustral wave.” There is no hope for the real sinner, but for the fictitious “pure in heart” it says, “One drop sufficeth for the sinless mortal; All else e'en ocean's billows cannot lave! “Now if a man be pure, he does not require cleansing at all; whereas those who really require and desire cleansing are informed that there is no power that can accomplish it. Men do not practice such preposterous foolishness in any other matters; no one ever saw a doctor professing that one drop of his medicine was sufficient for those who were perfectly well, and that not all the medicine he possessed could save any sick person. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” The fountain which God opens is “a fountain for sin and for uncleanness.”

Thus as these chapters which recount such a fearful catalog of sins are connected with the Great Day of Atonement, so does the sense of sin at all times—in some form and degree—lead to the apprehension of the atoning work of Christ. And it is the weakening of this sense of sin that in recent times has been undermining the doctrine of atonement and other foundational doctrines of Christianity. A recent writer in the Revue des Deux Mondes says, “With us the notion of sin has long been abolished. Adultery is the contravention of a certain article of the Code—the violation of a contract signed in the presence of such and such lawyers.” Though I refuse to believe that such words are true of the bulk of the French people, yet unquestionably they are true of a very large

number in that and all other nations professedly religious.

There are a great many who fancy they can see quite well; but when their eyes are tested, it is found that they are very defective: that they are myopic or, it may be, suffer from “Daltonism” —they are incapable of distinguishing certain colors, most frequently red. These people are astounded when told of the defect and find that others can see what they cannot. There is often the same kind of defect in the spiritual sight, and frequently those who assume to guide are unwittingly stone blind to the most important things which exist, and exist terribly, without their knowledge. These blind guides are more dangerous than the engine drivers who cannot distinguish the red lights on the railway that we hear of sometimes, for those lead only our bodies to destruction. One of the most fatal infatuations is for me to suppose that a danger does not exist because I do not see it, as one of the most stupid is to think that a phenomenon cannot exist because I do not understand it.

But the “advanced” theologians will find it more difficult to remove the atonement from the hearts of the people than probably they think. They have not yet quite succeeded in removing it even from the creeds. Heidelberg and Brooklyn must have been somewhat surprised lately when at the burial of that strong man of God who repudiated their “modern criticism,” the multitude burst with a great emotion into singing, “Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood Shall never lose its power”

The great Day of Atonement was ushered in with the most solemn, awful, and imposing ordinances. When modern criticism says that atonement by blood is shocking and terrible, it says what is true. It is meant to be shocking and terrible, for sin is shocking and terrible. The especial feature is the taking of the Two Goats, which give the two great aspects of the death of Christ. The first goat is the LORD'S lot: it is slain in order that His justice may be vindicated in respect of the presence of sin in the world, (apart altogether from the question of the forgiveness of sins). On the head of the second goat all the sins of His people are charged and it is sent into the wilderness bearing their offenses forever away from them to a land not inhabited—where there is no one to know them or charge them upon us. The first aspect—where God has the first and highest claim on the atonement—is perhaps little considered by us. In this sense Christ “tasted death for every man.” The blood was sprinkled once on the mercy seat, for one testimony is sufficient towards God, but it is sprinkled seven times before the throne out towards men, for the testimony must be repeated over and over again to man in order to be effectual. Goats are taken, because whilst they are really clean, yet they are put in the place of being unclean and regarded as symbols of impurity — God sent His Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” yet was He “holy, harmless, and undefiled.”

Scripture Imagery: 92. The Feast and Holy Convocations

91—THE FEAST AND HOLY CONVOCATIONS.

The experiences of a Drop of Water are not, one would think, very exciting; yet I remember being much interested in reading Grube's Geschichte eines Wassertropfen, and afterward being deeply impressed with Paul's question, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” Why indeed! for it is a thing of just the same nature, only a degree less wonderful, and entirely as impossible for us to comprehend, that God can transform and etherialize a drop of water, lift it up in its new invisible form in the air, and carry it flying through the heavens. The learned Professor will not believe that God can raise the dead because he cannot understand how it can be done; but can he understand how the other transformation is done? He says it is the heat that expands and turns the water into vapor, he., &c. But can he tell you how the heat does it, or why, or what heat is, or anything beyond one or two mere outward facts. Ah, when we get to the original causes, the “how” and “why,” the professor finds there is a point beyond which if one seek to go, he finds that he is “like a man trying to lift himself by his own waistband.” (This was the expression that the professor's able colleague himself used in his famous infidel address to the British Association some years ago).

Grube's drop of water lay long troubled in the restless, melancholy sea until one day a ray came down from the sun bringing it a message to come up hither to the Lord of Life and Glory. As the sunbeam kissed it, the drop of water (together with many of his neighboring drops, says Grube) felt a strange lightness and emotion—a strong sehnsucht—seize them. They disappeared from mortal sight, became changed into a spiritual and ethereal nature and rose into the sky, bathing in the sun's light and warmth. But its life was only now beginning: the Sun and the Wind sent it hither and thither on its delightful and beneficial course,—now flying in the cloud, now lashing in the hail, now plashing in the rain, now flashing in the snow, roaring in the cataract, glistening in the dew, moistening the fevered lip, or gleaming in the rainbow, eventually finding repose again in the vast and peaceful sea—not the same sea, though,—whence it originated.

It is the same God, working according to the same great principles, whether in the physical or spiritual realms, Whose light and warmth shining from the face of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness regnant in the celestial sphere, rest upon the sea of human strife and transform myriads of the drops that compose that sea into an invisible spiritual life, drawing them upwards into His own presence and favor. The natural and normal effect of the rays coming from the Sun of Righteousness upon the human Wassertropfen is to draw him upwards by the mysterious power of Warmth and Light.

In being changed the Wassertropfen leaves all its bitterness, its acids and its alkalies behind, becoming purified by the sun's chaste and genial beams, and being drawn upwards to survey the broad earth from above, and to see its wide panorama sweeping forth underneath. This is always the first thing that happens. Christ gathers His disciples round Him and shows them the course of the world's past, present, future, when sending them forth on their various missions. And the

principle is the same here in Leviticus. So soon as the work of redemption is finally settled, we are lifted up and taken in a rapid flight over the whole dispensations of human history, which pass under us (in the twenty-third chapter) like the islands and Continents of the revolving globe.

This is done by means of the divine appointment of the Seven Feasts (or Festivals)—they were by no means all of a joyful character—though some of them were so. These were solemn convocations at certain periods of the year: Holy-days, Feiertage. Unfortunately “holiday” expresses to us now only the ideas of indolence, pleasure, perhaps even debauchery (which fact gives us an instance of apostasy in words such as Dean Trench writes of). These Festivals do not commemorate but anticipate; for as the thoughtful S. T. Coleridge said, the Hebrew institutions differed from all others in this, that whereas other nations commemorated the past, with the Hebrews everything was prospective and preparatory, “nothing is done for itself alone, but all is typical of something yet to come;” and elsewhere, “Sublimity is Hebrew (not classical, Greek or Latin) by birth.”

I ask the reader to ponder those words of Cole-ridge's: his wide and deep knowledge of the classics and his heterodoxy in some things make his testimony the more remarkable. The heathens compose their calendars to commemorate a past mythology (composed of nursery tales smeared with the slime of Tophet). The Christians, disobeying the apostle, who discountenances their observance of such things, fill their calendar with days in memorial of St. This or St. That, or of a gunpowder plot or a “martyred” king. But the Hebrews, contrary to all the world, have feasts appointed which (so far as we can judge) anticipate and reflect the whole future history of the world. Thus tended also all their ritual, religion and public policy. What an overwhelming proof of the finger of God there is in this fact alone!

With the Jews, then, the calendar is a small chart, annually renewed, of future history. The first great event is the solemnization of the Passover which is expressly stated in 1 Cor. 5:7, 8 to be typical of the atonement of Christ, and immediately connected with it is the Feast of Unleavened Bread which in the same verse is shown to be typical of a course of life devoid of evil. The apostle says, “Christ our passover has been [lit.] slain for us; therefore let us keep the Feast [or holy-day,—he means, of course, the Feast of Unleavened bread which began at the Passover] not with the old leaven, [i.e., in this connection, the horrible profligacy that characterized the Corinthians' heathen worship] neither with the leaven of

malice and wickedness [elsewhere we read of the leaven of Herodians—political religiousness; the leaven of the Pharisees which was hypocrisy, &c.] but [keep the feast] with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The Feast of unleavened bread must not be divorced from the Passover, nor must the acceptance of the atonement of the true Paschal Lamb be separated from a pure and upright course of life.

Chapter 320

Scripture Imagery: 93. The First-Fruits and Pentecost

It is not merely a matter of conjecture when we say that the Hebrew Festivals were typical of the future dispensations. There is the most distinct scriptural authority for so regarding them. The verse just quoted from 1 Cor. 5 authoritatively applies in this way the feasts of the Passover and the Unleavened Bread, and the five others are (either directly or inferentially) thus applied and explained in other passages, as we shall see:—

On the third day after the Paschal Lamb was slain (“on the morrow after the sabbath") a sheaf of the first fruits of the new harvest was taken by the priest and waved before the Lord with the usual sacrifices,—but not with a sin offering—as a solemn dedication of what the ground would produce. This we are warranted in applying to the resurrection of the true Lamb of God on the third day (the morning after the sabbath, the first day of the week), “for now,” says Paul, “is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

Nothing of the harvest was to be eaten until this solemn dedication of the first sheaf to God had taken place, and the meaning of this we see shown in a peculiar and beautiful way in the Gospel of John. Our Lord had risen but not yet ascended. This ascension was the act of dedication of the life now begun in resurrection; and therefore He says to the sorrowing disciple with whom He speaks at the side of the sepulcher, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” No created being was to participate in Him, not even so much as touch Him, until His sacred life was as the first fruits of resurrection proffered to the God of the harvest.

But what takes place is entirely characteristic and beautiful. With reverence we may say, He could not go on His way, even on such a solemn embassy, and leave that sorrowing heart despairing beside the sepulcher without one word of comfort; and it is well to see that there is nothing in the claims of the highest ardor of devotion to God that hinders one from the flow of human sympathy whilst passing onwards. He could not see Mary bowed at the grave without saying, “Why weepest thou: whom seekest thou?” And she supposed it was the gardener! Ah! we often think that it is only the gardener when it is the Christ. There was no blaze of glory around. His head even in resurrection: though we cannot believe otherwise than that there was dignity and grace, yet He took on Him the nature and semblance of man so completely that He was mistaken for a gardener, and thus—as the sheaf of plain barley was waved before the Lord—He ascended as the first-fruits of them that sleep. This was on the sixteenth of the month Abib: it was on the seventeenth of Abib that Noah's ark had rested on the summit of the mountain."

Exactly seven weeks after the waving of the sheaf came the Feast of Pentecost in which was offered “a new meat offering” of the general harvest in the form of two wave-loaves of bread; but this time they were to be accompanied by a sin-offering, for there was leaven (typical of evil) in them. They were to be baked, however, so that the leaven should not continue to work. The antitype of this is given in Acts 2. There we are told that “when the day of Pentecost was fully come” —that is, not merely come, but “fully” —in the antitype—come, the disciples being together, the Holy Ghost descended upon them and formed them into the one body of the church. Until then

they had been so many separate particles, like the grains of flour which were to form the Pentecostal loaf until the oil was poured upon them. Directly that was done, the separate particles were united into one mass. This figure is very beautiful and expressive: the individual disciples being gathered together, upon them the Holy Ghost (typified by the oil—"the unction of the Holy one,"-) was poured forth, and they are thus baptized into one body in identity, unity, and cohesion, “for we,” says Paul, “being many, are one bread” [though formed out of two loaves, Jew and Gentile] “one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” This day of Pentecost was the day (according to Maimonides and the Rabbis) on which the law was given. It was in every way appropriate that it should be also the day on which the Spirit and the gospel were given.

Now Paul says, “If the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy.” How can that be if there be leaven in the bread? Simply because there is a sin-offering also with the bread, which was not required with the pure unblemished sheaf. Does not that view then give sanction to the allowance of evil in the church? By no means, for the leaven was baked; that is, the action of fire-judgment—is passed upon it and its corrupting action is stopped.

To the superficial mind there is nothing to notice, except indeed it be of a grotesque nature here in the offering of a couple of loaves of ordinary bread, accompanied by the elaborate ceremonial and sacrifices that seemed so disproportioned to the value of the bread itself—the whole round of sacrifices on an exceptionally large scale being commanded—two rams, seven lambs and so forth; but there are meanings in things which the superficial glance cannot perceive. There is a kind of ink made from oxalomolybdic acid, the writing of which is invisible till the sun shines upon it, and these sacred hieroglyphics of the Holy Ghost cannot be rightly read until the light shining from the face of Jesus Christ, “The light that never was on sea or land, The consecration,” rests on them. And much depends too on the eyes that look: he that would bring back the wealth of the Indies must take out the wealth of the Indies; the more the mind is already filled with the affluence of the scriptures, the more treasures shall we find on every fresh contemplation. If our eyes are filled with the beauties of the living Word, we shall see His glorious radiance transferred on to the page of the written word as we read.

But much depends on the way in which we look at things as to what we can see in them. The companions of Columbus only saw driftwood at the bow of their vessel; but Columbus saw, and saw correctly, a new world. The friends of Galileo and Newton saw chandeliers swing and apples fall, thinking them trifling matters no doubt; but the unveiled sight of the philosophers saw hidden in these little things the secrets of the laws which govern the swaying solar systems. The Viscount who escaped from Metz took a morsel of paper out of his tooth and they found on it, reduced by microscopic photography, the vast plan of the enemy's movements. The German officers play at Kriegspiel as Pyrrhus played in ancient times with the blocks of wood, but the blocks of wood mean regiments and battalions, the game is war, and the stakes are continents. This morsel of paper from the book of Leviticus may be to us merely the “Jehovistic account” of a Hebrew feast, or the reflection, as on a telescopic mirror, of the vast church dispensation.

Chapter 321

Scripture Imagery: 94. Atonement and Tabernacles. the Feasts of Trumpets

93.—THE FEASTS OF TRUMPETS, ATONEMENT,

AND TABERNACLES.

The period introduced by the feast of Pentecost covers a long time, as it pre-figures the present era, and is characterized by a very peculiar feature. It is commanded, “When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make a clean riddance of the corners of thy field neither shall thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger.” It is especially the period of charity and grace, during which “the gospel of the grace of God” is proclaimed in contrast with the gospel of the kingdom in the future, “the everlasting gospel” all through, and other characters of dispensation. And even when it is finished, there shall be still a reserve of mercy, gleanings left for the poor [of the Jewish flock] and the stranger [the Gentile] whereof we see the result in the vast redeemed multitude of the seventh of Revelation, assembled after the rapture of the church: “they shall hunger no more.....”

Can one see into the future? The learned professor smiles superciliously. He says, there have been plenty of people who said they could, but that is not quite the same thing. Many cases of course where there have been, even with these “monthly prognosticators,” happy shots, they could not always be wrong; but as to really foreseeing what is still future, nonsense! Even the most astute and learned are grotesquely often wrong when they forecast a week ahead. “A false prophet is a tautological expression.” Do you remember that Abbe who wrote the book proving that the Swedish constitution was now permanently settled, and while he was revising the proofs of the book, Gustavus III. came and upset it all? or the great and far sighted Metternich who said the disturbances in Vienna would be “nothing much,” and four days after was flying for his life from his ruined house? or how Napoleon sent off the messenger to Paris from Waterloo announcing that he had Won the battle, just a couple of hours before his defeat? No, no; “better not prophesy unless you know.” And you can never know of anything till it is positively there before you. That is the true ‘agnostic,' or, (if you prefer the Latin to the Greek word) ‘ignoramus,' view of the matter.

Can we then never see the things which are not actually there, the things which are invisible? Do not the travelers see the town of Messina, for instance, when entering the Straits long before it is actually visible? “Yes,” the professor admits, “but that is the Fata Morgana.” Do they not see the oasis in the desert long before it is in range of sight? “Yes, but that is the mirage.” Cannot the whole world every morning see the sun right up above the horizon at the very moment when you, the professor, prove that it is actually out of sight below the horizon “Yes, but that is refraction.” Very well then, there is the same power, operating spiritually, which produces by a fata morgana, mirage, or refraction of the celestial medium; that effect which enables us to see “those things which be not as though they were,” and to look on the things that are invisible.

The fourth great festival, the Feast of Trumpets has the clearest reference to the in-gathering of Israel after the close of the present period of the Two Loaves. Isaiah says, “Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria and the outcasts of the land of Egypt and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” Isaiah (and other prophets) further explain that in that time the enmity between the ten tribes and the two tribes will be removed. But in order to be welded together they must pass through a most fiery ordeal, “the great tribulation.”

This Reveille was to be on the 1st of the month Tisri, and on the 10th of the month the great day of Atonement was appointed. “Ye shall afflict your souls.” In fulfillment of this, Zechariah says, “they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn as one mourneth for his only son In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem.” They become conscious at last of their great and heinous sin in rejecting their Messiah. This day of Atonement has just been explained in Lev. 16.

Five days after this, on the 15th of Tisri, the last great feast—of Tabernacles is commenced, it continues for seven days. The vast multitudes dwell in the open in booths. They take the branches of goodly trees—willows of the brook which recall their sorrows and banishments, palm branches to celebrate their victories—and rejoice before the Lord their God. In that day—the period here typified—says Isaiah, “the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” In that day, says Zechariah, they shall go up to Jerusalem “to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. . . . In that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem. . . .In that day there shall be one LORD and His name one. . . .and at evening time it shall be light.” It is the beginning of eternal day. The time is come for which all nations long, when Gurmi is loosed from his chain, and, coming out of the dark cave, at last devours the war god Tyr, “and the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come with singing into Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head. . . .and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

Chapter 322

Scripture Imagery: 95. Painting the Lily

The whole Hebrew year was typical. It was “a dome of many-colored glass” through which one looked out on “the white radiance of eternity.” It had two beginnings, each of them in the seventh month dating from the other. The month Tizri began the civil year, when we pass through cold and barren season till we come to the seventh month, Abib, which then becomes the first month of the new era when all is changed, “when the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come;” all is in resurrection life. Then again, the period beginning at Abib culminates on the seventh month, in a new Tizri when the Feast of Tabernacles reveals to us the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The feasts were all but one arranged in these first months: three feasts (Passover, Unleavened-bread, and First-fruits) in Abib, the beginning of the spiritual year; and three (Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles) in Tizri, the beginning of the civil year. The remaining feast, that of the Two Loaves, which typified the Church period, is, so to speak, interjected in the month Sivan distinct from the other two groups of festivals but connecting them, like Panama betwixt the two seas.

Looking forward along the year from Tizri, the natural commencement, it begins with plowing and sowing, and ends in the general vintage (judgment). Looking forward from Abib, the spiritual commencement, the year begins with the Passover and First-fruits (death and resurrection) passes on through the period of Unleavened-bread, the barley. and wheat harvests (the time of salvation), the blossoming fig-tree (devotion), the former and the latter rain, the vintage, culminating in the holy convocations and rejoicings of the Feast of Tabernacles. The sabbaths running through the year are perpetually recurring pledges of the coming divinely-appointed rest. The seventh year was sabbatic. Seven sevens brought round the jubilee when the slaves were set free, mortgages were canceled, and land that had been sold reverted to the original owner. In proportion as the jubilee was near, the lease of the land diminished in value to the holder. In proportion as the coming of Christ seems near to us, so is the value of the earth and earthly things lessened in our estimation.

This complete prophetic chart, this perfect picture of the dispensations, was handed to the Hebrews, and immediately they began to “improve” it; as though one should take a chart prepared by the Admiralty and make fresh lines on it to suit one's own taste, or take a picture, finished (say) by Turner or Leighton, and trim it up. “Just let me put a little carmine here, a little gainboage there; ah, there's nothing like good red and yellow” Go to, let us “add another hue to the rainbow.”

I do not speak of the impiety of this; indeed I do not think the impiety of adding to what God has perfected so great as that of taking from it; but I would ask you to consider its astounding impudence! I ask you, Theologians, how would you like everything you did to be taken and improved upon with clumsy fingers; as Neologus, whom you follow, improves upon every divine injunction and precept. This is the spirit of Neologus; and you can see its impudent folly in everything else, but are blind to it in spiritual matters. When the carpenter drives in a nail,

Neologus insists on giving it a few more blows, and leaves his mark on the place. When he is shown a beautiful chord of Beethoven's, he says, “Yes, no doubt very fine; but there are only seven notes in it altogether, bass and treble. See I have three fingers still to spare; I may as well use them. Listen.....!”

Well, whether the chord be better than before or not, we must no longer call it Beethoven's; it is Neologus'. And when the Jews had added on the feasts of Purim, Dedication, &c., to the “Feasts of Jehovah,” and otherwise degraded them, we find them no longer called the Feasts of Jehovah at all, but “feasts of the Jews!" as the institution which was once called the church of God comes to be called “the church of the Laodiceans.” You may “paint the lily,” but then it is God's lily no longer.

For instance, God demands repentance and faith for salvation; but Neologus insists on that and something more,—creed, ceremonial, or action, I do not understand exactly, nor does he. All I know is that it is not the “salvation of God” that he proclaims; it is something of his own. The Founder of Christianity established two sacraments', Neologus says there must be seven. The Founder gave a cup of wine to His disciples; Neologus says, “No! It must be wine and water.” Have you considered the colossal IMPUDENCE of all that?

And there is a way of developing this principle by which every foundational doctrine may be diluted away to nothing. I read a sermon by Theologicus, in which he was defending his own orthodoxy. “Do I believe in the doctrine of regeneration?” said he, “Most assuredly I do, Except a man be born again, and again, and again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'“ Thus, whilst he appeared to be underlining the word, he had dexterously scored it out. He kept on hammering the nail in till he split the board.

Nevertheless the firm foundation of God standeth. And the building mysteriously grows towards completion,—

“No hammers fell, no ponderous axes rung;

Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung.

Majestic silence!”

“And He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying Grace, Grace unto it!”

Scripture Imagery: 96. The Lamp and Shewbread

95.—THE LAMP AND SHEWBREAD.

The whole diapason of the Levitical harmony closes in a double chord of promise, which is expressed by the perpetual renewal of the Lamp and Shewbread. The light of the testimony is to be always maintained through the darkest and longest nights, and the shewbread to be forever supported on the holy table, covered with fragrant incense in the divine presence,—the whole twelve loaves: “everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Thus whatever comes, we have this gracious assurance, “The Light Thy love has kindled Shall never be put out.” —this assurance that the Lord is continually looking on His people in their brightest and most favorable aspects, and regarding them as a shining light by the power of the Holy Ghost, and as the nourishment of life resting on Christ (the table of wood and gold), surrounded by the border” with its “golden crown” and covered with the frankincense,—"complete in Him.”

I pray you take notice of this. For to whomsoever else the light of the testimony has been extinguished, it has never been extinguished for God, and never will be. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen.”

This assurance is proved to be greatly needed, for the first thing we read of is that one of the Israelites does what lies in his individual power by contention and blasphemy to upset the whole organization. The evil is so grave that by divine command the people put him to death. There is usually a Thersites, —or spirit of Thersites—to be found at hand in every enterprise, to discredit it by his conduct, to discourage and disparage his comrades, and blaspheme his leaders. Sometimes he will assume a charitable tone; but you will find all his charity is directed to the enemy, and all his hatred to his brethren. You fancy what a fine candid and liberal nature this is, when you hear him speaking of the Trojans: but when he speaks of his fellow Greeks, of the great leaders especially, the heroic Agamemnon and Odysseus who are giving up their homes and lives to the cause which he is supposed to advocate, then you find what foul misrepresentation and vituperation can co-exist with unctuous but spurious liberality.

It is always difficult to understand why Thersites does not go over to the Trojans, if he likes them so much better than his companions. He often does go finally; and ah, what a relief it is! But his wretched work lives after him unhappily. What crops of doubts and contentions spring up from the seeds which he has sown! So that, when we contemplate them, we can at last get to understand how it was that one of the most gracious men who ever lived said with grief, “I would they were even cut off which trouble you!” As to arguing with Thersites and endeavoring to persuade, one may as well argue with a sewer and persuade a pestilence. That much-experienced, much-afflicted man Odysseus, the crafty, strong, and valiant Odysseus, used very short arguments with him: “Except detraction, what hast thou bestowed?” he demanded of the slanderer, as he smote him down to the dust with rough and ruthless blows.

Though perhaps after all David chose the more excellent way when he said to Abishai, “Let him alone, let him curse.”

On the whole, Rabshakeh is preferable to Thersites; Rabshakeh was coarse and abusive, but he was an open enemy and kept outside the wall. But let us be assured of this, that neither Shimei, Thersites, nor Rabshakeh, have breath enough, albeit they speak great swelling words, to blow out the light that God's love has kindled. It shall continue to burn—though perhaps feebly—through all the dark long night, till the dawn shall appear and the bright and morning star shall arise. We oscillate between optimism and pessimism. Truth is neither the one nor the other. It is neither true that “whatever is is right” nor that “whatever is is wrong.” There is much that exists that is right, and much that is wrong; and bright above all, “White-handed Hope, the hovering angel, girt with golden wings.”

The Comprachicos used to cut the facial nerves of children, so that the poor little creatures were disfigured by a perpetual laughter or a perpetual weeping. It was all ghastly and unnatural, but not more so than the ancient laughing and weeping philosophers, or modern optimism and pessimism. The Herr Professor has looked so long through the microscope that he has become myopic, he cannot see White-handed Hope hovering above, nor the ring of light round nature's last eclipse, though he can see the myriads of microbes better than we others. For him the bottom of Pandora's box is eaten away by them. He thinks the ancients were mistaken when they saw hope there—and I think so too.

It is a strange statement of scripture that experience leads to hope. If we listen to the man of the world, we hear that experience leads to caution, to distrust and hopeless cynicism: and yet truly experience leads distinctly to hope. One who for the first time saw the sun go down behind the ocean would despair of ever seeing it again; but we, who have seen it thus descend many times before, are emboldened by our experience to hope that in a few hours it will rise again at the other side of the universe to “flatter the mountain tops with sovereign dye.” He who for the first time beheld the melancholy autumn deepening into winter, would surely think all things were sinking into chaos and old night; but experience leads us to an assured expectation of the resurrection of all things in the coming springtide.

And though many beautiful qualities are seen even in the darkness of despair, yet few great achievements are accomplished without hope; and those who have the most completely conquered the world, whether physically or spiritually, have been those who were distinguished by this faculty. “If you thus give everything away,” said Perdiccas to Alexander, “what will you have for yourself?” To which the world-conqueror replied, “Hope “: and a greater man than he, the founder of an infinitely greater dynasty, wrote to his fellow-disciples—a handful of common workpeople who were trying to convert the world whilst being persecuted by all the powers of earth,—wrote to them about “rejoicing in hope.”

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.—What think you of Dr. Bullinger's “Sprits in Prison” (Second edition revised, 1891)? A.B.

A.—The greater part of this pamphlet prepares the way for the simple truth as set forth by Leighton, Pearson, and many more; quite as much as for Dr. B.'s notion that the “spirits in prison” are angels whom God cast down to Tartarus, and committed to chains or pits of darkness, to be

reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). It may have force against the anile superstition, popularized in our day, whether for a broadchurch purgatory or the vulgar Popish one. He seems to have overlooked Heb. 12:9 (a reference probably to Num. 16:22; 27:16). Besides, “spirits” we find here qualified doubly, by their present imprisonment, and by their past disobedience in the days of Noah, the cause of that safe keeping. But the language pointedly differs, both in connection and in strength of phrase, from that which describes the doom of those angels so singularly contrasted with the actual freedom of the dragon and his angels. The connection of 1 Peter 3:19, 20, is clearly with 2 Peter 2:5. For Noah, a preacher of righteousness, was the instrument by which the Spirit of Christ wrought in that day of divine long-suffering; the now imprisoned spirits were then the world of the ungodly on whom God brought the deluge, because they stumbled at the word, being disobedient. Dr. B., though he claims especial credit for it, fails to catch the touching force of the “For,” or rather “Because,” with which chap. 3:18 opens. “It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; because Christ also once suffered for sins, Just for unjust,” &c. He suffered once for sins. Let this suffice. Ours it is to suffer for righteousness and for Him. What has this to do with angels that kept not their own first estate, sinning atrociously and unnaturally? What had they to do with “disobedience” only? And why here baptism?

All is most appropriate to the unbelieving world which rejected Noah preaching in Christ's Spirit; for it is not said that He went into the prison and preached there, but to the imprisoned spirits. The apostle is combating such objections to Christianity as present suffering, spiritual power only through the word, comparatively small numbers, absence of Christ, &c. This he does effectually by laying down Christ's unique suffering for sins, leaving us to suffer as He did also for righteousness. To this he adds the most solemn judgment that befell the world of old, which our Lord also compared to the coming day of His appearing, when His word and Spirit (cf. Gen. 6) were despised. None need wonder if few be saved now or by-and-by, seeing that eight only passed safely through the flood. In connection with this he speaks of baptism as the standing sign, not of new birth as men say, but of salvation, the request or demand of a good conscience Godward by Christ's resurrection. The water, through which Noah and his family were saved, was the power of death for all outside the ark. Christ's resurrection was not only God's honor on Him and His work, but peace to the believer; and if Christ be not yet come in power and glory, He is at God's right hand, which in itself is higher still, gone into heaven, angels, authorities, and powers being subjected to Him, whatever the unbelievers scoff at on earth.

Dr. B.'s reasoning is valid against “the larger hope” as well as purgatory. But his own application is quite irrelevant. For the revealed use of the guilty and apostate angels in 2 Peter 2 and Jude differs totally from the scope of 1 Peter 3, and is a warning to false teachers of licentious life or even apostate from Christianity, not an encouragement to Christians who shrank from suffering, and were tried by the paucity of their brethren, and did not adequately stay their souls, conscious of salvation, on Christ's exaltation on high, the pledge of His sure appearing in glory. He is right, as we have long pointed out, as to the difference of ■κ■ρ. in chap. 3. and ε■ηγ. in chap. 4. But his notion of “spirits” has exposed him to a heterodox view of “the seven Spirits of God” in the Revelation, as some unreliable men had taught before him. Think of “grace and peace” from angels, no matter how high their rank! So he errs as to Acts 8. where the “Spirit” stands in contradistinction to “the angel.” Compare Acts 12. and 13. Each is appropriate. But this is a trifle

compared with misinterpreting Rev. 1:4, 4:5, &c., or even “sojourners of the dispersion” which Dean Alford mistook, and thereby the true bearing of the Epistle.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.—Do Matt. 18:20, Luke 24:32, John 14:23, teach that the Lord leaves the right hand of God to come down in the midst of believers gathered to His name? E. J. L.

A.—We may not rightly set scripture against scripture, but are to believe all. The Holy Spirit is now come, as Christ went on high to send Him to abide forever with us and in us. But this is not the same as Christ's presence, promised conditionally on the obedience of the assembly or the individual saint, which is in no way to leave God's right hand. He is there bodily, but deigns to vouchsafe His presence here also, which we by faith enjoy in the Spirit. Precious as is the truth of the Holy Spirit's presence, faith does not forego these comforting assurances. Prayer and discipline are only special cases of the more general truth, that Christ may be counted on to be in the midst where two or three are gathered to His name. So, even when the Lord appeared extraordinarily to the apostle, and more than once, He did not leave heaven; yet it was all real. Mystery is no less true than material fact, far more momentous, and inseparable from Christ, as Christians know Him at any rate. We walk by faith, and own scripture as absolutely authoritative.

Q.—Does 1 Cor. 15:47, imply manhood morally before the Son took human form? B.

A.—The assertion that the Word was in any real sense man, before He was made flesh, derives no authority from this text or any other. It is a dreamy fable. There was purpose of course, but more seems here meant and without warrant. The divine nature which was His eternally could of course connect itself with human nature, as in fact it did to form the person of Christ, Who could therefore be characterized as of, or out of, heaven. But this sure truth is very different from an unmeaning jargon unless it have a false meaning. Even to babble about the Son's person is eminently perilous and profane.

Q.—Rom. 5:11, Heb. 2:17. Are these texts correctly rendered in the A. V.? AMERICAN.

A.—Not so, but in the R. V. The late Abp Trench (Synonyms of the N. T., seventh ed. 276) owns that the word “atonement,” by which our (A.) Translators have once rendered καταλλαγ■ (Rom. 5:11), has little by little shifted its meaning, and confesses that, were the translation now for the first time made, “atonement” would plainly be “a much fitter rendering of ■λασμ■ς,” as “reconciliation” of the term in Rom. 5:11. Indeed no Christian scholar can doubt it. It is therefore astounding confusion for anyone, not merely to go back to “atonement,” which the present force of our language forbids, but to imagine this to be its primary meaning and according to its Biblical usage, if we mean the original, which of course alone is authoritative. The simple and certain fact is that our A. V., now at least, is doubly incorrect; it gives “atonement” in Romans, where “reconciliation” is the sole right rendering; as “making atonement for,” or expiating, is requisite in Hebrews. A similar blunder pervades the O.T. rendering of the corresponding Hebrew term. To reproduce that error is strange, especially with a view to clearness and accuracy of statement, which it destroys. Wiclif and the Rhemish were right as to Rom. 5:11; which fact goes far to convict of error the others from Tyndale, notwithstanding the amiable prelate's desire to excuse it on the ground of the language shifting. On the other hand, Wiclif's “merciful to” is very inadequate in Heb. 2:17, as Tyndale's “to pourge” is incorrect and rather the effect, which has its own proper

expression, though followed by all the older English save the Rhemish (here as usual servile to the very odd “repropitiaret” of the Vulgate). In the R. V. of this text to make “atonement” takes the place of “reconciliation” very properly. Καταλλαγ■ in the N. T. sense is unknown to the Septuagint. Trench's doctrine of “reconciliation” is well meant, but, like that of theologians in general, infirm and clouded. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Such was His aspect in the incarnate Word. But man, ungodly and implacably hostile, rejected Christ even to the death of the cross; wherein God made Him sin for us, and raised Him from the dead for our justification. Therefore, justified by faith, as being reconciled by His death even when enemies, we shall much more be saved by His life. To be reconciled to God supposes more than atonement, redemption from the enemy, and justification; it comprehends, besides, ourselves set in relationship with God righteously, according to the purpose of His grace. It means, neither changing God's mind from alienation into love, nor merely man brought out of his enmity to God, but the God of love and holiness having so wrought in the sacrifice of Christ, that He can righteously send the gospel of grace to every creature, and establish every believer in a new and steadfast relationship of favor with Himself.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.—1. Is there any difference between “carnally” and “of the flesh” in Rom. 8:5, 6, 13, &c.?

W. J. F.

2. What is “fleshy” in 2 Cor. 3:3? AL.

A. 1, 2. It is the same word and sense in Horn. viii., the mind of that flesh which is enmity to God, and came into man's moral constitution through Adam's sin. But “fleshy” means the different fact of the physical material, consisting of flesh, in contrast with stone; and the critics prefer it in Rom. 7:14 to the received reading which only differs by one letter. So do the oldest copies in 1 Cor. 3:1, though they give the form “fleshly” or “carnal” in ver 3. In Heb. 7:16 they prefer “fleshy” or at any rate the Greek form for the material. Yet in Rom. 15:27 the word for “fleshly” or “carnal,” is read; so that this would seem capable of both applications, whereas the other is confined to the material sense.

Scripture Queries and Answers: on Daniel 8

ON DAN. 8.

Q. J. C. asks whether the little horn of Dan. 8. is distinct from that of chap. 7.

A.—First, the very language differs. The prophet, who wrote in Aramaic from chap. 2:4, returned to Hebrew after chap. 7. The course of the four world-powers is given in a most instructive two-fold form, one Nebuchadnezzar's vision (2.), the other Daniel's (7.), with corresponding differences, in the language of the first empire, the captor of Judah. The chapters between contribute important moral features needed to fill up the divinely given picture. From ch. 8. we receive special details which concern the Jews, which are accordingly given in Hebrew.

Secondly, ch. 8. deals only with the second and third of the world-powers, Medo-Persia, and Javan or Greece the great and first ruler of which was to have his vast kingdom broken into four in due time after his death, and of course with inferior power. One of these was to meddle disastrously with the Jews and their religion and worship above all, whether in the type that is fulfilled, or in the antitype of the latter time “when the transgressors are come to the full.”

Thirdly, the empire of Babylon, the lion-like beast with eagle's wings, had a unity peculiar to itself. The Medo-Persian (a bear in ch. 7., a ram in ch. 8. with two high horns of which the higher came up last) answers truly and solely to the second of these world-powers, which, fierce and devouring in general, was mild and generous toward the Jews, as indeed was the notable horn of the Macedonian power, Alexander the Great. In this third empire the marked and settled partition after its founder's death was four-fold, which no historian can question.

But the no less marked division of the fourth or Roman power is into ten horns, of course contemporary, with one small at its rise which plucks up three by the roots, as remarkable for its intelligence as for its pride and blasphemous audacity. Here however we are in presence of that which awaits its fulfillment, even admitting a partial application to past history. For that horn by its lawlessness brings on, not providential loss of dominion as in the case of the earlier beasts, but direct, distinctive, and divine judgment at the appearing of God's kingdom in the person of the Son of man. How can these things be? The Revelation answers by the rising again of the fourth or Roman empire, when its imperial head (slain unto death) is healed to the wonder of the whole world (Rev. 13:3), the beast that was, and is not (its present negation), and shall be present, having emerged from the abyss. For it will be the brief destined hour of the dragon's wrath, power, and authority. Here also is shown that the Roman beast had distinctively seven successive forms of government or heads, besides (at the close, if not before also) ten contemporaneous horns or kings. Compare Rev. 17:8-12 with Dan. 7.

Clearly then it is no question in Dan. 8 of the Roman power of chap. 7., whose last horn, little at first, greater afterward, is to wield and direct the whole force of the empire, so as by his blasphemies to meet destructive judgment from God. He will be the immediate precursor of the Son of Man's coming in His kingdom. Even the unspiritual Josephus could not but see this, though

he was prudent enough to be reticent on a future so repulsive to his Roman patrons. But chap. viii. speaks not of the west but of the east, even of the Greco-Syrian kingdom and its persecuting profanation in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom we have ample details in chap. 11:21-31. Indeed the prediction is so exact as to surpass what any ancient historian extant furnishes; so much so that the heathen Porphyry betook himself to the same refuge of unbelief which the destructive critics of late days affect—the pretense of a writer in Maccabean times, who personated Daniel in Babylon! The vision in 8:9-14 dwells on what is now history; the interpretation, in 23-25, mainly on what is yet to be fulfilled.

It is well to observe that ver. 11 and the first half of 12 are really a parenthesis. The change of gender “he,” faithfully owned in the A. V., is slighted in the R. V. Its aim seems to have been to make the personality stronger, and here therefore to refer rather to the antitype than to the historical horn, which before and after the parenthesis is called “it.” In the interpretation nothing is said of the “2300 evenings—mornings,” or 1150 days, and of treading down the sanctuary, which may therefore be accomplished already. This period is known to be approximately near none can deny its absolute exactness, of which the believer is sure. Prophecy interprets history, not the converse. The one is absolutely reliable, as from God; the other imperfect at best, often partial and prejudiced, too often adverse to the truth. The historical horn did not play the Solomonic part of “understanding dark sentences” to deceive the Jews, reserved for the antitype, who is also to be “mighty, but not by his own power.” This can hardly be said of Antiochus Epiphanes. The future apostate ruler of Turkey in Asia, the enemy of Israel, will be sustained by a mightier monarch still farther north. See Ezek. 38; 39.

As to unfulfilled prophecy, superstition (slave of tradition) is dull and dark, rationalism is blind and hostile to God. Superstition is not faith and is therefore incapable of understanding beforehand; rationalism is in principle antagonistic to the truth, for it denies that prophecy is ever specific, and especially on the remote future. Hence, as superstition is unbelieving and unexercised, so rationalism offers nothing but futile interpretations to blot out the glorious future of God's kingdom by any little earnest in the past. But this falls so short as to give the willing impression that the prophets exaggerated or lied, like the poets or politicians of the day. Who but the unintelligent could confound the little horn of Dan. 8 with that of chap. 7? or either the western or the north-eastern chief with the willful king, to reign at the time of the end in Palestine, described in Dan. 11:36-39? The last no doubt is the Antichrist, here viewed politically, in 2 Thess. 2 religiously as the man of sin opposed to the Man of righteousness, Who will appear from heaven to destroy him. There are many antichrists; but this does not justify the pretentious ignorance of scripture, which jumbles all three into Antiochus Epiphanes. For he was but a type of the final representative of that power, the enemy of the Antichrist whose ally is the last chief of the Roman empire: all to perish forever in the day of Jehovah. W. K.

Chapter 325

Scripture Query and Answer

Q.—In a little book lately issued, an effort is made to qualify the great truth of Acts 2, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by citing Acts 8; 10, and 19. Does scripture warrant several descents of the Spirit, little Pentecosts following the great one? Does He in fact come down from time to time? If He came down repeatedly in apostolic days after Pentecost, why may He not come down any day now? Why may He not do so more than of old? Is the argument or insinuation sound? P.

A.—It is the common unbelief of Christendom in the personal presence of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord announced His coming as “the promise of the Father,” and to “abide forever” when come. John 14-16, Luke 24, Acts 1. Was this fulfilled or not at Pentecost? One can understand an influence renewed ever so often; but what of a person, and a Divine Person? Hence an immense difference marks off Acts 2 from the three subsequent occasions. Only then came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind filling all the house, only then tongues parting asunder as of fire which sat on each. Yet was it of high moment that the Samaritan believers, and the Gentile ones should receive the like gift, attested as at Pentecost by signs following. So at Ephesus much later, where God put honor on the apostle Paul, as at Samaria on the apostles Peter and John. But on the two great occasions, for Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit was given without the imposition of hands, which was due to special reasons in the two lesser cases. As the rule, we get the blessing now as Cornelius and the other Gentiles did at Cæsarea, while the word is spoken. The principle is just the same, though we have not the extraordinary powers then vouchsafed when it was a new thing. But the reception of the Spirit, or even His falling on all that heard the word, is not His coming or descent. His abiding presence is a cardinal truth of the gospel; and not much of its “heart” would remain, where either is undermined. For He it is Who glorifies Christ and leads into all truth. What then are we to infer justly?

These are not several comings or descents of the Spirit, but impressive and cheering communications of the blessing to others who successively believed the gospel of salvation, and greatly needed the given proof, as did the Jewish believers, so slow to credit the indiscriminate grace of God. Those of Samaria “received the Holy Spirit;” Who “fell on” all that were hearing the word at Cæsarea; as He “came on” the dozen disciples at Ephesus. Yet it was the successive operation of the same Holy Spirit Who had already been sent forth from heaven to abide forever. But Christendom, like Israel, is apt to be proud as well as poor, and boasts more, as the hour of judgment draws nigh. Unbelief is ever the down-grade.

Chapter 326

Scripture Query and Answer: “To Bring Us Unto Christ”

Q.—Is the A. V. [and Revised] “to bring us unto Christ” a correct translation? or does the text mean “until” or “up to” Christ? W. D.

A.—The Geneva V. by the English refugees (1557) seems. to have suggested first, in our tongue at least, the words printed in italics. Cranmer's Bible in 1539 gave merely the literal “unto “; but Tyndale (1534) has “unto the tyme of,” which is in sense equivalent to “until.” So ■ως is sometimes added to lend strength or precision; sometimes is used alone, as are ■χρι and μ■χρι, as more definite, though each has its own propriety. “Unto,” “for,” or “up to” appears safest, though the temporal meaning is often legitimate, whether an epoch or point as “until” or a period as “for.” But it is even more frequently used ethically for aim, state or effect,. and, result,, as the case may require. So it means here: certainly not “in” Christ, as Wiclif and the Rhemish following the error of the Vulgate: ε■ς never really has such a force. Nor is it correct to confound the “child-guide” with the “schoolmaster” or teacher. Even 1 Cor. 4:15 uses the word disparagingly, though the apostle be not contrasting the law as in Gal. 3 with the promise and the gospel. Severe dealing is implied in both, not parental love. The law shut up and kept in ward; but Christ sets free. Law may alarm and distress the soul; it cannot deliver; yet how often God has used it to drive the laboring and heavily burdened to Him Who alone gives rest! a use rather negative than positive; for indeed its ministry is of death and condemnation. But what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God has done; for He, sending His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin and [as offering] for sin, condemned [not us, but] sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us that walk not after the flesh but the Spirit. Our Savior annulled death and brought to light life and incorruption through the gospel.

It is a blessed thought that Christ will Himself introduce us into the Father's house—into heaven. What an entrance will that be, when He leads us in, the fruit of the travail of His soul, His own, and glorified according to His worth, and all His heavenly company there! And we await that day.

“Jehovah” is in the mouth of the writer of the Book of Job, not of the personages in it: so in the first two chapters. It was important to identify Jehovah with the God of all ages and all dealings with men but the persons whose history is recounted did not so know Him, and they say “God” and “Almighty” This is all natural and true, living its true moral date to the Book.

Scripture Sketches: 1.—Silhouette Balaam

The prosperity of divine favor that rested on Israel in the wilderness did not please the king of Moab—there are few things that give universal satisfaction;—and so in order to effect a change, he sent an embassy 600 miles for Balaam, who was a most respectable man and evidently in great repute, to arrange the matter more to his wishes. Balaam's respectability was not merely that "gig-respectability," which used to excite Carlyle's ire so much. To be sure Balaam kept his gig—or the saddle-ass which was the Oriental equivalent for it. He was an extremely "religious" man, his religion having moreover no desire to wed poverty like that of St. Francis. But besides this it is manifest that he was a man of the very highest order of mental and spiritual power and capacity,—of far-seeing prophetic vision, of vast and comprehensive knowledge, of lofty and splendid eloquence. But, like the centaur or satyr of the ancients, the upper part of him was like a demi-god and the lower part of him was like a beast. He was corrupt; and, as the Latin proverb says, the corruption of that which is best is the vilest thing of all. He had that cursed appetite for gold, auri sacra fames, which eats into the soul like a cancer.

There have been many who have followed in his footsteps—but afar off; for the race does not often produce men of his capacity. Solomon is an instance of a man who had god-like wisdom and at the same time a most animal libidinousness; but Solomon was incapable of the deliberate wickedness that Balaam perpetrated. The first Duke of Marlborough was an instance of a man of almost superhuman comprehension in war and diplomacy, who could yet sell his own sister, or his own country, for a little gold; who could rob the starving soldiers that were dying for his fame, and send information by which 800 of them were slain for a few guineas. But the only one who has at all completely resembled him was, I think, that lofty and wise philosopher, whose writings have scanned the whole province of knowledge and come home to "men's bosoms and businesses," who spake as one who had inquired at the mouth of God, and took bribes to wrest justice and sold his friends and benefactors to imprisonment and death, and yet who almost compels us to love him notwithstanding his wickedness,— "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind," Francis Bacon. It usually takes men a long time to learn that the Satyr is not a myth: it is reality; that there are those who have, what Montaigne calls, "Opinions super-celestes et moeurs souterraines," who have the brow crowned with the light of heaven and the heel nailed in hell.

When the ambassadors came to Balaam, he told them they must wait till he consulted the Lord. But this was only a way he had, so as not to make himself too cheap. He never dreamed of doing anything of the sort. He went to bed, and the Lord then takes the initiative in the matter. "God came to Balaam and said, What men are these, with thee?" and commanded him not to go with them. This was very embarrassing to the prophet. He had meant to make a little money out of this business, and here he is hindered at the outset. He cannot go. They urge him. He says at last he cannot go even if they give him a house. full of gold and silver. There they have his price now. When a man like that says that he cannot do a bad action for so many pounds, that is about. the amount required. "Make it guineas, and it is a bargain." He is given another chance. When the ambassadors come again, and Balaam is "wearying" to go with them, God tells him that he may go

with them, “if the men come to call thee.” But Balaam does not wait for the test to work. We read that he “rose up in the morning and saddled his ass and notwithstanding the original command not to go, the failure of the test, and the warning of the angel and the dumb beast on the way, he beats down all opposition and goes on to his gold, his honors, and his damnation.

The worst of his conduct is that he saw and knew perfectly the will and judgment of God in the events. We are not dealing with a mere stupid atheist. A man with the highest order of intelligence is never an atheist, though his followers often profess to be so. The great Darwin was no atheist, but the little Darwins frequently are. Neither Voltaire nor Thos. Paine nor Bonaparte were atheists. As Bacon says, “A little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion.” It is not “knowledge,” but “a little knowledge” that is a dangerous thing. But the man that has intelligence to know that God lives and judges is more guilty in his wickedness than the man—if there really be one—who is stupid enough to believe in a creation without a creator.

His great reputation for sanctity and spiritual power he is prepared to put out to market to Moab. And truly what was the good of it to him if he could not turn an honest penny by it? When Jonas Hanway suggested to his coachman that he would like him to have family prayers, the man replied that he would willingly, and he hoped it would be considered in the wages;—and certainly it ought to be, because piety of this nature must be rewarded in this life, for it has not much to expect from the next. Balaam hoped to die the death of the righteous, but like many another who has the same desire, he prefers to live the life of the wicked, and this is not the way to attain to it. He goes up deliberately prepared for a little sordid gain to curse into misery and disaster a whole nation of people who never offended him; and when God turns his curse into a blessing, in the middle of pronouncing it he murmurs in the king's ear—doubtless in calm, unctuous, sanctimonious accents—a fiendish plot by which to destroy them. “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end [just the “last end” of it only] be like his,” he said; but he died the death of the wicked in the midst of the enemies of God and by the sword of judgment,—a man of noble and splendid endowments, with the “golden mouth” of a Chrysostom in his life, and the gold-filled mouth of the ghastly Crassus in death.

Chapter 328

Scripture Sketches: 2. Balaam's Curse

The traveler on the Brocken sometimes sees upon the clouds over his head enormous shadows of what appear to be the gigantic demigods of the Norse period struggling over the destinies of the nations at their feet. The vision is a natural phenomenon, easy of explanation, though the spectator seems to be viewing such colossal conflicts as the poets of the old time recorded, of Thor grasping his huge hammer “till his knuckles were white,” or the Titanic brethren warring with Saturn, or Briareus and the Giants piling Ossa on Pelion to reach the heavens, and casting rocks and hills at the monarch of Olympus.

In such a way, over the head of Israel in the wilderness there was waged a great conflict. The learned and polished Balaam was a man who could sometimes put forth a fearful and mysterious power; and a terrible attack was being made upon them, which they were utterly powerless to avert in the slightest degree. The gates of hell were lifted up against them, but the arm of omnipotence was unexpectedly stretched forth for their protection. “All these thing happened unto them for examples.” The attack is commenced by the performance of an elaborate set of mystic rites and sacrifices on the part of the king and Balaam, who then regard the unconscious Israelites from the summit of the hills, and prepare to invoke the mysterious power and malignant craft of the devilish realms against them. But Balaam stood too near to the burnt sacrifice to be able to effect this. (?) The savor of that which represented the work of Christ ascended to the God Who never fails to honor that sacrifice, and the curse is changed into a blessing. This benediction is four-fold and discloses to us a marvelous affluence of divine favor:—

, I— From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him.” [He is looking at them from above, from God's point of view] “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” There, first of all, is the principle of sanctification, that is, a setting apart for God's purposes; a position of being specially separated and unique through divine consecration. Sanctification is not to be confounded with sanctity—much less with sanctimoniousness. It is not now a question of their behavior at all; it is God's act of secluding them, and regarding them as unique,—a peculiar people. Their consecration does not consist in any worth in themselves, but in the fact that God's favor rests upon them. Sanctification is usually thought of as the last thing to which men can attain, but in fact it is the first of all things conferred: “Elect,” writes Peter “...through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

II.— “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.” It was there, but God would not see it. He looked on the Sacrifice and imputed to them righteousness. At this same moment Moses was standing down in the plain among the people and saying “Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you"! This is the second great principle — justification. The king had taken Balaam to another part of the hill whence he had a less advantageous view of the people; he only let him see “the utmost part of them,” the ragged edges, the riff-raff;—we have always a least favorable side that our critics love to look upon, complacently murmuring “Curse me them from thence.” But it makes no difference. The gifts and the calling of

God are without repentance. “Whom He called, them He also justified.”

III.— “And whom He justified, them He also glorified.” This was the next thing that Balaam had to pronounce, and, pray mark, in doing so “he set his face toward the wilderness." It is not what shall be true in the future Canaan that he is speaking of, but what is true of the people of God here and now, in the wilderness:— “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” He says, What! with all their miserable sins, sorrows, and contentions? Yes, for God sees the things that are not, as He had already declined to see the things that were,—their iniquity and perverseness. Let him stumble at it who will: we glory in it!

Here is a mother holding her child and gazing upon it with an ineffable love. The child is a common enough lump of human flesh. We others can see plainly enough the vulgar features of a very ordinary child. But the mother cannot, will not, see anything of that sort. On the contrary her eyes invest it with the charm, the beauty, the radiance that Love alone can ever see. It is love that “throws its halo o'er the loved one's head,” and clothes with its own beauties the beloved object. The radiance on the beloved flow out on it from Love's own eyes.

There is an optical effect that is well-known. If we fix the eyes for a while on a certain arrangement of colors, and then look upon something else that is devoid of color, we see a radiance of complementary colors reproduced on the new object. In some such way God had looked upon the glorious personality of the Christ, and then looking upon His people, He has transferred the graces and beauties from One to the others. “As He is, so are we in this world.” No man would ever have been so audacious as to invent those words. I find them in the inspired Scriptures. And observe, it is “in this world” that all is true, however in the next. Balaam had this time set his face towards the wilderness, and yet he pours forth a rapture of admiration concerning them: “As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted”...In all the blessings we have an affluence of figures given, each with its own distinct and beautiful meaning. In this third declamation we have figures indicating Israel's serviceableness to God and man, and his, humiliation and subsequent glory.

IV.—The culmination of all is the coming and rule of Christ. “I shall see Him but not now, I shall behold him but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”

Chapter 329

Scripture Sketches: 3—Phinehas

The suggestion which. Balaam had made for the ruin of Israel was worthy of his able and ingenious mind, and was very near being entirely successful. The proposal was apparently innocent enough,—simply a union of the worship of Jehovah with the worship of Baal-peor,—a comprehensive religion, at all times the most subtle danger for a charitable and liberal mind. The narrow and bigoted mind does not lie so much open to, seduction here: its tendencies are in another direction.

But let us see what this proposal means. To put Jehovah and Baal-peor on the throne together is to insult God and consecrate Satan, Happily it is not possible permanently to do this, and Balaam knew it full well; but he knew also that the very attempt would do more to destroy Israel than all his repertoire of cursings, which would affect them no more than that of the jackdaw of Rheims,—they would “not be a penny the worse.” Since his time these proposals for a comprehensive religion have been often renewed. The Samaritans worshipped the Lord and the gods of the country around. Tertullian says that Tiberias proposed to the Roman Senate to enroll Christ among the gods. It is the temptation to the large and capacious mind. Socrates who was of this type, like Solomon or Francis Bacon, advises his pupils not to be over particular in such matters; he himself only believed in the one God, but one must have regard to the neighborhood, and the little local deities. Solomon included his wives' gods in his religion, and Bacon's orthodox Christianity had room in its temple for the golden calf. As apostatized Christianity entered the heathen countries, it showed an exquisite dexterity in comprehending the heathen feasts, saints, and customs, in its scheme. In these times the proposal is renewed with all energy and from all sides. Ceaseless efforts are made to work in with popular Christianity the principles of Buddhism, spiritualism,—devilism of all sorts. Not long since a leading ecclesiastic proposed in a convocation of Christian teachers that Christianity should join hands with Mohammedanism to evangelize Africa,—since the latter religion was so far superior to Christianity for negroes. This kind of thing may be called euphemistically “a marriage of the creeds,” but it engenders monstrosities and is called not by an honorable but by a foul name in the scriptures.

When men speak of benevolent precepts of idolatrous creeds and imply that Christianity has been developed out of them, they say what is only partially true, and imply what is wholly false. There are indeed many charitable elements to be found even in the worst of them: else had they not survived. But it is too much to ask us to accept, because of these, religions, an integral part of whose worship is too foul to be described. The most refined of the ancient human religions, the Greek, celebrated its worship with rites too vile and debauched to be translated out of the dead languages in which they are recorded; and the modern traveler will whisper, in the ear things he has seen even amongst the refined and intelligent Hindus which are never Put in print and make one shudder with horror and loathing. These things are part of their worship.

Such abominations were already being brought into the camp of Israel, in the presence of the leaders and priests of Jehovah, when a man suddenly arose, and with one swift, strong,

well-aimed blow, smote the iniquity into the hell whence it had arisen. This man was Phinehas.

He struck that one blow, just one blow, such an one as needed no second; and that is nearly all we know of him. But sometimes a whole life is, disclosed in a single act by a sudden revelation, as when the lightning illumes a darkened landscape, or when the clouds open and we see, for a moment never again to be forgotten, Melchizedek in his sacerdotal robes on Zion; or as when that fabled light flashed up from the Greek trenches as the great Achilles at length arrived.

All his life was a training for that one blow: all his character was revealed in it, zeal, discernment, boldness, promptitude. It was in ordinary circumstances entirely out of his province to interfere judicially thus; but these were no ordinary circumstances. Something more than the usual formal legal processes were required, or the nation would perish. The plague already raged amongst them. Many another would have seen that it was, the best thing to do a few seconds too late. He saw it, and at once he struck,—such a blow as Roland the paladin smote with his sword Durandal, or as when Wieland clove Amilias down to the ground; so Phinehas smote his Ithuriel's spear right through the iniquity of Baal-peor with all his strength, and saved a nation.

A second glance we have of him when the controversy arose with the two and half tribes which, stopped outside the Jordan. A difficulty had arisen concerning a pillar which they had built. Their brethren, thinking that it was a sectarian altar, were reasonably incensed, and sent Phinehas, who proves his fitness for the embassy by his just but considerate and conciliating language. A few kindly words explain the misunderstanding. Our brethren across the water have no business to be there at all, it is true; but they are not so bad as we sometimes are apt to think them—the cold mists of the river distort. What appeared to be a sectarian act was really only meant for an act of gratitude and worship. A frightful fratricidal war is averted instrumentally by Phinehas, and brotherly kindness is reaffirmed.

There is a burlesque of everything and everyone that is worth burlesquing. Uzzah is the caricature of Phinehas.

Chapter 330

Scripture Sketches: 4—Zelophehad's Daughters

The difficulties of questions concerning “Women's Rights” are not quite of such recent origin as some think. The “movement” never reached any acute stage amongst the Hebrews, it is true; for the position of women there was one of honorable consideration and quite above the position they held in any of the contemporary nations. Amongst the most civilized of them, their condition was one of extreme oppression, Herodotus says that in Assyria they were sold by auction; amongst the Romans they were classed with the chattels, res domestica; and amongst the Greeks, Plato's advice was that the children should be always kept away from the mother. The Hebrew child, on the contrary, was commanded to honor his mother as well as his father; and the subjection of the wife enjoined in the New Testament is illustrated by reference to Abraham's wife, who was certainly his companion and not his serf.

Phæbe was servant of the church at Cenchrem: Priscilla was able to instruct Apollos; Timothy is reminded of what he owed to his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. If we are to remember that a woman first listened to the Tempter, we may also remember, that, “Not she with traitorous kiss her Savior stung, Not she denied Him with unholy tongue.... Last at His cross and earliest at His grave.” All this may be noticed without in any way entering into the controversy, respecting the relative merits of men and women, which seems like comparing the merits of a flute with a trumpet. One may harmonize with the other: but why contrast or compare them? We know that green is the complementary color to red; we do not think it necessary to dispute about their respective merits or prefer one to the other. Each is best for its purpose.

Zelophehad had died leaving no sons, and his daughters, seeing that the Promised Land would be allotted without their father's house receiving a portion, had approached Moses and requested their share in the name of the dead. This was before the Promised Land was even in sight. Therefore, beyond all other aspects, the passage stands out as expressive of the anticipating and appropriating power of a living FAITH.

The matter in itself was a small one, but the principle involved was so great and far-reaching that even Moses felt he could not take upon himself the responsibility of deciding it, and referred the subject to the judgment of God: so easy is it for the humblest to ask a question which the wisest cannot solve. If Moses had been as careful to maintain his reputation for knowing everything as rulers usually are, he would never have confessed his inability to solve so apparently simple a difficulty. But his action was another proof of the simplicity which formed part of the grandeur of his character. And, besides this, it is another proof of the consideration and justice with which women were treated even in those barbarous times by the people of God, and of the evident civilization—from whatever causes—of that nation; for there is no greater test of the advancement of a nation in civilization, than the position which its women occupy. Moses might have brusquely dismissed the matter as too trivial (and embarrassing) for his consideration; but he appeals to Jehovah by Whom he is commanded to grant the claim. A great principle of law was by this laid down for Israel's future guidance, and a great principle of grace was unveiled.

Thus a small matter may involve vast issues. Some seem to think that every small matter does, but happily that is not true. If it were, we should have to be fighting to the death over every scruple of mint, anise, and cummin, whilst neglecting the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith. But it is true that some small-looking questions decide principles of immense magnitude. flow are we then to discern the really important questions? Ah, I grant that there is a margin for dispute. Nevertheless I think that with candor, grace, and discretion we may count on always finding a sure guidance. If we seek it as Moses did, we shall find it as he did—in the word of God. It is well to be not hasty to judge in disputes that seem trivial. For instance these two words that men fought over once, homoousian and homoiousian, seem nearly the same: in fact there is literally only an iota, a Greek ι, between them; yet they are as wide as the poles asunder; for one means a true Christ and the other a false. But on the other hand where it is a question of customs, prejudices, of "meats," there is no question of principle at all involved, except indeed these principles, "Forbearing one another in love," "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended or made weak:" "Let your moderation (■πιεικ■ς) be known unto all men."

But consider what a living and practical faith that was which enabled these women (concerning whom we have no reason to suppose that they were otherwise than modest and submissive) to come forth and stand before all the priests and princes, and the whole vast congregation, in order to claim a portion of a land not yet visible. How supremely ridiculous it was, or else how sublime!—according to the way one regards it, for the same action is often sublime towards God and ridiculous towards men. What presumption (ay, that is the term!) for one to believe he is entitled to a portion in the Promised Land, and to try and make a reality—a substance—of it! What presumption indeed, or what humility and faith Is it presumption to believe God's promises? When we think of the effect of faith toward God—moving the arm that moves the world—let us think also of its reactive effect within the possessors. It enables them to see the unseen. The youthful skeptic said he would not believe in what he had not seen. "Hast thou seen thy brains?" asked the Quaker. "Well, no," said the youthful skeptic. "Then," replied the other, "dost thou believe thou hast any?" It enables them to brave ridicule and persecution, to count a thing which God has promised as already tangibly and substantially their own.

For "Faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN." Contrast with this short, clear, explanation of the character of faith any of the theological descriptions that are so puzzling. Stay, I will give a specimen written by one of the most learned, capacious, and devout minds of the century:—

"Faith may he defined as fidelity to our own being, so far as such being is not and cannot become an object of the senses; and hence, by clear inference or implication to being generally, as far as the same is not the object of the senses; and again to whatever is affirmed or understood as the condition, or concomitant, or consequence of the same..... and so on for 13 pages of explanation, somewhat less distinct as it proceeds. The author of Religio Medici has however, written some beautiful thoughts about faith which may well be considered in a more skeptical day. He says he was greatly struck by Tertullian's expression, certum est quia impossibile est. He does not value very highly a faith which believes things which are inherently probable. It is a high faith that can see the absolutely unseen, and believe that which to the senses seems incredible and impossible.

But faith has its restraints as well as its possessions. The question arose shortly afterward in regard to these women as to what was to become of the land allotted to them if they married. The command is given that, if they take the land, “only to the family of the tribe of thy father shalt thou marry.” Some would have thought this to be an objectionable restraint; but it was of absolute necessity so as not to alienate the property; and every faculty and privilege carries a restraint with it. “Property also has its duties.” At any rate it is characteristic of Zelophehad's daughters, that they accept the condition imposed and observe it with loyalty and submission, though they had not as yet seen so much as a grain of the earth of their promised possession.

Chapter 331

Scripture Sketches: 5—Death of Moses

From a merely “secular” point of view, Moses was by far the most successful man that ever lived. The victories of military conquest are mere animal triumphs compared with the achievements of a man who awakened and humanized a great nation of hopeless slaves, dragging them out of the gigantic power of ancient Egypt, then taking them a forty years' journey through one of the most horrible and desolate deserts in the world, in the torrid plains of which he organized them by a system of law, government, and religion, which has been the admiration, and to a great extent the model, of all civilized peoples for more than three thousand years. The “rationalist” —who is credulous enough to believe anything that suits him—believes that Moses did all this (which he cannot dispute) without special divine assistance; but it is much easier to me to believe in monks' miracles than in skeptics' “rationalism,” which requires credulity with a capacity for swallowing difficulties like that of a boa-constrictor. It is a thousand times easier for me to believe that Moses accomplished what he did by the special aid of God's power, wonderful as that is, than that he achieved such marvelous results by unaided human effort. But however he did these things, he is still before us as the most successful man that ever lived. All the Alexanders, Canars, and Napoleons were mere vulgar little sordid earth-robbers, by comparison with this stupendous constructive genius.

And yet when he came to die, his whole life and work seemed to be the most disastrous failures. The nation which he had sacrificed himself to rescue and benefit was in a position of imminent danger in the midst of a torrid desert, the promised land hardly yet in sight after forty years' wandering and suffering, during which nearly the whole of the persons composing the original expedition had perished, whilst their descendants and survivors attributed all their sufferings to his meddlesome interference and agitation in stirring up the discontent of their fathers at a time when they were luxuriating in the voluptuous delights of the flesh-pots, cucumbers, onions, and garlic—the veritable potage jardiniere, et ragout a la mode, Egyptienne—which everybody knew their affectionate masters used to dispense to them in those good old times. Exasperated at last, by the long course of unjust treatment he had received, so-far as for a moment to lose his habitually calm self-command, Moses falls under the worst cloud that has ever overshadowed hint—divine displeasure,—and dies under a sort of chastisement from God before entering the promised land, or seeing the fulfillment of any of their hopes. This was the only thing needed to fitly close a life of saintly sacrifice, sorrow, and disaster. There, one would think, the ironical course of events might have stopped. It seemed an overflowing of the cup that the spirits should struggle over his dead body, that “Saint” Bernard should justify his causing the loss of two million lives in the crusades by comparing himself with Moses, and that Thomas Paine should have called him a Well, never mind what he called him: I own that it would have been still worse if he or Mr. Buchanan had praised him.

So that while the life of Moses was essentially more fruitful than any (save one, of course) that ever existed, temporally and outwardly it was no more than a barren and gigantic failure. Let us in these times of universal struggle for the front places at all cost; when all things are being judged by

their outward success; when the gospel of “getting on” in this life is the most popular creed; when the “fittest” always “survives “, with the blood of the unfittest on his hoof,—let us turn aside and behold in the death of that old man in the solitude of Pisgah's mount, the glorifying of Failure, the apotheosis of Disaster. Let us consider how many there have been whom their contemporaries have frantically, applauded for their present successes, whose work soon perished; and how there have been also those whose lives were persecuted, calumniated, and apparently unfruitful, but who nevertheless planted some seed that has since become a forest, or discovered some God-given treasury of resource for men. We think of the disastrous lives of some of those whom the world now acknowledges to have been its greatest benefactors; of Galileo and Columbus in their cells, of the poverty of Guttenberg, Fabricius, and Homer, of Milton in sickness, blindness, imprisonment, and penury; of More, Russell, Sidney, and Raleigh on the scaffold, of Huss and Ridley dying in the flames, Hampden in the battle, Regulus in the spiked barrel, Esop thrown over the precipice, the Founder of the Dutch liberties, with his work yet all unaccomplished, shot like a mad dog on the staircase and dying muttering, “God pity this poor people.” We think also of that cloud of divine witnesses, “who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins: being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.” And we think of “Him whom man despiseth, whom the nation abhorreth,” Who said “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God,” —the termination of whose work at one time seemed to be a few dismayed and horrified peasants standing around a cross.

When the end comes, and Moses is sentenced to die, leaving his work all unfinished, he receives the decree with characteristic dignity and submission. In nothing he says or does is there the slightest trace of bitterness or repining. The harsh imperious words which he had said to his brethren at Meribah were very few and never repeated. He now gives a last address and charge to them, in which he unfolds their high and glorious destinies, and concludes: “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms...Happy art thou, O Israel”! He bates no jot of heart or hope for them, though he knows he shall see none of their triumphs; and as to himself we know that those of the old covenant were not given the same definite hopes of happiness in a future life that Christians have now received. He then ascends the mountain alone. Death is always lonely: On mourra seul; but this is peculiar in its desolate surroundings. Mercy is however mingled with judgment and God grants him for the moment a transpiercing gaze that scans the whole of that. fair and glorious land which his people should ultimately attain. Then he dies and the devil, who never could make much use of him when he was alive, struggles hard to snatch his body in order to turn it to some use now that he is dead. Happily Michael the archangel defeats this purpose.

The people wept for him: of course,—when he was dead. If they had listened to him a little when he was living, or shown him a little loyal co-operation, and refrained from worrying him with every kind of unjust treatment when he was wearing out his great soul in their service, they need not perhaps have wept so soon nor so bitterly.

Chapter 332

Scripture Sketches: 6—John the Baptist

Another great and glorious life that seemed at the time of its close to be a most disastrous failure was that of John the Baptist. Of the lofty devotion, consecration, and self-sacrifice of this life there were little need to speak: a life spent in a wilderness apart from every comfort of civilization, and every consolation of human companionship; a life that was indeed brightened by the consciousness of a great mission and warmed by the hope of seeing the advent of “the desire of all nations” —but still a life of lonely privation which was closed at thirty-three years of age, after long imprisonment, by public execution for the amusement of an infamous woman and her profligate daughter: and this before any of the events hoped for were attained. When monsters of cruelty and wickedness live to a gloriously successful old age, as did Attila, Zingis, Tamerlane,—who were probably the cruelest men that afflicted the earth—it seems to the natural mind a strange thing that God should allow the life of one of the greatest and most honorable of His servants to terminate thus.

Strange indeed if it really did terminate there; but the beheading of John only opened his existence, not closed it. It only closed the first stage of it, the overture to its oratorio.

Besides there was just then a conjuncture of events in which he could do nothing more here; so well had he done his work, and his Successor had taken it all out of his hand. When however a man can do no more for his cause, he can still generally suffer for it and, if need be, die for it. This the Baptist did. In Corneille, Horatius, lamenting the disgrace he supposes to have been brought on him by the flight of his son in the combat with the Curiatii, is asked what he could have done against three foes, and the old man passionately replies, “Qu'il mourût”!

He was a man of more than Spartan simplicity and abstemiousness, his food locusts and wild honey, his clothing camel's hair, his home the wilderness. Of the most absolute humility, he called himself merely a voice,—a thing of breath and sound, but still indeed of significance,—and said he was not worthy to loose the shoe-latchet of One Who came after him; that “He must increase, but I must decrease,” evidently meaning entirely what he said. Being thus utterly devoid of self-consciousness or self-importance, he was the fittest man living for the high honor of announcing and baptizing the Messiah.

Yet we also find that kind of courage and endurance which is so often associated with native humility and reserve; and that not merely as regards passive courage, but active and aggressive where duty requires. He does not talk vaguely to people about sin in the abstract, but directly and incisively about their own sins. He says to the publicans (whose special characteristic was extortion in collecting the taxes), “Exact no more than that which is appointed you “: to the soldiers, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages” (the Roman soldier's three tendencies, violence, reckless accusation, and looting, being here uncovered and rebuked in a dozen words). To Herod the king, who was doubtless accustomed to very different language, he addresses the rebuke brief and stern, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.” These last few words cost him his life. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah, but his

departure was very different from the glorious rapture of the ancient prophet in flaming chariot. After lingering in prison until the infamous woman had arranged a plot for his death, he is beheaded at her daughter's request,—he, than whom there had lived no greater man, was put to death at the request of a profligate ballet-girl! They made a ghastly jest of it all too; his head struck off and dished up on a silver plate. Nor have we any ground for supposing that, when the glazed eyes of the dead prophet glared on that gay company, they produced any feeling of remorse or sorrow. Probably the guests were only highly amused at this espieglerie of their brilliant hostess and her attractive daughter. There were a few loving and reverent hands though, who took what remained of the great prophet when his head and his soul were gone, and buried it. Then, apparently with broken hearts, they “went and told Jesus.”

“When Jesus heard of it he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart.” May we not say though with guardedness and reverence, that this dreadful occurrence to the most honorable of His disciples was a very deep and personal sorrow to the Master? And this, though we know that the Master foresaw the event and could have prevented it, as we believe He would have done, and would prevent every ill that comes upon us, only that He sees some reason to let many of them take their course.

If the Baptist had been a spiritual automaton, he would no doubt have been an entirely consistent character to the end; but he was a man of like passions with ourselves, and at one time his faith failed. He is surprised to find himself left languishing in prison by the One Whom he understood to be the Messiah, Who was to right all wrongs, whilst the great work of the rescue and restoration of the nation is apparently as far off as ever, and the Lord seems to take no notice. He therefore sends to Christ a question framed in one of those brief direct sentences which he appears to have generally used, “Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” We cannot for a moment think, however, that it was fear or anxiety as to his own fate that impelled him to act thus. It was that kind of doubt which a capacious mind feels at times of discouragement as to whether the course pursued has been absolutely right after all, and such a kind of depression as every just mind feels when God seems to take no notice of the things all going disastrously wrong, “when His eyelids try the children of men.”

This message brings out one of the most beautiful passages in the life of our Lord. He could not without loss of dignity give a direct answer to a question from His servant which, after what had occurred, was of an offending nature. Neither would He grieve that servant by leaving him unanswered, or sending a reply that the bearers would know to be a rebuke. Therefore He advises them to go and tell John the wonderful and miraculous things that they had themselves seen and to give him this message, “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me!” It is not “Cursed is he that is offended in me;” that would have been the same and yet so very different. He then turns round to the multitude after John's disciples were gone and pronounces the most glowing eulogy. At the time of failure, when others would be “improving the occasion” by throwing stones at the one who was down, the Lord defends and praises his old and tried servant, ending the panegyric. “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”

All this is full of an infinite generosity and delicacy. Good is it that, when we fail, we have such an one for an Advocate. As the noble tree when wounded by the knife yields its healing balm; as from

the ground when wounded by the spade the living streams well forth; so from the heart of the Master there flows out only a more fragrant and ineffable benediction, when it is wounded by the failures and distrust of His servants.

Chapter 333

Scripture Sketches: 7—Miriam

Those angels who have desired to look into the progress of earthly dispensations could hardly have had a more interesting sight than they had when, three thousand years ago, they watched little Miriam “minding the baby” —if they only could have known who the baby that lay in that rude cradle was to become, and what stupendous work he was to accomplish. But poor little Miriam, the Hebrew slave-child, could have known nothing of all that. She probably only felt a horrible dread when the retinue of the princess of Egypt approached, and a suffocating affright when the crying baby was drawn forth from his hiding-place by the people who had decreed his death. The baby however was, it appears, a singularly attractive one. His parents, we read, considered him “a goodly child,” “a proper child,” “exceeding fair.” I am not aware that that view of their progeny is very exceptional to parents, and, though I have no evidence, am bold however to say that Miriam held the same opinion and was therefore less surprised than gratified to observe that the princess was evidently pleased with the child and amiably disposed toward it. This is the moment which Miriam seizes to run forward and ask whether she would like her to fetch a Hebrew woman to nurse it for her. Do so, says the. princess, and the girl hastens away to bring Jochebed—the babe's own mother. This was one of the finest pieces of finesse ever known. The courage and resource shown by Miriam, together with her devotion to a task at once monotonous and dangerous, gives an impression of her which enables us to read without surprise later on, that she is a prophetess and leads the choral worship of the entire redeemed nation on the banks of the Red Sea. It is gratifying to find that she has thrown in her lot with the oppressed and calumniated nation, the people of God. This was outwardly an extraordinary advance in occupation. She had been faithful in that which was least, that which appeared to be a humble and menial duty; and now she was set amongst those who led in the van of God's host. The dignity of the position is manifestly vastly different, but the dignity of the service itself does not differ so greatly as might be thought. We do not, it is true, usually rate the services of a nursemaid very high—in wages at least—but still she may be, like this one whom we are considering, doing work of enormous importance in guarding the beginning of some God-inspired life. We learn that, if we willingly and thoroughly perform the humble duty, whatever it is, that lies near at hand, we shall always be doing right and may possibly be carrying out some work of stupendous and eternal importance. “What! in minding a baby"? Yes, Miriam thought she was only “minding the baby,” when all the time she was watching over the destinies of the planet! When the fabled Norse hero, Thor, smote those three mighty blows with his hammer on the face of the sleeping Giant Skrymir, he was discouraged to see so little result. But afterward they found that Skrymir was the Earth, and that the blows had dented three great valleys into its surface. Who knows what vast work he may be doing when he fulfills the most ordinary duty? Does not Mr. Herbert Spencerprove the “persistence of force,” and that the impulse caused by the lifting of a hand vibrates to the farthest star? And as to whether one duty is menial and another honorable, there can be no honest work really menial, and all honest work is honorable. What is it “holy George Herbert” says in the Elixir:— “A servant with this clause Makes drudgery divine; Who sweeps a room as for thy laws Makes that and the action fine.”

And I said “thoroughly” just now, because I think there is evidence of a thoroughness in the way in which Miriam acts that would have satisfied even Lord Strafford. When the princess had received the infant in so friendly a fashion, without doubt, most watchers, under all the circumstances, would have quietly slunk away home quite satisfied; but Miriam clinches the nail and makes it a rivet. Oh, it was very good! Again when that mighty burst of national worship rose at the Red Sea bank, it was Miriam who closed the great and glorious anthem with its final diapason. I think that had she been housemaid as well as nursemaid (which of course she was, for the poor slave Jochebed was not likely to have had other domestic servants), she would not “have swept the dust in under the mat,” but would have made “that and the action fine.” I pray you, do not consider any honest work mean or despicable. By doing it to God we can make that and the action fine. It cannot lower one to do humble duty in the poorest circumstances. Jeremy Taylor worked in a barber's shop, Copernicus in a baker's, Kepler in an innkeeper's. Bunyan was a tinker, and Carey was a cobbler, David was a shepherd, Amos a herdsman, the apostles mostly fishermen, and their Master was called “the carpenter.”

Miriam's familiarity with household duties did not incapacitate her for the highest spiritual and intellectual attainments: she became a prophetess. There is a way of speaking as if the two things were incompatible; of saying (if one gives proof of learning and devotion), that she must be neglecting her home; and that it is better to be expert at domestic cares than to be studying the “ologies.” As if one could not do both, or as if, other things being equal, the expert and thorough housekeeper would not usually be better also in everything else than the negligent one! But the superstition is too stupid to argue against. I like to think of Elihu Burritt hammering his horse-shoe, or Thomas Cooper wielding his awl, whilst they stored their minds with the love of many strange lands and languages. I like to think of Philip Melancthon holding the baby on his knee with his one hand, whilst he held his Hebrew manuscript with the other.

It may be doubted whether, to the one that loved and nursed it, “the baby” ever entirely ceases to be an object over which protection and authority (modified indeed) should be exercised. At least it was so with Miriam. When Moses had been many years arrived at maturity, he married an Ethiopian bride. Miriam did not at all approve and went about “saying things,” which Aaron encouraged. Was Moses the only one by whom the Lord had spoken? Had he not also spoken by them? The passage is very fine. Moses, “meek above all the men that were upon the face of the earth,” does nothing to resent this (and indeed we should, remembering that childish care by the Nile's bank long before, be distressed if we read that he had done so). But Jehovah intervenes with a sudden and terrible chastisement. Aaron, the weak-natured and misled one, is leniently dealt with; but Miriam is of a different character and greater responsibility. They are both sternly rebuked, and Miriam is smitten with leprosy!

Then there arises to her brother an opportunity for returning some of her ancient care. “Moses cried unto the LORD, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.” If she can no longer expect his submission to her will, the love of those early years is not dead. His prayer is heard.

Chapter 334

Scripture Sketches: 8—Matthew the Publican

Tax-collectors are nowhere, I believe, very welcome visitors, and when, as in Matthew's time and country, they collected the taxes for a foreign, conquering power, and in addition to this, “farmed” the taxes, extorting from the oppressed people, as was believed, much more than was just or politic, they were as a class doubly disliked. The ancient Jew hated them and classed them generally with sinners— “publicans and sinners” as the common phrase went. So the modern Americans tarred and feathered them when they came claiming tribute for this country, what time they threw the chests of tea into Boston Harbor.

These popular condemnations, however, are usually merely the outcome of ignorant bigotry. The tax-collecting class are probably no worse than their neighbors. Certainly there is no money we pay that is better laid out than that which we contribute to enable the governing power to protect us from anarchy or invasion. The Christian too has received a direct command that dignifies his payment of taxes in an especial way: “Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Caesar's;” “Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom.” It is well for the Christian to avoid countenancing the vulgar class-hatreds and contempts that are so frequent in every part of the world. The Jew hated the Samaritan, the Greek called the Roman “barbarian,” to the Hindu all other people are contemptibly “Yavanna,” to the Chinese, “Tatse.” Every people have a part of the country which they make it their pleasure to abuse and sneer at: the Italians, Lombardy; the French, Gascony; the Germans, Saxony; the Austrians, the Magyar country; the English,—but I must not come too near home; let us keep at a distance. The Greeks scorned Bmotia, yet it produced Hesiod, Pindar, and Plutarch; the Syrians loathed Nazareth, but out of it came Christ.

In fact by coming from Nazareth, by being born of poor and obscure parents, and passing to His ministry through the curriculum of the workshop rather than the college, and by choosing His companions and apostles from the humblest and most despised classes, fishermen, and tax collectors, our Lord at every step traversed and discountenanced those vulgar prejudices that originate and nourish class-hatreds; and by the world-wide character of His gospel and the fraternal basis of the association of His disciples He opposed and condemned those international enmities which have been the chief causes of the greatest miseries that afflict the human race. It is well when we are characterized by the same spirit.

The principal fact therefore that we have concerning Matthew is that he was one of the hated tax-collectors. Though an apostle he seemed in no sense a prominent man; but, like some other quiet retiring persons we meet, he showed a hearty readiness in turning to Christ, and a thorough surrender of himself and all he possessed. When the Lord called him he was sitting with his heaps of custom's money before him; “and he left all, rose up, and followed him.” He evidently regarded the invitation as a most joyful event too, “and made him a great feast in his own house, and there was a great company of publicans and others that sat down with them,” Christ being in the midst.

And this is very fine. It is Luke and Mark that tell us all those pleasant things which were so creditable to Matthew; and there is no trace of envious feeling on their part to hinder his fellow

apostles from chronicling them. But Matthew himself only gives the most curt and formal account. “He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house.” Pray mark: he does not even say that it was his (Matthew's) house they sat in, much less that it was “a great feast” which he was giving, to which he had invited all his old publican friends; for he is like Jacob, “a plain man,” and he is too honest and sterling a man to be ashamed either of his old friends or of his new master.

Of course whilst noticing the different statements of the writers of the Gospels, I fully believe in their plenary inspiration, yet this does not affect the truth (and the beauty of the truth) that the Holy Ghost so acted on the mind of each writer as to produce that which should only be in keeping with the most absolute propriety and modesty, but also in some wise that which retains something of the impress of the mind through which it is communicated. The oil that runs down through the golden pipes of necessity takes somewhat the shape of the pipe through which it flows. The wind moves forward with its single majestic force, but it swells out the different sails in a thousand different ways.

Alas! for those who are so foolish as to think variations in gospel narrations to be contradictions. Not only do they wrest them to their own destruction, but what delicate shades of beauty there are, that their blind eyes can never perceive! “Ah, but Luke differs from Matthew: that's a discrepancy, a discord.” No, it is a complement, a concord. “But there are four different accounts;” “there is a confusion.” No, a harmony. “But which is true?” Thou fool! they are all true.

Do not the four parts of music differ and yet are they not all true and harmonic,—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass? Would not four plans of the same building differ, one giving ground-plan, another the elevation, a third the eastern and a fourth the western sides? Are there not the four dimensions, length, breadth, thickness, and throughness in everything that exists from a pin-head to a planet? The accounts differ, do they? Thou fool! if they did not differ, we should only require one of them.

And that were melody without harmony. We prefer both. The beauty of the sound is increased exceedingly. Here is another instance: in enumerating the apostles, the other writers simply say “Matthew and Thomas,” putting Matthew before Thomas and saying nothing about his hated profession; whereas, when Matthew enumerates them, he puts himself after Thomas and mentions his own profession, “Thomas and Matthew the publican.” “You were originally a shoe-maker, Mr. Carey, I believe,” loftily said the great dignitary, to the man who translated the Bible for the Hindus. “No, my lord, only a cobbler,” he replied.

A plain, honest, Christian man, apparently without one spark of natural genius, but characterized by modesty, hospitality, and cheerful devotion. According to Papias, Irenæeus, Eusebius, and others, he wrote his Gospel originally in Hebrew for Jewish converts, though our Greek version of it was extant so early as the second century. There seems no reliable evidence of his having been martyred; he seems to have died a natural death.

Scripture Sketches: 9—Joshua

“One soweth and another reapeth.” He that does the first part of the work seems to be wasting his time and throwing away valuable seeds on the ground. They sink in and are covered with the black soil. They fall into the ground and die. Often the sower dies too in neglect and poverty; and he and his work are forgotten.

But the sower knew that Time would silently and invisibly carry on his work; and the day at last comes when the fields are ripe to harvest over the ground where the seed had been scattered and apparently wasted. Then comes some other man who enters into the labors of his predecessor. He has only to thrust in his sickle, or shake the richly laden boughs of the trees; and he possesses the whole accumulated fruits of his own and his predecessor's labors. We should therefore judge wrongly if we estimated that the reaper had done all the work because we see him bringing in the sheaves: we must not forget the pathetic endeavors of his dead colleague, then apparently fruitless and hopeless. One man finishes his course in blank failure; another is crowned with success: but if each works as he is called, the work is one, and one God overhead.

There are two appropriate phrases in the Jewish Talmud. The first is “The sun will set without thy assistance.” That fact is obvious enough, one would think; and yet what a world of fretful anxiety is removed from the breast when it is realized that, after all, things will get on somehow without us! “God removes His workmen, but carries on His work.” He can even take away Moses or John the Baptist, without the work collapsing; for to finish Moses' work there is Joshua; and to finish John's comes the Christ. But the other Talmudic precept is equally important: “Though it is not incumbent on thee to complete the work, thou must not therefore cease from pursuing it.” There is nothing better than to work while it is day in obedience to the great Lord of the harvest; as we are directed whether sowing or reaping, whether in discouragement or success. We want no Monthyon prize for virtue. If virtue were always rewarded, it would cease to be virtue and become policy. It would be “prosperous to be just.” Let us at least avoid the vulgar stupidity of judging of our own or others' labors by their outward and present success.

But it is no less true that we should not undervalue the reaper's work either. It is necessary that he should do it, and do it thoroughly, conscientiously, and in its season: otherwise he sacrifices or endangers the whole results. In this sense he has a larger responsibility than the sower. If the sower work amiss, he wastes his own labor; but if the reaper work amiss, he wastes his own labor and the labor of all his predecessors. From this point of view Joshua was a conspicuous and splendid workman, taking up the work when it came to his turn with his whole heart, and mind, and strength, and the whole faculties of his magnificent, God-given, genius and capacity.

He is from the first a thoroughly “consistent” character, one of the very few consistent men who have ever lived, uncompromising in loyalty, truth, and devotion, from the day (and doubtless before it) when he “discomfited” Amalek with the edge of the sword, till the day when, at the close of his long and eventful life, he says “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” In which brief sentence, with his life and personality emphasizing it, we seem to hear each word closing

with a decisive snap like a steel spring. That is about all we know concerning his house, and it is entirely honorable to them and to him. Usually a conqueror makes pretty free with the spoils of victory and puts his relatives in good places. “Go to! Let us found our dynasty! Let us make our brother Joseph king of Naples, brother Louis king of Holland, Jerome of Westphalia, and so all round. To the victor the spoils!” But this man Joshua, “Serene, and resolute, and still, and calm, and self-possessed,” lives altogether in a higher plane. Neither he nor Gideon would found dynasties to aggrandize their own houses and put their partisans into good posts at the public expense. That lofty disregard for these things, which Fabricius and Curius Dentatus carried with them in their honorable poverty and Cincinnatus to his farm, was manifest here also. Now Caleb, though a good and great man, was not of this nature: forty-five years after the promise was made to him about that bit of property at Hebron, he went up to see after it, and took care he got it too.

Joshua had been trained and qualified for his office by many years of personal service to the great leader Moses, whom he accompanied up the holy mountain in the early days, under whose eyes he fought in the van of the warriors at Rephidim, and with whom he journeyed in the closest inter-communion for forty years. When he by divine command assumed the leadership and passed into Canaan, his course was a brilliantly triumphant one. Whether he would have borne defeats and disasters with the dignity and patient heroism which characterized his illustrious master, we cannot tell. Probably not: the only serious defeat he suffered was at Ai, and then he seemed utterly prostrated; though to be sure what unnerves him is that Israel should have turned their backs on their enemies. But then that is the kind of thing which most leaders have, to take account of, occasional panic and half-heartedness in their followers. He rends his clothes and throws himself on the ground, whence he is sternly commanded by the Lord to arise and deal with the evil which caused the defeat.

He promptly obeys, he does everything promptly and vigorously; and from that time he seems to regain, and regain permanently, his calm strength. When Achan is taken, and he sits in judgment on him, there proceeds no denunciation of the Judge Jefferies type from the bench. There is indeed a very courtesy and magnanimity of justice in the words of Joshua, “My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession.” A bystander might have thought from this calm unimpassioned demeanor that some weakness or spurious mercy would be shown; but he would be mistaken. Heat is not always a sign of strength: steel is cool enough, and so is adamant. Joshua could to some extent pity the man; but if there were no one else to do it, he would placidly and politely slay him with his own hands. “My son” found himself no better off in the face of that unimpassioned inflexible justice than the sons of Junius Brutus, or the son of that Galway sheriff, whose own father adjusted the rope round his neck.

One would think that it would be difficult to deceive a man of this cool deliberative wisdom and long experience. Yet the Gibeonites manage to do so by a neat little stratagem which makes him very angry when he discovers it, and causes him to upbraid them with their deceit; as if it was worse for the poor wretches to use strategy to save their lives than for himself to use strategy, which he constantly, did to destroy his enemies! We look in vain for that which is the conqueror's greatest glory, the magnanimity to fallen foes that David could grant from his heart, or Augustus Caesar could exercise for policy's sake. But then Joshua's case was entirely peculiar. He was sent by divine command to execute judgment on a people who had cursed and afflicted the earth by the most appalling wickedness—dimly disclosed in such passages as Gen. 19—which the world has

ever known; and it was not within his option to show leniency.

Chapter 336

Scripture Sketches: 10—The Herods

God had warned the Israelites against having a king; but of course they considered that they knew best, and as soon as possible they appointed one in order “to be like the other nations “: for the power of fashion over our minds is no new thing; nor is its baneful effect. However, owing to the safeguards with which they were provided through the prophetic ministry, they were not in general nearly so disastrously affected by the character of even their worst kings as the surrounding nations were. The Rehoboams, Manassehs, and Ahabs of the Hebrews were bad enough, but never were allowed to go to such terrible extremes of monstrous iniquity as the Caligulas and Neros of old, or the Theebaus, the kings of Dahomey, and Khans of Khelat in modern times. It must be allowed though, that the Herod family did much to counterbalance anything that had been in Israel's favor on this ground heretofore.

A glance at the ruling powers of the time when Christ came, and at the frightful condition of misery and oppression in which the mass of the people lived, makes us wonder at the calm audacity of those who assert that Christianity was a development of humanity, the result of a gradual improvement of the human race. The fact is too notorious that, whereas there had been hundreds of years previously such noble minds in Greece as the king Codrus and the sage Socrates, or in Rome such chiefs as Mettus Curtius and Cincinnatus, now the rulers of the civilized world were represented by Tiberius, Herod and Caiaphas, men who had “developed” to the penultimate stage, not of virtue, but of wickedness.

There are four Herods referred to in the New Testament. The first of these is called Herod the Great who was reigning as king (under the Romans) when our Lord was born. This was one of the most atrociously wicked rulers that ever lived. Augustus, at that time Emperor of Rome, said smilingly (and making a play upon the words in the language in which he was speaking), that “it was better to be Herod's swine than Herod's son “: and another thus describes him sans compliment, if not sans phrase, “A heathen at heart, a savage in character, a brute in passions, and a fawning slave to the Imperial Court, he made use of his position to betray his country to the Romans, by fostering immorality, cultivating alien customs, sapping religious faith, corrupting the priesthood and massacring the nobles.” He was an Idumean or descendant of Edom, that is Esau, who had struggled against Israel before he was born, had tried to kill him in his manhood, whose descendants had tried to stop the march of the Israelites through the wilderness, attacked them ceaselessly in the land, and now were making a last desperate effort to destroy the Messiah, the true Israel. This Herod was the man who ordered his own wives and sons to be murdered, prepared a general massacre of the nobles “to make the people mourn,” and slaughtered the poor little infants of Bethlehem, whilst he was advertising his piety and patriotism by making the people build the most gorgeous temple in the world. The subject is not inviting to continue. Only that when we are told that Christ was merely the efflorescence of a long-continued progress in mankind, it is well to remember of what kind the leading man was in the country to which He came.

It was the son of this man who ruled as Tetrarch in Galilee at the time of the crucifixion. He was called Herod Antipas. What religion the father had was of an architectural nature, but the son liked a good sermon: he “sat under” John the Baptist and “heard him gladly." “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things...” and that is more than everyone who “sits under” a popular preacher does. So that “he was not all bad.” No, but in a sense he was worse than if he had been. Notwithstanding all this he continued to live in the vilest debauchery, eventually murdered his religious teacher, and joined himself with the royal and priestly conspirators who put to death the Son of God. When men show a religious tendency and at the same time live bad lives, it is usual to speak of them as hypocrites, to impute to them deliberate deception; but this is often very incorrect. Such men as Herod Antipas are entirely and morbidly sincere in their religion. Their consciences are not conveniently hardened like those of men of the nature of Herod the Great, or Nero, who took a distinct pleasure in doing evil. A conscience at any time may be said to be an inconvenient and expensive thing to keep; but a conscience like that of Antipas, just strong and superstitious enough to worry and haunt him with his misdeeds, but not strong enough to keep him from perpetrating them, must be almost intolerable. It is difficult to understand how such a man could be an object of affection to any living creature; and yet Herodias, vile-natured as she was, going from one of her half-brothers to another, subtle instigator of murder and worse,—. Herodias left everything for him, first her husband and her honorable position, and finally followed him to Gaul into poverty and banishment when he was subsequently disgraced.

He was by no means a weak man. He would not have slain the Baptist at the direct desire of either Herodias or her daughter, but they entrapped him through his superstitious regard for his oath. The man is blessed who “keeps his oath to his own hurt;” but Herod kept it to the hurt of another. In the end it amounted however to the same thing as if he were weak: a woman and a wicked one, ruled the state, but the man, though a usurper, had taken the position and could not divest himself of his responsibility. When one like that rules, everything rests on an unstable and capricious basis. This was how at a certain time the Greeks said a child ruled the world, “because Europe ruled the world and of course Greece ruled Europe: of course also Athens ruled Greece, and Themistocles ruled Athens; then, of course, the wife of Themistocles ruled him; and naturally her little boy ruled her.” When things are arranged in this inverted manner, they cannot last long. It is like reversing a pyramid to balance it on its apex. The experiment is interesting, but the result hardly doubtful.

The next prominent ruler of this family is Herod Agrippa I. whom we meet in Acts 12 for a moment only. The moment is quite long enough: his passage is swift and devastating. “He stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.” And he “vexed” them to some purpose. He killed James and put Peter in prison, and would doubtless have continued “vexing” the Christians, as it pleased the Jews and did not cost so much as building temples, but that he had to go against Tire and Sidon where he decked himself out magnificently and made a great oration from the throne at which the people rapturously applauded. But vox popitli is not always vox Dei: God smote him and the worms ate him. Outside all glory and splendor: inside loathsome corruption.

He was the grandson of Herod the Great and left his power to his son Herod Agrippa II. whose life was a public scandal. But all the Herod were in their way capable men, having a good knowledge of what king James called “king-craft.” This Agrippa II. was a scholar of considerable repute, and

Festus refers the difficult case of the apostle Paul's indictment to him for advice. He hears Paul's long defense with a scholar's impartiality and patience of detail, candidly acknowledging with a kind of friendly raillery to the apostle that he has nearly convinced him. He was very far however from being “almost a Christian.” He was too intelligent and learned a man to be a bigot, and he acknowledges that there was no reason why Paul should not be set free, only that [he adds to avoid committing himself] as he has appealed to Cæsar, he must go to Rome. And so having calmly and adroitly extricated himself and his friend Festus from an awkward position, he turns from the light of the apostolic gospel, charmed though with the eloquent discourse, back to his licentious life with that fair Sin that accompanied him to palace or judgment-seat, or wherever he went. At the end he fought against Jerusalem under Titus. He was the last of the Herods.

Chapter 337

Scripture Sketches: 11—Achan

After their long and weary journey through the torrid desert the vast host of the Israelites had at length triumphantly crossed Jordan and taken the garrisoned and embattled city of Jericho. Their goal is at last attained. All their sorrows are over; all their troubles past!...All? No, not all.

The next town they must occupy, Ai, a mere village of a place, against which they felt it was only necessary to detach a mere handful of troops, stops them. The men of Ai were as valiant as they were wicked; for unfortunately the popular theory that bad men are cowardly is not always true. They resist desperately; “heroically,” we should say if they were on our side, but furiously” is the word generally used for the enemy; and the attacking Israelites are mown down or flee before them. The immediate cause was that the invaders underestimated their enemies and sent a small detachment to do work that the whole nation should have been engaged in; but the remote cause was something far more serious.

What an atrocious surprise it is to us, when we have overcome great difficulties, to find ourselves. suddenly stopped by some apparently trifling obstacle: to conquer the line of the Danube, and be stopped at the little fort of Plevna; to gain all Europe and find disaster at the small village of Waterloo. It is to climb over the great mountain, and then fall over the “ridiculous mouse.” Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall! It never ceases to be necessary to “walk circumspectly.” It is customary to despise the power of our foes too much, and to make a joke of the devil. It is a poor joke. At the gate of Utgard, says the Norse legend, they showed the great giant Thor a cat and asked him to move it. “Small as the feat seemed, Thor with his whole godlike strength could not; he bent up the creature's back, could not raise its feet off the ground, could at the utmost raise one foot. Why, you are no man, said the Utgard people: there is an old woman that will wrestle you! Thor, heartily ashamed, seized this haggard old woman; but could not throw her.”

But there was a reason, as for most things: the cat was the great world-serpent; the old woman was time; and who can wrestle with her? The men of Ai, so disastrous to attack, were invincible in all the panoply of the Almighty so long as Achan was amongst the people of Israel. For God had given a commandment that they were not to enrich themselves with the spoils of the wicked Canaanites upon whom their swords were executing judgment; and at the very first battle Achan had wantonly disobeyed and hidden away spoil for himself. At another time this would have been simply a case of petty larceny or looting; but now it was a flat defiance of God's authority; and if allowed to go without stern punishment, the evil would no doubt develop until the conquering Israelites, instead of having the character of a solemn mission of divine judgment, would become a horde of vile marauders, and all discipline being relaxed, would certainly be finally defeated with terrible disaster.

Achan's offense then checks the triumphant march of Israel, and throws the whole nation into calamity and confusion. Of so much importance is discipline and fellowship: of such far reaching malignant influence are the consequences of one sin. Time and circumstance make in these

things so much difference: when a work is being done by a great collective force, every man cannot have liberty to do what he chooses. There is a general responsibility to a certain amount of restraint; and what inconvenience is felt in the restraint is more than compensated for by gain in solidity and power. Any musician can play C for D as often as he likes on his own instrument at home; but if he do so in the midst of a great orchestra, he spoils them al], and fills a thousand breasts with rage and indignation. Thus no man lives to himself, nor even dies to himself: everything he does affects more or less remotely those that surround him, for good or evil. How cautious the consideration of that should make us as to the allowance of innocent sins and white lies in our lives.

His sin was that which in most ages, certainly in this, has been regarded as of a most respectable type,—cupidity. It was entirely according to the gospel of gentility and getting on in life: “get money; honestly if you can, but get it.” Yet after all, the twenty or thirty pounds' worth of material which he took was a poor price to sell his conscience and happiness for. Some of these covetous natures that usually make such sharp bargains in buying and selling, make terribly bad bargains when they go to sell their own souls. There is no evidence of repentance; only of remorse. He is not sorry for the sin, but for being found out; he stood quietly concealing his guilt whilst the whole nation was blamed and punished; but when there was no further use in concealment, he confesses in a sort of way. There was no object in keeping silent any longer, and acknowledgment perhaps may mitigate the punishment, but it does not. The calm inexorable face of Joshua is turned toward him and condemns him to be stoned to death. But Midas perishing of his gold, Crassus wailing for Solon, and Crassus with his dead mouth stuffed with the molten metal, were amongst his spiritual descendants.

The event occurring immediately on their entrance to Canaan, the disasters and the fearful judgment resulting from such an apparently small sin seem to have made so strong an impression on the mind of the nation that hundreds of years afterward the prophets refer to it; but strange to say they refer to it not in the way of condemnation, but as a ground of hopefulness. The judgment of evil, where evil exists, is the only means through which anyone can enter into the forgiveness and favor of God. Therefore Hosea says, that the valley of Achan (Achor) shall be a “door of hope,” and she (Israel) shall sing there. And Isaiah says, “The valley of Achor shall be a place for the herds to lie down in “; for there is no place where hope shines so brightly as it shines on the spot where sin has been judged, nor is there any place for a sinner to rest, like the foot of the cross.

Chapter 338

Scripture Sketches: 12—Simon Peter's Brother

The highest development in pictorial art is proved when the artist can with a few rapid lines represent some view or figure so as to give a good idea of its characteristic features. The three or four brief and casual references in the Gospels to Andrew reveal him to us with such graphic distinctness and power that we seem to have known him all our lives.

He was originally with John the Baptist and was one of the first two men who followed the Messiah. The Baptist was standing with these two of his disciples, “and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.” The apostle who writes this tells us that one of these two was Andrew, but with characteristic modesty he omits to mention who the other was, because it was himself. These two men follow the Master, who presently turns to ask what they require: they only ask, “Rabbi, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day.” All this was very characteristic of these two reticent, deep-natured, men; the silent, unquestioning, patient following, the one inquiry which at length falls from their lips, and the nature of that inquiry which divine love had awakened in their souls. It was neither doctrinal nor polemical; simply “Rabbi, where dwellest THOU?”

The other disciple is then modestly left out of the narrative, but of Andrew we are told that, “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias!...and he brought him to Jesus.” There Andrew's part is over for the time. Be it so: he had done a good day's work.

We see in a watch the hands doing their work out toward the world. They are revealed to all as they do their work—important work too—in public. So that when we look at the watch we hardly ever think of anything but the hands and what they indicate. But do they move themselves? No, round at the back, hidden away and difficult to discover, is the fusee, the cogs of which move them. It is a modest, curiously-shaped, wheel that does its work so quietly that you may have a watch for a life-time and not know even that it has a fusee. But the hands cannot move without it, and it is from its direct proximity to the hidden central spring that it has its power. Thus Simon Peter, like the hands of the watch did his work mainly in public, and Andrew his, like the fusee, in retirement. Simon Peter preached to the multitudes, and brought thousands to Christ; but Andrew it was who had given the first impulse by bringing Simon himself to Christ. It seemed a small individual service; but if we think of what Peter afterward accomplished, we see that it had a vast result.

And this kind of direct individual work is always needed. Priscilla's quiet words turn the stream of Apollos' eloquence into the right direction. Luther is instructed by von Staupitz; Farel by Lefevre; Calvin by his cousin Olivetan; John Wesley by Peter Boehler. Augustin's mother Monica it was who took him to hear Ambrose preaching; and when she had by this means turned him from his Manichmænism at Ostea, she said, “I am now satisfied, and have nothing further to wish for from this life.”

After this the two brothers were appointed to the service of the apostolate. As they were at their daily work, fishing, they were called from that and all else to be fishers of men. And they illustrate the different ways of fishing: Peter fished with a net and brought multitudes in with a sweep of the great waters, whilst Andrew fished with a line. He had already caught one fish, and this proved to be a very large one. Now the qualities needed for the two kinds of fishing are in many ways distinct. Patience and vigilance are needed in both cases; but whereas the net-fisherman has his attention on large things, the rise and fall of sea-tides, gales, and shoals, the line-fisherman has a careful watch for the little ripple, the slight depressions of the float, the faintest pressure on the line. This quality we see in Andrew. When the multitude stood starving around them, and the rest of the disciples were in despair, it was Andrew that saw the boy standing with the bread basket, and, with the practical eye of one accustomed to see small things and seize small opportunities, he said, “There is a lad here [another would not have noticed a lad at all!] which hath five barley loaves [he had not only counted them, but knew what they were made of!] and two small fishes.”

If he had only stopped there, what a glorious speech it had been! what audacity of faith it implied! But unfortunately he added on some reasoning of his own and produced a most ridiculous anti-climax; like that divinity student that, being asked who the first king of Israel was, hesitatingly answered “Saul “; and then, seeing he was correct, proceeded triumphantly...” afterward called Paul.” Ah, we often begin in the spirit and end in the flesh! The fact was, logic was not Andrew's gift: Paul, John, and others of them had that gift, but not he. So the sentence ends in the veritable bathos, “but what are they among so many?” What indeed!

But do not let the stupidity of the closing question make us forget that after all it was Andrew that saw the boy and the loaves, the small means which his faith in his Master's power led him to bring into notice. And if he had faith that would believe in a small miracle, but would not stretch to a big one, are we not reminded of many eminent theologians in the present day, who are exactly in the same condition? Excellent mathematicians and scientists they are too, and will spend years getting fish out of old rocks: but the fish are dead and the flesh gone. They call it paleontology, and they seem to like it.

But Andrew was evidently held in esteem by his companions and worthy of being referred to in difficult circumstances like that “Brother Jonathan” Trumbull, whom Washington always consulted. Men with little logic have sometimes much sagacity. Thus when the Greeks come up and go to Philip, he turns to Andrew for advice. By this time we are pretty certain what his advice is likely to be. He has a way of bringing, and referring people and things, direct to his divine Master: so we read, “and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.” He subsequently labored in Scythia and was put to death in Achaia on a transverse cross. He is the patron saint of the Russians and. Scots; but what he has done to deserve that his name and cross should be interwoven with the resentful thistle and the pugnacious motto Nemo me impune lacessit is not easy to say. J. C. B.

Chapter 339

Seeing Christ Glorified (Duplicate)

How powerful is the effect! It absorbs the heart. “I have suffered the loss of all things,” said the apostle, “and I do count them but dung.” It is not only that we have given them up, but their power is gone: the actual trials on the path become a matter of joy. They are the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death. It gives unity of action and perseverance. It gives a heavenly character to the path, the calling being above, no less than confidence and joy in reference to God. It is His calling, and in the most blessed way, in Christ Jesus. Christ Himself is the object; but this is united on us as on Him — “resurrection from among the dead.” For this too divine righteousness in Christ Himself can only be fit or suffice. J.N.D.

Chapter 340

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep: 1. The Blindness of the Jews

I.—THE BLINDNESS OF THE JEWS.

John 9:39-41.

No scripture can be divorced from its context without losing somewhat of its force and beauty. And the well-known passage in the Gospel of John dealing with the Good Shepherd is, like all other inspired writings, only a single link in the chain wrought by the Spirit of God for His own ends and purposes. It may therefore be profitable to meditate upon it with this thought before the mind.

The eighth and ninth chapters of John show in considerable detail both the inability of the Jews to appreciate in any measure the testimony of God which was being given them by the Lord from heaven, and also the enmity of their hearts against the One Who by His words of truth disturbed the serenity of their hypocritical ways. He was among them as the “Light of the world” (John 8:12); but this did not aid their moral perception; for to them noonday was no better than night. The light shone; but alas! they were blind. Had they confessed their true state then, as they will do in a later day, they would have said “We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as in the night” (Isa. 59:10).

Neither would such blindness then, any more than now or ever, have been a bar to blessing. For the prophets had testified beforehand that it wad a characteristic work of the Messiah to open the eyes of the blind (Psa. 146:8; Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). And this the Lord did, both in the temple (Matt. 21:14) and by the wayside (Luke 18:35). And what He did for the natural sight was but an earnest of what He would do for the spiritual eyes. Those that saw not should see and their sin be put away; but, in their pride of heart, the nation, by the mouths of their responsible religious leaders, said “We see” and thus their sin remained (John 9:41).

PROOF OF BLINDNESS.

It is important to observe that at the close of chap. 9., according to the teaching of this Gospel, the complete rejection of the Lord by the Jews is definitely marked. This is indeed indicated in a. general way in the first four chapters, but from thence it is shown to increase in intensity. In chap. 5:16 they persecute Him and seek to slay Him because He healed the impotent man on the Sabbath. day. In chap. 6:66 many of His disciples go back and walk no more with Him because of what He was teaching. In chap. 7:32 the Pharisees and chief priests send officers to take Him because many of the people believed on Him. In chap. 8. He argues with the Jews as only that One could Whose words were truth as well as spirit and life. But they do not understand His speech, because they cannot hear His word (ver. 43). Being full of all contumaciousness, they interrupt Him and oppose; failing in argument, as error must in presence of truth, they resort to abuse and say He is a Samaritan and has a demon (ver. 48). When His words still pursue them, piercing and cutting more keenly than a two-edged sword, laying them naked and bare before His

very eyes (Heb. 4:12), they take up stones to cast at Him, and thus drive Him from their midst (ver. 59). They could not endure Him because of what He says, because He tells them the truth (ver. 40).

Their blindness is thus proved. Would they but own this, they need not despair; for in chap. 9. the Lord shows that He can open the eyes even of one born blind. This act however provokes the Jews to further hostility. They, first of all, strive to make it appear that there was no miracle at all. Defeated in this, because the man is simple and honest enough to abide by the fact that his eyes had been opened by Jesus, they spitefully cast the poor fellow out of the synagogue as a disciple of Christ.

Thus the Spirit testifies in chaps. 8. and 9. that the Jews would not believe in what He said nor in what He did. His words and His works were alike offensive to them. They want neither Him nor His followers. This miracle would not have created such a stir if any but Jesus had done it.

Herein was the true condition of their hearts made manifest. As the Lord Himself said “For judgment I am come into the world” (chap. 9:39). Not of course to pronounce the sentence of final condemnation as He will do by-and-by (John 5:22, 27, 29); for He was here as a Savior not as a Judge (John 3:17; 12:47.) Nevertheless His presence afforded a very conclusive proof whether they could see or not. He was in their midst as the Light of the world, as the Dayspring from on high to give light to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke 1:7S, 79). The Light verily shone in darkness; but instead of being enlightened (Isa. 60:1 margin), the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5). Indeed this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

Willful BLINDNESS.

And this perversity made their state so much the more solemn. They were not only in darkness, but they loved it; they were not only blind but angry with the One Who would have healed them. The Lord had come that they which see not might see. But the Jews declined to own such a thing and gloried in themselves; in fact the dispensation was in its Laodicean stage. They said, like Christendom to-day, We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and they knew not they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Rev. 3:17). Oh! if they had but come down from their loftiness, and cried like the beggars of Jericho “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, Thou Son of David” (Matt. 20:30), their eyes might have been opened and they would have seen beauty in their King that they should desire Him. But no! so infatuated were they, so under the power of the enemy who blinds the minds of the unbelieving (2 Cor. 4:4), that they not only took the ground of being able to see for themselves, but assumed to be guides to the blind and lights to those in darkness (Rom. 2:19).

Inflated assumption! what could they be but blind guides at the best, as the Lord said to them (Matt. 23:16, 17, 26)? And if the blind led the blind, what could they do, but both fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14)? And this was surely the unhappy result, when the chief priests persuaded the people to ask Barabbas and crucify Jesus, Whose blood rests on them and their children unto this day.

JUDICIAL BLINDNESS.

And this climax of iniquity was reached by the Jewish nation as the inevitable outcome of their persistent refusal to acknowledge the Lord and to own their real state before Him. And in John 9:39 we have His solemn warning of such a thing. Whilst He had come that those which saw not might see, the effect of His presence would also be that those who saw not would be made blind. It was dangerous for them to dally with God's offers of mercy. Grace and truth had come in His Person: to reject Him was to bring down upon them that judicial blindness spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. “Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed” (Isa. 6:10). The Lord was the Great Physician come to heal them. And of His power and readiness so to do, He had given repeated proofs. But they “would not” (Matt. 23:37), and accordingly their blind eyes were more blinded.

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY.

It is instructive to note that in Matthew as also in John we have the above named prophecy from Isaiah quoted. Matt. 13:14. And there, as in John 12:40, it is made to follow the rejection of the Messiah, not being quoted till they had ascribed His power of casting out demons to Beelzebub the prince of demons (Matt. 12:24).

And it may also be helpful in this connection to mark that this order is invariably observed in scripture. It is not till man's will actively opposes God's that He manifests His sovereignty. It is when man will not that he cannot. This is shown clearly enough in this Gospel (John); and, in direct sequence to the scripture before us, we read “But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spice, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed”? (John 12:37, 38). Plainly they would not believe (John 5:40), though ample proofs were afforded. Then the passage proceeds, “Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart and be converted and I should heal them.

These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him” (John 12:39-41). So that we see they could: not believe because they would not. However this hardening was but national and was not apart from mercy; for it is immediately added “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him.”

Thus the Lord's words (John 9:39), may be taken as describing the twofold result of His mission here— “that they which see not might see and that those which see might be made blind.” He filled the hungry with good things, but the rich. He sent empty away. And, remembering the glory and worth of His Person, who shall measure the blessedness of the blind who received Him? Or, on the other hand, who shall measure the condemnation of those who rejected Him?

“Jesus said unto them If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth” (chap. 9:41.) Here the Lord states that they were responsible for the profession they were making concerning themselves. If they confessed their blindness, they would have no sin. For penitent sinners there was mercy and forgiveness. But if they said, We see, they were responsible to walk in the light and would be judged accordingly. If they could see as they said they should have recognized the Good Shepherd when He came. This the Lord develops in

the parable of the sheepfold at which we may look on another occasion (D.V).

W. J. H.

Chapter 341

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep: 2. The Proverb of the Sheepfold

The parable or proverb in these verses is a continuation of the Lord's discourse to the Pharisees begun in the previous chapter. He had spoken plainly of their actual blindness in spite of the pretense they made of seeing. Then, under the figure of a shepherd entering his fold and calling out his own sheep, He showed the effect of His presence in Israel. But these men, wise in their own conceits, knew not what the Lord was saying, though His words were especially directed to them (verse 6).

This inability to understand the Lord's meaning could not have arisen from the strangeness of the figure thus employed by Him. Shepherds and sheep were continually before their eyes, and the comparison of Israel to a flock is common throughout the Old Testament. And, in one of the prophets, the metaphor is even elaborated throughout an entire chapter (Ezek. 34). But, having failed to recognize the Person of Christ, ever the key of all divine teaching, the professed spiritual leaders of the people were blind to the real meaning of the Lord's words. Had these Jews but bowed to the long-promised and then-given Shepherd, all would have been plain. But though the Good Shepherd had come to His fold, they knew Him not and heard not His voice. Hence, as indeed the Lord told them, hearing not His word, they understood not His saying, John 8:43.

The Lord, speaking of Himself in relation to the sheepfold, gave three distinguishing marks by which the true shepherd might be known:—

1.—He enters by the door;

2.—To Him the porter openeth; and

3.—The sheep hear His voice.

These marks were of the simplest order, and were available for the simplest souls. Yet this very simplicity would be a sufficient reason for them to be scouted and despised by those vain pretenders to a wisdom which was far from them. Their pride of heart and of mind would not brook the grace that classed them with the people that knew not the law (John 7:49). Not content with what suited the humble, they demanded a sign from heaven (Matt. 16). Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

ENTRANCE BY THE DOOR.

The Eastern sheepfold consisted of an enclosure formed by a circular stone wall with a door for entrance. Here the sheep were driven at night and at other times for safety. In the Old Testament the figure of the fold is used to express the security and privilege of that people whose God was Jehovah. Thus looking on to a future day, the Lord of Israel says, “I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall he fruitful and increase” Jer. 23:3. Then again, “As a shepherd seeketh out his flock. in

the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep.... And I will bring them out from the peoples.... I will feed them in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be" (Ezek. 34:12-14). "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold" (Mic. 2:12). These scriptures remain to be fulfilled in their entirety. For not until the millennial rest shall Israel dwell peaceably in their own land secure from the inroads of every foe. In the parable before us, the fold undoubtedly refers to the separateness of the Jews from other nations, which was still true of them. The Romans had not yet taken away their place and nation. And though they had lost the inward sense of God's presence and favor, they had many of the outward and visible signs of God's ancient people. They had still the temple and its service, the sacrifices and the feasts, the priests and the Levites. When the Good Shepherd came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He came to the fold. He had not then to seek them among all nations. They were not then, as now, scattered over the face of the earth. And when He presented Himself to the sheep, it was in no surreptitious manner. On the contrary He submitted Himself to all that had been ordered of God of old and strictly prescribed in Old Testament prophecies. There the mode of the entry of the Good Shepherd was foretold in the plainest terms, that the simple of the flock might not be deceived. The Spirit signified beforehand that the Messiah should be supernaturally born of a virgin. This was fulfilled in Jesus. He should be of the house and lineage of David. This Jesus was proved to be. He should be born in Bethlehem of Judah. There the shepherds found the Savior, who is Christ the Lord. He should be called out of Egypt. Thence He was brought after Herod's death. But why add more? Do not the evangelists, especially Matthew, give in detail how the Lord fulfilled in Himself what had been spoken before by the prophets? It was thus easy for the simple and godly Israelite with the scriptures in his heart to recognize the Good Shepherd when He came. There could be but One Who should fulfill the promises of God. The question therefore was whether the shepherd was entering by the door, or whether he was forcing an entrance contrary to the testimony of the holy oracles which were in his hands. If he answered to the witness of the scriptures, he was the Good Shepherd. If he was climbing in some other way, he was a thief and a robber whose object was to pillage the flock.

Chapter 342

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep: 3. To Him the Porter Openeth

TO HIM THE PORTER OPENETH.

John 10:1-6.

In the absence of the owner of the sheep occupying the fold, a porter or watchman was set at the entrance, one of whose duties it was to admit no one but the shepherd. Obviously therefore if he opened the door to anyone, that one must be the shepherd of the sheep.

Now when the Lord came to the fold of Israel, He did not come unannounced. The door was opened for His admittance. The Holy Ghost Who gave the promises of old through the prophets raised up a special testimony at the coming of Him Who was to fulfill those promises. He Who had inspired no prophets since the days of Malachi, after an interval of 400 years, spake by the mouth of Zacharias the priest concerning his infant son John.

“Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways” (Luke 1:76). Isaiah had long before foretold the forerunner of the Messiah (Isa. 40:3). That herald was now come. On the banks of the Jordan, John the Baptist delivered his message concerning the Christ coming after him Whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose. He plainly told all enquirers that he himself was not the Christ. He had come baptizing with water so that the Sent One might be “made manifest to Israel” (John 1:31). And when the Spirit descended like a dove and abode upon Jesus of Nazareth, and the voice from heaven proclaimed the divine Sonship, John testified that this was He Who should baptize with the Holy Ghost.

Thus did the Spirit of God open the door for the Shepherd, by giving an ample testimony to Him by Zacharias immediately previous to His birth, and also by John the Baptist at the commencement of His public ministry.

THE SHEEP HEAR HIS VOICE.

The recognition of the shepherd by the sheep proves two things:

1.—That He is the Shepherd of the sheep and

2.—That they are the sheep of the Shepherd. Thus in ver. 3 the fact of hearing His voice is used to distinguish the Shepherd from strangers, while in vers. 26-27 it is used to distinguish the true from the false sheep.

In Israel there were some who heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. At His coming there was a little flock expecting Him. These were waiting upon God for the consolation of Israel. They were diligently studying His word. So that when Christ appeared among them, they were not unprepared.

Aged Simeon discerned in the Holy Babe the Salvation of Israel. Anna gave thanks to God at the sight of Him and carried the glad news to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. The guileless Israelite of Cana in Galilee, hearing His voice, said, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” Others, whom He called, left all and followed Him; for they knew the claims of the One Who called them. He was their Shepherd.

HIS OWN SHEEP.

It is of peculiar interest thus to observe that while the Jews generally lapsed into blind rejection of Christ there were a few who received Him. Such are here designated “His own” sheep. This description points to the close and inseparable link between the Shepherd and the sheep. His own people refused their King. For “He came unto His own (things), and His own (people) received Him not” (John 1:11). However His own sheep did not revolt against Him, their Shepherd. They were His own particular property; as the Lord said to His Father, “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me” (John 17:6). Therefore they heard His voice and they followed Him.

And while the little flock as a whole is His very own, His love and interest are directed toward each individual sheep. He knows the name of every one; for He calleth His own sheep by name. He called Zaccheus by name from his hiding-place in the sycamore tree. He saw Nathaniel secreted under the fig-tree. He knew the past history of the Samaritan stranger. He had compassion on the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, knowing he had been a long time in that case.

But more than this: besides the authority which calls them “His own” and the loving concern which calls them “by name,” He constitutes Himself their Guide. They should no longer be as sheep without a shepherd. He places Himself at their head. He leadeth them out. When He putteth forth all His own, He goeth before them; and they follow Him.

Having beard and recognized the voice of the Good Shepherd, it was now the part of the sheep to keep close to Him. If He led them out from the lifeless forms of Judaism, it was enough for them to be with the Shepherd. The voices of stranger shepherds, such as the Pharisees in chap. 9., might decoy or threaten; but the sheep would neither hear nor heed them. They looked only to Him Who was to prove His love by laying down His life for them.

“This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them.” Are there any so blind to-day?

Chapter 343

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep: 4. The Door

THE DOOR.

After the break indicated by the sixth verse, the Lord resumes His discourse concerning the sheep and their relationship to the Shepherd. In the previous verses He had spoken in a general way of His own advent into the sheepfold. He now proceeds to reveal what a bountiful provision there is in Himself for the poor of the flock who welcome Him. In Him the sheep would find their all.

He was indeed the Shepherd, but He was also the Door of the sheep (verse 7). And it cannot but be noticed that the Lord, here and in ver. 9, abstains from saying that He is the Door of the fold. There is however no need to resort to hazardous conjectures as to the significance of the omission. The context shows that the Israelitish fold with its legal system and fleshly ordinances was virtually abandoned. The Shepherd leadeth His sheep out. But not a word is heard of a rival fold. The truth is that a new order of things was at hand, into which the sheep might enter through the Door, that is, Christ. But the hour had not then come to make this known. Neither were the hearers able to bear such an announcement. Hence the general terms employed which allowed fully for the future revelation of the wide display of the grace of God to Jew and Gentile alike.

Even here, in verse 9, it is intimated that the blessing was not to be restricted to Israel. He had announced Himself as the Door of the Jewish sheep; but the gracious truth is repeated with unlimited scope. “I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture.”

Thus the Lord calls the faithful in Israel, nay in every place, to find their sufficiency in Himself. He definitely substitutes Himself for the ancient earthly fold. He does not proclaim Himself as the Door to another earthly system, but says “I am the Door “; and if curiosity inquire of what He is the Door, love rightly surmises there is naught beyond the Door besides Himself.

SALVATION, LIBERTY, AND PASTURE.

In Christ alone the sheep would find suited salvation. They had suffered from false shepherds who pillaged the sheep, from the thief who came to steal and to kill and to destroy, and from the wolf who ravaged and scattered the flock. But they needed to be saved from more than these. They had inward faults as well as outward foes. They had all gone astray. Everyone had turned to his own way. And upon the One then speaking to them Jehovah would lay the iniquities of them all. As the Shepherd, so soon to be smitten by the sword of divine judgment on account of the flock, He guarantees salvation to any who seek it at His hands. “If any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

Further, in contrast with the bondage gendered at Mount Sinai, they should be brought into the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free. Sin and Satan held men in hard and bitter slavery, and the law of Moses could remove the masterful power of neither the one nor the other. But at the cross the Lord Jesus annulled the power, not of one only, but of both. This emancipating fact, after its accomplishment is fully unfolded by the Spirit in the Epistles. Here the Lord only says they shall

“go in and out “; for it was the Spirit's office to chronicle the glorious effects of redemption, it was the Son's mission to perform the gracious work.

Moreover, He promises they shall find pasture. It was a special charge of Jehovah against those who, of old, professed to be shepherds of Israel, that they fed themselves and not the flock. But not so the Good Shepherd. Now that He had come, the sheep should no longer want. He would make them lie down in green pastures, and lead them beside the still waters. According to Ezekiel's prophecy He was Himself that “Plant of Renown” which God had promised to raise up for His sheep, so that they might no more be consumed with hunger in the land (Ezek. 34:29). Thus the Lord Jesus is Shepherd and Door and Pasture and All.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

By means of a single epithet of the simplest character, the Lord contrasts Himself with all the false and unworthy hirelings who had gone before. He is the Good Shepherd, and “good,” in that absolute sense which applies to God alone (Luke 18:19). Among men there is none good, no, not one. But the goodness of the Shepherd of Israel was such as would undergo the supremest test. No love could exceed His. He would lay down His life for the sheep.

This phrase, “laying down the life,” as an expression of love, is characteristic of John, being found in the Epistle as well as repeated in the Gospel (see John 10:11, 15, 17; 15:13 John 3:16). The same transcendent act is also given in Rom. 5:8 as the proof of God's love. “God commendeth his (own) love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

But while Paul and John use the same unparalleled fact to demonstrate that truth which would otherwise be beyond human conception, the difference in their standpoint is plainly observable. The apostle of divine righteousness emphasizes the sin and guilt of man. He points out that it was when we were “ungodly,” “sinners,” “enemies,” that Christ died for us. He thus displays the beauty of God's grace upon the dark background of human guilt. But the apostle of divine love dilates upon the Person of the One Who thus died. He enforces his words by the consideration of Who He is and not so much of what man is. The Holy Ghost by Paul sums up what we were in a few pregnant words; but the main theme of John's Gospel throughout is the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father Who laid down His life for us. Paul often discourses from the brazen altar, and we weep with shame at ourselves as we consider that He died for such as we. But John leads us into the holy place, and there, before the veil, effulgent with the Shechinah from the throne beyond, we worship with reverent joy as we learn that such an, One died for us. We cannot afford to neglect either the one or the other aspect of this blessed truth. In yielding up His life for the sheep, the Lord showed Himself the very reverse of the menial shepherds before or since. Their slender interest in the flock vanished at the first roar of the lion or growl of the bear. Such pastors as they were bargained for wages not for wolves. Their care was only for themselves and not at all for their charge. Indeed this was the general character of those of old who were set up to feed God's sheep. Even David through his folly caused 70,000 of Israel to fall of a pestilence (1 Chron. 21.). On account of Solomon's sin, the kingdom was rent in twain in the days of his son Rehoboam. Hoshea filled up the measure of iniquity until Ephraim was carried captive by the Assyrian to the uttermost parts of the earth. Under king Zedekiah the people of Judah were removed from their own land to serve seventy years in Babylon. Of such rulers, Jehovah said “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” (Jer. 23:1.) But the Good Shepherd had

now come. The sheep were His own; He loved them and laid down His life for them. MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE. “I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father.” So the Revised Version reads, showing the true connection between verses 14 and 15, which is not so apparent in the A. V. It is perhaps a matter of little surprise to learn that the Lord knoweth them that are His: but it is a matter of great wonder and of greater thankfulness that the sheep should know the Shepherd. And it is upon this particular manifestation of divine life in the soul that John is inspired to dwell in an especial manner. Of the world the Holy Ghost says, that it “knew Him not” (John 1:10, 1 John 3:2); and in that which is most properly described as the “Lord's prayer,” the Son declared “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee” (John 17:25; compare 16:3). So of the Pharisees in this chapter. “They understood (lit. knew) not what things they were which he spake unto them” (John 10:6). But when speaking of those who are “not of the world,” we read “The Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true” (1 John 5:20). This knowledge characterizes the babes as well as the fathers (1 John 2:13, 14). And it was exemplified in the case of Simon Peter, when he said “We have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God” (John 6:69. R. V).

This reciprocal knowledge of the Good Shepherd and His sheep is here most strikingly compared” even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father.” Without pretending to say whether this refers to the measure or the manner of our knowledge, or to theorize in any way with regard to that which seems a fitter subject for meditation than for exposition, one remark may be permitted by the way. We may surely gather from this analogy that the knowledge of Christ's sheep in this respect is neither uncertain nor obscure; for it is the knowledge of a Person, not about Him. Knowledge concerning the Lord is undoubtedly progressive; but knowing Him is that which marks the veriest lamb of the flock, as not being of the world which knows Him not. One of the robbers at Calvary recognized his Lord in the One crucified at his side; and said, “Lord [Jesus], remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” Herein was he distinguished from his fellow malefactor, both in this world and the next. Verily, it is not so much what we know as Whom we know. W. J. H.

Chapter 344

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep: 5. Therefore Doth My Father Love Me

THEREFORE DOTH MY FATHER LOVE ME.

We have here an instance, unparalleled in the history of all time, of One who afforded a motive and an occasion for the Father's love. The unique character of God's gracious love towards sinners is elsewhere described as triumphing over the extreme repulsiveness of its objects (Rom. 5:8). Here, on the contrary the object of love is in perfect accord with the One Who loves; for the Lord declares of Himself, “Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again” (John 10:17). In this act was unqualified obedience to the commandment He had received of His Father. And it was by such obedience that the Father's name was glorified and His love drawn forth. For the Son's obedience was unvarying in His life and, moreover, consummated in His death, as the word says of Him, “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Small wonder, then, if such unrivaled perfection of thoughts and ways should become (speaking after the manner of men) an adequate cause for the satisfaction and complacency of the Father Who alone could estimate its true worth.

This divine delight in the Messiah was foretold in the prophets. For instance, Jehovah says through Isaiah, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1). In like manner, it was announced by the angelic host to the shepherds of Bethlehem, when on that memorable night they praised God and said “Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good pleasure in men “ (Luke 2:14.) The first man, together with everything God made, was pronounced very good (Gen. 1:31); but the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, is herein declared to be the object of the fullness of divine delight as well as the medium of its display to others. Subsequently a voice came from heaven, not then of angels, but of the Father Himself, not once only but twice, “This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). And when, in obeying unto death, He finished the work given Him to do, His soul was not left in hades (Acts 2:27), but, by His exaltation to the throne, He was demonstrated to be the One Whom God delighted to honor. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him” &c. (Phil. 2:9).

It is well to remind ourselves in considering these divine testimonies to the excellence of the Man Christ Jesus, that they were given not to command our admiration, but rather our worship. We are called to admire many a worthy in the Old Testament as well as the New; but we are to worship One only, Him Who though fully man was never less than God. It was when Peter sought to class the Lord Jesus with Moses and Elias, that the voice came from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear Him.” In His very lowest stoop of grace, as well as in the height of His exaltation, no rival so much as appears. In all things He has and must have the pre-eminence.

Now the witnesses we have heard, the prophet, the angels, the Father Himself, all combine to show that the words uttered by the Lord in John 10:17 are, in point of fact, an echo of what had

already been declared of Him. In comparing, however, the act of laying down His life as spoken of in verse 17, with verses 11 and 15, a difference is at once noticed. The Shepherd first spoke of laying down His life for the sheep. In this aspect, His death is given as an irrefragable demonstration of His love and devotion to the flock as well as His substitution for them since they had all gone astray. But in verse 17 the sheep are not so much as mentioned.

It is here a question of what the Father sees in the death of the Son. It was to Him a source of love and delight, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor. So that this phase of Christ's death is the Antitype of the burnt offering (Lev. 1). There as well as here is seen that, when the Son yielded up His life, the Father found therein an abundant and acceptable portion. Compare also Eph. 5:2.

POWER TO LAY IT DOWN.

It has often been remarked in these pages, as well as elsewhere, how fatal it is to the true understanding of scripture to set one passage against another, and to endeavor in an excess of misdirected zeal, to effect a kind of reconciliation by adding to or subtracting from the plain statements of the Word. It is in fact, only the faith which accepts the words of the Holy Ghost as they stand, that is the true solvent of so-called Biblical difficulties. This much is prefaced because some have professed to see a sort of contradiction between this word, “I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again,” and such passages as follow, “This Jesus hath God raised up” (Acts 2:32), “Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father” (Rom. 6:4), “Christ..., being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). In regard to these and similar places, it should be needless to say that there is no necessity whatever for adjustment of any kind, but faith is called to reverently receive the whole as the truth of God. So that while the mysteries of the Trinity are and must be inscrutable to the creature, the believer clearly discerns, because it is revealed, that in the mighty act of resurrection, Father, Son and Holy Ghost each bore a part. And these various aspects are severally given in suitable connection with the context and with the design of the Infallible Inspirer of Holy Writ.

The connection of this declaration of the Lord's (John 10:18) with the general design of the fourth Gospel is evident. For He here speaks as the Son of God Who indeed is God. And throughout John He is made to appear in this character. He takes a place with regard to His life and death, that a mere man could never take without the most daring presumption and the most blasphemous usurpation of the supreme authority of God. To the Jews the Lord said, speaking of His resurrection, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). And again, referring to His atoning death, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51). It is also surely not without its significance that in this Gospel alone it is recorded that, when the armed men sought Him in the garden, He, not waiting to be found of them, but as the Giver-up of His own life, went forth aril said to them “Whom seek ye?” The betrayer's kiss of the synoptists is passed over and replaced by the holy dignity of the Son Who knew all things that should come upon Him. From the majesty of Him Who said, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself,” the constables with their swords and staves recoil in abject impotence, prostrated to the very ground (John 18:4, 5). In like manner, the Incarnate Word announced from the cross with regard to His own work, “It is finished.” Only One could so speak of what He had done and so yield up His spirit (Mark 15:39). It was that One Who said, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”

And surely it is the possession of this right to which He thus asserts His claim as the Son, that so incalculably enhances the value of His act in laying down His life in obedience to the commandment He had received from His Father. The creature, as such, could never have the power of choosing to do the will of his Creator; when man obeys, he does no more than his duty and is therein no more than an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). The Son, however, being equal with God, was able to announce His own acquiescence in the divine will and purpose, saying, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7). It was His prerogative, in contrast to the mere creature, to thus signify His assent. A servant could not choose to be other than subject to the will of his lord. But it was the will of the Lord of all to become the Servant even to the laying down of His life; hence the immeasurable worth and acceptability of this incomparable act.

We hear of another in this Gospel, who spoke of giving up his life. Simon Peter, in the impetuosity of his character, consumed with zeal for his beloved Master, exclaimed on the very night of His betrayal, “I will lay down my life for thy sake” (John 13:37). For the son of Jonas did not then understand that the very reverse would be the case according to John 10:11-15. Neither did he then believe what the Lord immediately told him of the instability of his own heart, that, before an hour or so had passed, he would be denying with oaths and curses that he so much as knew the gracious Master Whom he now seemed prepared to follow to prison and to death. But so it was that a share in such a disgrace and death proved too much for one who trusted in his own strength.

Still, though he fell so shamefully, the Lord credited the desire of his spirit. And after his restoration he was called by the risen Lord to follow Him, and assured of the death by which he should glorify God (John 21:18, 19).

Chapter 345

The Shepherd, the Sheepfold, and the Sheep: 6. The Sheep

John 10:24-30.

This section relates in a summary manner to the characteristics of the sheep of Christ, as contrasted with the unbelief of the Jews. The latter display their utter blindness to all the Lord had previously said and done, by their question, “How long dost thou make us doubt?” “If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (ver. 24). In reply He charges them with positively rejecting both His words and His works, as chapters 8. and 9. of this Gospel respectively show in greater detail. He told them Who He was, but they believed Him not. His works bore witness to the same, but neither did they believe them, because they were not of His sheep. The very fact of asking such a question at such a juncture was full proof of their spiritual status.

The Lord thereon turns from the unbelievers to the believers. He speaks of the sheep of which He is at once the Owner, the Shepherd, and the Guardian. They had heard His voice (ver. 27). He had cried unto Israel, “To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Psa. 95:7, 8); but the mass of the nation would not hear, and accordingly their foolish hearts were darkened. There were however some who heard the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard lived (John 5:28)'.

Of such He says, “I know them.” But to the faithless ones He will say, as to the foolish virgins, “Verily, I say unto you, I know you not” (Matt. 25:12); and to many who have prophesied and cast out demons and done many wonderful works in His name, He will profess “I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity” (Matt. 7:22, 23).

Moreover, those who heard the Shepherd's, voice followed Him, as He said before in a somewhat different connection (ver. 4). Here His words are, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.” Not so the rich young man, who anxiously inquired of the Lord, how he might inherit eternal life. Though outwardly moral and inwardly sincere, he absolutely failed to answer to this claim of the Master. “Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21). But he went away grieved. Whatever else he may have possessed, he undoubtedly lacked this distinguishing characteristic of the sheep of Christ. He was not constrained like the disciples to leave all and follow the poor, the lowly, and the despised. Nazarene; it is therefore clear he had not heard the Shepherd's voice. To him the path, with its apparent darkness and chilly gloom, was forbidding and repellent, as indeed it must be to all who have not the light of life (John 8:12).

Chapter 346

The Gift of Eternal Life

“I give unto them eternal life.” The Good Shepherd, Who laid down His life for the sheep, gives eternal life to the sheep. He had come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10); for it is the will of Him that sent Him, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have everlasting life (John 6:40); and the Son had received power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him (John 17:2). Other passages in this Gospel show that it is given consequent upon faith in God and in Christ. (See chaps. 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 54). But here all mention of faith is omitted that our gaze may be concentrated upon eternal life as the priceless dower of divine love and goodness.

While the effects of the possession of eternal life are many and blessed, it forms in itself the essential basis of the intimate relationships of the children of God. Foolish is it, and fruitless of aught save wild and dangerous speculations, to attempt to analyze this precious gift. The subtle terms, in which it is expressed and referred to, effectually elude and baffle the researches of mere prurient curiosity after explanation and definition. The unraveled mysteries of even the natural life should serve as a sufficient warning to those who would intrude into what is not revealed concerning the spiritual life. It ought not to be forgotten that to exceed the scripture tends to destruction, even as ignorance of it tends to debility. Not one inspired word on this or any other topic can be overlooked without loss, neither can one word be added without the gravest peril.

Chapter 347

The Security of the Sheep

“They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand.” It has often been pointed out that this promise is of a double character, assuring the saints against both corruption and disruption, against internal decay and external foes, against their own harmful weaknesses as well as the rapacious power of the enemy.

Truly, “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). And this unqualified promise is such an impregnable citadel for the timid believer. For the Good Shepherd herein pledges Himself and the honor of His glorious name that the very feeblest of the flock shall never by any possible means perish. So, speaking to His Father of the twelve, He says, “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost (same Greek word) but the son of perdition “ (John 17:12).

Further, the place of safety for the believer is not symbolized by an earthly fold as in former days, but by the hand of the Good Shepherd. There, in the shadow of His hand (compare Isa. 49:2; 51; 16) are they securely hidden from every foe. That hand of invincible might (which redeemed the ancient people from the iron bondage of Egypt, preserved and defended them through the desert and brought them into the promised land flowing with milk and honey) will environ the frail and feeble sheep and protect them from every attack of the enemy. Though the wolf seeks to ravage the flock, the Good Shepherd leads the sheep of His hand (Psa. 95:7) into those green pastures where they may peacefully feed beside the still waters.

The Father also graciously concerns Himself in their guardianship. “My Father which 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.” This unity of interest in those who received the Lord is also shown in John 17:11, 12. The Son there prays the Father to “keep in thine own name those whom thou hast given me,” adding “while I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name.” And when the Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered, the Father turned His hand upon these little ones, according to the prophecy of the Spirit (Zech. 13:7) and the prayer of the Son (John 17); for it was not His will that one of the little ones should perish (Matt. 18:14).

Thus the Father and the Son constitute themselves the Protectors of those who trust them for salvation. Could the ground for confident assurance be made firmer? Away with those who depict the child of faith as scantily-attired, clinging with numb fingers to a slippery sea-girt rock, while dashing waves threaten every moment to engulf in a watery grave. Scripture teaches us to think of such a one held in that hand, in Whose hollow the waters were measured (Isa. 40:12).

W. J. H.

Chapter 348

The Spirit of Heaven and That of the World

The one gathers and unites; the other scatters and divides. Get a center on earth, and around it may be those who regard it in one common light; but in this you separate from Christ and those who are His. Let Christ in heavenly glory be really seen by faith, and those who so see Him must by the Spirit's power be gathered round Him, on ground of God's word, from which nothing but ignorance or earthliness can keep apart any that are His.

Chapter 349

Teaching of the Twelve Apostles: Review

Such is the title of a recently discovered Greek MS.; or perhaps, more literally, the longer and more pretentious form, “Teaching of the Lord, through the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles.” Meager and incorrect, it serves to manifest the melancholy and rapid decline of the second century from revealed truth. The MS. is of the 11th century, and was found a few years ago by Philotheos Bryennios, who afterward became Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in the library of the Patriarch of JeruSalem in Constantinople. Any scholar can see the strong analogies between it and both the Epistle of the Pseudo-Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, which have been generally referred to the beginning and middle of the second century. Some have argued for its priority even to the former; but even the enthusiastic discoverer does not contend for so early a date as either. The sole value of them all is their united yet unwitting evidence how grievously the church had fallen through Judaism. The exaggerated estimate of the late discoveries, formed by men of various schools in our day, demonstrates the same thing now. In the whole treatise of sixteen chapters, if we except the Lord's prayer and a few texts substantially drawn from scripture, there is not one sentence of weighty truth, not one which indicates the enjoyment of the liberty of Christ, no distinctness as to redemption, not an inkling of the presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, nor of the heavenly relationship of the church, nor of the special privileges of the Christian.

It is worse than defective, as may be shown by a brief notice of chap. 1. only. In it the law usurps the place of the gospel from first to last. Clearly the writer had before him, besides the Old Testament, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, the Gospel of John, the Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, and that of James; but where is true intelligence of anything? All is letter, and not spirit. There is no testimony how souls receive life, so as to take its way and refuse the broad road of death; no right. sense expressed of that grace which alone keeps by the power of God through faith. What a contrast with Rom. 5 or 8., which last shows us how the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those that walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit! So it is with Rom. 13 where love, in us impossible apart from faith and life in Christ, is truly said to be the fulfillment of the law, which the law itself never did make good. Still less is the doctrine an approach to that in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians and in the First of John.

The writer interpolates “fasting” unwarrantably into his citation of Matt. 5:44, and holds out a false promise to those that love such as hate them (“But love ye those that hate you and ye shall have no enemy”). Had the author never weighed the death of Stephen, or of James the son of Zebedee, or of others who were slain for Christ's sake, to say nothing of Himself, the substance and test of all truth? It is amazing that any Christian should think that this weak and even false expectation could be a probable oral tradition of the Master's words. No doubt as an ordinary rule those zealous of good disarm the injurious, as 1 Peter 3 shows from Psa. 34. But the same apostle teaches that our place is to do good, suffer for it, and take it patiently, which is certainly not law but grace; as Christ also suffered for us, leaving an example that we should follow His steps. Even this Teaching goes on to cite words quite incompatible with his preceding comment; but when he adds

“for thou canst not,” he exaggerates, unless he means consistently with grace. Indeed his remarks are singularly poor everywhere and in no case suggest a single oral tradition worthy of the Savior. How strange, in the face of Matt. 5:42, to fancy some traditional commandment of the. Lord on the subject of giving! And it is really too bad for any sensible Christian to say of the closing sentence (“Let thine alms sweat into thy hands, as long as thou knowest to whom thou givest") that it clearly refers to some unwritten saying of authority spoken by our Lord! or by one of His near followers. Most men instructed in the truth and at home in the scriptures will rather judge it as vulgar in style, as beneath inspired sentiment. Indeed it is hard to reconcile with what goes before or with our Lord's words.

There is little or nothing noteworthy in chaps. 2., 3., save perhaps the sentence which Clement of Alex. quotes as scripture from this treatise, “My child, be not a liar, for a lie leads to theft.” It would be as true to say, “Be not a thief, for theft leads to lying.” Neither sentiment is scriptural, but wholly beneath its tone. But chap. 4. opens with a call to honor him that speaks God's word as the Lord or Jehovah (for it is anarthrous) and for the strange reason, for, when the lordship is spoken of, then the Lord is. Soon after, in urging liberality, comes the word, “If thou professest, by thy hands thou shalt give ransom, or redemption, for thy sins.” What sort of doctrine is this? Not God's but man's. It is in vain to refer to Dan. 4:27, where the prophet exhorts the vain and self-willed king, not to ransom, but to break off his sins by righteousness (the LXX say “by alms"), and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor (or afflicted), “if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.” How sober is the divine word, as man's is wild and false! I am aware of the effort to make the Chaldee version utter a similar error, and how Greek and Latin and other superstitious minds seized it. But De Dieu and others long ago refuted the heterodoxy, and on linguistic ground. The A. and R. Vv. are right. It is useless to pursue the review into less weighty questions; but in these, too, the treatise departs from scripture.

Chapter 350

This Grace Wherein We Stand

Faith then receives God's testimony to Christ and His work. He Who believes on Him is justified. My sins are no obstacle. It was for sins and for sinners that Jesus died; and they are blotted out and forgiven to him that believes the gospel. At God's call doubt no longer, but believe His word. This is not only to turn to Him from self and sin and the creature in every form, but to honor God Whom you have slighted hitherto, believing His love and submitting to His righteousness. Not that faith is an object: Christ is what God presents to the needy and guilty soul, Confess Him as God reveals Him; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no different name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved. That divine Savior cannot fail; and it is because you have utterly failed in yourself that you need Him, Him only, to save you. For as God the Father sent Him to be Savior, so does the Holy Spirit bear witness to Him alone. Cast away every doubt and fear; only believe.

But justification, wondrous boon as it is for a sinner is far from all that God gives through our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle adds, “Through Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” How many souls, after really believing on Him, take the ground of law in their newborn relationship with God! And what is the result? Dissatisfaction and uneasiness, doubt and fear not without torment. Self-judgment is thoroughly right; but in such a case it is apt to be as superficial as the faith, even supposing both to be of God's Spirit. Neither can be deep, unless the soul rest by faith on God's estimate of Christ's blood and of its own guilt and abject need: when one does, the conscience is purged, the heart confides in God, and self-judgment proceeds habitually and unreservedly as we walk in the light.

Christ by His work entitles the believer to a constant approach and standing in the favor of God. This is part, and a most important part, of the salvation which the gospel proclaims. When justified, we are not placed, as the Jews were by their own choice (Ex. 19), under law; we have the well-known, near, and real access to God which is proper to the Christian (Eph. 2:18; 3:12). Before the redemption that is in Christ, it was not enjoyed, nor could it be given; and when Christ comes to reign over the earth, it will no longer be the portion of those here below. It is a privilege peculiar to the gospel of sovereign grace; and he who now believes since Pentecost has it and ought to enjoy it.

Only consider how immense the blessing is to him that believes, whatever the license that the hypocrite takes to his own destruction. It is not only that righteousness is reckoned to you, but that you have got and so possess as a settled thing access by faith into this favor in which we stand: not a blot left on you, not a cloud hanging or rising over you, but divine favor without stint, change, or end. Christ and Christ's accomplished work alone account for it; as thus only was it rendered possible to faith. For it is not simply the love of God. He loves the angels, He loves His creatures. The gospel is the glad tidings of His saving grace for all, not Israel merely, but all men indiscriminately, that appeared when Christ died, rose, and went to heaven; grace rising over sins, and where sin abounded, over-exceeding grace reigning through righteousness unto life eternal

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This grace of God in the Savior, not law, is what meets us as our assured portion in our approach to God. Nor indeed can there be true approach to God on any other ground than one of perfect favor in Christ. Grace and truth came to pass through Jesus Christ. It was not so before; it is the fact now. The law was given through Moses: grace and truth came into being for man here below through Christ, the only-begotten Son, Who alone could make either good, Who made both good to God's glory. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin. More than that, we are through Him made welcome to the presence of God, we have boldness. Weigh the word which the Holy Ghost gives (He.b. x. 19); weigh well the word, ye timid believers, for your souls' joy and blessing. Weigh it solemnly, ye who believe in superstition and tradition and human reasoning, not in the gospel of the grace of God; weigh it and tremble for your dishonor of God's will, and of Christ's work, and of the Holy Spirit's witness.

For, if we believe in Christ, God's word tells us that we have boldness for the entrance into the Holies by the blood of Jesus, which fresh and living way He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. Without this it would indeed be madness and presumption. But now that He is come and has found everlasting redemption, the presumption is on their side who deny it against those who believe in Him; and, if believing in Him they deny it, what folly as well as presumption!

Only God can tell us infallibly what He has done for us and given to us in His Son; and He it is Who tells us beyond a doubt that, as believers in. Him we have obtained, and do possess, access into this grace wherein we stand. For it is not like the characteristic blessing of Israel contingent on the obedience of the law. The gospel is founded on redemption in Christ as the great fact beyond all others save His person Who achieved it. And justification is a fact attested by God's word and Spirit to him that believes; and so is the access we have into this favor wherein we stand. They rest on Christ and His redemption, and they are ours as believing in Him. Nor do they pass away, like Jewish privileges; they abide like Christ.

But may not the believer become careless and sin grievously? Alas! it is too true; yet God does not change nor forsake His child (as other scriptures declare), but chastises him faithfully, and, if need be, even to the death of the body. See 1 Cor. 11, Heb. 12, 1 John 5 Nevertheless, as these very scriptures show, He does nut change from His grace even when He thus deals in His moral government. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.” The Christian's failure brings out the loss not of relationship but of his enjoyment of communion; and Christ's advocacy works to restore his soul by self-judgment before God. For as the Christian, once darkness but now light in the Lord, walks in the light as God is in the light, so he comes under the dealing of God as a Father judging day by day, that he may walk according to the light. But he received and has access to God. “He that followeth Me,” says our Lord, “shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.”

Chapter 351

To an Enquirer About the Law

Dear Brother,—In the present confusion of thought throughout Christendom, scarce any subject is less understood according to God. So it was even in apostolic days through Jewish tradition, as Timothy was told (1 Tim. 1:7, 8): how much greater is the darkness, now that men have corrupted the gospel and more and more lose its light! The views, of which you send a specimen, illustrate the value of the warning. You yourself reject what the young man most contended for; you believe, as scripture teaches, that we are under not law but grace, and not for justification only, but emphatically as set free from sin and made servants to God. Rom. 6 beyond doubt treats of Christian walk, not of pardon, and lays it down authoritatively that sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law but under grace. And 1 Cor. 9:20, 21 formally excludes that for which it is so often unintelligently cited. For the apostle is careful (in speaking of the gracious elasticity of his service “to those under law, as under law,") to say “not being myself under law,” in order that he might gain those under law. The omission of the clause here printed in italics is a defect of high moment; yet was it unsupplied in the A. V. as many may still overlook its insertion in the R. V. on authority which no scholar ought to dispute.

The very phrase “moral law” indicates how little the essayist, or his valued editor, appreciated the scriptural truth. For the sanctity of the seventh day as the sabbath, fundamental as it is made in the Bible, was of God's injunction, and not discoverable from conscience like the other nine words. And it is chaos itself to confound Adam unfallen under prohibition of the tree of knowledge with Israel under the law, already fallen, having the knowledge of good and evil, and disposed to violate every commandment of God. Innocence once lost is never regained. Grace brings in a far better thing in Christ; but the evil is still there within, even if faith preserves the believer from yielding and strengthens him to walk in the Spirit. Law has not its application to a righteous person, as the apostle ruled, but to lawless and insubordinate, to impious and sinful, to unholy and profane, &c., and if any other thing is opposed to sound teaching. The law was a rule of death, not of life, a ministry of death and of condemnation, as is shown in 2 Cor. 3, even when Jehovah's mercy and longsuffering were proclaimed along with its inflexible claims on sinful man. It works wrath therefore, not righteousness; not because the commandment is not holy and just and good, but because fallen man is all wrong, ungodly, and without strength. Hence the apostle declares that the power of sin is the law, and that it was added for the sake of transgressions, or (as another epistle says) that it came in by the bye that, not sin but, the offense might abound.

This is little more than a setting down together of what scripture expressly teaches of the law; which is not more expressive of its real character and effects, than exclusive of traditional theology in all its forms, Popish and Protestant, Arminian and Calvinistic. Man fell under a law incomparably less stringent than the law; as he sinned in the long interval from Adam to Moses when there was no law. For sin is lawlessness, doing one's own will independently of God; as men sinned, so death reigned. The law brought in the added guilt of violating known law. But Christ is the end of law for righteousness to every one that believes. And Christianity is not only that faith is reckoned for righteousness to us, as to Abraham, but that we died with Christ and were baptized, not to a

living Messiah, but to His death. How then should we who died to sin live any longer therein? And those who knew law, as Jewish believers did, are carefully taught that they were made dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they should belong to another to Him that was raised from the dead. Thus is fruit brought forth to God. This is what Puritanism saw no more than its usual opponents, though a cardinal truth of the gospel. Had we been of Ephraim, or of Judah, yea, of Levi and Aaron's house, we have been made quit of the law, having died to that wherein we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter. Can anything be clearer or more conclusive than these words of God, so forgotten in theological systems of all shades?

Never was law on the one hand so vindicated as in the cross of Christ, never so established as in His death (Rom. 3:31), which is the basis of the gospel to ruined sinners. On the other hand the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled, not in Pharisees who talked and boasted vainly of being under the law, but in Christians who died to law as well as sin, and walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit (Rom. 8). But one prefers to affirm the truth from scripture rather than to criticize the defective and erroneous views of others.

Chapter 352

The Two Trees

Scarce any fact of paradise seems less understood than that recorded in the latter half of Gen. 2:9, none supposed to be more distinctly an early myth. Yet were these two trees, singled out from the rest, a positive fact suited to that day of primeval innocence, and to no other; but embodying divine principles of the deepest and most enduring value for all time; and this without applying force to either, or indulging in imagination of any kind, but in subjection to the indications of the inspired record itself. And the truth conveyed intimately concerns every soul of man

The first thing to note is that “the tree of life” in the midst of the garden was absolutely distinct from that “of knowledge of good and evil.” To eat of the latter was forbidden on pain of certain death (ver. 17). Only when the man did eat of the prohibited tree, the LORD God took care that he should not take also of the tree of life (Gen. 3:22). It would have been the perpetuated life of sinful man: a calamity, and violation of all order, not a blessing. Apart from that transgression, the tree of life was open to him, and expressly outside the tree of knowledge.

Clearly then the first tree points out the channel of life for man unfallen, the provision of God for Adam in paradise freely given and quite independently of the second tree: so true is this that man forfeited his title to partake of the one tree when he ate of the other. Man was responsible not to eat of the tree of knowledge; if he abstained, he was free to eat of the tree of life. When guilty and fallen, he was debarred, and driven out, with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

Now the constant effort of man, especially of religious man, is as it were to identify the two trees; that is, to suspend life on the fulfillment of responsibility: a notion which flies in the face of the facts, when man was innocent, and still more manifestly false, when man was a sinner, and expressly excluded from the tree of life. The original relationship was lost through transgression. The only natural religion that ever had or could have reality had ceased to be. All henceforth turned on what God is to man in saving mercy. Man in the most favorable circumstances had wholly failed toward God. Sin morally compelled God to be a judge. Love, divine grace, made Him a Savior. Even so it was to lie only in and through His Son, His deigning to become man, and His going down into death and judgment for the guilty. The Father hath sent the Son as Savior of the world (1 John 4:14); the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

But consider the intermediate dealings of God before the Advent. The Epistle to the Galatians lays great stress on the promises as given, a covenant previously confirmed by God, 430 years before the law. They, too, were thereby so arranged that the one could not annul, still less be confounded with, the other. Now the promises answered to the tree of life, as the law to the tree of knowing good and evil. The promises were the unconditional and pledged grace of God, designedly long before, and absolutely distinct from, the law, which expressed His righteous demand from man on the ground of his responsibility. If Israel, if any, pretended to stand on that ground before God, the ten words were His terms. Such terms can only be a ministry of death and condemnation to sinful creatures, as Israel were, as all mankind are. The fatal mistake then as always is to seek life by

meeting man's responsibility. Israel took that ground and failed utterly, as all sinners must who go the same path. Scripture records the failure in the O.T and explains it in the N. T., that men now may profit by that solemn lesson of old and betake themselves only to God's grace in Christ.

For Christ alone has solved the problem; and this by accepting the full responsibility of man and bearing the consequences of sin and our sins in death, yea, death of the cross; so that, after glorifying God perfectly, He is risen from the dead, a life giving Spirit to all believers. Thus there is no condemnation to those that are in Him, in Whom the two trees are thus brought into blessed harmony for our salvation unto God's glory.

As responsible men, we are ungodly and powerless, as the apostle asserts beyond dispute. So the Lord treats even the Jews as “lost,” which closes the question of that responsibility. What more presumptuous in our sinful state of fallen nature than to seek life by pretending to fulfill our duty as men? Even to innocent man, as Gen. 2 teaches, life and responsibility were set expressly and altogether apart. But as Christ gives life freely to believers in His name, so is He propitiation by His death for their sins. For both were absolutely needed, if we were to be made meet for sharing the portion of the saints in light; and both are now given of God through faith to every believer, who has eternal life in the Son and through His blood redemption, the forgiveness of our offenses. Not that a new responsibility is lacking, but it is the responsibility of a child of God. So Himself said “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19); and previously that He gives His sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall snatch them out of His hand (John 10:28), yea the Father's hand also securing them (29). Can any assurance be conceived plainer or stronger?

Thus in Christ alone, by His sacrifice and the sovereign gift of life, we have the principle of two trees, and this in fullness of blessing for all that believe; whereas the unbeliever, despising the word, and as self-confident as he is weak and sinful, repeats the error of Adam and Israel to his ruin. As Christians we have the treasure of Christ in our earthen vessel; and are responsible to be always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus, the new nature, may be manifested in our body. W. K.

Chapter 353

The Unreason of Darwinism

I do not touch upon the grave question whether Darwinism is compatible with a belief in the Bible as the word of God, although having a strong judgment that it is not, but on the contrary that it is foolish and profane. But for my present purpose it is only necessary to show that the system is illogical, and for the following reason. It is not proven. Accordingly it seems to me that it will be time enough to accept the evolution hypothesis of the origin of mankind when those “missing links” are discovered which will raise it to the dignity of a demonstrable system. Meantime it is but a house of cards with no securer buttresses than “ifs” and “must have beens” and such phrases as “it is easily conceived,” “we may in that case conclude.” Those, it is true, who have the slightest reverence for the word of God, and appreciation of divine principles, of course I know that the system will remain hypothetical. But my contention is that, putting aside revelation, fitness of things, &c., it is absurd to settle down in calm acceptance of a mere theory which its fondest votaries dare not claim to have established. It is to be noted also that even Prof. Huxley has carefully guarded against committing himself absolutely to the Darwinian hypothesis. But when we bear in mind the notorious fact that these so-called scientific men reject Christianity in toto (i.e. as a revelation), and that some (I grant not all) have gone so far as to say “we have no need of the hypothesis of God,” one need not hesitate before rejecting their theories.

The pet dream of modern scientists—a dream by which Prof. Drummond, for instance, has been led astray—is that all things are what they are in virtue of their environment. And of course the evolution doctrine stands or falls with this. But it is an undoubted fact that there have been found in savages latent capacities, physical as well as spiritual, that no environment can have coaxed into being (as they are utterly opposed to it), but which bear eloquent testimony to primitive endowment. It is seen in the structure of the hand, and in the mechanism of the voice; it is witnessed in the capacity to receive spiritual truths. This, however, I am aware that you would not question—as to the spiritual fact at least—inasmuch as you hold to the divine inbreathing of the Spirit of God. But no “authority” among those who belong to this school admits one or other. One and all, they drive the Deity back into the infinite past, when and where only they reluctantly allow Him to have given birth to one or two (or is it one only?) primordial germs. One and all, I mean, of those who do admit a God. Others, like the late Prof. W. K. Clifford, who said (one wonders how he dared) that “the great companion was dead,” would affirm, that every subsequent phenomenon was latent in the original stardust.

Yet there are other scientific men, such as Wallace, and, I doubt not, Dawson, who contend that man's body cannot be the product of evolution. You, I understand, think that God may have breathed His spirit into some anthropoid ape! On an unproven hypothesis; on the soundness of a theory that has missing links, (and remember that while no chain is stronger than its weakest link, in this case some of the links are actually non-existent!), a theory concocted by men, who reject as antiquated myths those high verities of the incarnation and the atonement, which presuppose the fall and which alone make for our peace, and without the consolation of which you confess the fairest lot here were but chaos. Nay, nay, Christ is the Truth, and all else is vain dreaming.

I contend then that these scientific men, while to be listened to with due respect when engaged in investigating facts, are “blind guides” when they enter the realm of speculation, as indeed every one must be. I admit freely their erudition, their patient industry, their keen acumen, as well as the humane debt men owe them with regard to the amenities of life. But here praise must stop. For to pass off defective theories as established science—at least to act as if it was established—seems fitter for monastic dreamers than for men of science, who vaunt their “weapons of precision.” Is it not flying without wings! Of such Coleridge says excellently well, “He that would fly without wings must perforce fly in his dreams: and till he awake, he will not know that to fly in one's dreams is but to dream of flying.” R. B. Junr.

Chapter 354

Walk in the Spirit

“Out of the eater came forth sweetness” has been the test of divine providence exemplified in all ages of the world. Sin, with all its misery, brought Jesus. In the church at Corinth the misery of the flesh disclosed many a secret. if the eater had not gone to Corinth, a stronger than he had not gone after him, nor out of the eater such sweetness come forth to us; nor in the Colossians such fullness of the Lord Jesus.

But the Galatians eminently show forth how the eater had gone in and given occasion for a blessed expression of the Sufficiency of the Lord Jesus, and the blessedness of a simple-hearted acquaintance with the Son of God. Oh! what a blessed profession it is when we profess the Son of God and none but the Son. No epistle is more fervent taking its character of fervency from a fresh delight in Jesus, a fervency well accounted for by the thought of Jesus defending (not merely fervency in defense of impugned truth, but) the fervency of a soul given to taste afresh the virtues and divine perfection of the Son. And what would you covet but this in these days when the world is on every side challenging the rights of the Son, bringing in man's religion, edifices, and ceremonies, and ordinances? The strong man enters in to challenge the claims of the Son of man; and shall we see it and be without the fervency of Paul?

Let us turn to the first chapter where we find the first virtue of the Son revealed to his soul, making him entirely independent of flesh and blood; let us read verses 15 and 16. Having got the Son, Paul had got all, Jerusalem was nothing, even apostles were nothing; standing as a sinner brought entirely home, he wanted nothing besides. How fine is this fervency thrown in the face of Galatian error! The moment the Son was revealed, he conferred not with flesh, and blood. Those rights of the Son, so divine, so supreme, only let them be understood; and I ask your convicted conscience whether they are not claims so exclusive, that nothing else can be thought of. We cannot see Jerusalem, in one sense, cannot see even brethren, cannot confer with flesh and blood: can we each of us throw ourselves open to be read? Mark how Paul did. The moment the Son was revealed he went not to Jerusalem, nor to the apostles but into Arabia, independent of all belonging to flesh and blood, With what emphasis he reads out the first virtue of the Son in that divine independency of everything short of Himself! And ought not each of us to go about showing to the world and all about us this precious independency of all but the One revealed to our souls? Imputed righteousness is as much ours as it was Abraham's; Paul had not a richer profession than mine. O let this divine independency be read in us by all! The claims the Son had on Paul's conscience instantly made him independent of everything. If Jerusalem, the apostles, brethren, and all the claims of flesh and blood, be put together in the balance of a conscience: put the Son in one scale, with all this in the other and would it not be as the fine dust in the balance?

In the second chapter we have not only independent Paul, but bold Paul. Peter had been the companion of the Lord Jesus, when Paul was the enemy of Jesus Christ; and if anyone could have intimidated Paul, this Peter must have been able to do so. But the man in Arabia was not to be intimidated by flesh and blood. O for more of Paul's boldness to show we have been on the road to

Arabia with the Lord! Do we ever make in private an essay of what we have in Jesus? Are there any to whom we give place? Read vers. 4, 5: there Paul's soul was making an essay of all he had in Jesus; and beautiful is his independence of flesh and blood. And yet this is the man who could have his heart broken by other's tears, who could ask for the prayers of saints as one feeling need of help!

But now it is another style altogether. Had he then ceased to be feeling and gentle? Not a bit! but the claims of the Son are abroad, he cannot withstand them; and when he meets Peter it is with the boldness of a lion. If flesh and blood could make him tremble, it was in Peter. Did he tremble? No but withstood him to the face, and yet Peter was serving Christ. But Paul had that in him that could not suffer for a moment the dissimulation of the flesh in Peter. And this is the spirit we want in this day when the claims of the Son are so challenged by the Galatian spirit on many a side. Paul teaches us how to have this boldness, and he does not merely teach, but shows it is our property as well as his. If the Son has been revealed in me, I want nothing but Himself: churches and ordinances can do nothing for me. If I have the Son, I have everything.

We see in Paul the fervency and the sensitiveness of love: he could not allow the claims of the Son to be touched or to be soiled for a moment. It was the revelation of God, and was deep in his soul; and that is what you want. Give the deeper parts of your soul to Jesus and will you be any other than independent? Get Jesus deep down into your soul, and you will have Paul's spirit to whom God had given the Son, and He was deep in his soul. I want Christ to be so revealed as to make me independent of all flesh and blood, of everything but Himself Who puts each one and thing in its due place.

In the third chapter, having traced Christ revealed in the independent man of Arabia, the bold man of Antioch, we shall now find him as a son in the Father's house in the presence of God.

Read chapter 4. Observe he would have you there with himself in the same liberty. “I beseech you be ye as I am” is the happy freedom of a son in the Father's presence, (the spirit of Isaac, laughter, not Hagar gendering to bondage). He will not have a bit of bondage, he has the Spirit of the Son in his heart. And O what manner of people has the Spirit of God made us! how entirely setting us free from the claims of flesh and blood, and nothing less than a Father's house! is there anything beyond that wanted to set you free? Happy, if happy, because brought into relationship with the Father; and nothing can make you happy but that; nothing does for the heart personally but the sense of relationship; and this is what He has brought me into, calling me to His kingdom, and giving me a home there. If you look round in the sense of relationship, cannot you feel you have a home on high? You are not only a son, but an heir, of God through Christ. The excellency of the gift I will never challenge, nor let others. I want all that the Son is to me deep down in my soul, but oh! let me have the simple childlike mind that knows I have a home up there. The son of the bondwoman has no more right to be in the Father's house than Peter with his subtleties had to bring the children of the free woman into bondage. Is not this Epistle as a whip of small cords to drive out all such things from amongst the children of promise? To know the presence of God as a sanctuary and home for my soul, this is what I want. J. G. B.

Chapter 355

The Washing of Water by the Word

Three things especially come out in this chapter: first, the completeness of the work which the Father had given the Lord Jesus to do; secondly, while that gives the full consciousness of the place we are in with God, there is the jealous care, and holy watchfulness in the path in which we are called to walk down here; and, thirdly, the love of the Lord Jesus. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Hence He made Himself a servant in order to minister to us.

It is important for us as Christians to see our place with God in Christ, to know distinctly what that place is. Many sincere souls, not seizing it, do not know their relationship with God, nor even what the blessed Son of God has done in dying for them and bringing them to God, and at the same time how that bears upon holiness of walk. Yet the Lord here shows that no defilement can be allowed, and then adds its measure. Suitability of walk and of conduct flows from the place you are in. You cannot expect anyone who is not a child or a servant to behave as a child or a servant. Evidently then it is of all importance to know the place I am in, as all my duties flow from it. The moment the relationship is formed, the duties follow. But you cannot get the relationship by doing the duties. Such is the connection between the grace of God that brings salvation, and our practice. We must see what the relationship is, before we can have the consciousness of its duties. The Lord would bring, perhaps through painful exercises, to the consciousness of the place we are in, and the gracious provision there is for us in that place never to allow unholiness.

If it were only the being saved by His grace, this would be a blessed thing; but He brings us into positive relationship with Himself in love, as perfect as the righteousness. He came into a world of sinners for this end. We have the treasure in earthen vessels; but the relationship is settled. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Therefore His first word to Mary after His resurrection is “Go tell my brethren, etc.” My Father is your Father too. He puts them into this place; He died to bring them into it, and tells them where He has brought them.

The moment I estimate the cross according to the word of God, I learn what the apostle says, “If one died for all, then were all dead.” I see One who came in unspeakable love to save me. God said “I have got one Son.” One thing remains—to see if upright thoughts and feelings can be awakened in these husbandmen. “But when they saw the Son, they cast Him out and slew Him.” In calling ourselves Christians, we are in a world which has cast out the Son of God, we are in a world of condemned sinners. God had long been dealing with man. He tested man, who had got out of the place where God had put him in Paradise, to see whether his heart could be reclaimed. Law was the test.

All ends in bringing out the condition in which man lay. The trial showed that he preferred anything to God—wealth, pleasure, rank, power, ease: no object too small to govern the heart and to shut out Christ. Take dress; is not that small enough? Take money; it is the same case with all our hearts. You never found a natural man thinking of Christ as the object of his soul: if alone in a room for two or three hours, he thinks of his sorrows, of his joys, but not of Christ. You never find a

man ashamed of a false religion. A Mahometan, if you are making a bargain with him, will stop to say his prayers when the hour comes; and you may wait till he has done. But you find even true Christians ashamed of confessing Christ. The true God and eternal life people are ashamed of but of a false religion not so. Any and every object in the natural heart has displaced Christ. If I confess the Son of God has come and died for me, as do all the baptized, should I prefer a bit of dress to Him?

All this tells out that “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” Every object is dominant on it; and even when we do love God, are we not oft ashamed of Him? It is not a question of trying to arrange ourselves a little and set things straight, but the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost. My natural condition is that I am lost. When men gather for enjoyment, if you only bring Christ in, it is all spoiled. The natural man never enjoys Christ; and as Christians we have to watch lest we slip.

First comes the honest conviction that one is lost; then we find what God has done, which is another thing altogether. The law came to require from man; but Christ came to bring salvation because we are lost. Do I own myself a sinner? I cannot go into heaven as a sinner of course: so the question is, What has He done for me that I may be forgiven and cleansed? Supposing I have been brought thoroughly to confess that I am lost, I turn to Christ; and what is found there? That when I did not think of God, He was thinking of me in saving mercy. I have then (with no seeking of mine) what the spring of God's mind and heart was towards me. To spare me He spared not His Son. If I acknowledge myself as a sinner, I find what the Son of God has done for such. It is the gospel.

The true God cannot allow sin; He is perfect in holiness and righteousness. But I find Him doing what love always does, when it is real—considering the whole state and real need of its object. I was dead; and He comes into death. Judgment was against me, and He bears the judgment. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. I see One coming in love and goodness, in grace which astonishes me. As with the poor woman by the well, He must bring us into the light. He made her feel herself vile, not fit to show her face to a decent person. But there was also the revelation of God in love. The truth comes not as a claim upon me but as divine grace: else why should it come? Christ brings all this out to the soul. If the highest measure of grace is the cross of Christ, it is the very thing that shows me where and what I am. Why should He go down into that dreadful ditch, if there were not those in it to pull out? His death proved where all were.

And this infinite work is now done. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” Therefore is He set down at the right hand of God, accepted on high. God gave Him in love and accepted Him in righteousness. God is satisfied, and more than satisfied—glorified about sin. The cross is the place where good and evil met absolutely. All the evil of man was there shown out against Christ. He was going about doing good, healing all their diseases. Even Pilate had to ask, What do you kill Him for? It was enmity against good. But if all the wickedness of man's heart was there, what do you find on the other side? Absolute obedience and perfect love to His Father, “That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” Where do I learn love? “Hereby know we love, because He laid down his life for us.” There is no such display of perfect righteousness any where as in Christ drinking that dreadful cup. There was unwavering righteousness, and the perfect love of God to the sinner too.

If we look at the moral glory of the cross, the whole question of sin was perfectly settled; and God has glorified Christ in consequence. For what did He die? For my sins according to the scriptures. If I come as a poor lost sinner to the cross, I see Him Who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, but now in glory. Has He got the sins there? I see Him standing here for me, made sin by God, drinking that cup, the very thought of which made Him sweat great drops of blood; then, having purged the sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, unlike the Jewish priests often offering the same sacrifices. He is forever sat down, because the work is perfect and finished. If the work is not done, it never will be. I am not speaking now of your appreciation of it, but of the work itself. If we live near to God, we shall appreciate it more every day; but the atoning work is done. How blessed the truth, that, coming to God by Him, I find that work which is proof of God's love to me when I was ungodly, done and accepted when I was without strength. Of course my heart is changed too, or I should not care about it in that way. He is waiting till His enemies be made His footstool, having brought me to God by His own work; and God is sedulous in His love to put it before us in every shape in which it can meet our need, as an actual fact of settled blessing.

Do you, believer, say you are guilty? But God has justified you. Defiled by sins? Yes, but God says, The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth you. Do you say, Ah, I have offended God dreadfully? Indeed you have; but God freely forgives you. Then the Holy Ghost, come down at Pentecost, is given to everyone who believes. “In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” “Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.” “If any man confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” Oh! that those words rested in our hearts solidly. There is the place grace has brought us to; but we shall not personally enter the glory till the Lord Jesus comes again. “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.” “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him.” “The glory Thou hast given me, I have given them.”

The purpose of God is to bring us believers into the same glory as His Son. Meanwhile may your hearts get firm hold that all of the first Adam is judged in the cross, that we might have all the blessing of the last Adam. He became a man that He might be the First-born among many brethren. The dignity of His person is always maintained; but He will never be satisfied, until He sees you there in the same glory with Himself and as Himself forever. If one pays a man's debts and leaves him without a farthing, he is a ruined man still; but Christ has paid our debts and given us an immense fortune besides. “As is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” The scripture teems with pages, which show the way we are associated with Himself. As soon as Christ was gone up into heaven, the witness of divine righteousness, the Holy Ghost came down that we might know it. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).

How can I say “Father,” if I do not know I am a child? It would be hypocrisy. If the conscience is purged by the blood of Christ, relationship is known by His person, and then I have to walk as a child. But I must know I am child first. We cannot expect people to walk as children of God, if they are not His children. Something else has to come first: they have to confess their sins, calling on the Lord's name, and be saved. Can you then say, I know I am in Christ? At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you (John 14:20). I have to manifest the life of Jesus in my mortal body; but I must have His life first. For how can I manifest this, if I have not got it? Supposing I have listened in faith to the words, “My Father and your Father,” what follows? He has brought me into the same place as Himself, and I am waiting for Himself, God's Son, to take me

there in person. Death has lost its sting. If I die, it is to be with the Lord, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” The full result will not be till He comes again, and the marriage of the Lamb takes place.

We might think that, when Christ went up into glory, all His service was over; but it is not so. Love never ceases to be itself and never gives up the happiness of those beloved. If a child goes wrong, the father's heart yearns over him: he may have to punish; but the heart goes after him. Christ's love is perfect, and it never gives up its service if it can make the loved one happy; and this is seen here. As He came from God, He was going back to God in all the blessed perfectness in which He came; and what does He then? His act was as He says; “I am among you as one that serveth.” Is there an end of His service now? No, He rises from supper, testifies He cannot stay with them here, but tells them He must have them with Him there. He could not stay as Messiah; He was going away as their Forerunner. “I go to prepare a place for you.”

This takes two forms. First He is as Priest serving. “He ever liveth (think of that!) to make intercession for us.” This is not exactly for sin, but that we may not sin: I a feeble soul upon the earth, and He always at God's right hand, occupied with me. But in this chapter is another thing. Supposing I do sin, how are my feet to be washed? It was as much as to say there must be holiness. “He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet;” he cannot be regenerate over again. The word used for washing the body and washing the feet is not the same in the original of this chapter. We are cleansed by water and by blood. But we are each exposed to danger here: I am walking through a world which is ready to defile me. There is this danger for my feet. When the Lord goes back to God, He takes heaven as the measure of our walk. He prays that we should be, not taken out of the world, but kept from the evil. And, looking up to the Lord in glory, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. “Every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure.” I see Christ in glory, and knowing I am to be like Him, I want to walk like Him now. And this is what Paul meant in saying “That I may win Him.” He now tries in every possible way to walk like Christ here. But supposing we fail (there is no excuse for doing so: it is our own carelessness and neglect), He says, going up on high, I shall wash your feet. Outwardly He had washed them here. “Ye are clean, because of the word that I have spoken to you” (John 15).

Peter was ashamed to see the Lord stoop like a servant to wash his feet; but when he hears Him say it must be, he exclaims, “Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” No, the Lord replies, the feet are enough. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father “; and He is the propitiation for our sins. The propitiation is unchanged; but another service comes in. If one have sinned, he ought not to say, I am not under the blood of sprinkling, but can the Father have fellowship with an unworthy thing? No, scripture says, if “any one sin,” not even it he should repent. It is the advocacy that brings one to repentance. If I have let only an evil thought come in, do you think God has communion with that? It were blasphemy to say so. I have found my pleasure if only for a moment in what made Christ's agony on the cross. But if it were His agony, can it be imputed to me a believer? I am convicted, humbled like Peter, led to repentance. It was not because be repented that Christ prayed for him, but Peter repented because Christ prayed. In the present work of the Lord Jesus is this boon: if by anything I defile my feet, He takes away the taint because I belong to Him in heaven. He does not raise the question whether I belong to this place; He acts because I do belong to it. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.” Holiness is

maintained because I am in this relationship; God cannot have defiled people in His house. He chastens that we may be partakers of His holiness. He brings the word of God, which reveals what I am, to bear upon my conscience. “He restoreth my soul and leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.”

The Christian stands between the first coming of Christ (which accomplished redemption) and His second coming (which takes him to glory); and meanwhile the Holy Ghost is given to everyone that believes. He makes me cry, Abba Father. The witness that I am a child is the earnest of the inheritance. He gives me the certainty of the efficacy of Christ's work when He first came, and leads my heart on to the glory. But there must be holiness; and I get grace still working and giving me the measure of what I am. He tells me I am going to be like Christ; and he who has this hope purifies himself. The measure of my walk is “even as He (Christ) is pure” Not that I have attained, or ever shall, until I am with Christ; but I ought to be always going on, never to soil my feet, never to do anything inconsistent. There are three appeals: we are to walk worthy of God who has called us to His kingdom and glory; “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing “; and “worthy of the vocation” wherewith we are called.” Worthiness is put before us in these three shapes.

We have first the settled consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought, and then the conduct which suits those who are in this place. Do your souls know this? supposing you profess it. Have your consciences got hold of the efficacy of His work? “Peace I leave with you “: can you say you have got this peace? Do you fear the judgment-seat? There is no place in which a Christian may be so bold, because he will be raised in glory as Christ is. Do you believe that your sins will be no more remembered? Many a one sees it in scripture and says it is true; but can you stand in thought before the judgment-seat, in the consciousness that it is so—that you are made divine righteousness before God? One more question, if you can thus stand, are you seeking to be in everything the epistle of Christ, and, whatever you do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus? We shall need watchfulness, and the word to search us (and it exercises, which makes good soldiers). The motive is the great thing. If I love my father, and he wishes a book to be laid this way instead of that, I put it so, because I love my father. The Lord give us to have His will as the one object of our lives, the motive of all we do, remembering that we are not our own, but bought with a price. May He give us to have our eyes upon Him, that we may know His love and seek His will. This is what Christ ever did, Who left us an example that we should follow His steps. But the example were vain for us, if Christ had not suffered for us, and we believed not in Him.

J. N. D.

Chapter 356

We Also Joy in God

The grace of God here shines at its brightest, as far as this Epistle goes; and we who believe are meant to enjoy all to the full. Never is this possible, never understood, till we are convinced by divine teaching that all our blessing is in Christ and His redemption. Justified by faith of Him and His work, we have peace with God. This strengthens us to judge ourselves and abhor our sins far more deeply than when, first convinced of our guilt, we cried to God and cast our souls on the sacrifice of Christ. Solid peace with God no soul has till he believes on Him that raised up from the dead Jesus our Lord, Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised up for our justification.

Faith is reckoned to the believer now for righteousness, not only as to Abraham of old but more blessedly still. For, as the apostle shows, he believed in hope of what God would do; the Christian believes what God has done for him in Christ. Abraham confided in promise; we under the gospel have accomplishment. The work of God's grace for the remission of our sins and purging our consciences is once and forever done. It cannot be annulled nor can it be added to. There are resources of grace to meet other wants; but, receiving him who died for us and rose again, we received the reconciliation. We know that the love of God was toward us, when we were yet sinners. Then it was that Christ died for us, not when we had a little strength and became godly. For when we were still without strength, in clue time Christ died for ungodly persons.

Such is the unerring word of God: what glad tidings for men! How wicked to despise His message! How blessed to believe! For sin wronged His love and His truth; and Christ vindicated both, while He suffered once for sins that He might bring us to God; and faith receives the boon on God's word to the salvation of the soul. He who so began carries on accordingly. By Christ also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, instead of being alarmed and shrinking back to perdition.

Nor is this all. We rejoice or boast in tribulations also. This is the promise to the Christian, instead of the earthly prosperity pledged to the Jew if faithful. But grace turns tribulations to the Christian's present good, by breaking his will, and teaching him what the God is that has found him and that he has found, For tribulation works out patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope does not make ashamed; because the love of God is then better known, being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that is given to us. His love thus spent on us at all cost to Christ and to Himself, when we were unloveable to any but God; certainly cannot be less when we have repentance toward Him and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. His love is the assurance to our faith, that, being now justified by Christ's blood, we shall be saved from wrath through the Savior. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved in virtue of His life.

There is even more than this most comforting assurance as to the future. “And not only so, but we also joy (or boast, the same word as in vers. 2 and 3) in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (or rather “reconciliation,” referring to ver. 10). It is not now the love of God, but the God of love; and He is our boast, in no way our dread as once.

We can glory in Himself, not merely in what He has given us in Christ or will give us in the day when all will be according to His power and goodness. For as we have now received the reconciliation, His perfect love casts out fear, and we know what He is to us in Christ; yea, the very sorrows of the way lead us to know His love better, as well as His word which is thus verified to us not only in our Savior but in every day's experience. For the Holy Spirit does not fail here below while Christ is on high.

Indeed, this is life eternal, that the Christian should know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent. And he knows Him to be love as well as light, Christ's Father and our Father, Christ's God and our God. Receiving Christ, we have renounced the bidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully. From such crooked ways there was no real deliverance apart from Christ; but now that the Son of God has come, the Deliverer from the coming wrath, He has also given us an understanding that we may know Him that is, true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. We love, because He first loved us; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. And it was manifested toward us in this, that God sent His only-begotten Son that we might live through Him, yea more, that He might die for us, a propitiation for our sins.

But it is impossible so to know God and His love without busting in Him. The heart is cleared of its idols; the living and true God is served. But there is much more than this. For the heart is led up, by the truth of Christ and the love of God displayed toward us in His work, from the blessing to the Blesser, Who sets us in perfect and unchanging favor. His very chastening thenceforth is the effect and proof of His love to His children, as we read in Heb. 12 Hence do we boast in God, even now in this world, as the fruit of “the reconciliation.” So in order to it our Lord taught us in the parable that the father deemed it well to make merry and rejoice because the lost prodigal was found; not the sinner only to be saved, but the God Who saved him. Can we but glory in Himself then? We are thereby made true worshippers and worship Him in spirit and truth. Thus do we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we now received the reconciliation.

Chapter 357

We Glory in Tribulations Also

No wonder that the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes (Rom. 1:16). Justified by faith we have peace with God; we received and have access by faith into this grace wherein we were placed and stand; and we boast in hope of the glory of God. This expressly covers, with blessing unmistakably divine and wholly undeserved by us, the entire past, present, and future, for every believer.

Can the Spirit add more? This is just what the text before us does. God in Christ alone accounts for it all; and His love, through Hint Who died and rose again, finds its joy in blessing us to His own glory. He delights in blessing man, and can afford to bless him righteously and according to all His heart through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

How are you treating such a God and such a Savior? Does His goodness lead you to repentance? or according to your hardness and impenitent heart are you treasuring up to yourself wrath in a day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment? After the sin of man, yea when it rose up to its climax against His Son sent and come in love, God has answered this crowning sin by His own grace, so far exceeding, that, instead of judging all the guilty world which crucified Jesus, He is reconciling every one that believes, howbeit hitherto His evident and proved enemy, by the death of His Son. And why not you? Is it a small thing in your eyes, that though He declares you “lost” in yourself, He is willing to save you by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8)? Oh! hear the word of reconciliation; for so He calls the gospel (in contrast with the law, however holy, just, and good in itself, which must condemn the ungodly). He has commanded His ambassadors for Christ even to beseech, Be reconciled to God. Man cannot himself become meet for His presence in light; but God made Christ Who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become God's righteousness. Neglect no more so great salvation. Beware in that case lest the worst befall you.

The Holy Spirit never uttered, never wrote, a word to sanction doubt, but to produce faith in God and His Christ. Let no one glory in men. For all things are yours (if you believe), whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Cor. 3:22, 23).

It is therefore not only in His counsels going on to glory through redemption that He blesses and we boast, but in His ways through this wilderness world. Sometimes the believer is at his wits' end: difficulties so thicken. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groanings unutterable; and He that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He intercedes for saints according to God. But we do know that, to those who love God, all things work together for good.

So in our text the apostle, after saying that “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” adds “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also,” and explains clearly how it is: “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that was given

to us." It is the path of trial into which we are ushered when we are no longer slaves in Egypt, God's judgment being staid by the blood of the Lamb.

Are we then to murmur because, while Christ is on high, we see not yet all things subjected to Him? He is crowned with glory; but Satan is still the god and prince of the world, and hence the enmity to all who have faith, and the greater in proportion to their fidelity.

In Rom. 5:3-5 the true way of God is briefly traced in the discipline of the soul, full of profit for all exercised thereby. It all supposes and follows our justification by faith. There may be, as there was of old, a shirking of God's will; but He knows how to deal with His children when refractory; and as of old, so now He chastens whom He loves, and scourges every son whom He receives. Nor is discipline the only end of God. He tries us, as He did Abraham; and blessed is the man that endures temptation, for after being proved he shall receive the crown of life which He promised to those that love Him.

So the apostle Peter says, that ye greatly rejoice in the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, though now for a little while, if need be, put to grief by various temptations, that the trying of your faith, more precious than gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But in our text the apostle dwells on the present fruit for the soul. "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (or endurance) &c. This is hindered if we question our justification and so our peace be unsettled. But starting on our pilgrim journey with assurance of faith, we interpret the tribulations by the light of redemption, and confide in Him Who justifies the ungodly man (Rom. 4:5), having raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. Our acceptance of tribulation at His hand works out endurance or patience on our part.

Again, "patience [works out] experience." It is not yet the experience of what is within, which is formally and fully discussed in a later part of this Epistle from chap. 5:12 to chap. 8. inclusively. Here endurance works out what God is along the road; which is missed just so far as we allow impatience. And this "experience" works out "hope." In quietness of spirit and the proof of what God is toward us, let the world and present trials oppose as they may, we learn to have our eyes habitually above. Hence it is that the hope of the glory of God which was accepted as a truth becomes more influential, consolatory, and cheering practically. Nor does it, whatever its heavenly brightness, put us to shame, for the blessed reason, that the love of God has been and is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

No greater power of enjoying Himself than this, we may boldly say, could our gracious God give to the believer. Our blessed Lord, in the days of This flesh, had the Spirit given Him, and so without blood. The Holy One of God, He needed no sacrifice as He had no sin. The Spirit of God descending and abiding on Him was the sign and witness of His personal perfectness, as He walked here below. Him, the Son of man, God the Father sealed. We receive the Holy Spirit because in Christ we have redemption; as, in the type of the O.T., the oil followed the blood on the sons of Aaron, already washed in the water, the high priest alone being anointed without blood (Lev. 8:12); afterward, he and they together (ver. 23, 24, 30). This was a beautiful shadow, though of course not the very image. Christ is the truth. If the love of God, spite of our imperfect condition, has been thus shed abroad in our hearts in virtue of redemption, what surprise can there be that, when risen or changed at the coming of Christ, we should share with Him God's eternal glory?

Even this hope does not make us ashamed because of His love pervading the heart. W. K.

Chapter 358

We Have Heard Him Ourselves

There is no salvation without the revelation of God to the soul, and this is in Christ His Son. The warrant is the word of God, and now the written word (or scripture) on which rests all the authority of what is preached or spoken. This the Holy Spirit in quickening power carries home to the soul, not only convicting the conscience but winning the heart to God through faith in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

God graciously employs, not an angel, but a sinner born anew to convey the truth to others, as we see here in Samaria. “And out of that city many of the Samaritans believed on Him because of the word of the woman testifying, He told me all things that I did.” It was a true work of God, and in the ordinary way of grace through the word dealing with the conscience. There was no miracle, any more than persuasive words of human wisdom, but demonstration of the Spirit, that their faith might stand in God's power.

And the Lord Jesus acted in that grace which the apostles only learned in their measure years afterward when propitiation was made and the Spirit was sent down. For when the Samaritans came to Him, they besought Him to abide with them, and He abode there two days. “And many more believed because of His word, and said to the woman. No longer because of thy speaking do we believe; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

It was the simple and blessed fact for these Samaritans, the beautiful foreshadowing of the true and unchangeable ground of faith for all that should hear and believe the gospel when the Lord would not be personally on earth. Any one and anything may arrest souls by revealed truth; a man, a woman, a child; a sermon, a conversation, a book or a tract. But whatever the means, the soul believes God; and without believing God there is no true faith, no divine authority and grace over heart and conscience.

Hence the Samaritans, struck by the converted woman's testimony, justly bore witness to the word of the Lord Himself. Hearing Him, they knew and believed the love that God has to us. Having received His testimony, they set to their seal that God is true. And as they thus believed God in the full revelation of Himself in Christ, we may surely say of them what scripture attests of Abraham when he believed God in a far less measure of light, that it was counted to them for righteousness. For living faith ever brings the soul before God, where it has His light whereby to judge itself. But God revealed in Man, and that Man His only-begotten Son, brings His love near to the heart in a reality beyond all thought, and rises above all sinfulness, proved (as we can add) in His death, that we might possess known remission of sins through His blood, and thus the conscience purged from dead works to serve a living God.

It is a universal truth, in short, that the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice, and that they follow Him, for they know His voice. What these Samaritans enjoyed as a literal fact is no less true of all who believe the gospel. And Christ came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly; or, as His servant wrote, died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live to

themselves but to Him that for them died and was raised. Thus all things are of God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave us the service of reconciliation, the spirit of which is plain for the Samaritan woman; as the contrary of it appears in such as place themselves or other men between God and the soul, denying His grace and intercepting His right.

The Lord Jesus was just the One to do the work of God; for as on one side He was God, so on the other He was Man, in one person, come here below to declare God and reveal the Father, to bear the sins in His own body on the tree and thus enable the believer to draw near to God without fear and assured of His perfect love. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” said the psalmist prophetically (Psa. 40) of Jesus. More than a thousand years after inspired David, wrote one equally inspired to expound him, “by the which will we have been (and are) sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10).

Christ alone reveals God as light and love. By Him alone mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. All other systems, all adversaries of Him, are but thieves and robbers whom the sheep hear not. But His word is as divine as His work. As one of them said, Thou hast words of eternal life; as He said Himself, The words I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. When He went away on high, the Holy Ghost was sent down to abide forever with those that believe, to glorify the Son that glorified God the Father, and to guide into all the truth. So that no excuse for unbelief is valid on the score that Jesus is gone. It is expedient for you, said the Lord, that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Advocate) will not come unto you, but if I go, I will send Him unto you. Thus the Spirit ever fully takes of the things of Jesus and declares them to us, teaches all things, besides bringing to remembrance all that He had said, bears witness of Christ far beyond what the apostles saw or heard though with Thin from the beginning. For the Spirit was sent forth from heaven where Christ is now exalted, as He had indeed many things to say to them, which they could not hear till He was glorified.

How blessed then that, when we hear the apostles' words, it is still Christ speaking in them! If any believe not, it is because they are not of His sheep, the test of whom is that they hear His voice. But He adds “I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:27-30).

Chapter 359

We Shall Be Saved

Salvation is a great word and a great thing, especially in its force as interpreted by Christ. Israel often knew deliverances of divine mercy, saviors not a few; but they were national, for time and this world. Even then faith looked for things better and more enduring through the Messiah that was coming. So much the more were souls astonished that, when He came, He did not restore the kingdom to Israel nor destroy their enemies; for He was Himself rejected by men, in particular by the Jews, far more than His herald John the Baptist had been.

But thus was God's counsel accomplished, His love displayed, and His word magnified; thus was man and Israel proved to be altogether guilty and lost; but no less was room left for sovereign grace, and divine righteousness, and everlasting salvation. All met in the cross of Christ, where the worst evil of the creature rose up against the perfect goodness of God, Who laid the burden of sin on His Son, the suffering Son of man, a sacrifice for sins, a propitiatory through faith in His blood for showing forth God's righteousness. And now, Christ being raised for the believer's justification, he is assured of salvation.

If sins set to any man's account by God must ensure judgment, never did one stand forth as a sufferer to the utmost like the Savior. He was man, born of woman, as truly as any, not so the first Adam who was created, not born. He, the Son, was God as truly as the Father, or the Holy Spirit. He was the Holy One of God; which Adam was not, even untainted and fresh from God's hand, innocent and upright, but never said to be holy, though he had no sin then in his nature when tempted. Christ was in all things tempted like as we are, sin excepted. Such was the One, God and man, the absolutely obedient One, Who undertook to suffer and die, Just for unjust: the only, the adequate, the perfect sufferer for sins, that He might bring those who believe to God (1 Peter 3). But God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might he in God. What could be a grander demonstration of the sacrifice accepted, of sins effaced?

Yet you are not justified by His blood, unless you believe the testimony God brings in the gospel; nay, you are worse than heathen; you add to all your other sins contempt of God's grace, and of Christ's atoning death, and of the Holy Spirit, the present and divine though unseen Witness. If the word of the law spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how shall. those escape who either reject so great salvation when presented, or neglect it by a heartless profession of the Lord's name?

Do you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead? Then fear not to rest on the inspired assurance; “thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). He that spared not but gave up His own Son for us all, when we were ungodly and enemies, is worthy of all trust, as His word is of all acceptation. To rest on it is “obedience of faith,” the root of all the practical obedience that follows. The soul that receives His testimony sets to his seal that God is true. Why should you fear that He in Whom you believe for the remission of your sins will abandon you afterward? No doubt, you are weak; but what is Christ? Is He a little Savior? is He not our great God and Savior (Titus 2:13)?

Listen to the apostle authorized of God to reason with you. “Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life” (vers. 9, 10). Such is the salvation here guaranteed by God. No doubt it is for believers only, but it is for every believer, and not one should doubt it. If you at His word cast your soul on Christ and His work, God declares the blessing is yours all through. Doubts of Christ and of His salvation come not from God's Spirit, but from the enemy who hates you and Christ yet more. The express aim of the passage is to strengthen your confidence and chase fear away. The love of God in Christ has already met your need when desperate. That love which sought you when an enemy and made you a friend, yea God's child, by faith in Christ Jesus, is still real and active on your behalf. Distrust not His love, nor His word.

It is quite right for the believer to exercise himself, to have a conscience in everything void of offense toward God and men. Nor can anything happen to him sadder than sin, far more serious in a believer than in another man. Assuredly it calls for self-judgment and humiliation before God in proportion to the offense and the offender. But God provides for the failures and the trials of the way by Christ's advocacy and priesthood, as also in the action of His Spirit and word. Impossible that grace, unless abused, should clash with the righteous government of God, for the Father judges according to the work of each (John 15 Peter 1:17). Indeed this constant vigilance takes effect on His children, because they know themselves redeemed with Christ's precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. It is their new responsibility (for as men, on their old responsibility, they were lost) to walk as children of obedience, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance; but, as He that called them is holy, they too should be holy in all manner of conduct.

In our scripture, however, the apostle would establish souls in the saving grace of God before dealing with the walk; and therefore he instructs those who believe to rest assured from their justification that they shall be saved. That unbelievers should make a principle of doubting is but natural. It is deplorable that any believer should be so dull and negligent of the word before us, if there were no other, or as if all others were not consistent. Of all men, the Christian should be wholly subject to God's word. And here we have a two-fold witness, either of them divinely strong, both conclusive, that believers shall be saved. It would be strange indeed, if after we were justified by Christ's blood, we should not be saved from that wrath which is to fall on all impiety and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness. Not so: the apostle affirms that much more we shall be saved through Christ; and he adds that, if when enemies we were reconciled to God through His Son's death, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by His life. He was crucified of weakness; He lives of God's power. Each is to God's glory, each fraught with blessing. If that depth be so efficacious, what security in this height? Even as Himself said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” The believer is called to walk accordingly. His standing is wholly because of what grace has wrought in Christ, and given him freely and fully and abidingly. He is responsible to walk by faith as thus blessed of God, coming under discipline if he fail, but cheered from the start with God's assurance of salvation according to the virtue of Christ's death and in the power of His life.

Chapter 360

The Woman Then Left Her Waterpot

Blessed effects follow faith when it is the work of God's Spirit as here. “He that believeth hath everlasting life;” and life from God does not fail to show itself in ways pleasing to Him if not to man. A faith of mere tradition, or founded on evidences, is powerless. The conscience being untouched, in no case is it before God; nor is He trusted for everlasting life.

Little acts as well as matters of great moment disclose the work of God in a believer. The Holy Spirit notices both in the Samaritan woman. In the opening of the interview her pre-occupation with present things was evident. When the Lord seized the figure of living water in contrast with that before her, we see her total insensibility. She was unable to rise above earthly wants and desires. Only when her conscience was reached, did God and His word deal with her soul, however amazed and attracted she might be by the grace of Christ. Even when her life was suddenly laid bare by the wondrous stranger, so as to convince her that everything was known to Him divinely, she has no wish to escape into the darkness in which she had heretofore lived; she desires light in what most nearly touches the right state of the soul with God. She is assured that He could and would guide her aright in the worship of God, where men differ most and so keenly. She had to learn of a new worship superseding Jerusalem no less than her vain traditional mountain—the worship of the Father. This He, the Son, was alone competent to announce; as also the Holy Spirit is the needed power to enable the worshipper, even the true worshipper, to render it suitably to God's nature as well as His relationship as Father. But the work in her soul was not complete till He stood revealed in her spirit as Messiah come, the Declarer of all things to us: so she expected and confessed, and yet how much more the reality and fullness!

At this point, the most solemn and blessed for every soul that knows it, when God reveals Himself in Christ to the needy and guilty but now the sinner repentant, came His disciples marveling that He was speaking with a woman. For even they still shared the Jewish pride which despised the sex. How much greater their astonishment, had they known what she was, and what were His communications of infinite grace! “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”

It was the simple effect of divine truth acting on her heart, now that her conscience was before God. To everything there is a seasons and a time to every purpose, or matter, under heaven, a time to seek, and a time to lose. So she rightly felt the all-importance of the moment, not for herself only but for others. Her ordinary duty could well wait. It was nothing to her now to avoid the concourse of women at the well, for she clearly had been alone there. What were censorious tongues now? She had heard the Shepherd's voice. Had He not called her, knowing all she was and had done? She left her waterpot therefore. To know Him was the great business. Another time was equally good for the waterpot. But here was the Messiah, the Christ; and if He deigned in His compassionate love to make Himself known to her, convicted as she was, surely no sinner need despair. Without a command, as the fruit of His grace, she leaves aside what was earthly and

perishing, she seeks to spread the blessed news, which filled her soul and made her forget herself and every consideration but of Christ and His goodness to such as she had been. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation,” just expressed her new-born feelings, the activity of that life she had in Christ.

And so it is with souls born of God, who learn from Christ that the Father seeketh such to worship Him. As yet she was ignorant of dogma, but by grace she had received Christ, the despised Messiah, and the more despised because He was and is infinitely more, the Son of God, the Only begotten, full of grace and truth. Little she knew of Him; but she believed in Him as the Promised One, the destroyer of Satan, the Redeemer, not merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel, but given for a light to the Gentiles, that He might be God's salvation unto the end of the earth.

The Samaritan woman had already proved that His divine knowledge of her sins did not in the least hinder the out-flow of divine grace to her soul. Grace had used truth to search her and put her in her true place, that she might be fully blessed of God and able to draw near in adoration as a true worshipper. Nor is there anything so humbling as the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. When the prodigal came to himself, he made up his mind to say, “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” Had he adequately judged himself, he could not have asked even this; he must have felt his unworthiness (so far as he was concerned) of any place whatever. But when his father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him in his rags, he owned his sin and unworthiness; but not a word of being made an hireling. It was, he now learned, no question of himself, but of the Father's love. So is it with our God and Father. He acts in His own love and for His own glory. And Christ alone has made it possible righteously by His propitiation; as He alone is the truth, the way, and the life, revealing Him as Father and God, that we may know the true God Whom we adore.

The woman in the energy of faith, not only leaves her waterpot for a more fitting season, but in her own way shows the effect of the truth that the Father is seeking true worshippers, as she also knew that grace can and does make poor sinners such. So it was with her. Now the positive power of the truth discloses itself. She seeks others, any, in the faith of His grace. “She saith to the men (that is, of the city), Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” And she was right, truly guided, where human learning and genius have utterly failed and prove their possessors to be but blind guides who only lead and fall into the ditch. She was right and testified of, and in, the grace that blessed her. For Christ is man, yet as truly God, the only Man Who ever thus told all to the sinner, the only bearer of his sins on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness. It is a suspicious faith that does not subordinate earthly claims to Christ, and that burns not to make Him known to the lost.

Chapter 361

Worship in Spirit and Truth

John 4:24

God never accepted in His worship the efforts of man or the imitations of self-will. But He gave a system of beautiful and instructive forms to Israel, who had His law till Christ came to Whom they all pointed, and Who superseded all by a fulfillment which more than accomplished all. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never, with the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, perfect those that approach. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having been once purged, have no longer conscience of sins?

Totally different is the standing of the Christian through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Who came to do perfectly the will of God. “He taketh away the first (i.e. Levitical offering) that. He may establish the second (i.e. God's will), by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:9, 10.) Yea more; “for by one offering He hath perfected forever (uninterruptedly) them that are sanctified” or set apart to God (ver. 14).

Our Gospel here views Christian worship from another point of the highest importance, the need and blessing of eternal life in Christ and of the consequent gift of the Spirit that dwells henceforth in the believer. The Epistle views him as in himself at a distance from God, needing propitiation, and his conscience to be purified from dead works to serve religiously (or worship) the living God. Both blessings attach to faith. They are the portion of the believer only. For Christ is his life; and his sins are forgiven for His Name's sake; and the Holy Spirit seals him as having believed the glad tidings of his salvation.

Thus pardoned, furnished, and blessed by grace, the Christian draws nigh to God, instead of standing far off like a Jew; he is exhorted to approach with boldness, as may well be, since it is “unto the throne of grace” (Heb. 4), to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. There alone is a Great Priest over the house of God. All others are human pretenders over their own society, even if they have ambition enough to claim the whole of Christendom, or all the world. In this respect an apostle or a prophet takes common ground with all the faithful; for the blood of Christ is equally efficacious for all that believe. It perfects them each and all before God, and this here and now; so that all various efficacy of that blood is excluded, whatever the different positions in the church the sovereign will of God may assign as He does (1 Cor. 12:28), and whatever the differing place in glory, as we know from Matt. 25:14-22, Luke 19:1, 15-19 Cor. 3:8), and elsewhere. But the inspired word to all brethren is, Let us approach “with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water.”

And what is worship but thanksgiving and praise? Thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ and gives freely to us who believe; praise for what we know by His word and Spirit He is, not only

to us, but in Himself, His majesty, holiness, truth, goodness, mercy, love, and delight in us, the eternal self-existing One, now revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Dear reader, do you know the only true God? Do you know the Father? From 1 John 2:13 we learn that the little children, the babes of God's family, know the Father. But only he that confesses the Son has the Father also. God is no party to His Son's dishonor. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,” Faith is the operation of the Holy Spirit by the word. But to worship we need, besides, the gift of the Spirit, which is received when we rest on Christ's redemption; as in the O.T. oil was put where the blood (not merely the water) had been. Indeed as we see in Lev. 8, though Aaron alone had the oil without blood (12), Aaron's sons as well as he were sprinkled with the oil and the blood after the blood sprinkling (23, 24).

Is it so with you? Are you resting by faith on the sacrifice of Christ? Then you are anointed also; you are sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption—the redemption of the body, as you already have in Christ redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of your offenses.

See then that you worship the Father in spirit and truth. We have in the N.T. the clear impression how the believers worshipped since redemption. No doubt there were at first the effects of their old religious associations. But the fresh grace and mighty truth of a risen and exalted Savior led them out surely if slowly. And the Lord's Supper became by His institution the central symbol and ever-recurring observance every Lord's day at least. Nor did the now sent and ever abiding Spirit fail to work in the assembly, not only in teaching, and exhorting and edifying, but in singing, blessing, and giving thanks. Flesh might deceive and intrude; but the holy responsibility of all was to worship in spirit and truth—to worship the Father in that near and blessed relationship, as the Son revealed Him and the Spirit gives us to enjoy, to worship God in that holy nature and majesty Whose perfect love has cast out our fear; for He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

It is not enough to be “true worshippers,” blessed though this is. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” How sad for the true worshippers to swamp themselves with notorious men of the world, and in acts and words suited to a mixed multitude! This He called not for nor accepts. It is not worship in spirit and truth which our Lord declares “must” be.

It is a necessity of His nature, and of theirs too, seeing that believers are become partakers of it in His grace (compare James 1:18, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 3:9). If true worshippers, look to it that your worship be, according to His will, “in spirit and truth,” not in forms or falsehood, but as we have been taught by the Lord Himself and His inspired servants. Since the Son of God is come and has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true, formal and false worship is hateful to Him and a shame for “true worshippers” who have the Spirit and know the truth, and are called to worship consistently.

Chapter 362

Worship of the Father

John 4:20-22

When the conscience is awakened, the need and the duty of worship are felt. So we see of old in Naaman when cured of leprosy by the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 5:27). Yet the difficulty is great for souls, as men differ in nothing more, and too often plead this patent fact to excuse themselves from all concern. Not so does the Samaritan now at least. fie Who had told her the truth and brought her conscience before God could surely solve the dilemma. Directly therefore after owning Him as a prophet, she presents the case. Divine authority must clear up what was contested so stoutly. And she is the more bold to ask after the wondrous persevering grace she had experienced.

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews” (vss. 20-22).

A venerable antiquity has a strong hold on human feeling, and especially in religion. Even a Samaritan could go back a long way and boast of succession. “Our fathers... in this mountain.” It was a serious thing virtually to condemn their race and ancestors! It is more serious still to leave God out of a question which He has the right to answer. The Samaritans after all never had been a great nation. Yet what great nation ever had God so nigh to them as Israel had their covenant God Jehovah whensoever they called on Him? But did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as Israel heard, and live? They alone were His chosen nation, as Jehovah is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath: there is none else.

Therefore the Lord Jesus could not but allow the plea for Jerusalem as against “this mountain” of Samaria. The Samaritans worshipped that which they did not know. The Jews were used to worship that which they knew; and this on a firm foundation, because “salvation is of the Jews.” Theirs are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law giving, and the service, and the promises; theirs the “Fathers” in the best sense; and of them as concerning the flesh is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen. He as the woman's seed, as David's and David's Lord, Son of God (Psa. 2) and Immanuel, had been evermore the One to Whom Israel looked and on whom faith rested; and this Himself here vindicated.

“Salvation is of the Jews “; in that line only is the promised Seed in Whom dead and risen shall all the nation be blessed. For if the promise be to the Jews, pre-eminently to their Messiah, never was it for them alone, but that the grace of God might bless faith wherever it wrought, and so in particular where need was greatest and man could least boast.

So did the Lord now deal with the woman, guiding her to boast only in the Father, the only true God, far from the vain confidence of man; and assuredly Samaria had nothing better than others. The truth comes not by succession. Natural descent is no guarantee, any more than human

priests or sacred places, still less scribes and lawyers. Jerusalem was proving itself as far from the Father as Gerizim; for His Son was “rejected by men,” and by none so bitterly as by the Jews. This gives occasion to the richest display of grace in the gospel; and the Savior announces it more fully than ever before, not to Nicodemus who heard much but to her of Samaria who heard far more. “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.”

That hour is now come.. When the crucified Lord died, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. This solemn act on God's part ratified the Savior's sentence. The place of worship is changed from earth to heaven. The earthly people refused, even to the death of the cross, the Lord of all the earth. But He is no less the Lord of heaven; and on high God has highly exalted Him Whom not man only but His own people chiefly cast out, and thus proved their own evil and ruin to the uttermost. This is just the moment for God to prove His own good; for through that very death of Christ propitiation was made for sins. Thereon the Holy Spirit was sent down to proclaim God's glad tidings to guilty sinners; so that the vilest may be forgiven by the faith of Christ and His blood, yea become thereby sons of God, free and called to worship the Father. Even the babes or little children of God's family know the Father (1 John 2:13.), and are capable of worshipping Him, not as Jehovah now, but as Father.

Nor is any other worship now acceptable. For God is thus fully revealed: the Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. The partial measure of Judaism has passed away, no less than Samaritan pretension or any other. Grace and truth came through Jesus; and the testimony of the Holy Spirit is to Him as the sole way to the Father.

My fellow-sinners, renounce self, renounce man; for all sinned, all are lost, and are seen to be so when the true light shines as it does now, as truly as in the day of judgment. This, however true, would be the saddest news, were it all. But the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. If we believe in Him, our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake. For this is He that carpe by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because He is the truth. The Son of God is the Son of Man Who came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Say not that you are too bad for Jesus to receive and bless, and bring you to God. You are indeed too bad for anyone but Jesus, Who has assured us that “him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” Fear not then to cast your soul on His grace just as you are. Beware of Satan and his ministers who would persuade you to make yourself more worthy before you believe on His name: there is no surer way to put Him off and lose your own soul forever. Undoubtedly your sins apart from Jesus deserve perdition; but Christ and His death have infinitely glorified God as to sin, so that the door of salvation is open to you or any other that believes in Him. Then and not till then will you worship the Father. There is nothing higher in heaven; yet you on earth begin that worship, which is of heaven and will never end.

Psalm 50

“To the chief musician a psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he went unto Bathsheba. Be gracious unto me, O God, according to thy mercy; according to the multitude

of thy compassions blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sins. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is continually before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and have done the evil in thy sight (eyes); that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be near when thou judgest. Behold, in iniquity was I born, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou hast desired truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden [part] thou wilt make me to know wisdom. Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; thou wilt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Thou wilt make me to hear joy and gladness; the bones thou hast broken shall rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create for me a pure heart, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from thy presence, and the spirit of thy holiness take not from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and let a free spirit uphold me. I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall turn unto thee. Deliver me from blood, O God, God of my salvation; my tongue shall celebrate thy righteousness. O Lord, thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare thy praise. For thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it; in burnt offering thou dost not take pleasure. The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit; a heart broken and contrite, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; thou wilt build the walls of Jerusalem. Then thou shalt delight in sacrifices of righteousness, burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar" (vss. 1-21).

Plainly these two psalms are closely bound together, though the first is a public and general summons, the second a private and personal confession, which at the end the godly remnant will take up as their own in view of corruption and the blood shedding of the Messiah, the great transgression. Real godliness is requisite, not sacrifice, in the former; in the latter not sacrifice but genuine repentance. Ceremonial observances are in vain, when God judges us even on the earth, yet more for eternity. Boasting of the law serves only the more to condemn the sinner

Psalm 52

"To the chief musician upon Mahaleth; a psalm of instruction of David, when Doeg the Edomite went in, and told Saul and said to him, David went to the house of Ahimelech. Why boastest thou thyself in evil, O mighty man? The mercy of God [is] all the day. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, as a sharp razor, working deceit. Thou hast loved evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking righteousness. Selah. Thou hast loved all words of destruction, O tongue of deceit. God shall also destroy thee forever; he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of tent, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah. The righteous also shall see and fear, and laugh at him. Behold the man (strong one) that made not God his strength, but confided in the abundance of his riches; he strengthened himself in his wickedness. But for me, I [am] like a green olive-tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise thee forever, for thou hast done [it], and I will hope in thy name, for it is good before thy saints (vss. 1-9).

As we had the saints brought to renounce ceremonies as a substitute for righteousness and repentance, now we have the treacherous enemy portrayed, and the saints in their helpless exposure suffering, but delivered by the destruction that falls on the Edomite at the end, when good shall flourish like the olive and give thanks forever.

Psalm 53

“To the chief musician upon Mahaleth; a psalm of instruction of David. The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They have corrupted themselves, they have done abominable iniquity; there is none doing good. God looked down from the heavens upon the sons of man to see if there were one understanding, seeking God. Every one hath departed; together they are become corrupt; there is none doing good, there is not even one. Have not the workers of iniquity known, eating my people [as] they have eaten bread? They called not upon God. There have they greatly feared [where] no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee. Thou hast put [them] to shame, for God hath rejected them. Who will give; out of Zion the salvation of Israel? When God turneth the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad” (vss. 1-8).

This is the great folly of man, but most guiltily among the Jews, denying Him to Whom we owe all, Who had above all chosen and favored them. Their fear is to come, whatever their contempt and hatred of God's people now. As for the righteous, they had no reason to fear: God's judgment will fall when least expected. And His word proclaims it across the ages.

Psalm 54

“To the chief musician upon Neginoth (stringed instruments); a psalm of instruction of David, when the Ziphites went in and said to Saul, Is not David hiding himself with me? O God, by thy might judge (vindicate) me. O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors sought after my soul; they set not God before them. Selah. Behold, God [is] a helper for me; the Lord. [is] with them that uphold my soul. He will requite the evil to my adversaries: in thy truth cut them off. With a freewill offering I will sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name,

O Jehovah, for [it is] good. For out of trouble, lie delivered me; and mine eye hath looked (seen its desire) upon mine enemies” (vss. 1-9).

The name of God (Elohim) will be everything in that dark hour to the godly Jews in the latter day, when they find themselves driven away by their apostate brethren amalgamated with the lawless Gentiles, and Antichrist at their head. God's name is the revelation of what He is, and to this they cling in faith, when they have lost all else. As they besought by it, so they will give thanks and praise it when it emerges as Jehovah (ver. 8), in the power and glory of His day when His hand makes good what His mouth had spoken.

Psalm 56

“To the chief musician, as the silent dove of the distant, Michtam; when the Philistines took him in Gath. Be gracious unto me, O God; for man would swallow me. up; all the day fighting he oppresseth me. They that lie in wait for me would swallow [me] up all the day, for many fight proudly against me. The day I am afraid I will trust in thee. In God will I praise his word. In God have I trusted, I will not fear: what can flesh do unto me? All the day they wrest my words; all their devices [are] against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they mark my steps while they wait for my soul. Shall they escape iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God. Thou, countest my wanderings: put my tears in thy bottle; [are] they not in thy book? Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day I shall call: this I know, for God [is] for me. In God will I praise [the] word; in Jehovah will I praise [the] word. In God have I trusted, I will not fear: what shall man do

unto me? Upon me, O God, [are] thy vows: I will render thank-offerings unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: [wilt thou] not [deliver] my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living" (ver. 1-14).

This is a distinct advance on the overwhelming anguish of the preceding psalm, where the cry to God comes late, and confidence is attained only at the close. Here the soul begins with an appeal to His mercy; and enemies are in view, without the aggravated bitterness of traitors in those who were once near friends. The haughty fighting of foes threw him in the day of his fear on God, and, what is more, on His word as especial ground of praise. All this our Lord knew more calmly and profoundly; and this is our portion, the, clearer to us as impressed with His name, as the Spirit is given us to make it good. But the godly Jews will also know what God's word is in their day of supreme trial when imposture and blasphemy succeed existing incredulity and superstition.

Psalm 57

"To the chief musician; Al-tascheth (destroy not), of David, Michtam,- on his fleeing from Saul in the cave. Be gracious unto me, O God, be gracious unto me; for my soul [is] trusting in thee; and in the shadow of thy wings will I trust until mischiefs (or calamities) shall pass. I will call unto God most High, unto God that perfecteth for me. He will send from the heavens rand save me (he that would swallow up reviled! Selah). God will send His mercy and His truth. My soul [is] in the midst of lions; I will lie down with those on fire, the sons of men, their teeth spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be exalted above the heavens, O God, above all the earth thy glory! A net they prepared for my steps; my soul was bowed down; they digged a pit before me they fell into the midst of it. Selah. Fixed [is] my heart, O God, fixed my heart: I will sing, yea I will sing psalms (play). Awake, my glory! awake, lute and harp! I will wake the dawn (or with it). O Lord, among the peoples, I will give thee thanks. For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be exalted above the heavens, O God, thy glory above all the earth! ' (ver. 1-12).

In this psalm, the evidently close companion of Psa. 56, the progress of soul in confidence is more complete. It is no longer the plea, "for man would swallow me up," but the quiet assurance, "for my soul is trusting in thee." And God's word was not praised in vain. Intervention from heaven is counted on, God's loving-kindness too and truth, with the grand result of His exaltation above the heavens, and His glory above all the earth. All things work together for good to those that love Him, as the godly remnant will; and as we do now by grace.

Psalm 58

"To the chief musician, Al-tascheth, of David, Michtam. Silence indeed! do ye speak righteousness? Do ye judge equitably, sons of men? Yea, in heart ye work iniquities; in the earth ye weigh the violence of your hands. The wicked are estranged from the womb; they err from the birth (belly), speaking lies. They have poison after the likeness of the poison of a serpent, as the deaf adder which stoppeth its ears, which will not hearken to the voice of enchanters, of one charming charms most wise. O God, destroy their teeth in their mouth; shatter the great teeth of the young lions, O Jehovah. Let them melt away as waters, let them go away. He will send his arrows as at those cut off. As a snail melteth, let them pass; as abortion of a woman, let them not see the sun. Before your pots feel a thorn, whether green or burning, he will whirl them away. The righteous one shall rejoice, for he hath seen vengeance; his steps he shall wash in the blood of the

wicked one; and a man shall say, Surely the righteous one has fruit; surely there is a God judging in the earth" (ver. 1-12).

Here we have the solemn warning of the righteous, and the call of God to execute that judgment on the living wicked which will deliver the godly Jew of the future and clear the earth for the reign of Him Who is alike Son of David and Son of man, and with divine complacency as He is Son of God, yea the true God and Eternal Life. It is inconceivable that any unprejudiced mind could fail to see that the psalm, the due sequel of those before it, expresses not in the least the sentiments proper to those that now confess the Divine Savior and are therefore the sharers of His long-suffering grace toward the evil and injurious, but the desire for long-slumbering and righteous vengeance of God on the iniquity that will then rise to a prouder lawlessness than ever. The time for patience will then he past; and most holy will it be for those who then fear God and are in the secret of His ways to pray for His judgment on His and their enemies (they are in truth the same). And the time is at hand; and the Spirit gives them to anticipate it, whilst preserving them from carnal measures. Even a tear of the eye God puts into His bottle, as the figure is, and His vows are on them-they are consciously devoted to Him. They look for His exaltation above the heavens, for His glory above all the earth; but this, not as Christians do by being gathered together to Christ on high, but by His crushing destruction of the wicked here below, who would have swallowed them up. Lions they may be, and with the poison of serpents; yet they melt as snails when He appears in His glory, and the sword that proceeds from His mouth prepares the scene for the throne of His glory over the earth. Israel will be the vessel of God's earthly righteousness in that day; as we ought to express the grace and glory of Christ in heaven now. Hence the godly Jew rightly utters his satisfaction at the terrible things in righteousness with which the God of their salvation will answer their prayer.

Psalm 59

"To the chief musician, Al-tashheth (destroy not), of David, Michtam, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to put him to death. Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God; set me on high from those that rise up against me. Deliver me from doers of iniquity, and save me from men of blood. For, behold, they laid wait for my soul; strong ones assemble against me: not my transgression, not my sin, O Jehovah. Without iniquity they run and set themselves: awake to meet me, and see. And thou, Jehovah, God of hosts, God of Israel, arise to visit all the Gentiles; be gracious to no traitors of iniquity. Selah. Let them return at the evening, let them howl like the dog, and go around the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords [are] in their lips; for who heareth? But thou, Jehovah, wilt laugh at them; thou wilt mock at all the Gentiles. His strength! I will watch for thee, for God is my high place. The God of my mercy will come to meet me; God will make me gaze on mine enemies. Slay them not, lest my people forget; scatter them in thy power and bring them down, O Lord our shield. The sin of their mouth [is] the words of their lips; and they shall be taken in their pride, and for cursing and falsehood they will tell. Consume in wrath, consume [them], and let them be no more; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob to the end of the earth. Selah. And at the evening let them return, let them howl like the dog, and go around the city. They shall wander for food; if they be not satisfied, then they tarry all night (or murmur). And for me, I will sing of thy strength, and will in the morning shout for joy of thy mercy; for thou hast been a high place to me, and a refuge in the day of trouble to me. O my strength, unto thee will I sing psalms, for God is my high place, the God of my mercy" (verses 1-18).

As it is the Gentiles or heathen who are here before the heart, Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel, is also the God of his mercy, his gracious God. To the ends of the earth is anticipated His rule in Jacob. To faith overwhelming danger is the signal for triumph.

Psalm 60

“To the chief musician, on Shushan (lily) of testimony, Michtam of David to teach; when he strove with Syria of Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and smote Edom in the valley of salt, twelve thousand. O God, thou -hast cast us off, thou hast rent us, thou hast been angry; turn again to us. Thou hast made earth (or the land) to tremble, thou hast rent it: heal its breaches, for it shaketh. Thou hast shown thy people hard things, thou hast made us drink the wine of reeling. Thou hast given to those that fear thee a banner to be raised because of the truth. Selah. That thy beloved may be delivered, save [with] thy right hand and answer me (or us). God hath spoken in his holiness: I will exult; I will divide Shechem, and the valley of Succoth will I mete out. Gilead [is] mine, and mine Manasseh, Ephraim the strength of my head, Judah my lawgiver (or scepter?). Moab [is] my washpot; on Edom will I cast my shoe; on me, Philistia, shout aloud. Who will bring me [to] the city of defense? Who hath led me up to Edom? (Is it) not thou, O God, (who) hast cast us off and didst not go forth, O God, with our hosts? Give us help from trouble, for vain [is] man's salvation. Through (lit. in) God we shall do valiantly; and he will tread down our troubles” (ver. 1-14).

In this fine psalm, the fitting close of its series, God's temporary rejection of His people is felt and acknowledged frankly. Yet they cleave to His calling them, and while justifying Him in His displeasure and sore chastening, they see, for those that fear, a banner to be raised for truth which He gave them. Hence their bold challenge even in their lowest state, as well as their identification with the whole elect nation and all the land. The God who restores is the more surely theirs against all their foes and oppressors; and man once leaned on is seen to be but vanity.

Psalm 61

“To the chief musician, on a stringed instrument, of David. Hear, O God, my cry; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth I will call unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: to a rock higher than I thou wilt lead me. For thou hast been a refuge unto me, a tower of strength from before the enemy. I will sojourn in thy tent forever, I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows, thou hast given the inheritance of those that fear thy name. Thou wilt add days to the days of the king; his years shall be as many generations (lit. generation and generation). He shall abide [sit] before God forever: mercy and truth afford; let them preserve him. So I will sing psalms to thy name forever that I may pay my vows from day to day” (ver. 1-9).

Here it is the soul more than the people and their enemies. And though the heart is overwhelmed, the cry is to God. From the end of the earth is strange and sad for a Jew, but makes no difference to God, Whose chastening is accepted, and His leading to a Rock higher than himself is counted on. He cannot fail, though His people have. Nor does the Spirit look for a refuge only but “the king,” not as erst to be rejected, but to abide forever. So will the godly praise His name forever, performing vows day by day.

Psalm 62

“To the chief musician, on Jeduthun, a psalm of David. Only on God [is] my soul silent; from him [is] my salvation. Only he [is] my rock and my salvation, my high place; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will ye set upon a man? will ye murder, all of you, one like a wall inclined, a fence thrust down? Truly from his dignity they consult to thrust; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, and in their inward part they curse. Selah. Only on God be silent, my soul, for from him [is] my expectation. Truly he [is] my rock and my salvation, my high place; I shall not be moved. On God [rests] my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, my refuge [is] in God. Confide in him at every time, O people; pour out before him your heart: God [is] a refuge for us. Selah. Truly vanity [are] sons of man, a lie are sons of man; in a balance they go up, less than vanity together. Confide not in oppression, and in robbery be not vain; if riches increase, set not your heart [on them]. Once hath God spoken; twice. have I heard this, that power [belongeth] to God. And to thee, O Lord, [belongeth] mercy; for thou wilt render to a man according to his work” (ver. 1-13).

Thus, as is well known, this psalm divides into three strophes, each opening with “only” or truly, and the first and second ending with Selah. Throughout God alone is declared worthy of trust. Unworthy objects are exposed in the last, where God is shown emphatically worthy.

There is manifest progress in Psa. 62 as compared with its forerunner. The soul learns to be silent or still, as well as to call on God importunately. It distrusts its own activity, and is assured that God's will alone is good. Only He therefore is looked to; no deliverance from another quarter would satisfy. Mercy, power, and justice are His.

In the psalm that follows the soul rises higher still as we may clearly see.

Psalm 63

A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, my God (El) [art] thou; early will I seek thee. For thee thirsteth my soul, for thee longeth my flesh, in a land dry and weary without water, so as I have beheld thee in the holy place, to see thy power and thy glory; for thy mercy [is] better than life; my lips shall praise thee. So will I bless thee in my life, in thy name will I lift up my hands. As [with] marrow and fatness thou wilt satisfy my soul; and [with] lips of rejoicings will my mouth praise thee. When I remember thee upon my bed in night watches, I will meditate on thee. For thou hast been a help, and in the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice. My soul cleaveth after thee; thy right hand maintaineth me. And they to ruin are seeking my soul; they shall go into the depths of the earth. They shall be given up to the power of the sword (lit. they shall pour him out into the hands of the sword); a portion of foxes they shall be. And the king shall rejoice in God: every one that sweareth by him shall glory, for the mouth of those that speak falsehood shall be stopped” (ver. 1-12). Higher than this, in its kind, no soul can go, though the covenant blessings cannot be enjoyed far from the city and the sanctuary. But the blessedness of God is enjoyed as never before, the Giver Himself; when the righteous are outside the prostitution of His gifts. Our Lord knew this, as no man ever did. Even deliverance is not sought; and the thirst is not of the desert but of the soul after God, and this too to see His power and His glory where He revealed Himself. A dry and weary land only brings out the more the longing for God fully manifested. It is meanwhile what the apostle calls joying or glorying in God (Rom. 5), and in the close what the Lord desires for us in John 17:24. When the Bride and Lamb's wife is glorified, she rejoices that she has in fact the glory of God (Rev. 21:11), in the hope of which we now exult.

Psalm 64

“To the chief musician, a psalm of David. Hear, O God, my voice in my meditation; from fear of the enemy, thou wilt preserve my life. Thou wilt hide me from the secret of evil-doers, from the tumult of workers of iniquity, who have sharpened like the sword their tongues, have bent their arrow, a bitter word, to shoot in the secret places at the perfect; suddenly they will shoot at him and fear not. They will strengthen for themselves an evil matter; they concert to hide snares; they have said, who will see to them? They devise iniquities: We are ready [finished]! a well-devised device! and man's inward (thought) and heart [is deep. But God shall shoot at them: with an arrow suddenly the wounds have been theirs. And they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue against them; all that see them shall flee away. And every man shall fear, and they shall declare God's doings, and his work they shall understand. The righteous one shall be glad in Jehovah, and trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory” (ver. 1-11).

Thus the godly are consoled by the assurance of God's sudden and retributive judgment of their enemies, who are here described not as reprobates only but as malicious against the righteous, plotting and conspiring; but suddenly God's judgment falls, others fear as they behold God's doing, and the righteous rejoice in Jehovah Who has thus appeared at length in vindication of His name.

Psalm 65

“To the chief musician, a psalm of David, a song. To thee waiteth praise, O God, in Zion, and to thee shall vow be paid. Hearer of prayer, to thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities [lit. words or matters of] have been far too strong for me: our transgressions, thou wilt purge them. Blessed [he whom] thou wilt choose and bring near: he shall dwell in thy courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, thy holy temple. Terrible things in righteousness thou wilt answer us, O God of our salvation; confidence of all the ends of the earth and sea, afar off; establishing mountains by his strength, girded with power, stilling the roar of seas; roar of their waves, and the tumult of peoples. And those inhabiting the uppermost parts shall fear because of thy signs; the outgoings of morning and evening thou wilt make to shout for joy. Thou hast visited the earth and watered it; greatly wilt thou enrich it; the river of God is full of water; thou preparest their corn, for so thou preparest it (the earth). The furrows thou dost water, thou dost break down its ridges; with showers thou wilt soften it; its springing thou wilt bless. Thou crownest the year [with] thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. They drop [on] the pastures of the wilderness, and the hills are girded with joy. The sheep-walks are clothed with the sheep, and the valleys are covered with corn; they shout for joy, yea, they sing” (ver. 1-14).

Here the positive side of blessing is before the heart; for to Jewish thought the people and the land (and indeed all the earth) are blended in their expectations of goodness at length triumphant. And terrible things in righteousness are not absent, even if the joyous change be more prominent. Not such is our proper but heavenly hope in the coming of our Lord Jesus; it is to be with Himself in the Father's house, though we surely love His appearing and expect to be manifested with Him when He is manifested in glory. Our hope is to be translated to heaven, as Christ ascended, apart from all judgment of the world, in which the Jew shall be involved but delivered out of it, when the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Psalm 66

“To the chief musician, a song, a psalm. Shout aloud to God, all the earth, sing forth the glory of his name, make his praise glorious. Say to God, how terrible [are] thy doings; in the greatness of thy strength shall cringe to thee thine enemies. All the earth shall worship thee and' sing psalms to thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah. Come and see the works of God, terrible in dealing toward the sons of men. He turned sea to dry land; through the river they will pass on foot; there will we be glad in him. He ruleth by his might forever; his eyes over the Gentiles watch; let not the rebels exalt themselves. Selah. Bless, ye peoples, our God, and make the voice of his praise to be heard, who setteth our soul in the life and hath not given our foot to be moved. For thou hast proved us, O God, thou hast assayed us as silver is assayed. Thou hast brought us into the net, thou hast put pressure upon our loins, thou hast caused men to ride on our heads; we went into the fire and into the waters, and thou hast brought us into abundance. I will go to thy house with burnt offerings, I will pay to thee my vows, which my lips uttered and my mouth spoke in my distress. Burnt offerings of fatlings will I offer up to thee with incense of rams, I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. Come, hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. I called to him [with] my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I had regarded iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. Verily God hath heard, he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed [be] God who hath not turned away my prayer nor his mercy from me” (ver. 1-21).

It is the godly Jew anticipating deliverance after the sorest but justly inflicted trials. But God is faithful, and proved so at the close Who had of old redeemed them from Egypt.

Psalm 67

“To the chief musician, on Neginoth (stringed instruments), a psalm, a song. God be gracious to us and bless us; cause his face to shine upon us (Selah), that thy way may be known in the earth, in all Gentiles thy salvation. Let the peoples give thee thanks, O God, let all the peoples give thee thanks. Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy, for thou wilt judge the peoples equitably, and the nations on the earth, thou wilt guide them. Selah. Let the peoples give thee thanks, O God, let all the peoples give thee thanks. The earth hath yielded its increase; God, our God, will bless us; God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him” (ver. 1-8).

Here the wonder is how any believer can fail to see that the Jew praising God's grace at length delights in the blessing of the Gentiles, all of them, whether in association with Israel or outside. Not only shall Ephraim not envy Judah, and Judah not envy Ephraim; but far from them in that day an atom of narrowness toward the nations. Their heart is enlarged by God's mercy to themselves. If the casting away of Israel was the world's reconciling as now, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?

The Gift of Eternal Life

“I give unto them eternal life.” The Good Shepherd, Who laid down His life for the sheep, gives eternal life to the sheep. He had come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10); for it is the will of Him that sent Him, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should' have everlasting life (John 6:40); and the Son had received power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him (John 17:2). Other passages in this Gospel show that it is given consequent upon faith in God and in Christ.

(See chaps. 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 54). But here all mention of faith is omitted that our gaze may be concentrated upon eternal life as the priceless dower of divine love and goodness.

While the effects of the possession of eternal life are many and blessed, it forms in itself the essential basis of the intimate relationships of the children of God. Foolish is it, and fruitless of aught save wild and dangerous speculations, to attempt to analyze this precious gift. The subtle terms, in which it is expressed and referred to, effectually elude and baffle the researches of mere prurient curiosity after explanation and definition. The unraveled mysteries of even the natural life should serve as a sufficient warning to those who would intrude into what is not revealed concerning the spiritual life. It ought not to be forgotten that to exceed the scripture tends to destruction, even as ignorance of it tends to debility. Not one inspired word on this or any other topic can be overlooked without loss, neither can one word be added without the gravest peril.

The Security of the Sheep

“They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand.” It has often been pointed out that this promise is of a double character, assuring the saints against both corruption and disruption, against internal decay and external foes, against their own harmful weaknesses as well as the rapacious power of the enemy.

Truly, “the name of the Lord is a-strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). And this unqualified promise is such an impregnable citadel for the timid believer. For the Good Shepherd herein pledges Himself and the honor of His glorious name that the very feeblest of the flock shall never by any possible means perish. So, speaking to His Father of the twelve, He says, “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost (same Greek word) but the son of perdition” (John 17:12).

Further, the place of safety for the believer is not symbolized by an earthly fold as in former days, but by the hand of the Good Shepherd. There, in the shadow of His hand (compare Isa. 49:2; 51; 16) are they securely hidden from every foe. That hand of invincible might (which redeemed the ancient people from the iron bondage of Egypt, preserved and defended them through the desert and brought them into the promised land flowing with milk and honey) will environ the frail and feeble sheep and protect them from every attack of the enemy. Though the wolf seeks to ravage the flock, the Good Shepherd leads the sheep of His hand (Psa. 95:7) into those green pastures where they may peacefully feed beside the still waters.

The Father also graciously concerns Himself in their guardianship. “My Father which 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.” This unity of interest in those who received the Lord is also shown in John 17:11, 12. The Son there prays the Father to “keep in thine own name those whom thou hast given me,” adding” while I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name.” And when the Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered, the Father turned His hand upon these little ones, according to the prophecy of the Spirit (Zech. 13:7) and the prayer of the Son (John 17); for it was not His will that one of the little ones should perish (Matt. 18:14).

Thus the Father and the Son constitute themselves the Protectors of those who trust them for salvation. Could the ground for confident assurance be made firmer? Away with those who depict the child of faith as scantily-attired, clinging with numb fingers to a slippery sea-girt rock, while

dashing waves threaten every moment to engulf in a watery grave. Scripture teaches us to think of such a one held in that hand, in Whose hollow the waters were measured (Isa. 40:12).

W. J. H.

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