BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 4

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 4, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

142 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 4

Chapter 1

Abram and Lot

(Gen. 13)

The word of God is given that by it we may judge ourselves. It is not merely a book of abstract doctrine, but, it tells us truth about ourselves in our connection with God, coming down to us in every-day life: Especially about the working of the will we get instruction.

The Old Testament Scriptures were “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” The Israelites had the manna and the water, but we get instruction through that which happened unto them for ensamples.

In the days of Abraham the world had departed from God in an open way. The family of Abraham worshipped idols, as we see in Josh. 24:2. (After the flood men began to worship devils.) But when idolatry is openly established, God calls out one family in whom His name is to be honored, and through whom His truth is to be preserved. God had called Abraham out to go into the land of Canaan, but he lingered till his father died, and got no farther than Haran. Alas! it is natural to the heart to let human affection come between it and God. He did not get into the land till after his father's death. He takes Lot with him. It was a kind and generous act, one might say, to a poor orphan. Abraham's general character was that of walking by faith: but we see his failure in faith. Lot was a person accompanying Abraham's faith, while he had it not. He walked in the steps of another, and not for himself. The spirit of the world was in him and showed itself on temptation. There was failure in Abraham, but it was the opposite of a choice of the world. The god of this world blinds the minds of those who believe not, &c. Lot was a “righteous soul,” but he was seduced. Abraham had not so much as to set his foot upon, while Lot chose the fair portion, and got with it vexation of soul from day to day. We have not open idolatry now. No worshipping of stocks and stones in these lands; but the flesh is the same as it was then; and Satan tempts to the following of the course of this world in a more subtle way. The lust in our heart is drawn out by the world; and Satan governs all those whose hearts are not set upon Christ. Where the heart likes the thing by which Satan governs, he maintains his power. Lot left idolatry, but fell into the spirit of the world. In him and Abraham we see the difference between failure in faith and following the course of the world.

God called Abraham to leave the world and walk with Him. Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” He says, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.”

Abraham came unto Haran. He did not get at once into Canaan, because he took something from which God had called him; for God had commanded him to leave his kindred and his father's house. There was a reserve in his heart, and so he got only part of the blessing. He lost his home and his country for but very little, while he was only half-way towards where God had sent him.

Arrived in Canaan, there was a famine in the land. He went down to Egypt. He was called to trust in the living God, but there he was not in a place to do so. He could not have an altar in Egypt.

Communion with God was lost, though God watched over him still.

Staying out of Canaan, he did not get the promise: wandering out of Canaan, he lost communion. All the riches he had gained with God there had not turned his will. There is nothing like simplicity in the ways of Christ. It is not a question here of salvation, but of walking in the light as God is in the light. Abraham forsook two of the three things which God had told him to leave, but not the third. Here is the failure of a godly man. Scripture never conceals the defects of those whose histories it records. But see how God delights (Heb. 11) to recall the traits of faith in His children.

Lot was a believer, but he walked by the faith of another. “Lot went with him.” He goes out and on with Abraham.

When Abraham left Egypt, he came back to the place of the altar he had built before, and there called upon the name of the Lord. If we have departed from the Lord, we never get back into communion till we get back into the place we started from. When the Lord deals with Peter, He does not reproach him with what he had done, but gets at his heart— “Lovest thou me?” So in Jer. 31:21: “Set thine heart towards the way, even the way thou wentest.” And Jer. 4:1: “Return unto me.” Abraham was a stranger in the land as well as a stranger in the earth, and so with us. And here is where lies the difficulty of the exercise of faith. God says, “If they had been mindful of the country whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned;” but “they desire a better,” &e. He does not put us actually into heaven, but leaves us here to try our affections. He puts us to the test. The Lord must have a heavenly people, as well as a heavenly place for them. He exercises our hearts without putting us in actual possession of the heavenly things. We are sitting there in Christ; yet here, wrestling with principalities and powers—all spiritual wickedness to hinder our holding fast our hope—Satan tries to settle us where God has made us strangers. The world has rejected Christ, and Satan wants us to be satisfied with it for our portion. The spirit of the world comes to dim the value of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heavenly promises put the affections in another place altogether. I delight in Christ, and have possession of Him: what do I want here, then? What matter who slights me? If the soul is living in Christ, and enjoying the promises, it can count it all joy when trial comes. It is better to wait for heaven than to enjoy the world. Better for Abraham to be where the Canaanite and the Perizzite still dwell, than to find his place where God had called him from. This was Abraham's character of faith in the main—he gave Lot his choice of the land before them. See his quiet giving way. “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” He had confidence in the promises of God, so he could give up that which seemed fair. Lot's affections are now put to the test, and his faith is tested too. A Christian should be determined to have heaven, and nothing else. Providence had made the plain of Jordan beautiful; why should he not enjoy it? So with the world now, and many Christians. They like the providential mercies of God, without God Himself. No Christian would deliberately choose a portion in that which God has pronounced to be under judgment. This righteous man was not thinking of the wicked men of Sodom, but of the well-watered plain. It was not open rebellion. Self-deception is not hypocrisy; but it was a righteous man not delivered from the spirit and power of the world. He chose the place of judgment. This world is a judged world. After long patience, it rejected Jesus; and this is its condemnation. As regards the responsibility of the world, it is all over with it.

Abraham stayed in the place of the promises. There was no harm in the well-watered plain, but Lot preferred present comfort and enjoyment to the promises of God. He lifted up his eyes, and his eyes affected his heart.

If we have been walking by the faith of another, the time must come when it will be put to the test whether God reigns over our affections.

It was a turning point for Abraham as for Lot. God said to him, “All the land I will give thee.” “Arise, walk through the land.” When he had made the good choice, and accepted the portion from God, then God shows him far more fully all that He had given him. Abraham gets a definite knowledge of his possessions. When our affections are set upon God, He can reveal Himself to us more fully. All the land is ours, but we have to realize it. It produces happy worship of heart, when as strangers and pilgrims we are seeking nothing in the world. Was it merely Canaan that Abraham valued? Truly, it was the glory of all lands; but the plain of Jordan was in Canaan, too. It was because he had it as the gift of God. Gifts are precious as they put us in communion with the Giver. The love that gives is more precious than the gift.

Beloved friends, have we so taken the promises of God for our portion as not to think about, or care for, the plains of Jordan? The way it comes easy to us is because Christ is in heaven, and we are in Him. He became poor for us, that we through His poverty might be rich. When our hearts are upon Christ, all else sinks down. We are seeking a country. Communion with God strengthens our souls while passing through this wilderness on our way. He has loved us better than we can love ourselves.

Chapter 2

Acts 26

The peculiarity of the gospel is its activity towards man—dealing with individuals to whom it is addressed, and not merely propagating opinions. It is quite intelligible that a person may like to propagate opinions, but he will soon get tired of it. The gospel deals with man individually, and goes out actively towards man: neither Judaism or heathenism ever did this.

The character of the gospel is as when Paul preached it, that it turned “the world upside down.” Nothing was to stand before it; nothing could be allowed with it. Judaism, heathenism, &c.-it overturned all. It brought in the claims of God upon individuals. It not only brought truth about God, &c., but it showed those addressed to be in a certain position towards God. The gospel comes and says, “You are lost;” and it does turn the world upside down. It is a new thing for them to be told, You are all wrong. Paul did this. He stated soberly what it was—gave proofs of it, but could not convince man's mind. He treated every living soul as a sinner, a child of wrath, a child of disobedience. That must be either from God, or it is turning the world upside down. Paul was sent out to all the world, and so were others also. (1 Cor. 15:10.) His mission was peculiar; and he brought the claims of God before men, calling every one to repent—telling them they were all away from God, and calling them to submit to the gospel. It is a solemn thing for a man to stand up, and say, “You are all lost.” And that is what Christianity tells us is the state of all by nature; and yet it comes in grace. It is not law: the law never did that. It came to a people already redeemed. They had been brought out of Egypt, and now God said, You are to have that law, and to you only can I give it (any who come in as a Jew may have the same privileges). The law maintained the unity of the Godhead, and it gave a rule of life. It gave principles of blessedness for a creature, if he could keep it. It was given to a feeble people to maintain the truth until the “seed” came; but it dealt with man (while convincing him that he could not keep it) on the supposition that he could keep it. The Jews to whom it was given were a specimen taken from human nature to test it, and to prove whether any good thing could come out of it. What is the good, you may say, of telling men they are lost? Why not leave it till the day of judgment? That would not be grace: it would do for law, but not grace. There was most important truth conveyed in the law—one God, &c.; but He was behind the veil. He sent out to tell man what He was, but He hid Himself in thick darkness. He never revealed Himself under the law. He gave a law, telling men what they should be, but could not reveal Himself. He would not have put man to the test if He had, for “God is love,” and love could not deal in law. If He had revealed Himself, He would have said, ‘You are perfect sin; but I am perfect love, and can put away your sins.’ “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The gospel tells you not only that you have done wrong, but that you are a sinner in the presence of a God who reveals Himself. It comes revealing God in such a way; that the contrast between Himself and you is brought to light—sin and light. “Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness,” &c. Christ never turned away any; but He did not cover over the sin—He brought it to light. That is truth as well as grace. He came presenting God to the conscience of man, and laid it open and bare before Him. Why should God trouble Himself about my sins, and not leave it all till the day of judgment? It is all grace that makes you conscious of what you are in His

presence now. There is life-giving, quickening power from Him, which, however terrible the conviction arising from it, brings a longing for holiness when I have not got it. There is a new nature that cannot get peace for itself; it has the desire after holiness, knows it has not got it. It is there, heavy laden, though delighting in God, and desiring Him. There is a consciousness of a burden but no power to get from under it. There must be something else. The gospel brings salvation to the person for whom it is wrought. There must be righteousness. The new nature is not righteousness. I have to find out, not only what is in my heart, but what is in God's heart about me. Confessing my faults will not make me happy. Can I be happy, if I have offended my Father, because I feel sorry about it, without knowing what His thought about me is? The gospel brings knowledge of divine love in salvation. The gospel is the perfect, full answer from God to the desires He has produced. In a word, it is salvation. Paul, when the gospel came to him, was full of himself, self-righteousness and self-complacency. He had been spending his life in doing things to make himself righteous in God's sight, and then found out that it was all in vain, and that the “carnal mind is enmity against God.” Self had been the object of all. He had been spending all his activities to drive God out of the world, and hinder the gospel of His grace. If he could have done it, he would. That is the character of every one by nature, though not so energetic as Paul, they are the enemies of God. Will a wealthy man like to hear money spoken of as good for nothing? If he has none, perhaps he will be glad to hear it; but men do not like what they pride themselves in to be made nothing of God and man are enmity. Man is righteous in his own sight, and how will he like to hear his own righteousness called “filthy rags?” “He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners” was the complaint against Christ. Will He go to the sinners and slight their righteousness? Will they have such a God as that? Saul was an enemy of God, when in his own sight he was righteous. He wanted his eyes opened, and that is what he got. “When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me.” Two things must accompany each other—the revelation of God's Son and the knowledge, by that revelation, of ourselves. Paul had all manner of truth before; but God was not revealed to him. So you may have plenty of truth or doctrine and not know God. If God is revealed to me it is because I have not known Him before. Could you be conscious of being in the presence of God—every one is in His presence; but could you be conscious of it and not know what you are? When the eye is open we see with the truth of God. Philosophy argues about God, but what are the thoughts of man about Him? Think of a man with plenty of money being told the Lord was to come to-morrow. What would he think of his money? Would not he hide it? We live the life of fools in this world (I do not mean Christians, but in our natural state), and what is more, we know it, but we do not like to know it. “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.” You must take a child to get the simple expectation of good from this world—men do not expect it—they know they are pursuing what cannot satisfy them. In the 17th verse of this chapter we get a new starting point. Paul was one to whom the gospel came thus, his enmity having reached its height, he was turned “from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.” Paul tasted the perfect grace of God, that left not a thought of sin between Him and Paul. “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” He saw Christ, and was taken up in the midst of his enmity and sin, and made an apostle of, “to turn from darkness to light.” We are not only living in darkness, but we are darkness until our eyes are opened. The sun does not give light to a blind man, and such are we till our eyes are opened. When a person sees with the eyes of God as to himself, as to light, as to God, that is repentance, not salvation yet; and a sinner needs salvation. I cannot get the sun at all, without having a little heat, but that is not peace. You must be at home with God to have confidence—you must see

Him. The consciousness that we want God and the consciousness of knowing Him are different things. It is what God has done for man, that is salvation, not what He has done in man. We can tell men they are lost, because we know it for ourselves. We can tell them they are lost, because we know we are saved. When I have got the remedy and know it will cure, I can tell of it. I know there are sins, but I have got Christ. I have got something beyond the new nature that longs for holiness. I have forgiveness—no mention of sins against the man who believes in Christ. The gospel not only tells men they need forgiveness, but it tells them they have it—not a single spot—all the sins gone. Any Christian can say he has it who knows and believes the gospel. But how can you say that? you ask. Does not God say so? Perhaps you are not caring for it! It is terrible if you are not—terrible that God should spend His Son and you not care about it! That is worse than breaking the law, for the blood was shed to wash away that sin. But when atonement has been made, and is rejected or treated with indifference, what can be done? For “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” By the gospel we announce the forgiveness of your sins, and a perfect righteousness wrought out for you. Have you got it? Do you think God has spent His Son to atone for—our sins, and to work out this righteousness, and we not need it? If you need it, have you got it? Nay, do you know you want it? Have you ever been in the presence of God? Have your eyes ever been opened to see your nakedness in the presence of God? The blind man does not know his state. When God has clothed a man he is not naked. God clothed Adam with skins. When a man has put on Christ, surely it may be said, “By grace are ye saved.”

Christ has wrought out a righteousness in which we can be in the presence of God, and in which He can Himself sit on the throne of God. He has clothed me with divine righteousness as well as given me forgiveness, and He preaches peace. I know when clothed I have perfect peace. After this, there is the full and blessed result in glory. What Christ is entitled to we get. He has a title to everything, and I have a portion with Him in all that He has. The work which has earned the glory for Him as Son of man gives it to me. When He comes, we shall come with Him in the glory. There is the “inheritance,” but what is better, we are to be with Him who is the universal Heir. He has finished the work for salvation. Who for? For me; for every believer. Do you say, Ought not I to wait till I am in the glory, before I believe that I am cleansed from all sin? Surely not. The angels will see it then; but we, are not we to see the salvation? We do when we have faith. Those who only expect to see it when they get there will not see it at all. Ought I to wait till then to know the cross of Christ? The effect of knowing it, is forgiveness. Am I to wait to know righteousness then? The only way to have it is to see Him by faith, while we cannot see Him. The gospel reveals the answer of God to my soul, that what I want I have in Christ—forgiveness, righteousness, life, peace, glory. My sins are borne away already, and my title to glory just as perfect as when I get there. “We have redemption through his blood.” The consequence of knowing I have it, is that I can walk with God. How can you walk with God if you have not peace, if you have not forgiveness, if you are not cleansed from sin? Could Adam walk with God when his conscience told him he had sinned? No. But the gospel bringeth salvation, as it is said, “The grace of God which bringeth,” &c. Now, have you got salvation? If your eyes are open, you will want it; have you got it? God does not deceive you. He does not say you are saved, if you are not. The craving after it is not the answer to it. If He has given the craving, He will complete the work; but it is not the answer. If you say, How can I tell? you have not submitted to the righteousness of God; you are going about to establish your own righteousness by the fruits of grace you want to find in yourself, and so to get a proof of your standing before God. But will fruits of grace give you forgiveness, righteousness? They are not the

blood of Christ; they are not Christ. How can they cleanse from sin? God delights in the fruits of grace, but they cannot put away sin. It is the work of Christ on the cross that alone does that. God has set Him on His own right hand, and when I believe it I see how God has loved me. May you be in yourself so broken down, that you may find One who never breaks down.

Grace reigns through righteousness, and will produce all manner of fruits through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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“ALL THINGS MUST BE No. 79.]

FULFILLED WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE LAW OF MOSES, AND IN THE PROPHETS, AND IN THE PSALMS, CONCERNING ME.” - Luke 24:44.

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Chapter 4

The Assembly and Ministry

If the brethren prefer all meetings of brethren as such, it is all very well; I have no objection; I would most cordially meet with them; but when they do not meet corporately as brethren, then I act on my individual responsibility to God—I individualize myself. If I find it profitable to associate another with me, as Barnabas or Silas (Paul chose Silas) it is all well, but I must take care how I do so. I count it of the very last importance to maintain individual responsibility, while ministering in unity and discipline in form: if individual responsibility be not recognized therewith, it becomes a petty Rome, and worse, from being narrower. Where charity is warm, there is no difficulty. If brethren who have a room, desire to use it only for corporate meetings, as I have said, it is all well, and I admit the liberty of the Spirit edifying by whom He will; but my responsibility of individual gift is between me and Christ, where not exercised in a corporate meeting; I dare not forego the responsibility (woe is me if I do!); and no one can meddle with it—he meddles with the prerogative of Christ. In the assembly, the order of the assembly, or Christ by the Spirit in that, is supreme; out of the assembly I act on my own responsibility to the Lord. If I have five talents, I do not necessarily club with him who has two. I admit freely, alongside of this, all godly counsel; and all discipline as to error or misconduct. Even so, you cannot prevent a man's preaching alone; you can refuse to recognize, or warn, and the like. I attach all possible importance to this individual responsibility (repeating yet again all just accompanying discipline): I would not be of any body where it was touched; I dare not, for I should do just what Rome has—set up something between me and Christ. If the brethren do not like to lend me their place of meeting, where I may exercise my gift on this responsibility, 1 resist not; it is merely a question of rooms, or of expediency perhaps; they may be wiser in this than myself. This question arose as to myself once at—. I replied, as above, that if the brethren did not like me to preach on my own responsibility in the room, and would have only open corporate meetings, I had no more to say: I would hire a room; but out of the corporate meetings I was Christ's servant, and I recognized no right in another to meddle with this responsibility, saving discipline if that were needed. The difficulty disappeared, as it always does where there is fidelity; though humbleness alone can save us getting out of one ditch into another.

Chapter 5

The Banished One

Some time since I read a paper, in a periodical, which taught us, that the Lord Jesus was as a banished one under the hand of God, and began to bear the curse that was due to us from the moment of His incarnation, and that He was bearing it all through His life, as well as on the cross.

I wonder that such a thought should have been entertained by a saint of God; or, that if it proposed itself to his mind for a moment, it did not at once get an answer and rejection.

I fully refuse this teaching; but would consider it in a very simple way, for a little season.

The incarnation took place in the midst of the joys of heaven. The Son was introduced to man and to the earth in a season of full noon-day light in the heavens. Angels celebrated that event with exultation. “They broke bounds that morning,” as one once observed; for their joy was overflowing. The Spirit filled human vessels with the oil of gladness. The angel of the Lord, and a multitude of the heavenly host, old men and maidens, and babes in the womb, priests in the temple, and shepherds in the field, all in their way and measure attest the full, universal joy.

Was this, I ask, ushering forth the Lord under a curse? Was this an act of banishment? Was this as Adam sent out of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword waiting on that judgment.

This scene of gladness, I know, was quickly changed. But who changed it? Did the counsel of God, the hand and Spirit of God, who had formed it, repent No: it was man who changed it. He that was born the Bethlehemite became, under man's hand, the Nazarene. The wise men from the east took their journey to greet the child that had been born, laden with offerings. And this they did, under the Spirit, led by the hand of God. But He whom they, as sent of God, came to worship, had quickly, through the enmity of man, to fly into Egypt. God had appointed Him to be a King in Judea; man makes Him an exile in Egypt.

Does this countenance, or does it gainsay the thought, that Jesus, at His incarnation, was treated as a banished one by God And when in due time, this same blessed Jesus is sent forth to His work or ministry, it was in like solemnities as had thus already waited on His incarnation. The heaven is opened to Him; yea, upon Him; the voice of the Father, in infinite, divine good pleasure, ordains Him; and the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, descends and rests upon Him. Was this an act of banishment?

But man again resisted and refused. Man again changes the scene, forcing the One who had been thus sent forth to His service by God, into other conditions altogether. His words are perverted. His grace is despised. His life is sought, and He and His are like lambs in the midst of wolves. He is not given where to lay His head.

The history of the ministering Son is thus in strict moral analogy with that of the incarnate Son. It was man that was banishing Him in whom God was delighting, and whom He was wondrously and blessedly accrediting.

But again, He who had been ushered forth at His birth, in the midst of the joys of heaven, and sent forth to His work afterward, under an opened heaven, and as with oil of gladness, is just at the close of His ministry offered by God as King to the daughter of Zion. And this is done, under God's hand, in a way fully kindred with what we have already witnessed. All due attestations to His rights as God's King entering God's earthly metropolis accompany Him. The ass and its owner, the acclamations of the multitude, the mind of the whole scene, every expression yielded to the occasion, is taken up, and forced to be in concord with the divine purpose to set forth the King in his beauty under the eye of the daughter of Zion. The shout of a King is heard. All is worthy of the royal glory of the Son of David.

But man turned Him out again and banished Him—made Him an exile now from Jerusalem, seeking an asylum in Bethany, as before he had made Him an exile from Bethlehem, seeking an asylum in Egypt.

Surely all this is anything but an exhibition of One banished by God. These occasions measure the life of the Lord Jesus from the moment of His incarnation to the close of His ministry; and they tell us of God's unchanged delight in Him, of His patient proposal of Him again and again to the acceptance of man, and of man's continued, settled enmity, and of His purpose, fixed and resolved, to banish Him whom God was delighting to honor.

This is the secret, or the story of His banishment.

His own experience was according to this. His communion was ever with the Father, as another has observed. And, surely, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places,” was not the language of a banished one. The light upon the holy hill was altogether different from the three hours of darkness that shrouded Him on the cross; and “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” was not “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

But I say only this little. May our hearts be more occupied with worship, and less with speculations! We need grace to gaze, to wonder, and to adore. A constellation of moral glories shone in Jesus before the eye of God. May it so shine before ours! In Him an infinitely more attractive glory was taking its course, and accomplishing its transit across the face of a degraded, polluted earth, than ever of old, in the unstained creation, had studded and traversed the heavens.

Chapter 6

Scripture Query and Answer: Blood of His Own

Q. Would the author of the tract, “The Sufferings of Christ,” be so kind as to give a short explanation of Acts 20:28 in the Bible Treasury? The writer of this note thinks it would be very advantageous to the public to develop the teaching of that remarkable verse. A. B. C

A. As regards the translation of δια του αιματος του ιδιου, I have not much to say. As to the fear of its touching the divinity of Christ, a person must be very ill grounded in that fundamental truth to have any such feeling. The fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ, His being truly God, Jehovah, I AM, is too inseparably a part of the whole texture of Scripture, too plainly stated in Scripture, and still more strongly proved, if possible, by the way it is supposed or assumed and implied in passages where it is no direct subject of revelation. Nothing could be more mischievous than the resting the divinity of the Lord Christ on this passage—a passage tortured by critics, no two of whom hardly can agree upon it. With the exception of Scholz, hardly any noted critic has simply ‘God' in the passage at all. Indeed, as far as I know, Mill is the only one; the principal ones have not ‘God' at all, reading ‘Lord' instead. Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, all read ‘the Church of the Lord’ —Matthaei, 'Lord and God,' which Middleton approves, and Alford and others of more weight than he reject as perfectly untenable. Alford read 'Lord' in his first edition; and saying, that as B. in the Vatican has it by the first hand, the evidence of manuscripts is balanced; but, on internal evidence, he reads Θεου in the second. To me it remains uncertain if it be by the first hand, for the transcript of the MS. is not to be trusted. Wetstein prefers ‘Lord.' The new Codex Sinaiticus reads. But A. C. D. E. and many others read κυριου. Many more, but modern, read Κυριου και Θεου. It would be monstrous to rest a vital doctrine on a text evidently tampered with. Even in Athanasius to Seraphion (i. 522), the printed text has Θεου, but other MSS. Κυριου or χριστου. I suppose we may account Athanasius as a sufficient champion of the true divinity of the blessed Lord. Of all ancient writers, he is known to be the undaunted and suffering defender of this truth against the whole body of Arians, the Emperor and all, and died an exile for this truth. Now, not only in the passage quoted by critics he declares that the blood of God is never used by itself, and that it is Arianism; but the argument of his two books against the Apollinarians, particularly the second book, is based on this. It forms, I may say, the whole point and subject of the second. He denounces as Arian such language as saying, “God suffered,” or speaking of His blood flowing. He treats it as the madness of the Arians. He says that “if it be said that God suffered, δια σαρκος even, then the Father and the Comforter have suffered, for they are all one;” and concludes, “The Word is God, if you look at His immortality (αθανασια) and incorruptibility and immutability; but man, in His nailing to the cross, and the flowing of His blood, and the burial of His body, and descent into Hades, and resurrection from the dead. Thus the Christ is raised from the dead, and, being God, raises the dead.” He says we are to be content to say, Christ has suffered for us in the flesh.' I cannot quote more here: it is, as I have said, the argument of the whole second book. The reader may find a multitude of the Fathers also object to the expression too. They may be found in notes to critical editions. Wetstein gives many of them. At any rate, speaking of the sufferings of God or His blood-shedding is denounced by him, who best knew what Arianism was, and the

greatest champion for the blessed truth of Christ's divinity who ever lived, as being Arianism. The Arians and Apollinarians did so speak; because the Arians did not hold that Christ was of one nature with the Father, and the Apollinarians held that Christ had no human intellectual soul, but that the divinity took its place in the Christ. Hence, the former had no difficulty that what was a creature, however elevated, suffered; and the latter must have made God suffer as the mind in Christ, or else He must have ceased to be. Hence, Athanasius opposed them so energetically, and said it was running into Arianism; and hence we can easily see how he rejected an expression such as the one we are considering. Now, I admit it was reasoning, not criticism. If I found it in Scripture, I should certainly not mind Athanasius, but take it as what is called κοινωνια ιδιωματων, dangerous and slippery as that ground is, if it ever be justified as to the natures of the Lord. I read, “the Son of man who is in heaven;” but that, by His person, passes into His divine nature. But I do not believe the natures are so spoken of. They are not to be confounded, any more than the person divided. I do not want to speculate on such subjects. I only say this to express my subjection to Scripture language, if such there be. But it is ridiculous to make a matter of orthodoxy, as a fundamental proof of Christ's divinity, what Athanasius denounces as denying that divinity, and being Arianism.

Now for my own part I believe—have always thought—the reading the Church of God to be right. If δια του ιδιου αιματος was the reading in this place, then the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood would be the only right translation; and so the English translators read it. But I confess I agree with Athanasius that such language is not according to Scripture analogy and its expression of the truth. It is not a question of the divinity of the Lord, one way or the other, but of the fitness of speaking of the blood of God. I do not think such an expression Scriptural. I do not accept the title even of the Mother of God. I believe it revolts just and divinely-given thoughts in the mind, and turns away from the true, eternal divinity of the blessed Lord. He who was God had a mother, and He who was God shed his blood; but I do not think Scripture speaks of God's shedding His blood. I think it revolts the mind as wrong, unseemly—I will say profane. I know what a person means and I bear with it, because I delight in his holding the true, essential deity of the Lord. But I agreed with Athanasius, when I had never read him, when I examined the passage in this view, in thinking such expressions contrary to the analogy of the faith. As regards the translation of δια του αιματος του ιδιου by the blood of His own, that it is Greek is I judge beyond controversy, in spite of the confident pretensions of some, and the slighting remarks of others, In John 15:19, we have this usage, which anyone may find in a dictionary. “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own” —το ιδιον εφιλει. It is an unquestionable Greek usage. Of course it can be translated, by His own blood.' The question is, which is right. To ιδιον is that which is specially near and identified with anyone, as our word, “own.” Hence it is said, “He spared not His own Son.” God has purchased the Church with that which was His own, nearest and dearest to Himself; a thought as apt and beautiful as possible here. Of that there can be no question. The singular seems to me more intimate than the plural, but I could not here give any proof that I am right. At all events, no expression would be more appropriate, hardly any, it seems to me, so strong. God purchased the Church with that which was most near to Himself, and most dear to Himself. This seems to me a most forcible expression, peculiarly expressive in the circumstances. More so, it seems to me, than that which would have expressed the relationship of the blessed Lord to His Father, whatever the essential importance of that may be in its place. The force of the sentence is in the word ιδιον, which is to me a deeply

touching expression.

Since I translated the passage, I have found the first biblical scholars, dead and living, discussing this translation without the smallest idea of its not being sound Greek. Doederlein proposed it. Michaelis suggests this rendering. Meyer says the text was changed from του αιματος του ιδιου to του ιδιου αιματος because the latter, which is admitted not to be the true reading, obliged men to translate it, the blood of God;' allowing this, that with the true reading it is not necessary to do so. The only other translation is the one I have given. I am thoroughly satisfied that all the tampering with the text, which for so short a passage is almost unexampled, arose from not simply taking it as I have done. For my own part I think that του αιματος του ιδιου applied to God is unnatural and objectionable. This use of ιδιος after a substantive is rare in the New Testament, just because it has a contrasting and emphatic force. When it is used with αιμα elsewhere, it is put before. Heb. 9:12; 13:12. When tame is put after, it is contrast or special emphasis. Of Christ it is said (Mark 15:20), they took the purple off him and put on him his own clothes—τα ιματια τα ιδια. Judas went εις τον τοπον ιδιον—his own place, not mooning that which was naturally his, but as could be said really of no other man, one appropriate to himself. Any man may go εις τον ιδιον τοπον, but εισ τον τοπον τον ιδιον raises the question, why is it so peculiarly his own? It is to that place which was peculiarly his own. So He spared not His own Son του ιδιου υιου, not του υιου του ιδιου. 2 Tim. 4:3; their own lusts τας επιθυμιας τας ιδιας, their own proper lusts in contrast with God's will, which they ought to have done. When it is simply the fact it is (James 1:14) ν. τ. ιδιας επιθυμιας. I have given all the cases, I believe, in the New Testament of this emphatic use. It is the general force of an adjective so placed after with an article. Now I confess this seems to me to make it singularly inapposite to be applied to the blood of God, that blood which was peculiarly God's own in contrast with all other. I would not fail in reverence in speaking on such things, but it does seem to me that such a contrasted use of God's blood as distinguished from all other is irreverent and somewhat shocking. The question is not on the divinity of the Lord, I repeat. Athanasius even charges such kind of language with being Arian. It is whether we are authorized (again I dread irreverence, but it is not mine, but theirs who would insist on it) to speak of God's own blood as God, for that would be the proper force of it.

Of the genitive ιδιου after a noun there is no example in Scripture. For my own part I am perfectly satisfied that by the blood of His own—i.e., what was more than our words of near and 'dear' can possibly convey—it was God's own dear and beloved Son, is the true translation. J. N. D.

Chapter 7

Where Is Abel Thy Brother?

(Gen. 4:9.)

What was it that constituted the radical difference between the offering of Cain and that of Abel? Why was it that Abel's was a “more excellent sacrifice” than Cain's? The difference between the characters of the two men was great. The one, we are told, was “righteous,” the other appears to have been an ungovernable man with strong passions, though they may not have broken out till Abel's sacrifice drew the evil forth. But why was it that the one had his offering accepted, and the other found a stern refusal? The point is not found in the characters of the men. It is summed up in a most momentous word— “faith.” “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Bear in mind that I do not for a moment put out of sight the difference in the practical ways of these two men—the bright side of Abel and the dark side of Cain. The moral effects of faith always justify God. It is true that that which faith lays hold of is outside the soul that possesses it; the resting place of faith is entirely without us. But no man can believe in Christ without most blessed effects—not immediate perhaps, nor always rapidly developed; but it is as impossible that there can be faith in Christ without consequences produced in life and walk, as it is that God could in anything put forth His mighty power without proof that such work is of Him.

My present desire is to show how we find the character of Cain brought out in Scripture. It is a very striking proof of the perfectness of the Bible, that there is a great part of the Old Testament which we can only understand in the light of some of the latest books of the New. And in the case of the history of Cain, the mere reading of the narrative in Genesis would not give the clue. But the moment we apply the key, the door, which was previously locked, opens instantly. And the case with which it flies open is no mean proof that the very same hand which made the lock made the key also. In this case one little word applied makes all plain. That word is “faith.” And here is the great searching question for each soul that is here—have you got it? If we read this history, with the light of God shining through us, we shall find it is God Himself speaking to us. Here you have two men—an accepted man and a rejected man. With which of these is your portion now? Can you say that you have by faith “a more excellent sacrifice?” Can you say that you know that God has offered it, and that the Holy Ghost has given you to believe it? Have you taken your stand by Abel? or are you traveling in the way of Cain? How is it that thousands lose their souls? They are kept by Satan in their ruin, in their degradation, by putting off the solemn consideration as to how they stand at this moment before God. They ignore their real condition. And let me entreat you, my readers, to take care that this may not be the case with your own hearts now. Take care, on the contrary, that you are applying the standard of God to your souls. It is an unsparing criterion. It leaves you nothing to stand on as a man, for you are a sinful man; and you may boast of being a man., but who can boast of being a sinner? The truth that God solemnly presses is that sin is come into the world. “So He drove out the man” —drove him out of Paradise.

It was not always so—not so did God make him. But look on the world now, and you have the same great proof of moral ruin as in these two, the offspring of the pair who were originally driven

out. They were born in sin. Here they were alike. But in one case there was a believing man, and in the other a man who went on in his enmity to God, still in his ruin. To Cain God's question was, “Where is Abel thy brother?” And did you ever think that God has the same challenge to put to the soul now? There was One who condescended to become a man, to take our nature, and thus become brother of Israel, of man in a certain sense—our brother—though of course holy and guiltless, the only faithful witness. Yet He was smitten—smitten in the house of His friends! But it was not only a Jew who did it. It was man. Do you see, therefore, that this solemn question is one which God is ever pressing on this world? If His blessed Son came and deigned to die, does that relieve us from the awful guilt of having slain Him? Is God indifferent about it? Does any sin rise up against man like that? It was when Adam was put away from Eden that the blessed Lord of glory came into the midst of men who came short of the glory of God. He descended into the midst of suffering. He knew affliction as no other. He was the “man of sorrows.” But that very One—the Son of man—could say, in speaking of Himself, “the Son of man which is in heaven.” It is not only that He is the “only begotten Son “of the Father, but, as it is said, “which is in the bosom of the Father.” And this is not a question of locality, but of the most intimate relationship and of Deity. Even as man He could not be described otherwise than as “the Son of man which is in heaven.” Had He not been God, how could He have so spoken of Himself? But He became a man, a man as truly as one of us. He was not only man, but God; and not only God, but man. And in Him was shown what God was to man—in Him just as truly what man ought to be towards God. Yet the end of all was THE CROSS; and this at the hands of man. And God will make inquisition for that holy blood—I was going to say “innocent” blood. It was that, of course, but it was holy. There was divine power in Him repellent of evil. Adam, even unfallen, could not be called holy; he was faultless, but he had not a particle of holiness. But the Son of God came, and though there was divine power, yet one most wonderful trait in Him was, that He never escaped an atom of suffering by putting forth His own Godhead power. He did not walk in self-sustainment, though he might have done so; but in leaning upon His Father's power, doing the will of Him who sent Him. He looked up, He prayed, He would not speak His own words, and what the Father told Him to do, that He did. He was the obedient One—the perfect servant—bending down to every burden in order to glorify God in it. And all that He got here below was the cross. Now do you believe this? Do you believe what God would do for your soul?

God has given me this perfect pattern of all goodness and dependence; but that is not all. He has given this blessed One to bear my sins, to take them upon Himself, to bear the judgment for them. And do you think that Christ has failed to do it? God is most explicit. He has found a glory in Christ, not merely as His Son, not merely as a man, but as the bearer of sin upon the cross, so much so that He can bring out now a full, immediate pardon. Nay, more; He is justifying, He is giving such a standing before Him as one would not exchange for that of Adam in Paradise. Though sin is around, and the believer may find the effects in his own soul and body of what sin has brought in, and though the believer may have a lot worse in suffering than that of others, as is the normal case; with all that he has got Christ—he has redemption; he has the certainty of eternal life. Is it presumption to allow this? You might better ask; Is it presumption to believe God? If you said, I have abstained from this or that sin, &cc., and therefore can look up with confidence, or at least hope, for the favor of God, that would be presumption. Can I put my obedience by the side of Christ? Can I challenge God to look at it? Men look among themselves to see which is the least defiled. But there is One who is without taint; God has declared it. The whole question is over. The

perfectness of Christ, the love of Christ, the love of God in Christ, made the case of man only the more hopeless until redemption came in. Christ magnified God in the cross, and God raised Him from the dead. This is part of God's righteousness. But redemption is the very thing that man always leaves out of the account, because he ignores his own sin. Can you say for yourself, the whole question is settled ? Everyone that believes in Christ ought to be able to answer with boldness. If you were to ask, Have you been faithful? surely it should bring many a blush on the face. There ought to be many a trembling knee where there is honesty, and the only confession would be of utter unfaithfulness. But if God has accomplished redemption, am I honoring Him if I dispute His word, or doubt His love, and put away what He presents to me? It is a terrible thing to talk about redemption and faith without having drawn near to God. That is only trifling about sin.

But if you have gone to God, and confessed to Him what you are, there is nothing but blessing awaits you, though you have to confess that you have outraged Him, that you have lived for yourself without God, that you have thought to approach Him in doing some religious duty—like Cain, who brought an offering of that which his own hands had labored in, thinking he had done his best to bring it in a suitable way to God. It is plain that Cain had never felt his sin. As to natural character, there might have been more in him than in Abel. It might have been said of Abel that he was a quiet, spiritless man, with no energy in him at all. But Cain was such as men can admire. He was a bold man, indeed, for he dared to look up to God and answer Him. For when God said, You shall be a fugitive on the face of the earth, he replies, in effect, No I will build a city. That is what man applauds. And in all that makes man great, there might be some ground, if there was no such thing as sin. But if I have to meet God about my sins.... And meet Him I must, now or hereafter. If I meet Him now, there is nothing but salvation, redemption, and forgiveness of sins; love from God, power with God; because He has given all I need in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son.

But man, away from God, says, True, we are not in Paradise, but we must make an imitation of it; and so he takes advantage of all that science and art have brought in, and tries to make this world a pleasant place to live in. But there is an infinitely more important question, and that is, How is man to stand with God? And all that would better the material condition of human life is but a blind of Satan to hinder men from settling the great question. Where do you find these things first coming in? Among the descendants of Cain. It cannot be denied that the inventions of man are useful—that he who invented a steam-engine conferred a benefit on others; and, of course, it is all right to make use of these things. But it is another thing to live in them, to live for them, as though this world were only a place for man to amuse himself and dwell forever in. We must appear before the tribunal of Christ. What should we think of the depraved moral condition of a criminal, condemned to death, spending his time and thoughts in adorning his cell, which he must leave only for the place of execution? Yet such a state is doubtless true of some who hear me.

Have you met God about your sins? Have you answered His solemn question. Where is thy brother? Why is He not here? He had eternal life. No one—not only no man, but no one—had power to take it away. He laid it down of Himself. His death might seem like the death of any other; but it did differ most essentially from any beside. It was the death of a man who was a divine person. Not all the legions of Rome could have taken it from Him, had He not given it up Himself. He was the willing prisoner, and the willing sacrifice. When the band of armed men came to take Him, after proving with what perfect ease He could baffle His persecutors—for when He said, “I am

he," they went backward and fell to the ground—He gave Himself into their hands. And yet men take advantage of His love to deny His power—take advantage of His humiliation to gainsay His glory! Alas! men refuse to commit their souls without an anxious thought to that precious blood whose virtue is proclaimed in God's own Word. Strange, that in these days of such extensive circulation of the Word of God, there should be so little real belief in its power! The Turk, with his Koran, believes what it tells him, goes through his prayers, ablutions, and forms, and is satisfied that he is one of the faithful. But those who have God's Word are afraid to trust Him, afraid lest, after all, their sins should rise up against them! But what does God proclaim that blood for? Either the death of Christ is of no value; or no sin of scarlet dye can rise up to make me doubt it is all put away, if I believe God's word about it. No doubt sin ought to humble me. But the one who knows most of himself, while resting on the blood of Christ, will be the most humble. Suppose a man in debt, so deeply that he is afraid even to look into his books to discern the amount. But a friend appears who has unbounded resources, and says, I will pay your debt. No matter what your lack of credit is; the question is, what is my name? will it stand good I will not only pay your debts, but set you up as you never were before. It is precisely so that God works through His beloved Son. And when a man believes, he should not be afraid to look at himself; he can afford to let the light of God shine into his heart, and search out and show him all his motives. And all the discovery of his own evil ought to be only for the discovery of the worth of that which has blotted out all his sins forever. This binds him to Christ with a new hatred of sin that he never knew before. God is exalted as a Savior—God who has come down to me in His Son; not as One who could have no sympathy with me, but in that Blessed Man who thought it not robbery to be equal with God—in Him of whom the prophets spoke, testifying of His glory. And if you believe, the inestimable privilege is yours of being saved by Him, without even a speck of sin left upon you. What a joy! and well may you rejoice, if this portion is yours.

And what a thought it is that something so wonderful is always going on—God thinking of souls; pressing this salvation upon you; telling you of His Son as the Savior! Will you not accept Him for the worth at which God accounts Him? Remember the word of God, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." How many say, "If only I could see the blood!" Does God call you to do this? He sees it. And faith means the soul resting upon the value that God attaches to the blood of His dear Son; so that I can say, My sins, which were scarlet, are washed away; though they were many, they are all forgiven. There may be many important questions; but every question sinks into insignificance in presence of this—the value of Christ and His blood in the presence of God. I am brought to meet God at His judgment-seat now, as it were, in my own conscience; and there I hear His voice saying, The blood of Jesus Christ, my Son, cleanses from all sin. Beloved friends, have you thus come May this be the language of your hearts, "I believe." What is it that hinders the giving up of self? of the little world, or the great world? If I give up myself and bow before the only worthy one, this exalts God. It is the acknowledgment that He is good to me in my sins. In Israel, God was at a distance, hidden, and they had to approach Him; but now God is going out to sinners. Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost." God was so bent on blessing sinners, that He must become manifest in flesh to die for them. Thus the sum is this: If I prefer myself; I am a lost man; but if I cast myself upon the worthiness of Christ, I can join those who say, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Chapter 8

Christ Has Indeed Established Ordinances

Christ has indeed established ordinances to distinguish his people from the world, on the one hand, by that which signified, that they were not of it, but dead and risen with him; and on the other hand, gathering them on the ground of that which alone can unite them all—on the ground of the cross and of accomplished redemption, in the unity of the body. But if, instead of using them with thanksgiving, according to his will, we rest upon them, we have forsaken the fullness, the sufficiency of Christ, to build upon the flesh, which can thus occupy itself with these ordinances, and find in them its fatal sustenance, and a veil to hide the perfect savior, of whose death, as in connection with this world and with man living in the flesh, these ordinances so plainly speak to us.

Chapter 9

Christ the Last Adam and the Second Man

(1 Cor. 15:45-47)

I desire to say a few words upon the remarkable contrast between Adam and Christ that is given us in this passage. Christ is called “the Second Man” and “the last Adam.” I believe there is a volume of truth in each of these designations, and of truth too needed for this day in which we live. For what a sentence upon all that is of man? What rich comfort, too, in such a Christ! And surely all is needed when the energies of men are put forth with increasing pride and self-confidence, when there seems nothing, as far as human hopes and expectations at least can measure, withholder from the domain of man's power. “The second man” writes death and condemnation upon all that has been in or of man morally. Before God, and therefore before the eye of faith, humanity is summed up in Adam. And whatever may be the pretensions of men, whatever earth may boast of in this or that man that has been born since, the Holy Ghost closes all in him that fell, that sinned, that brought in, along with sin, shame, and woe, and death. For the judgment of God was rendered necessary by sin, though it was, one may surely say, most painful even to God. For God in His own nature is not a Judge: it is what sin has morally compelled Him to be. “God is love.” No circumstances made Him to be such. He was love entirely apart from all causes. But had there been no sin, there would have been no judgment. Therefore I say, sin made it needful that God should be a Judge, whereas no possible circumstances could have drawn out love where love was not already. It would be most derogatory to His nature to suppose that God became love. God is love as truly as He is light: the divine judgment is a necessity created by sin. But as to man, all that the Holy Ghost can say about him is contained, as it were, in the man that transgressed God's command, and thus rendered it due to God's majesty that He should assume a new character as far as man on the earth was concerned, i.e., to be a Judge, and to deal with Him even in paradise in that capacity. For when the Spirit of God calls our Lord the “Second Man,” it is as good as telling us that all other men are only the reproduction of the first man. When you have known “the first man,” you have all that can be said about man as such. When Christ appeared, then for the first time there was another man. All others were of the same stock; and you had the sample of the common character in him who first of all broke down and went away from God, and was driven out afterward in shame by the command of Him who is love. Such is man.

But what a joy for us to know that He who was made flesh is “the Second Man” —a new kind of man altogether, as risen from the dead. For although truly man as much as you or I, yet the Holy Ghost gives Him this term of new and special honor. And it is not more true to insist upon it that Christ is a real man than that, as now entered into the resurrection-state, He is another sort of man, for whom the Holy Ghost reserves this remarkable title— “the Second Man.” Generations upon generations of men there might have been; but they were no other than “the first man.” Generations are going on still, whose associations are only with “the first man.” But I look up, and by faith I behold now risen from the dead, at the right hand of God, another, even “the Second Man.” Man has broken through death; man has spoiled Satan; man has entered into a new region altogether; man is the object of the delight of God, of the worship of all heaven.

What a wondrous thought this is for that poor weak creature! Man as he was disappears before the eye of faith. We know what he is; he is “the first man,” he is like Adam. But now we know another man altogether. And, thanks be to God! He who is “the Second Man” is “the Last Adam.” There is no other man—no other state or condition into which man can be brought: there can be no advance upon the Risen Man at the right hand of God. Humanity in Him is fixed in blessedness and glory before God. So that if “the first man” sweeps the whole world into one common grave of death, and pronounces condemnation upon the ways of the race, “the Second Man” lifts up our hearts, and rejoices them in the apprehension of what He is in heaven, and of what we too shall be with Him. For He who is risen from the grave, the conqueror of death, has lifted us up along with, yea in, Himself; and as sure as He is in heaven, we shall have our portion with Him there. And we should desire practically that our place now, and our ways and conversation, should not be with Adam that fell, but with “the Second Man,” “the Last Adam.” Is it so with us? Let us ask not only for ourselves personally, but for our belongings: for there is many a man that shows the world, not so much in his own spirit, as in what he desires and seeks for those that belong to him. And you will often see pride or vanity, not so much perhaps in the parent personally, as in that which he gives to or winks at in the child. The Lord grant that we may neither do nor allow a single thing that would grieve Himself! It matters little whether we stand in twenty things, if there is one in which we deliberately sanction what is contrary to the Second Man. What a shame this should be for us! Let us look well to it that we stand having our eyes fixed upon Him to whom we belong, even “the heavenly.” For this is another term used of our Lord here. “As in the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” These blessed titles or descriptions belong to Him in their fullness only as risen from the dead and entered into glory; as such He is “the Second Man, the Last Adam,” the heavenly one. No doubt He was and is “the Lord from heaven:” else neither could have been said of Him. And in this too is another element of our joy and glory, that He who as the glorified Man is the object of heaven's delight and praise, is the mighty God Himself—the only begotten Son. Hence man's blessing is secured forever in His one divided person. We are bound up with Him with an indissoluble bond that has already passed through death. But He is risen from the dead; and we stand in His own resurrection-life, and wait for the day when “we shall wear the image of the heavenly.”

Meanwhile, be it ours to walk as those that are consciously His, and one with Him even now.

Chapter 10

The Church and the Bible

As regards the Church and the Bible three questions present themselves for consideration, which, however they may be mutually connected, are perfectly different and distinct from each other. They are:-

I. The settlement of the Canon of Scripture.

II. The preservation of the Holy Scriptures to the present day.

III. Whether, when God's Word is in one's possession, it can be efficacious to the souls of believers, apart from, and even in opposition to, the voice of the Church, as it is called.

I. As to the Canon. We need for the present consider only that of the New Testament, which, being established, fixes that of the Old Testament also, in its main divisions, and very nearly its several books.

The Canon then, ultimately and really, depends upon particular and specific human testimony and not, on tradition. These two things are totally different from each other. Human testimony to be effective must be original; that is to say, must report the words or acts of the original speaker or actor, and must be proved to be so, by the evidence of witnesses who may be living or dead. If living, their evidence may be oral, as in the earliest days of Christianity; if dead their evidence will be historical; but in both cases it must be circumstantial and adequately supported. Historical evidence, when relating to an event long past, must be documental or inscribed, so as to give contemporaneous testimony (or as nearly so as possible) in a comparatively immutable and permanent form, written or printed statements not being liable to fluctuation and distortion, whereas verbal statements are extremely so, especially as the channel of communication gets longer or more diffuse. Tradition and effective human testimony then are totally different things. The former is generally entirely unsupported, and always incapable of proof; the latter is specific, particular and personal (not the less so that we do not know who the persons were: many persons are, however, specified by name in the Scriptures). The former is vague, general, and opposed to other evidence; the latter, definite, circumstantial, and confirmatory. The one is a responsible and solemn asseveration before God and the world of personal and actual experience; the other a general and irresponsible negation of actual experience and the substitution for it of fable. The one, therefore, is imposition, the other truth. Tradition is indispensable, it seems, to the Church, evidence in a court of law. The Church would suspend divine truth upon the former; the world would determine what is true in human matters by means of the latter. In this the world's procedure is a moral one, the Church's an immoral one. Even popular faith differs from tradition, in exact proportion as there is evidence of its being grounded on fact. All certainty depends upon evidence, and evidence must be a personal thing. As regards the settlement of the Canon of Scripture, the Church is indebted to individuals (if indebted to man at all), and not individuals to the Church.

Now there were in existence certain writings, known upon particular and specific evidence to have been written by men used of God to do so. By far the greater proportion of these writings are

addressed to persons (often to assemblies of persons) with whom the writer was acquainted. No great number of books were ever promiscuously, and as having equal claims, submitted to the judgment of men, but certain particular writings possessed peculiar and notorious claims, from the time they were received—claims which were never detached from them. The evidence for their genuineness (I allude here to the outward evidence, which itself is logically decisive; but there is likewise an inward evidence of the divine origin of Holy Scripture, which is no less, nay, even more, decisive to those who, through the grace of God, are acquainted with it) was unofficial, but reliable human—i.e. personal—testimony, originated and maintained by divine Providence; and so clear and conclusive, that, with extremely few exceptions, to know that such writings existed was almost to know which they were, since the sacred writings created their own fame, as do all the works of God. (Psa. 145:10). As to the few exceptions, the same principle was involved of letting God's Word speak for itself, i.e., letting the claims of what really was God's Word be heard alone; whereas whatever difficulties there were, were produced by the folly and wickedness of men in regard to their own writings (the Apocrypha for instance-the apostolical constitutions, besides a swarm of evidently spurious gospels), which the Church encouraged and availed herself of, but which was permitted by God to a limited extent only, though quite far enough to manifest the unfaithfulness of the Church. The settling the Canon of Scripture was, on the part of the Church, simply an official and formal recognition of already established evidence, not the discovery, still less the creation, of evidence. The Holy Scriptures were written by inspiration, they were identified (so far as man had to do with it) by ordinary but adequate human testimony.

There was no extraordinary virtue then in publicly admitting the Holy Scriptures; but, a providential necessity for doing so existing, common honesty alone was required on the part of all concerned—such honesty as is daily required and witnessed in courts of law.

II. As to the preservation of these writings, the Canon being a settled thing. I say preservation in preference to transmission, for the writings remain—generations change. We owe the Church then nothing for that, for, in the first place, divine Providence again comes in to watch over the Holy Scriptures, and rendering their destruction as a whole, or inutility, simply impossible. Witness the case of the Codex Sinaiticus, and the contrary action with respect to the Bible of different sections of the Church, such as Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Which of these contrary actions are we to regard as the act of the Church? Again, as it was God who first gave the Church the Bible, so it was God who caused His Word to be owned as such, and who also restored it to His people, when the Church deprived them of it. Did the Church tell Wyckliffe or Tyndal to give the people the Word of God, or did they do so in spite of her opposition Did the Pope commission Luther to preach the gospel, or was the Church against him? The fact is, individual faithfulness and energy, whether in parents or more public teachers, must never be confounded with Church action. So far, however, as the Church was concerned, she was undoubtedly responsible to God, not to destroy, corrupt, or withhold His Word, a responsibility she has not acquitted herself of over-well. The Bible, however, is the Church's charter, by which her title may be read by the world. She knows this too well not to take care of it, though, having it, she would make use of it to domineer. The Church would make her dictum more potent than facts, which happily are independent of her (such as the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, who will set the light upon a candlestick, and reliable history); whereas so potent are these facts that we can not only dispense with the Church's dictum, but, whenever necessary, act in defiance of it with great and manifest blessing.

III. As to the question whether, when God's Word is in one's possession, the sanction or authority of the Church, as to its being God's, is requisite ere it can be efficacious to one's soul. This question can be best answered by asking another. Has not God a right to speak directly, by means of His written Word, to every human soul? Is not Christ the “Word” of God, and that for every man? Did He not say, “the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day?” Yet how could it be a witness against a man, if it had never presented itself to his conscience in its true character? Is the immediate Lordship of Christ over my soul to be thrown back (i.e., denied) to make room for the intervention of aught else? True, the magistracy, for instance, is an institution of divine appointment, and in the things of Caesar we have to submit to it; but the Word of God comes to people equally with magistrates, enjoining the former to obey, whilst warning the latter that they are His servants. But blind or unlimited obedience is never enjoined; nor is unlimited power ever given to man. The things that are Caesar's form the limit of Caesar's jurisdiction, whilst spiritual guides are to be followed only as they follow and obey the Lord. “Not,” says the Apostle Paul, “that we have dominion over your faith.” “Endeavoring to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” The authority of the written Word and of Christ are identical, the authority of each being absolutely that of God, and does not that word say, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God?” (Rom. 14:12.) Is it possible that the Word and authority of God will be more direct and personal then than now? No! it will indeed be impossible then to avoid it, but more direct or personal then than now it will not be, or judgment would be more plain and personal than grace; God's righteous hatred of sin than His love to the sinner. Judgment will exactly correspond and be commensurate with previous responsibility. The Holy Ghost is here and presses that Word, whether in result it be for life, or for judgment and eternal death, upon the individual conscience. Woe to those who would substitute the authority of the Church for that of Christ by the Word! Such is a terrible act of usurpation—the final form in which the woman will rule (Rev. 17) according to her own will. That she is ruling is true, and has been for ages; and ever have there been witnesses to the truth that her rule and that of Christ are irreconcilable with each other. Not till her authority is repudiated therefore can believers say (more emphatically than the Samaritans, for the Samaritan woman told the truth), “Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.” Not only then is the voice, or assumed authority, of the Church out of the question, when God and His Word are before us; but the attempt to add her authority to that of God is virtually to deny what God has already done by His Word, in giving and sustaining eternal life by it, and that even in cases where the Church is opposing and opposed. “If any man desires to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” (John 7:17.)

P.

Chapter 11

Fragment: Communion

Christianity speaks of communion. But it is, first of all, the activity of God's love toward them that were perishing by their own fault far from him, a love exercised toward them though their will was antagonist. It reveals a God of love, who cared for, and thought of, those who did not care for Him who has compassion on sinners that they may become thankful worshippers.

Chapter 12

Correspondence

My dear brother, the Record has pronounced a judgment; yet as the pope's, after all, was not final with Luther, but raised a question which his authority was not calculated, as he had supposed, to settle, so, I apprehend, it will be now. For my part, I am thankful for the article. It has kept alive a question which I believe also to be important to the church of God. And without burning the bull, I shall profit by it to search the scriptures whether these things be so. I am glad the question is raised. Whether the journal of the evangelical party in the establishment is wise to volunteer in thus attacking others on the subject of doctrine, I must leave for its friends to judge. However, I am glad the subject is taken up.

The article does not take up particular expressions of C. S. (and that I am glad of, too), but the doctrine of the imputation of the legal obedience of Christ to sinners as their righteousness, and as the only title to eternal life, “a title which His death,” they say, does not give. This the Record calls the gospel. “Where it is not taught, it is another gospel.” Now I do not charge those who hold the active obedience of Christ under the law as imputed righteousness, with being heretics. I have known many beloved saints holding these views; but I think they are very obscure in their gospel. And, without any animosity or reproach of antichristian doctrine, merely as taking the question fairly and distinctly up, I say what the Record insists on is not the gospel; and, so far from it, that what they preach is not the true gospel of God as contained in Scripture. For a long time the doctrine was held, and held confusedly, and statements made inconsistent with it by the persons who hold it; or it was partially held, and not strictly. And all I should have said was, they were not clear. In modern times, the doctrine has been insisted on with more precision. Whether ex motu proprio, or provoked by some external influence, I know not; but the Record has committed itself to this doctrine as so precisely taught, and I affirm it to be precisely wrong. And that which it calls the gospel is not the gospel at all, nor in the gospel, as taught in Scripture; so that issue is fairly joined.

I hardly ever heard a person (a charge from which I do not pretend to be exempt) who did not, in preaching, lose his balance a little between human responsibility and sovereign grace. In earnest love to souls he would speak to win, so as to compromise the absolute need of grace; or in carefulness to show the work was God's, dim the fullness of love in his presentation of it. This is human infirmity, and we must humble ourselves and have patience. When I went to Plymouth, a vast body of the Christians there were clear old Dr. Hawker's disciples. I did not agree with his statements, though my heart might long after his true and earnest love to his Master. The other great body of Christians were Wesleyans, with whom I should be very far indeed from agreeing too; and each of these would have denounced the other as teaching most awful doctrine. I regret the extremes, but I thank God He blest both. Between these there may be much imperfect teaching, and yet, where Christ is loved, and foundation-truth held, and souls earnestly sought, God, blessed be His name, will bless, and does bless, in spite of the infirmity. All error is mischievous, for we are sanctified by the truth. Still, we have to do with a patient and gracious God; and, while we never can justify any mistake, where the truth is held He will bless. I say this, that we may discuss peacefully what is an important doctrine, without denouncing one who is not

clear. I do not think that the Record is wise in thus committing itself: I do not mean in abusing “Brethren” (that they are used to, and I trust may never answer mere attacks); but in committing itself to a formula of doctrine and a party. I do not think (I may be mistaken) it is quite at ease in what it is about. It puts me in mind of Erasmus' feelings when he attacked Luther, though it may have no Luther to attack. But truth is mightier than Luther. It is obliged to reverse its previous judgment. It is very anxious to have not a word to say as to C. S.'s relationship to God. Still, the case is so strong, if he were an angel from heaven, it must take it up. It is truly sorry to have to reverse its judgment; but it does pronounce a judgment, when they think of sundry members of their Church, and how C. S. stands related to their fellow-subjects (!) and that without much hesitation, for, unfortunately, there is not room for two opinions. I do not know why they should have any hesitation at all, if there is no room for two opinions. However, they have reached the needed point of courage, and the bull is gone forth.

I suppose the “Brethren” must be making progress, and their doctrines too. At any rate, there is a recrudescence of agitation and uneasiness. Both the Establishment and Dissenters are in movement. I suppose they feel that the ground totters a little under them; and so it does. I say this with no spirit of triumph or satisfaction. It is one of the signs of the last days. No one can shut his eyes to the fact that nothing conventional holds its ground. The Lord may see it needed, does surely see it right, or He would not allow it. He sees that, if the break-up must come (and as to instrumentality, it comes mainly from the side of evil—Rome and Rationalism, and governmental favoring of popery, through indifference to truth), the conventional order or formularies of what is breaking up cannot hold the moral elements of good, and the souls that delight in them, together. Christians increasedly feel that Christians and the world cannot go on together. There may be no position taken, but there is a growing sense that Christianity ought to be and must be itself. Hence the truth becomes of the deepest interest and the deepest importance. It rallies the soul to God, to Christ, the only true stay and center. Faith recognizes that there is such a thing as truth, and a divine record of it; that there is a divine teaching, that we may know the truth and that we may reckon upon it. Hence the importance of holding fast foundation-truth, and having it as clearly as possible, that the enemy may have no advantage and souls not be scattered by human admixture. Rome, Puseyites and Papists, would have authority; the Evangelical churchman, the formularies of the Reformation, which have already failed in uniting godly people; the Rationalist would make his own judgment the measure of inquiry, and deny the inspiration and authority of Scripture, or speak of Shakespeare's and Milton's, by which all divine authority in the word is openly denied. In the midst of this, let faith hold the truth, and inquire, with the certain standard of the word of God, what the full truth of God is. No new truth can unsettle an old one. None can unsettle the absolute authority on which alone all truth is founded—the word of God. Let the saints do this with patience and grace, and it will be a resting place, through divine mercy, for many an anxious soul—a haven in the storm. It is in this spirit I would inquire into the doctrine whether Christ's obedience to the law is imputed to us as meeting our failure under it. I will at the close (as my object is in no way to attack the Record, but to get at the truth), notice some others who have taken up the subject. To be clear, I will begin with the Record's doctrine. “C. S. fails to see,” we are told, “that though I am pardoned, I am not justified—mere pardon is not justification.” Now this is the precision I speak of It is not merely that Christ fulfilled the law for us that so we may be said to have fulfilled it; that is a tolerably ancient doctrine. It dates from the close of the Reformation. I am not aware that it was ever heard of before. The Reformers were not clear in everything. The Homilies of the

Establishment teach that Christ fulfilled the law for us in His life. Nor, for my part, if thus vaguely and generally stated, should I have anything which would rouse me to combat what was said, though it would be probable the person was not clear; but the writer's notion of justification, its contrast with pardon, never enters into the minds of the authors of these Homilies.. Thus speaks the Homily: “Every man of necessity is constrained to seek for another righteousness, or justification, to be received at God's own hands; that is to say, the forgiveness of his sins and trespasses.” So that for them justification was forgiveness. The two were identified with “that is to say.” So again, in the second part, “for to have only by him remission of our sins, or justification.” So Calvin: “To justify, therefore, is nothing else than to acquit from the charge of guilt, as if innocency were proved.” (On God's justifying the wicked.) Again, he says (Rom. 3:26), “What can be the sense, unless by the benefit of faith, to free from condemnation which their iniquity merited.” So, in Acts 13, “Thou seest how, after remission of sins, this justification is put as an interpretation (in loco interpretationis), so he absolves by the imputation of righteousness.” Further, “But in the fourth chapter to the Rom. 6-8, he first calls [it] imputation of righteousness, nor doubts to place that in the remission of sins.” And this he does very definitely; he says, after quoting the passage, “There, certainly, he does not discuss a part of justification, but the whole of the thing itself; whence it appears that this justice which is spoken of is simply opposed to guilt.” So, when he speaks. of 2 Cor. 5, “The righteousness of God in Him,” he says, “in this place nothing else is to be understood than that we stand supported by the expiation of Christ's death before the tribunal of God.” Again, “God by pardoning justifies.” Again, “Certainly he does not cite the prophet as a witness, as if he taught that the pardon of sins was a part of righteousness, or that it contributed to the justifying a man, but includes the whole righteousness in gratuitous remission.” All this he calls Christ's righteousness. And his language in III. 17, 13, excludes all idea of Christ's making a righteousness for us by the keeping of the law. So in his commentary: “That most beautiful sentence therefore remains to us safe—he is justified by faith who is purged before God by the gratuitous remission of sins.” These doctrines are asserted by him over and over again, and proved by Scripture. Once he states, on Rom. iii. 31, “but when we come to Christ first, the exact righteousness of the law is found in Him, which, by imputation, also becomes ours.” But even this makes no part of his general doctrine, and he uses it only as a proof that the law is confirmed, never as meeting our failures. Now, I do not accept simply the doctrine of the Homilies or Calvin. But this is certain, that both carefully contradict the distinction between the forgiveness of sins and imputation of righteousness. When Calvin speaks of the words, “the obedience of one,” he applies it to the satisfaction offered to His Father. Any one can see that what is charged as a grievous error is distinctly affirmed by the Homilies and by Calvin, and that for them remission of sins is justification. The truth is, the Reformers were charged, as Paul was, and as the Brethren are, with setting aside the law; they declare that they establish it; and in one place Calvin, as proving they do, says—Christ fulfilled it, which is reckoned to us; but the law is specially introduced by Calvin as an answer to works of supererogation or satisfaction. If works, you must take law, is the argument, but law does not speak of particular acts; but if you are to have righteousness by it, you must keep it all, and no man has done this. It was thus against the merit of partial works he uses the requirement of the law, and, in doing this, never hints at Christ's fulfilling it as the answer to our failure. Only in his commentary, when speaking of confirming the law by faith (not in the Institutes), he says, Christ was perfect in it, and that is ours by imputation.

If we turn to Luther, the whole thought is entirely foreign to him. He declares the law to have wholly ceased when Christ came, if you take it literally; and if spiritually, as soon as Christ is known in the soul; that its only use was previously on account of sin, and to convict of it, and that we have nothing more whatever to say to it. That it was given to Israel, not to the heathen at all; only that, as to fundamentals, natural conscience supplied its place, and that we have nothing to say to it. His language is the strongest possible. For those who are already righteous (through faith in Christ) are far outside and above all laws (weit ausser and fiber alle Gesetze). Therefore, should the law be laid on those alone who are not yet righteous, and yet would willingly be righteous, yet not forever, but for a time, until the righteousness which is by faith come; not that such righteousness be attained by law, for such is not rightly using but misusing the law, but that they may, alarmed and humbled, flee to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to all those who believe. (Gal. 3:19—23.) “The law is a light which makes plain and clear, not grace, also not righteousness, whereby man obtains life, but sin, death—God's wrath and judgment. That is the proper and right work of the law, in which it should remain, and not take a step further.” So “when the law has accomplished its work or office, that is, given me to recognize my sin, frightened me, and revealed God's anger and judgments.... It has reached its set time and end, so that it is to cease and leave me unplagued by its tyranny.” So, in the first book of Moses, “The law of Moses concerns the Jews, which does not bind us any more. For the law is given to the Jewish people alone, and the heathen are excluded.” He then directly refers to the moral law, saying, that the heathens have the main points in their conscience. “It is not new what Moses commands here.” He says, “Thus I keep the commandments now, not because Moses has commanded them. But,” he says, “it is objected God spoke them.” His answer is, “That is not all, that God has spoken it, we must know to whom he spoke that.” “Therefore answer, leave Moses and his people together; it is finished with them, it does not concern me. I have the word which regards me we have the Gospel.” “Only,” he says, “It is to be preached to make men fear, so as to drive them to the Gospel.”

Thus the doctrine, that the blood gives pardon and the law righteousness, and that we have one without the other, is denied by the Establishment in its Homilies, diligently by Calvin; and as to Luther, so far is he from thinking of such a doctrine, that though he holds that the law may be used to condemn and burthen the soul, he declares the Christian is in no way under it. It has ceased for him. Man may get light from it, but, once applied, it is only death, and only meant to be so, and ceases literally and spiritually when Christ comes. If he keeps it, it is not because Moses has commanded it, but because it agrees with natural conscience. We are to suppose that they had not the Gospel, nor taught what all the Church of God held as taught in the word! Now, I do not agree with much that remained unclear to the Reformers: consubstantiation; Christ completing His work in hell; baptismal regeneration—which they all clearly held; the putting away of original sin by infant baptism. For the Reformers I bless God unfeignedly, but they are in no way a rule of faith for me: “to the law and the testimony.” I must have the word of God. But with these statements in the Reformers, to talk as the Record does, is more than idle.

To clear our way yet a little, the writer's view as to obeying the law is a simple mystification. Be it that the law commands as well as forbids. It does so. But the contrasting between not merely breaking and keeping is absurd. If it is a prohibition: it is clear if I break it, I do not keep it, and if I do not keep it, I break it. But it commands. It does. But if I do not do what it commands, I break it.

God says I must love Him with all my heart. I do not do so. Well, then, I break the law. This foundation of the Record's system has no sense in it. There is another point remarkable in all these reasonings; not one passage of Scripture is produced. We are told “that it is another Gospel than that held by the whole Church of God, as taught in the word of God.” I deny it is held by the whole church of God; none of the Wesleyans hold it at all. Dr. Wardlaw declared there was no Scripture for it at all. Mr. Harrison, of Sheffield, in attacking the tracts, declares he held it for fifteen years, and gave it up because he could not find a word of it in Scripture. And as to the difference of pardon and justification or righteousness, the doctrine of the Record is contrary to the Homilies and to Calvin, contrary to the whole doctrine of the Reformation. But what I have to remark is, that when any of them who do speak of it approach any part of this doctrine, and (as I have stated, it was partially and vaguely held, that Christ fulfilled the law for us, by the Reformed portion of the work of the sixteenth century, but not by the Lutheran, and not as the Record and their friends do), but when they approach it, Scripture instantly disappears. The Record says, “Held by the whole Church of Christ, as taught in Scripture.” Taught where? Total silence. I turn to Calvin: he luxuriates in Scripture proofs when he condemns the doctrine of the Record; when, in a solitary passage, he at all approaches it, not a Scripture to be lout. He says so. So again here: “The essence of the glorious Gospel lies in this—that the Lord Jesus not only bore our penalty, but did our work!!.... And this whole work of His.... is called in the Scriptures and proclaimed in the Gospel, as the righteousness of God.” Where? Silence; total silence. Is not this singular? “We have in our surety suffered all the law's penalty, and fully and perfectly obeyed all its precepts.” This is the righteousness which is revealed in the Gospel, “which is brought nigh to us, by which God is just while he is a justifier.” Not so Calvin; quite the contrary. I suppose he was not of the Church of God! But let that pass. Where revealed? Not a letter of Scripture to be had, but a text alluded to, entirely perverted, which really teaches quite otherwise, quite the opposite. I might add another, which we shall equally see is misapplied. What is attempted to be given from Scripture, proves this with an unquestionable distinctness. They give, of course, all they can, but the only pretension to use Scripture is an illustration from the ark. I will examine that further on. But why this ominous silence? Why this incapacity to produce one text for what is held by all the Church of Christ?

One text, I have said, is alluded to; I refer to the phrase, “This is the righteousness which is revealed in the Gospel, which is brought nigh to us, by which God is just while He is a justifier.” Now, I say that that is false, and contrary to the scripture referred to. Let any one judge. It is, I must say, unless it be prejudice and carelessness, an audacious contradiction of Scripture. It is insisted that, not only “we have in the person of our surety suffered all the law's penalty, but fully and perfectly obeyed its precepts; and that this is the righteousness by which God is just and a justifier.” The curse of the law borne and its precepts fulfilled; that is the righteousness. Now for the passage: “Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified before God.” He does not say merely by my doing it, but not by deeds of law; no one is justified in that way. “For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” As Luther argues, “That was its use; other use of it was a misuse.” (Miszbrauch.) “But now the righteousness of God without the law (χωρις νομου—wholly apart from law) is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by. his grace, through the redemption which was in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Now here we have the words, "just and justifier," but not one word of bearing the curse of the law, nor of keeping its precepts. "Redemption through his blood" is spoken of, and we are justified by that.

But this is not all. Not only is the justifying ascribed to the blood only, but we are told negatively that it is not by deeds of law. And further, to make the matter clear, as that which the apostle insisted upon, that it was not law, whoever fulfilled it, it is said, "But now apart from law." Now, to quote this text, or allude to it, to prove that the righteousness by which God is just and a justifier is righteousness by law, is a monstrous and direct contradiction of Scripture—a denial of the apostle's doctrine.

"We are, in Christ," not only pardoned but justified men; we are righteous in Him. All true, but how? is the question. The Record tells us that the essence of the gospel lies in this, that the Lord not only bore our penalty, but did our work, and that this is called in the Scriptures, and proclaimed in the gospel as, the righteousness of God. Where? I challenge the Record to produce a passage. The passages I have already quoted in the Bible Treasury. But such subjects as these can only be judged of by Scripture, and I shall quote all the passages in which the righteousness of God is spoken of besides Rom. 3, already commented on, and itself sufficient to prove the contrary. They are the following Mutt. vi. 33; Rom. 1:17; 3:5; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9. Now, in which of these is the keeping the law called the righteousness of God? Not such a thought found in them. The first is, "Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" the second is, "The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" —a passage quoted by the apostle to show it is not by law? "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith: and the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them." (Gal. 3:11, 12.) Now, remark, it is not here the question who fulfills it, but that it is not by law, because it is by faith, and the law is not of faith, "but the man that doeth these things shall live in them:" and not then that another does it in order to justify, but that another way of justification is brought in. It is not by doing, let the doer be Christ or another. It is not by law. The principle of keeping law to justify, says the apostle, "is not faith." If the Record added, "Surely the man cannot be justified by his doing them, because he has not done them; but he is justified by doing them, because Christ has done them for him," what would come of the apostle's argument, "A man is not justified by works of law?" But it is added, "Christ path redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" — "and kept it for us besides," says the Record. But the Holy Ghost says not a word of the kind, though it was just the opportunity to bring it in. "If my unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God." (Rom. 3:5.) This has nothing to say to the matter; only we may remark, to exclude all controversy, that here it is God's being justified in His ways and vengeance: hence His own righteousness in Himself. The next is Rom. 10:3: "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Thus far does not help us, but the words following do: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He is the end of it, not the fulfiller of it, for me, because I am under it now. If I am, He is not the end of it. This passage Luther uses in the sense I give to it, and insists largely on the truth.

But the apostle does go on to say what the righteousness which is of faith is, and never says one word of the law, and could not if Christ was the end of it. "We are the righteousness of God in him."

(2 Cor. 5:21.) There is the Sinless One made sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him; not keeping the law, that we might be. Being made sin is not keeping the law. “And he found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Phil. 3:9.) There is never the trace of an idea of a righteousness of God by Christ's keeping the law. All these passages refute entirely the assertion and condemn the doctrine of the Record. One passage may be attempted to be cited, though the Record has not done so— “To them who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” I am quite willing to take it as others desire, through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. But there is not a word of the law. I am perfectly satisfied that righteousness of our God and Savior does not mean here justifying righteousness, but the faithfulness of God to His promises. They have obtained the precious faith of Christ as God had surely promised to His people—for he writes to Jews. They have obtained it through the righteousness of God. At any rate, law does not enter in any way into the verse. Such are the passages which speak of the righteousness of God; but I go further, and take the passages which speak of righteousness, and challenge the Record to produce one which speaks. of its being by law, or “Christ's fulfilling the law for us. I read of righteousness, because I go to the Father. God was righteous in glorifying Him. Law does not come in question; yet the demonstration of righteousness was here, lay in this, that Christ went to the Father, and men saw Him no more. In Rom. 4:3, faith is counted to Abraham for righteousness. He believed God. Not a word of law; only care taken to exclude works which were under the law. (Ver. 6.) God imputeth righteousness without works, not imputeth works for righteousness. And, at the close of his argument, the apostle takes cares to add, “for the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham and to his seed through law, but through the righteousness of faith. The inheritance of promise is not by law at all, neither for Abraham nor for his seed.” Verses 17-21 afford us in themselves no word upon it, only it is a gift; but it is added afterward the law entered, by the by, as a distinct thing. Of this more further on. Christ is made unto us righteousness. (1 Cor. 1:30.) The blessed fact is there, but no word of law; He Himself is it, however, not His keeping the law. In Gal. 2:21, we have an important verse, “For if righteousness came by the law, Christ is dead in vain.” Now here Christ's death and righteousness by law are contrasted. We are told pardon comes by death, righteousness by law, Christ fulfilling it. But the apostle declares that it does not come by law; that if it did, Christ is dead in vain. Indeed, why should He die, if I was righteous, without it? And note here, the apostle has no thought of a person being righteous and unpardoned. Yet if Christ's life was there for us—not His death—a man were righteous and a guilty sinner at the same time. What an unscriptural notion! They do not put it in this way, I know, but they do the converse—pardoned, but not righteous. Hence, it is equally certain, he might be righteous, but not pardoned! The whole system is false. Gal. 3:21: If a law had been given which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law: but it was not so. And then the apostle pursues the reasoning which Luther so insists upon. The law was our schoolmaster unto Christ; but after that faith came, we are no longer under the schoolmaster: before it came, we were under the law. If I am not under it, Christ clearly has not to fulfill it for me, for I am not under it to call for it. “Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” (Gal. 5:5.). It is not Christ must keep it for you to be justified by it, because you have not; but you are fallen from grace if you are justified on this principle. The Record says, We are pardoned by Christ's death, but must be justified by law;—the Scripture, that we are fallen from

grace, and Christ of no effect to us if we are. Titus 3:5 speaks of it—not a word of law. I had omitted one passage where righteousness of God. is mentioned, James 1:20; but it does not touch our present subject. Again, Abel obtained witness that he was righteous by the offering of Christ (typically), not by his keeping the law. “To him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly.” (Rom. 4:5.) It is not by another's works. “He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith,” &c. No thought of law or Christ's law-fulfilling for it. It is His death and resurrection. (Ver. 9.) Being justified by his blood. “A man is not justified by works of law.” (Gal. 2:16.) But he is, if he be justified by Christ's doing them. “That we might be justified by the faith of Christ, not by works of law; for by works of law shall no flesh be justified.” It is not merely he has not done them, but it is another way of being justified, not the Christian one. I have already quoted chapter 3:17-24. Now, what I find here is, the positive assertion of justification in another way than law; the rejection of the principle the Record insists on, and the declaration of the incompatibility of the two. If the Record has a text or a testimony of Scripture which teaches that a man is justified by Christ's keeping the law, let it be produced.

There is a text referred to, “By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous.” But so far from there being a word of law or obedience to law here, it is in express contrast. “Moreover the law entered,” παρεισηλθε, was no part of this great scheme in the two Adams, only came in by the by that the offense might abound. Mark, no word about keeping it. It had an object—it was to convict, bring in offense, make sin sinful. So Luther, passim. The obedience of Christ is in contrast with law. It is a monstrous idea to make Christ's obedience merely legal. He kept the law, surely; He was born under it, though as Son of man above it in title. But His obedience was absolute. What righteousness of the law called upon Him to give His life for sinners? But that He did as obedience. What, to bear the law's curse for another? All His life was obedience, but far beyond law; He laid down His life so, not according to law. And here it is obedience as a principle contrasted with disobedience, and no thought of law. There was a disobedient man and an obedient one—Adam and Christ. The law came in by the by. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Did the law make a righteous man suffer? Christ's obedience was perfect and absolute. To reduce it to fulfilling the law is horrible, though He fulfilled the highest requirement of the law. The law was suited to the first man; Christ's obedience to the glory of God, into which He is entered, because He finished the work His Father gave Him to do. So in Phil. 2, He was obedient unto death (μεχρι θανατου). It is the character and extreme possible limit of a principle of obedience—He was obedient even to death. Think of saying, He fulfilled the precepts of the law even to death! What precept commanded a person to die? No; His obedience was the principle of perfect submission to His Father's will, whatever the cost might be.

I will now take up the illustration of the ark. It really has nothing to say to the matter; and as far as the type goes, refutes the doctrine of the Record. That the perfection of the law was in the heart of Christ, no Christian could for a moment deny. Psa. 40 suffices to declare it. And being born under the law, He could not but be perfect under it—in His person and walk. That is above all inquiry. It is received by the simplicity of faith as the truth. But what is there in the ark which says that was imputed to meet the failure of Israelites, so that they were viewed as if they had kept the law? Had it been so, why offer sacrifices to make their failures good in another way? That the ark is a symbol of Christ, divine in the gold, human in the wood, and having the law safely kept within, I make no kind of opposition to. No man can make an illustration a matter of faith; but I do not gainsay the

figure. But, as far as it goes, it is quite contrary to the Record; because it was a figure of Christ—not standing for man towards God and offering what was needed, but as the seat or throne of God, on which, sitting in judgment, He required what His righteousness demanded; and the high priest represented Christ coming to God, there seated in judgment. If the law was laid up there as righteous, they were already righteous, even as regards all their faults; and yet required expiation and atonement! The whole thought of the Record is confusion. God did not sit on the throne giving righteousness, but requiring propitiation. Nor was the ark in any way a figure of Christ standing before God for us. The whole idea is confusion and error, a want of discernment as to the nature of the type. At any rate, it is not Christ on man's behalf coming to God, but that throne to which a man, and Christ as man for him, had to come, and on which blood had to be sprinkled. Was it sprinkled on a fulfilled law?

I have now gone through Scripture, I trust fairly, and as completely as I could, and referred to the illustration by which alone the Record seeks to support its doctrine. I have referred to the Reformers, not as any authority, for the word of God alone is that, but in reply to the statement that the whole Church of God teaches this doctrine. I have quoted. the Institutes of Calvin and his Commentary, the Commentary of Luther on the Galatians and first book of Moses, and the Homilies of the Establishment. I will add here two sentences from the Apology for the Confession of Augsburg, and the Formula of Concord, 76 of Part 2, Article IV.: The first says, “To obtain remission of sins is to be justified, according to that (passage), Psa. 32” And such is the uniform doctrine of the Apology, which refutes the idea of any fulfillment of law having anything to say to it, contrasting law and promise, referring the last to Christ in contrast with the former. The Formula of Concord speaks thus: “We repudiate and condemn all the false doctrine which we will here recite.” The third doctrine condemned is: “That in the prophets' and apostles' sayings, where justification by faith is in question, the words 'to justify and to be justified' are not the same as 'to absolve and to be absolved from sins, and to obtain remission of sins.'“

The conclusion I draw is, that the Homilies contradict, Calvin laboriously controverts, and the Lutheran body openly condemns, that special distinction which is made essential by the Record, and the party it represents, and declared by it to be the faith of the whole Church of God; that the Reformed or Calvinistic part of Protestantism did speak of the fulfilling of the law by Christ for us—that we may be considered as having fulfilled it in Him, but barely alludes to it as maintaining the law, and not at all as it is now taught; and that the Lutheran part of the Church rejects it altogether. I find further that there is no attempt to adduce Scripture in proof of what they do state as to the law. The Westminster Confession speaks of Christ's obedience and death as a satisfaction, never of the law in justifying. (Chap. viii. 5; xi. 1-3). Nor, when speaking of the law, does it speak of Christ's fulfilling it for us. The passages which it quotes are those in Romans, which exclude the law, and Jer. 33, and the like; though it says what is foolish enough, that “God gave a law to Adam as a covenant of works, promising life upon the fulfilling, (!) and threatening death upon the breach of it, and that this law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments.” I refer to this, because this notion really lies at the bottom of the whole question. I have, in the Scriptures I have referred to, brought forward fully the testimony of the word of God on the subject. In these the law is excluded as a way of righteousness and life. Nor is it even hinted that Christ fulfilled it in our stead. It is declared that it was our schoolmaster up to Christ, and that now He is

come we are no longer under it; and instead of its fulfillment by ally one being our righteousness, it is declared that, if righteousness come by law, Christ is dead in vain." If it be alleged that that referred to persons seeking it by their own works under law, supposing it were (for it is really an absolute principle), it is declared that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness" —that now faith is come, we are not under it that we are delivered from it, having died in Him, the law having power over a man only as long as he lives. That modern Evangelicals have generally this doctrine I do not deny; but they are no rule of faith. After all, half the Christians in the world, perhaps even at this moment, have no such principle.

I hold this doctrine of the Evangelical school on this subject to be false and wrong, because it is not in Scripture, but contrary to Scripture. Will the Record fairly meet the question on the ground of Scripture? I do not hold with Lutherans against Calvinists, or with the latter against Lutherans; but I bow to the word of God. The doctrine of the Record, the modern doctrine, as to pardon and justification, we have seen rejected by the Reformation entirely—rejected by the whole of it. I have quoted their statements only to relieve people's minds from prejudice. And without concerning myself further about the opinions of any, I shall now endeavor to show why I think the question is important, and what the scriptural view of it is.

Two systems are in presence. One is, that we are all under the law—Christians and all men; that the fulfillment of the law alone is righteousness; that in vain is propitiation made that we may be forgiven. That is not the means of being justified. In order to this, Christ has kept the law in our stead, and then died for our sins; but that His death is the means of pardon, but not of justification.

The other is, that we believers are not under law, but under grace—that Christ, while perfect under law in His own Person, did not keep it to make good our defects under it, or give us legal righteousness or justification by it—that He died for our sins, and thus put them away; but that we are viewed as being also dead with Him, and no longer in the flesh at all, to which law applied, but stand as risen in the presence of God, in the position in which He stands, with all the value of His work upon us, and accepted in His Person, according to His acceptance now that He is risen. That this is measured by His having perfectly glorified God in His work, and hence is glorified in and with God in heaven; and that this is our title to be in heaven and glory in due time with Him—conformed to His image—the first-born among many brethren. Here is the importance of the matter. The first opinion makes our righteousness to be a righteousness under law, in flesh, connecting us with Christ's position before the cross, and making our righteousness purely legal, and putting us under the law; this being the measure and principle of it, we are justified by its being kept. Do this and live. The second holds us to be dead to that state of flesh under law altogether; that when Christ was in the body He stood alone, and that our standing in Him is as dead and risen, the old man entirely condemned; but crucified and dead for faith, we alive to God in Christ, risen, delivered from the law, united to Christ, risen, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, because Christ has perfectly glorified God in dying, and that our place is that of having entered into God's presence through the cross, that new and living way, that is, through death, by which it is all left behind, and all that related to flesh in its relationship with God, though in fact, having to contend with it as an enemy to be overcome. They put us behind the cross under law. God has put us by the cross, and as now crucified with Christ, alive in His presence, as risen with Him.

Which is the scriptural truth? That is the question. I affirm the common modern Evangelical statement, maintained by the Record, to be unscriptural; and that it destroys the true Christian liberty insisted on by Paul, and the claims for holiness presented by Scripture, according to the new position into which grace has brought us. That it lowers Christianity and disfigures it, and denies the depth of sin and the power of resurrection. That the Gospel as taught specially by Paul in conflict with Judaism, is denied by it. We both admit propitiation by blood. But they put before us a man living in flesh, and righteousness provided for him by Christ under law. Paul, I affirm, puts a believer in resurrection, and wholly dead to the former state, and accepted in Christ when he is no longer under law at all. Now, I will commence by stating that I hold the maintenance of the law, in its true and highest character, to be of the deepest importance, and necessary to a right and full apprehension of divine teaching. It is the abstract perfection of a creature, loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves; and this Christ most surely did in all He did. All the moral claims and teaching of law and prophets, as the Lord declares, hang on it. And if angels suggest little, the thought of a neighbor where God's presence fills all things, and He only, so to speak, is thought of; still, in a general way, though not under law, we can say that the angels surely do so. Love to God and to others govern them. Still, it is because the others are objects of God's love, God has a more exclusive place with them. For love to one another is not brought out as to them in Scripture as in man. Man's wants develop it; angels can much more think of God only. For us, at any rate, the maintaining this immutable standard abstractedly, as our creature perfection, is, I believe, of deep moral importance. To say that it was given to Adam with a promise of life, and reproduced at Sinai, is an idle unscriptural imagination, and utter confusion as to the ways of God. There was no promise of life to Adam innocent; it would have been out of place. It is false and only confusion. A law to love God does not suit innocence; loving a neighbor was not suited to Adam's position; had he remained innocent, he never would have had any, but been the head and father of his race without a neighbor. The ten commandments suppose the knowledge of good and evil: to give a law to Adam which supposed it would have falsified his position. What did stealing mean for him? And, what is yet more important, what a prohibition to lust? Sinai does take the two great commandments as basis (that we know), but supposes lust, knowledge of good and evil, and sin, prohibits it. Law is not made for the righteous but for the unrighteous. That, Adam was not. He had a command which was a test of obedience, and no more; a test by that which, save by prohibition, would have been as innocent in itself as all else. The acquirement of the knowledge of good and evil changed the whole moral condition of man, coming in by sin, too, as it did; and to that condition the law undoubtedly applied. Of that condition (i.e., of a being having knowledge of good and evil), the two great commandments were perfection in the creature. Adam had a law, that is plain—a simple test of obedience before the knowledge of good and evil. Moses gave from God a law, when man had the knowledge of good and evil, and suited to that state. Both these suppose the express authority of God. They both impose a rule under a penalty. The law under Moses adds, This do and thou shalt live. Man departed from God, was lawless. This did not alter the abstract perfection of the law; but he had abandoned God in will, had a knowledge of good and evil, but no law save the law of conscience. God gave a law to Israel, and in it set the jewel of man's perfection according to law. Christ took a double character. He was born of a woman, and born under law. He was a perfect man in the midst of evil (but much more), and had the law in all its perfection in His heart; but, besides that, grace and truth came by Him. He, not the law, was the light of the world.

But now comes the question. Man being a sinner, utterly departed from God, and if under law, a lawbreaker—is the law the way of justifying him, or the rule according to which he is justified? Ah, if he has kept it all right, he shall surely have righteousness by it and life. But we have supposed with Scripture that man is a sinner, and under law, a law-breaker, so that he has not righteousness by it. How then does Scripture bring in righteousness and salvation? Is it by law? Is it founded on its rules and claims; or is it, while surely maintaining the excellency and authority of the law fully, in some other way? Upon the ground of the first Adam in law, it is all over with us—the way to the tree of life shut and all access forbidden. But from the outset what hope is given? It is another Adam, the seed of the woman, not a restoration of the first on any old principle. The seed of the woman is to bruise the serpent's head. The destruction of evil is by Christ's coming in as a deliverer. Next (and mark, for this is important and insisted on by the apostle, the special thesis of his Epistle to the Galatians, which is really a treatise on this point), a promise without any condition comes, contrary in its nature to law. Promise may be attached to law; it was in Sinai, but then it depends on a condition; there are two parties, and man must be faithful to his or it fails. Simply promise is of one God, and then is infallible; and this promise was to the seed Christ. The promise is made to Him, simply, absolutely, And unconditionally; but we may add, Abraham gives up all the promises as given to Isaac in flesh, sacrifices him, and the promise is confirmed to one risen in figure. This on every ground never can be annulled. The law comes in 430 years after, let man say what he will in dreaming about law, but it cannot touch the unconditional promise. So says the apostle; “it came in by the by,” παρεισηλθε. Was it, then, immaterial that man was a sinner, that there was no righteousness? Was he to be blessed in his sin, and human righteousness or unrighteousness not to be considered? That would not do, and hence human righteousness—righteousness in flesh—of man as a child of Adam, is proposed and required in the law, with promise of life by it, and a curse attached to its breach, and given with every help and advantage to a chosen people. The result was simple; flesh was not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, and those that are in flesh cannot please Him. The law convinced of sin, but did not touch and could not touch God's unconditional promise. Was it, then, the ground of righteousness so that man should have the promise? If it were, he must fail of the promise, for flesh could not keep it. Now comes the question. Is the law broken, always broken by flesh, the ground on which the promise or eternal life is had, by another's keeping it when man does not? Is the law our righteousness? i.e., does our righteousness and eternal life come by it, through another's keeping it'? That is our point. My answer shall be the Apostle's, “If righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” It is as absolute and abstract as possible, ουκ αθετω την χαριν του Θεου ει υαρ δια ωομου δικαιοσυνη αρα Χριστος δωρεαν απεθανεν. It is not, if it be by my keeping it; but if righteousness be by law, Christ has died in vain. But God's promise was to be fulfilled. What is the relationship of promise and law? That is the first question. The second is the connection of law, and death and resurrection, though they run into one another in fact, but the first is treated more especially in Galatians, the second in Romans.

Is the accomplishment of the promise on which all rests from Adam's fall, yea, from before the worlds, founded on law-fulfilling? I answer, No. Law was the test of the creature as its perfect rule, the test of the first man; the promise is given to and by the Second. He has magnified the law; has not left it to be the ground of righteousness. What says the Apostle? As we are arrived here, we cannot do better than follow his order; that is, the guidance of God's Spirit. First his own and Peter's course. “Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by faith of Jesus Christ.

Here I get two points. “Works of law” are not what justify me (it is not I am a sinner, and I need pardon): the question is, what justifies? The answer, not works of law, says the Apostle. The Record and the Evangelicals tell me it is. Secondly: it is in contrast with the faith of Christ. Works of law are one way of justifying, faith in Christ another. They are inconsistent with one another. He had left one system to have recourse to another, and if he set up the law again, made himself a transgressor, he declares, in leaving it. But we get much more than this: “For I through law am dead to law, that I might live to God.” Dead to law! What is that? Why, he has nothing more to say to it as a man in flesh. The law, which is a ministration of death, as well as of condemnation, has killed him he does not, as in flesh, exist morally before God. If he were alive to the law, sensible to it, or did it find a point of contact in him, he would not live to God. But the law has killed him as alive in flesh, and now he can live to God. But this takes him out of all reach of law. His life is not that which was in connection with law; he is dead to it, because as to the life with which law had to do—it has killed him. How, then, is he justified by another's keeping it for him? The law has acted, but acted in another way. It has closed his existence as responsible to it. It has done the opposite to justifying him, and can do no more, for the man is dead. We shall see this more fully entered upon in the Romans. The way this is met and becomes real for us is, that we are crucified with Christ. Is the justified man crucified? What we find in Scripture is another way of dealing with the flesh, which breaks the law and cannot be subject to it; that is, condemning it and putting the man to death, viewed as in it. Now, crucified with Christ, he yet lives; but not he, but Christ. The man again has ceased to exist for faith and in God's sight, and it is now Christ who is his life, but Christ risen from the dead. Now, that a true heart may not yet understand this, I can conceive; but the Record contradicts the doctrine of Scripture, and adopts another—justifying by law works done by Christ, instead of holding the man dead and condemned, but now alive in Christ, in a new position.

In the whole of the third chapter the apostle contrasts the hearing of faith and law. Those who are of works of law are under a curse. How so, if it is fulfilled? The curse has no ground, if the law has been vicariously fulfilled. But the apostle is more precise. “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them.” Now, nothing can be simpler than this. The principle on which a man is justified is contrary in its nature to a man's being justified by the law. We are told that man is pardoned through blood-shedding, but justified by law-keeping. The apostle says he is not in God's sight, because the principles are diametrically opposed to one another. Now here was the time to explain the Record's system. The law brought a curse—Christ redeemed us from the curse; that is, by suffering on the cross. And will he not save the justifying by law-works, to show he did not mean to set aside Christ's vicariously keeping it? Not a word is to be found. Instead of this he goes on to show that the law could not have this place at all, because. God had given before it a complete, confirmed covenant, which could not be added to. And, hence, though the law did come in after it, what was said to Abraham could not be added to, nor disannulled; that law only came in, therefore, by the by, added because of transgressions till the Seed should come; and that, when faith came, we were no longer under it. It was a temporary ground of dealing with men between the promise and its fulfillment. It was up to Christ, that we might be justified in another way. It will be at once objected, How do you reconcile this with the eternal character of the law and its subsistence? Here is just the point of the whole matter, and the mischievous fallacy of the Record's system. The law, in its essence, is the principle of creature-righteousness, the perfect rule for responsible children of Adam. The Record says, “Then it must be made good, that the

children of Adam may be justified." Totally, ruinously false! The first Adam and man, as such, is not justified—the second is brought in, and we are accepted in Him. The first is condemned, killed by the moral sentence of the law, and savingly in the death of Christ, that we may live. But we are justified, not by making out a legal righteousness for the first, which ought to have been there, and which would have been his righteousness; but by redeeming us wholly out of that condition which is condemned and set aside, and bringing us livingly into the second. The first as a condition before God is never set up again. Are we to be both first and second in our standing before God? The law, in itself, is eternally creature-righteousness; but the creature could not make it out. The law was given to man when he was a sinner. How could he have legal righteousness when the flesh was not subject to law? It served to prove that when the creature is a sinner, he could not. Is then Christ come to set up its legal righteousness and re-establish it? He is not. He is come to write final condemnation on it, but by His own death, and to redeem us out of it, and bring us nigh in Himself to God. The law became a test of a sinful creature—was applied to man when he was a sinner, as a condition of obtaining life. He was saved, not by setting him up on this ground, but by taking him out of it by redemption, and giving him acceptance on another and in another condition, the old one being put under death and condemnation, only that Christ took that on Himself. He took the condemnation of the first Adam for us, but did not set up the righteousness of the first. Thus, after the promise of the true Savior, it came in, by the by, till the seed came to whom the promise was made; "and then," as Luther says, "it had done its work and ceased" (aufhorete). "We are no longer under the schoolmaster." It is by the death of the old man, not by justifying it, the Christian is delivered from this charge. "He that is dead is freed (justified) from sin." So Paul in the Philippians gives up, not his sins, but his legal righteousness, viewed as such for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. The promise, then, cannot be annulled or added to. We have, therefore, the inheritance not by law; for if it is by law, it is not by promise: now God gave it to Abram by promise. You cannot connect law-keeping with promise you cannot connect law-keeping with faith you cannot connect law-keeping with justifying:

Christ is the seed of promise, the object of faith and our righteousness. The apostle declares the two incompatible, but that the law could do one thing—kill. This it had done, and his guilty self for faith existed no more. Instead of that, he had Christ, in whom it was he had died. But more. The apostle speaks of Christ's coming under law. Surely now he will tell us of the glorious gospel, the essence of which is said to lie in His keeping it to justify us. Not a word. Quite the contrary: "He was made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." Did He redeem by law-keeping or by blood? Did He redeem by leaving them in responsibility to law, and justifying them in it? He redeemed out of it by blood; so that we are no more servants, but sons. Now, servants are those under law. It is no longer our condition at all. Again, supposing we are justified by law—, Christ is become of no effect unto you. Ah! will one say, That is by our keeping it? No; it is the principle, "You are fallen from grace." What are we to do, then, as to godliness? Walk in the Spirit. Is not that right? Surely our opponents must say, Yes. But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under law. You will do that against which there is none, and so fulfill it yourself in practice, because you are not under it. But will not the apostle glory in this righteousness which Christ has made good for him by keeping the law? No; only in the cross. In a word, on the point of justifying, the apostle sets Christ, grace, promise, faith, the Spirit, all in opposition to law-works, and declares that they are incompatible in their nature.

Indeed it is a strange system which first keeps the law perfectly, in every respect surely, so that we are justified, perfectly righteous before God, and then dies for us. Yet such is the Record's system. We are not justified, surely, if Christ has still to die for us. Yet Christ first lived and then died. The whole system is false. It justifies the old man instead of utterly killing and condemning him, that we may live in the new; owning, not rectification of our old position, but one wholly new consequent on Christ's death. As the fruit of Christ's death, we are past the whole settlement of the question of sin with God; that, for faith, was on the cross. He was made sin, went through the utter hatred of compassionless man, all that Satan could bring upon Him in terror and suffering; went through death, drank the cup of wrath, is risen out of it; and we are in Him consequent on His having gone through it all and settled the question of sin, death,. wrath, Satan's power. We are in Him as entered into, what is beyond and after it, because He is; and according to the value of all He has done in glorifying God in the work through which He entered into this new position.

But let us turn to the Romans, where this subject. is more fully discussed in connection with resurrection. Our thesis is this: the law is holy, just, and good; but, its application being to a sinful creature, it becomes simply death and condemnation. Our justification is, not by Christ's vicariously keeping it because we are under it as men born of Adam, so that we should be justified in that position by legal works, but (while He glorified God as a living man), through an entire deliverance from the whole standing of flesh before God, which is wholly judged and condemned by law. But in His death; and our introduction into a new position in Christ risen, according to the value of His work. It is death under the law, death by sin without law in the first Adam, but death in Christ who died for us to the putting off the old man, and we in newness of life in a position which law cannot reach, in Christ risen from the dead, living and called to live according to this new life. Such, I say, is Paul's doctrine in the Romans: death for and to sin as to the old man, and a new place in Christ in resurrection. Let us examine the epistle. The first passage I may quote as a general principle is, “Therein is the righteousness of God revealed.” It is according to the principle of faith; the law, we know, is not of faith. Next, a passage I have already quoted, chap. iii., but which is too important to pass over here. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Of the last verse of the chapter hereafter. Here, then, is guilt by law. The Jew's mouth stopped, and thus all the world guilty; for the Gentiles were confessedly so. Now the conclusions: “Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight:” none in this way, whoever did them— “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” But now the righteousness of God without the law (χωρις νομον, wholly apart from law) is manifested. I cannot conceive how anything can be plainer. They tell me God's righteousness is by Christ's keeping the law. Paul tells me, that is, the Spirit of God tells me, that it is without the law, that the law has nothing to do with it. I believe the word of God, the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the divine word, and not the

Evangelicals; “even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ,".... “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Is redemption by law, or by keeping law? We are justified freely through this redemption. By faith in His keeping the law? No; by faith in His blood to declare God's righteousness. The law excluded wholly, even for those who had been under it; justification by redemption, Christ a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare God's righteousness. Thus God is just and the justifier.

Thus far we have only His death. But the apostle goes further, not, surely, to anything inconsistent. Up to this he had met the sin of the old man by the blood of Christ. Now, from chap. 4., he takes up the new man in resurrection, which pre-supposes death. Abraham is justified by faith, so are we who believe on Him who raised up Christ. What Christ? A Christ who kept the law for us? Not such a thought. A Christ, blessed be His most gracious name, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. He died for the ungodly. The apostle then compares Adam and Christ, speaking of the law as come in between, but that sin and death were there without it, and that we must not confine ourselves to those who were under law by Moses, but, taking the second Adam, go to the first also. That, as, by one's man's disobedience, a mass of others connected with him were constituted sinners, so, by the obedience of one, the mass connected with him shall be constituted righteous. That is, he ascends to the two great heads, the obedient and disobedient man. The law, he adds, came in, by the by, that the offense might abound. Have we a thought that Christ therefore kept it for us? No; its object was not righteousness, but to make the offense abound. There where sin abounded grace did much more abound. No hint of meeting the law, as a, fixed rule, by obeying it. There was disobedience and obedience. The law came in, by the by, to give a special character to sin; then grace, not legal righteousness, reigns. The apostle then turns to the common confession of Christianity in baptism. What have you come to? To death. You have been baptized to Christ's death. The initiation of a Christian has no hint in it of legal righteousness. Christ's death is the point of contact with him. Nothing before. Then newness of life according to His resurrection. But, then, is sin to have dominion over us because the prohibitory enactments of the law do not reach us? No; we are dead to it, and alive to God, according to Christ's resurrection. But law, what as to it? Why, sin will not have dominion over us because we are not under it. Under what, then? Under grace. Are they, then, so diametrically opposite? Diametrically in their nature. Grace would be no more grace, nor works works. Eternal life is God's gift, not earned by law-keeping. Of this further on. But this leads the Apostle to consider definitely the question of our being under law or not; and he lays down this principle: “Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. Now we are not alive in flesh, because Christ has died, and we are in Him risen after death. He puts the case of two husbands—the law, and (not Christ on earth keeping law, but) Christ risen. You cannot have both, says the Apostle, it is mere adultery. How, then, are we delivered from law (as from sin)? Is it by blaming the law as bad, or setting it aside as such in its own nature? No: God forbid. How, then? By our dying; for it has only power over a man as long as a man lives. We are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we might be to another, to Christ risen from the dead; that we might bring forth fruit to God; no fruit under law, but from Christ risen, fruit to God. Thus we are delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held. The Christian is dead to the law, does not exist as to it, because he died in Christ (but that was death to sin, too); hence he is delivered from it. Resurrection puts me in a new place, where law, the first husband, never reaches at all. I belong exclusively to Christ, and to Christ risen (for if He takes up my case, He must die and end law and sin, as to Him and me together), not to Christ

living on the earth. Hence the Apostle says, “Yea, if I have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth I know him no more.” And now, mark how distinct the Apostle is us to what our position is as dead and risen; and if risen, having to say to the new husband, Christ risen, not to law: “When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” When we were in the flesh. What a word is that! Then we are not in the flesh at all? Surely not. When we were, the law was that by which the motions of sin got power, and brought in death and condemnation. But as a child of Adam in flesh, I am not alive at all (comp. Col. 2:20), because Christ has died; and not being alive, the law has no more to do with me; for it has power over a man only as long as he lives. But I am alive, but it is in Christ risen. I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. It is a new creation, not a justifying of the old, which had been put under the schoolmaster but never obeyed. The Record has quoted also 2 Cor. 4, the glorious gospel as referring to this keeping of the law. It is really the gospel of the glory, referring to the preceding chapter. The citation is an unhappy one, because it is founded on a contrast of law and Christianity; one was death and condemnation, the other righteousness and the Spirit. Christianity is the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The glorious Gospel is not the law kept by Christ, but Christ in glory, in contrast with, the law. If we are to be saved, it is in contrast with a righteousness by law. (Rom. 10) That said, do this and live; this, not believe Christ has done it, but confess His name and believe God has raised Him.

Are we not saved, then, made righteous by one man's obedience? Surely, as contrasted with Adam's disobedience, but not by the works of law of one man. He was obedient, absolutely, unlimitedly—did not accomplish so much simply, but was intrinsically and absolutely obedient at all cost—characterized as the obedient man, learned it, what it was to the uttermost, by the things which He suffered. His obedience was different in nature, and went very far indeed beyond law-fulfilling. “I come to do thy will, O God,” be it what it might, and that was to die—give up His life for those the Father had given Him; suffer all things, even to the cup of wrath, to glorify God. Was that law? It is monstrous, and, I must say, wickedness or blindness, to limit Christ's obedience to the keeping of the law. Moreover, in Rom. 5, it is in contrast with law. Christ in offering Himself according to the roll of the book, offered Himself to do whatever God's will might be; the great example the apostle gives, is the offering of Himself once for all. Is that law? It is outrageous, and a deadly wrong to Christ, to make this infinite obedience of devoted love a mere obedience to a prescribed rule of human righteousness, however perfect.

I know not that I can add more. The Scripture teaches us, not that human righteousness according to the perfect rule of the law is made good, so that we should be justified in our old position; but that flesh is condemned, death passed on it, the old man put off, the new put on, and this through the death of Christ and His resurrection. So that we say, “when we were in the flesh.” Never once does it speak of a vicarious fulfilling of the law, but of our deliverance from the state in which it applied to us, and our entrance into a new one. “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh.”

Did not God then magnify the law, and make it honorable in Christ? Undoubtedly. I have already said it was the perfect law of the creature abstractedly; and Christ came under the law, and God glorified His law thus; and it was most right and just. But we were dead, away from God, without any law at all. It is never said, He kept it for us. He kept it to glorify God, to honor the law of God.

But in this character he was alone: death alone connected Christ really with those who were dead in sin. As to pious life, in the new nature, He is surely, as walking on earth, the companion of those who fear God. But the sinner, looked at as a sinner when as a child of Adam (and we look at him as a sinner, we speak of justification), has no connection with Christ. They were without Christ, without God in the world, and a Jew was really the same by nature. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone.” Christ was absolutely alone in His living state; He was perfect in it, overcame in it, knew no sin in it. But man being dead in sin, Christ never came into his condition properly known till He came into death. Really, truly man, sympathizing with him in everything, He never, as to His real state, as to righteousness before God, came into man's position, till the cup of death was there; for death was the condition of man. The keeping of the law was over really with man. As a sinner with a will, he was not subject to it at all, nor could be. Christ must be perfect in the place He took in contrast with man. He was the responsible man (through grace) and never failed; and, as law was, never failed under law (and that in the midst of every difficulty, not in Paradise), as Adam had failed; but He became the head of blessing after death, and when He had taken a new position in righteousness, as Adam when he had taken a new position in sin. But is not there the keeping of the law by us? Yes, in principle, in living in the Spirit, and by not being under it; but it is not vicariously, but really. But then, it will be said, Yes, but you do not even so keep it perfectly, and how do you make out righteousness then? My friend, I am a Christian. I do not make out righteousness by law. If it were so to be made out, Christ were dead in vain. I am righteous, the righteousness of God in Him, before I begin to do what is in the law practically. I never came under it. A vicarious keeping of the law is unknown to Scripture. If it be not, let those who maintain it, cite a single passage—show it from Scripture. A poor soul says, Christ kept the law, and everything He did was precious for us. I delight in his piety, even if ignorance be mixed with it. Christ must have been all that for the glory of God. The merely coming down to die would not have failed in putting away sin, but in glorifying God as a living man. For we have seen God manifested, a perfect man before God, Satan overcome, the law kept and magnified, tender sympathies, perfect and patient love. We have seen what God delighted in—the Bread come from Heaven—the only path through a world of sin, One delighting in the sons of men—far more than I could now here speak of; more than I can think of, but not redemption till His death: and redemption is the first need of a sinner dead in trespasses and sin. And this lies at the root of the question, Is man dead in trespasses and sin? How is he brought out of it? If Scripture be taken as authority, I am not afraid of the answer of anyone taught of God on this subject.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 13

Correspondence: The Word Righteousness in Scripture

As this paper, from its length (which I regret, and attribute to the haste with which it was composed in the midst of many avocations), could not appear in one number of the Bible Treasury, I will add one or two remarks as to righteousness, and the use of this word in Scripture. First, it is quite certain that in Rom. 3 righteousness means God's righteousness as God in contrast with Christ's work, though displayed through and in virtue of it. It is the righteousness of God without law. This is its nature and quality. It is not man's; it is God's, apart from law. Such is the constant use of the genitive. Next, it is the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ. That is the way it is brought to bear on men in their favor. Then His passing over sins in times past seemed to deny this righteousness; but the death of Christ accounted for that. And so God's righteousness was, at this time, that he might be righteous and justifier of them who believe in Jesus. Now the person whose righteousness is spoken of, is the righteous justifier, that is, God. The way is faith in Jesus. I say, then, in this capital passage it is a character or attribute of God, which is made good by the blood of Christ, when it seemed to be impossible, in respect of sinners so as to favor them.

The righteousness of God is His consistency with Himself. Hence it shows itself in mercy when it is promised, in judgment on the wicked, in rewarding integrity, not as merit, but as that which pleased Him, and rightly—everything in which God makes good what He has revealed Himself to be. For in a certain sense He owes Himself to that, because withal it is Himself; and on this faith ought to reckon. Hence all the interventions of God in favor of His people, according to His revelation of Himself, or His promises, are called righteousness. Of course, His revelation of Himself is the truth of what He is; but this revelation is our only just way of knowing it. But it is a relative term. A person cannot be intrinsically righteousness, i.e., without reference to some one else. Man's righteousness, if he had any, would be his consistency with the revelation of God and its requirements. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, His countenance doth behold the upright.” But man was not this. Hence when the law had been given, mercy is always put before righteousness; because the saint felt, as the Spirit taught, that he had forfeited everything. It is from this sense of righteousness (God's consistency with Himself as revealed, His acting on the revelation of Himself), that it has been said to mean goodness, mercy, and the like. The display of it was such; the thing spoken of as displaying it was such. Still, it was God's consistency with Himself, and this is constantly appealed to in the Psalms, and declared to be “near” and to “be forever” in Isa. 51, and connected with Israel's salvation when mercy and truth will be met together, righteousness and peace will kiss each other, and truth flourish out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven. & David speaks of bringing in everlasting righteousness amongst men when God manifests His glory—His perfect consistency with Himself—and blesses His people. The heavens will. declare His righteousness, for God will be judge Himself; and the fruit of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. Thus righteousness will reign in the millennium, and peace and bliss be maintained. In the new heavens and the new earth the righteousness will dwell, and nothing can be changed; there is nothing to change.

On the other hand, we read, “Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.” Here the godly man looks for enlargement out of distress, according to God's consistency with His revelation of Himself—the thing he looks to as the title to be helped, he walking in fear and faith. And the sacrifices of righteousness have the same force, sacrifices offered according to the true character in which God had revealed Himself: of course, in Israel according to the law, but with the piety, purpose, and truth of heart which became this approach to God, and the consciousness of what He was. So, in the triumphant deliverance of His people at the end, it is righteousness sustains Him. He saw there was no man, but He was Himself, and He put it on as a breastplate, and made good His character against evil. And it is this which makes the perplexity of the saint, in the Psalms, who yet owns his sin. How was God's character made good when His people were oppressed, and not a promise fulfilled? Yet there is the confession of sin, and confidence in Him through grace. Integrity wrought in by grace calls on righteousness and expects an answer according to what God has said, and yet confesses sin. This last was uprightness.

But how could all this be made good, and God be really consistent with Himself, show mercy, judge sin, bless faith and hope in Him, according to promise? That was based on redemption, on Christ's work as made sin; and though there may be hope, the soul is never clear till this is known. Here God can be, yea, is, here alone is (now sin is come in), consistent with Himself in blessing. Thus He could righteously bless according to promise. “Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers” —and that effectually, only through death and resurrection.

But there was much more than this in Christ's death. God, independently of promise, was perfectly glorified in all He is—righteousness, love, truth, majesty—in all He is. Hence, a ground of righteousness is laid for every sinner. God is consistent with, glorifies, Himself in blessing. I do not mean that this was all; for it was not—there was positive substitution for the redeemed—but I confine myself now to the one point. Thus the Gentiles, who had no promise, could glorify God for His mercy. Whoever believed had a part in it. God was righteous in blessing him, just in forgiving. Hence, grace reigned, but reigned through righteousness; Jew or Gentle, when the matter was fully looked into, being all alike. God did and will make good His promises, but by nature all were children of wrath. There was no difference. It was, through Christ, God's righteousness unto all; and it is upon all them that believe. This is Paul's great theme in the Romans. To the end of the third chapter, the death which made it good. From the fourth to the end of the eighth, the position into which we are righteously brought in resurrection, the sure place which this glorifying of God has obtained for us, and which He righteously puts into, and must, so to speak, in Christ: and then (chaps. 9 - 11) the apostle meets the objection of special promise. He had only discussed law as yet with the Jew; and the Jew could say, Yes; but what about our special promises? And his answer is, God is sovereign; or, else, if you rest it on fleshly descent, you must let in Ishmael and Esau; and God will use this sovereignty to let in Gentiles, You have forfeited all by seeking it by law, and stumbling at the stumbling-stone. And yet (so profound is God's wisdom), He has not cast you off. He will make good His promises. He could not but do it; only now you must come in under mercy like a Gentile. The prophets, too, had foretold it all.

Thus, though God did make good His character revealed to the Jew, and His promise, yet that was not a partial thing. The cross must reveal deeper truth, and, displayed in all its perfectness and grace, what God was in Himself; and thus dealt with the sinner as such, with what man was in

himself, that is, nothing but sin; and brought him, through faith in Jesus, according to the value of that sacrifice, into the presence of God Himself in heaven. The Jews, as a nation, must wait till the great High Priest comes out to know the sacrifice is accepted. Then they will be blessed. To them that believe, the Holy Ghost is come out, while Christ is within; and we know that He is, and are at peace, and that according to righteousness. Grace reigns through righteousness.

I can only, of course, in an article or a tract, sketch the scriptural use of this word. The reader has only to take a concordance, and see how far it is just. I have no doubt the New Testament, as would naturally be the case, alludes to several of these passages. I rather think Psa. 1 was in the apostle's mind in Rom. 3, or that which the Spirit had produced by it in his mind. Thus, too, the remarkable passages in Jer. 23-33, “the Lord our righteousness” —the first said of Christ, the second of Jerusalem. As Christ is righteousness to us, and we are the righteousness of God in Him, we are accepted according to God's own character, righteously, in Him. His infinite value, including therein His work, is our title before God.

There is another point it will be well to clear up from Scripture. How is eternal life obtained? We are told by law-keeping. I deny it. A law was not given which could give life; Christ had, or rather was, eternal life before He kept law. Eternal life is not obtained by law-keeping. What says the Scripture? The subject is one of deep importance. Justification being one aspect of salvation, the other part of it, so to speak, is eternal life. The direct doctrine of Scripture is as plain as possible. That I shall state. The Jews had connected it with the law, as they had righteousness. This connection will require more attention than the simple truth itself. The Lord, while presenting Himself to their responsibility during His lifetime, speaks in a guarded way upon it. Once rejected (and He is so viewed all through the Gospel of John), all is distinct and simple. The notion of our getting life by His law keeping, is not only not found in Scripture, but is contrary to every idea the Gospel gives of it. Let us first state from Scripture the simple truth on the subject. The simplest, fullest, and most direct statements of what eternal life is, are to be found, perhaps, in John's first epistle; the main object of the whole epistle being to show what that life is. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).” Here we have eternal life with the Father, but manifested in the person of Christ. So in the last chapter: “This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. He is the true God and eternal life.” This, then, is most definite and distinct. The life is in the Son. He is eternal life. So the Gospel: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in Himself.” (John 5) He is a life-giving Spirit; He quickens whom He will.

All this is plain. Life is in the Son, or He is life. He has it in His person; He communicates it. It is given of God, not won. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23.) “I,” says Christ of His sheep, “am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

We may now see how it is obtained. It is the Spirit working by the word. We are born of the Spirit; and “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his

creatures.” (James 1:18.) Hence John 5:24: “He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” So Paul's witness was “a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death.” The form or character of this is resurrection. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” (Col. 3:1, 3, 4.) (This and verse 20 depend on Chap. 2:12, 13.) So Eph. 2 “God.... when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” And this passage shows it is the same power which raised up Christ—not of works, but in resurrection. It has its groundwork as to faith (for, being by the word, it is by faith) in the knowledge of the Father, and Jesus, whom He has sent. For that was the revelation of God, as acting in grace, and to give life. So Christ gives eternal life to His sheep. (John 10) This life-receiving faith in its present object is unfolded in John 6 “Whoso seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” First, He is received as incarnate, the bread come down from heaven. But this is particularized: He gives His “flesh for the life of the world,” and this in His death; so that if one do not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, he has no life in Himself at all. Whoso does, has eternal life. In order to this, therefore He must, as standing for sinful man, die, and be in death the witness of the Father's love who sent Him; for it was love to sinners.

This is John 3:15, 16. At the close of that chapter, it is confirmed: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” The power of it is in the Spirit, Jesus' divine gift. It “is a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4) The Spirit is life if Christ be in us. (Rom. 8) He was to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. (John 17)

A few accessory passages may be added. Titus 1:2 shows “the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.” There is another aspect in which eternal life is viewed, namely, its full accomplishment in glory, according to the full purpose of God. In this view we are, of course, not said to have it, but to follow after it. Thus, Rom. 6: “Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” So Paul to Timothy: “Lay hold on eternal life.” That is present energy, but is the earnest faith of the saint, not simply the gift of God. So of the rich giving freely, that they may lay hold on eternal life. So Rom. 5: “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” So “they that lose their life shall keep it unto life eternal.” This is put as a great general principle in Rom. 2 “To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and incorruptibility, eternal life.” This does not throw any obscurity on the great truth. It is simply what is universal in the New Testament: the energy of faith in the wilderness-journey, through grace, which goes onwards to the full result for which God has redeemed us. We have to go the road in order to arrive, but have sure grace and the keeping of God to go it.

This free and perfect gift, and maintenance of instructive responsibility, on the footing of His inalienable gift, is ever found in God's ways in grace. “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

We have yet a particular point to inquire into historically (for the doctrine of eternal life is clear): how far the Jews thought of this, and how far Christ met their thoughts. The doctrine of eternal life

or any life after this world was not necessary to be a good Jew. The priests and high priests were Sadducees who believed nothing of it. It is said that Sadoc's teaching originally was only urging that rewards after this life ought not to be our motive for goodness, but the blessedness of what was good. However that may be, it ended in his followers denying resurrection, angel, and spirit, and taking this world for their portion. But, while the Pentateuch is silent as to eternal life, saying only, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them,” the subsequent teaching of the Jews had brought the nation, with the exception of the Sadducees, to expect eternal life, with the grossest corruption of principles as to merit, balancing accounts of merit and demerit, and even positive superstitions.

That they did expect it we find in John. “In them ye think ye have eternal life.” So the young man who comes to Jesus acts on it: “What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal lifer So the lawyer tempting Him in Luke. But the Lord, while replying to these persons, and putting His sanction on the witness of Moses (“he that doeth these things shall live in them”), never meets the expectation of eternal life by them. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” —that Moses had taught. When the young man still looks for more, Jesus tests his heart, and calls on him to follow Him. So to the lawyer in Luke, on a similar question, He only says, “What is written in the law, how readest thou?” and when he seeks to excuse himself by the question, “Who is my neighbor?” the Lord shows (not “who is my neighbor,” but) how in grace I can be neighbor to any one—the divine principle of grace. The testimony of eternal life, given by God in Christ, remains in all its simple fullness. Only in resurrection could it be given in righteousness and in the power which passed man beyond the place and power of sin and death. The reader, taught of God, will see that resurrection is the place where justification and life meet. “He hath quickened you together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Resurrection is the power of a new life which I have in Christ. Having Him as my life, I am risen with Him. But He had died, and I am forgiven all trespasses through a work done before I partake of the life. He is raised for my justification, and I am in the presence of God according to the acceptance which belongs to the position in which He stands, after the putting away of sin, and all He has done to the glory of God in doing it. Resurrection is both the witness of the righteous acceptance of Christ's work, and the entrance into the position which is the just result of it. He was “raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” It is life from the dead, according to the power of God. He was raised for our justification; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. I have a living place in righteousness before God. Now, if we consider the value of that which brings us unto it, it is infinite. The glory of the Father was all engaged in raising Christ. He had glorified God perfectly—not merely borne our sins and been a sacrifice for sin. This was the means of our righteous forgiveness; but there was more. He glorified God in doing it in the place of, and as to, sin, but in everything in which God's nature and character consisted. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” This is in the place of Son (John 17), and by that which gives us a title—His finishing the work. Now this was more than forgiveness; it was positive. It was not (though about sin) sin ward, but God-ward. How could God be righteous and show love too? How make good His word of judgment unto death, and save? How vindicate His majesty, yet bless sinners? Christ offers Himself. There is God's perfect love infinitely glorified; there is His righteousness against sin, as naught else could show it; there His truth, that the wages of sin is death, there His majesty vindicated His Son is given up to death because of it; His holiness made good in repudiating sin, when His Son was made sin. Surely it was the glory of the

Son of man; but God was glorified in it; and man is entered in righteousness into the glory of God. This, surely, is more than forgiveness, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We expect to be like Christ in His Father's house, perfectly conformed to Him—to bear the image of the heavenly, as we have borne the image of the earthy. But, even now, we have more than forgiveness; we have Christ's own position: not in body, of course, but much more really and importantly, summed up in one word: “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” The choicest blessing to the heart is, that we are not only blessed through, but with Christ. As to peace “My peace I leave with thee” — “joy, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” “The words that thou gavest unto me I have given unto them.” “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.... Father I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.” And this partaking livingly in His own portion is applied to assurance in respect of future judgment. “Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because, as he is, so are we in this world.” Wondrous privilege! and all grace, yet in righteousness. And all confirms this. is Christ hid in God Our life is hid with Him in God. Does. He appear? We shall appear with Him in glory. Does He live? We shall live also. Now, this is more than forgiveness. He is gone to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God; and does He sit because all is finished, and “that by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified?” They sit, too, in heavenly places in Him. Our reproach-bearing is His reproach. We suffer with Him and reign with Him. Such is the Scriptural presentation, and much more than this, of our place. Is all this by keeping law or by grace? Is it by the law, or by His offering, He hath perfected us forever?

I close. My answer to the Record is this: Its declaration that the theory, that pardon and justification are distinct things, and that a man may be pardoned but not justified, is the universal doctrine of the Church of God, is ignorance of history. The contrary is stated by the Homilies and Calvin, and the thought is formally condemned by the Lutheran symbolical books as false doctrine. It is not the doctrine taught at the Reformation, but the contrary. The Record moves here in the narrow circle of its own associates. Next, I do not accept, more than the Record does, that justification is limited by that. A man is justified by blood—that is, by the blood of Christ. Scripture, as Calvin insists, is express upon it. But when the Record would correct the absolute limitation of justification to pardon, it goes back instead of forward, and makes us justified before we are pardoned—justified, before Christ dies for us, by Christ's law-keeping before the cross. Here it is all wrong again. Scripture repudiates righteousness by law for man altogether, and declares, if it be on this ground, Christ is dead in vain, and that we are fallen from grace. The Record does not see the extent to which we are dead and condemned, and thus puts us under law, and leaves us to make out our justification by a completing unfailing law-keeping, by Christ's perfect law-keeping; so that it is a work which goes on, the application of this righteousness being progressive, and proportioned to my failures. It denies the value of law, which counts a breaker of one commandment guilty of all, and the existence of one lust sufficient to damn. It is an allowance of failure in keeping the law when put under it; for a perfect obedience, not atonement, is provided beforehand. And the apostle's answer to this they have not got. He replies, Yes; but you are dead and risen again. How can you live in flesh when you are dead? But no such argument applies to law. Historically, the Record is totally wrong. When it goes beyond the defect it condemns, it goes back to law, instead of forward in the power of resurrection into Christ. Let those who search the Scriptures (and I beseech Christians to do it, and not satisfy themselves with my rapid and imperfect sketch of the

truth for a periodical) say whether law or resurrection is the ground on which the apostle, on which the Spirit of God, sets us in the word for justification before God, for life and acceptance in Christ.

I have not taken up particular expressions in the Record, but the whole subject itself. I pray the reader to do the same. Of course, all of us are liable to express ourselves in a way which lays us open to attacks; but let the reader's inquiry be, What is the Scripture truth on this subject? I think I have fairly taken the issue upon it.

A few words of definition (which Cicero might have taught me to put first, but in divine subjects come, after all, better last), will complete what I have to say.

Pardon and justification are not the same thing. Pardon is the favor and kindness of a person wronged passing over faults against himself, an act of prerogative goodness; so that kindness flows forth unimpeded by the wrong—though, in this case, it be by the blood of Christ. Justification is the holding not chargeable with guilt. The latter refers to righteous judgment, the former to kindness. Where one is a sinner against God, they approach one another, and run together, in fact, but are not the same, nor in the effect the same in the heart. Justified, I do not fear judgment—pardoned, my heart returns in comfort to Him who has pardoned me; but by His blood we have both. It is another aspect, not another act. So, when we connect our risen position with justifying, it is not logically exact. The justifying is always holding discharged from accusation. The way in which we so stand is not simply holding us to be clear, but, by the resurrection of Christ, putting us into a new position; for if He be risen, and God has acknowledged therein the satisfaction made in Christ's death, He has therein discharged or justified us. But that which justified us implies, therefore, more than pardon—an introduction into God's presence as Christ stands there. If Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins; but if He be, we are cleared by a work which brings us into the glory of God in perfect acceptance.

This is not properly justification, but it is the justification we have got, seeing how we have obtained the justification; for we are justified by being the righteousness of God in Him, and are warranted practically in taking what Christ is as the measure of our justification, because it is that which will be recognized in the day of judgment. “Herein is love made perfect with us, that we should have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.” The day of judgment pronounces on us. We are as the Judge—clearly justified therefore. But the Lamb is the Judge too; we appear before Him who bore our sins; so that their being put away, covered (in virtue of which work all is pardoned) is our justification, too; for “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

The merits of Christ, though a most justifiable and true expression, has misled, as it is in another order of ideas from justifying. It is not by meriting that we are held free from charge. Christ has merited that we should, and so it is all well. But meriting has respect to reward; and I have no doubt this has led to connect our justifying with His keeping the law. Now, no merits could have cleared us before God without death, that was the wages of sin, and “without shedding of blood there is no remission;” and this leads us to see the wisdom of God, because, being thus, there is also a putting away, an end of the old evil, and the introduction in a new life into a wholly new order of things, pure and excellent. Finally, the heart wants pardon, the conscience justifying.

I would add one word in conclusion, without thinking of dwelling on it. The Record speaks of its objection to the “Brethren's” dogma of baptism. I do not know what is its object in this; but I must be allowed to say, the Brethren have no dogma on baptism. Had they, they would have given up their first principles, and I, for one, could not be among them: first, because they would be at once sectarian, united on a particular opinion; and, secondly, that I have no such dogma. I know well that many among them have Baptist views on this subject; but many, very many, have not: many are decidedly opposed to it, I for one. I think it an utter mistake, and, from beginning to end, a want of intelligence in Scripture; a confusion between the house of God and the body of Christ; and a bar to the true judgment of the state and responsibility of Christendom and of parents. The Record's principles have so mixed the Church and the world that the meaning of baptism has been lost. But when the Holy Ghost was in the Church, consciously as the house of God, and the devil in the world sensibly, as in a heathen country, it would be monstrous to say that the children of Christians were not to be where the Holy Ghost was, but to remain where the devil ruled outside. And the corruption that has come in and mixed Church and world together, does not change God's truth. I say this, without thinking of proving my views here, because, as I am answering the Record on the capital point of its article, did I let this pass, it might seem accepting it as a fact that Baptism (that is, Baptist views) was a dogma of Brethren.

A few words as to other assailants. Mr. Harrison, whom I would not doubt to be a good man—though not having the faith of the Church of God nor the Gospel according to the Record!—has attacked the tracts on the other side. I would just mention that he is mistaken as to Osiander, who was Lutheran professor at Konigsberg, not a papist. He did hold that there was an infusion of the divine nature, by which the Christian became righteous. He was resisted by Lutherans and Calvinists. There is, morally speaking, an infusion of the divine nature, though I do not admire the term, for it is a new life; but certainly righteousness is not by it, though it cannot be without it. Here I think Mr. Harrison is on slippery ground, because he says we cannot be accounted what we are not. It is something like denying imputed righteousness altogether. Now, that we must have this divine nature to be accounted righteous is true. Yet we are not accounted righteous for this, but for Christ's sake in Himself. I am imperfect in result; but before God, “as he is, so am I in this world.” Without being aware of it, Mr. Harrison has slipped into Osiander's doctrine, which I do not hold at all, but reject. Does he mean to say that a man is reckoned just when he is so? His words are, “Reckons them to be what they really are.” If so, it is only in the divine nature of which we are made partakers; and it is Osiander's doctrine. I do not think Mr. Harrison at all clear on this head. Next, as to Dr. Crisp, he is quite mistaken. I had never seen the book when I read Mr. Harrison's tract. I lit on it since and looked at it, but Crisp's doctrine is the common one of Christ's law-keeping being imputed to us—His active obedience as our righteousness. Only he holds that, Christ being God, an infinite value is imparted to His human obedience. But Mr. Harrison is quite mistaken as to him, and so he is as to Mr. Stanley's tracts. I hold no communication of essential righteousness. I hold Christ Himself in His own perfection to be, as now risen, our righteousness before God; but I believe that righteousness is the true relative character of God as to good and evil, and that He accepts Christ in virtue of that character and us in Him; but it would not be righteousness if Christ had not deserved it. To speak exactly, I do not think righteousness an essential quality at all. If I have said so, it was inexact. God is light and God is love: that is essential. But He is not righteousness nor holiness, because these are relative terms; He is righteous and holy. But righteousness is manifested and demonstrated to the world,

because Christ is gone to the Father. He had glorified God, and God has glorified Him with Himself, and (leaving aside just final condemnation for the moment) therein righteousness is proved. It is righteousness in God, but would not have been so, had not Christ merited it. Let me venture to recommend Mr. Harrison to read again my “extraordinary language,” in his page 30, and see if he cannot understand it, comparing 1 John; for I think it very sound truth indeed.

Two other points I would refer to: the Septuagint, and 2 Peter 1:1. As to the first, though I read and study, it would be wrong in me to pretend to be learned. My life, as I dare say Mr. Harrison knows, lies in other things, and I should be glad of any light on the New Testament, particularly from such a source as the Septuagint. I could not quite apply, however, Septuagint language absolutely to the Greek of the New Testament, however great a help it may be. I believe the Holy Spirit guided the New Testament writers. And while the general tone of language may be drawn from the Septuagint, because they lived in it, habitually on all important subjects they gave what the Holy Spirit meant them to give; and, in point of fact, do not follow the Septuagint, when it does not give the divine mind, as may be seen in Randolph's tract. On all subjects they give it; but I mean, in the direct teaching of truth; we must admit no accepted language which may induce imperfectness of thought. I therefore deliberately maintain the sense given to Rom. 1. I do not deny the Hebrew rule, of course, given by Gesenius and other Hebrew grammarians, that a determining noun renders the determining article unnecessary, and that the LXX., who were not famous scholars (some at least of the translators), follow the Hebrew idiom much. In two of the examples, however, given by Mr. Harrison, the verb substantive is a reason why there should be no article, and in the only case in which Jehovah's righteousness is mentioned in Scripture (Mr. Harrison gives no case at all) the article is found in the Septuagint. It is in Mic. 6:5. In the other passages where the righteousness of God is mentioned, it is my righteousness; and, in spite of Hebrew, has necessarily the article. It could hardly be otherwise, so that I do not cite it in proof of anything. The only other cases are “the Lord our righteousness,” applied to Israel and to Jerusalem as a name. But the absence of the article in the New Testament I hold to be purposed, and the true mind of the Holy Ghost. Thus, where it is said (perhaps alluding to Jer. 33:16), “we are made the righteousness of God,” there is no article. The article here would say a great deal too much: either that we were it, intrinsically and abstractedly so; or that we were the whole thing, and that there was no other righteousness of God but ourselves. As it stands it does not say this, but merely that we have this standing and character in Christ. Our place, title, privilege, is not merely mercy (which it is as to us in an infinite degree), but our salvation, looked at in Christ, is the display of God's righteousness. He is consistent with Himself in it. We are the expression and display of this righteousness, not in contradiction with it, and this is a glorious truth wrought out by Christ's work. “The heavens shall declare His righteousness; for God is judge Himself.” Thus, though the fact is that the LXX. give the article with the righteousness of God, and the New Testament does not, I do not rest merely on this, but on the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the word as perfect in itself.

As to 2 Peter 1 I still think also it is nothing to the purpose. It is not imputed righteousness here, nor anything to do with it, nor a righteousness presented to God (Christ's righteousness, as men speak in this sense), but a righteousness exercised by God in virtue of which they got Christianity, or the precious faith. It was not a righteousness accepted, but a righteousness of God, which gave according to promise, and revealed grace. And so the English translators understood it; and, I have no doubt at all, rightly. I do not know that I have any subject of controversy with Mr. Harrison,

and I have no wish to have any. I think he runs a little into inherent righteousness, or is in danger of it—i.e., of Wesleyanism; and I think he has not yet at all understood our position in Christ risen, as something else than His dying for us, though the fruit of it. I trust he will believe that I say this with no assumption, nor as a reproach, and that he will weigh it in the spirit I say it in; for I am quite ready to believe him more faithful to the light he has than I am; but still I think there is truth in Scripture on this subject which he has not received.

As I am upon attacks, I notice very briefly two that have been sent me, Adelphos, and the Eclectic Review. I was begged to read the first, and have run through it, but I do not think it calls for any answer. I agree with the writer in thinking that discussions on the person of Christ are mischievous, but I do not think the rejection of blasphemy is. I am sorry he cannot find out the difference. Science is not knowledge, in spite of Latin. Science is the deduction of general results and principles from facts and axioms within the certain knowledge of man. But a defense of the pursuit of science, of the desires of the mind, because an experienced pastor thought a Christian ought to do his work thoroughly well, is not worth an answer. As regards the abuse of the followers of Mr. Darby, as they are called, it is a matter of course: I apprehend the writer will find them sufficiently independent in their judgment not to mind his. The tract is hardly the expression of the absence of party spirit which he so strongly recommends. As to his allegations, he ought to be better informed, or to say nothing.

The Eclectic also has taken up arms in an article which certainly would demand no kind of notice but for the work commented on, the little tract of Mrs. Grattan Guinness. As it is stated, in another of these common-place attacks I have seen, that this is referred to by others, I allow myself to say that I should object altogether to this tract being taken as the Brethren's account of themselves, or any Brother's account of them. The estimable person who gives it (and I say this very sincerely, believing Mrs. Guinness to be so), was hardly, I apprehend, born when the Brethren began; and hence it cannot be surprising that her account should be inexact historically. It is very inexact indeed. But this, too, I should leave where it was; as the best thing for Christians to do is to serve God so that He may commend them, and then let people say what they like. But I object to Mrs. Guinness' account, because it is a regular puff of Brethren, and in this point of view I feel it highly objectionable. It seems to me that, in a young female, it would have been better taste to have omitted characterizing any Christian, some years older than herself, as Diotrephes. She may be sure he forgives her; nor would it be of any consequence to mention it, were it not a proof that the true motives of opposition, which she so characterizes, have lost their weight in her mind. I may not have any right to expect that, what so many Christians hold to be horrible blasphemies, Mrs. Guinness should hold to be such; but I must conclude that, if she is obliged to consider the opposition to them as the spirit of Diotrephes, she cannot see in these blasphemies anything which affects her mind as such. I am sorry for her that it should be so.

J. N. D.

Chapter 14

There Is Nothing Like the Cross

There is nothing like the cross. It is the meeting of the perfect sin of man with the perfect love of God: sin risen up to its highest point of evil, and gone, put away, and lost in its own worst act. God is above man even in the height of his sin—not in allowing it, but in putting it away by Christ dying for it in love. The soldier's insulting spear, the witness if not the instrument of death, was answered by the blood and water which expiated and purified from the blow which brought it out there is nothing like the cross. it is the meeting of the perfect sin of man with the perfect love of God: sin risen up to its highest point of evil, and gone, put away, and lost in its own worst act. God is above man even in the height of his sin—not in allowing it, but in putting it away by Christ dying for it in love. The soldier's insulting spear, the witness if not the instrument of death, was answered by the blood and water which expiated and purified from the blow which brought it out.

Chapter 15

Discipline: 13. Samuel

If we comprehend the state and condition of God's people at any one period, we shall then be able to understand why the servant who is most used to serve them should be found in his own life and circumstances to be fitted for the service. An unsuited servant, however willing, must always render inadequate service. His discipline and education, we shall find, are always with reference to the place that he is appointed to hold, and, as we see in Scripture, for the one he holds. Israel, up to Samuel's time, had no king, and “every one did that which was right in his own eyes,” and, consequently, must have learned by experience that “he that trusteth his own heart is a fool” —and that only through God's intervention were they ever delivered from those who ruled over them. And not only this, but they themselves as a people were in every way departing gradually more and more from all acknowledgment of God.

It is in the progress of this state of things that Samuel is born; but he does not take his place as God's servant till Eli (the martyr of a condition of things which he deprecated, but had not power to reform) is dead.

Samuel's mother is a type of the godly remnant in Israel at that time, and Samuel a type of the blessing vouchsafed to that remnant. Hannah, because of her distress and reproach from the adversary, prayed to the Lord in the bitterness of her soul. Forms and demonstrations were dispensed with. It was with the unexpressed breathing of her soul that she pleaded with the Lord; so that the holy priest under the law did not understand.

It was evidently out of due time; something entirely novel and unprecedented; a mere spiritual pleading with the Lord. The sorrowing one of Israel is wiser, because of her felt sorrow and condition, than the high priest; and she actually corrects him, which he has grace to accept and admit.

Hannah's prayer was for Samuel. What will suit a true, holy, sorrowing individual will suit the whole family of God's people. The answer to Hannah's prayer was the answer to every sorrowing cry in Israel. Samuel will suit each and all: he is the answer to the prayer of sorrow, and, as such, is dedicated to the Lord and remains there as a witness to the answer of the prayer of Hannah.

Now let us turn and look at Samuel himself. The more his understanding opens, the more he is aware that he is called, as being the answer to prayer; and as being so, he has been dedicated to the Lord, to be ever before Him; so that very early he must have had an idea of his mission: at all events, it is evident that he is receiving the best education for it. If the sorrowing, oppressed Hannah has received him in answer to prayer, and has returned him to the Lord as the Lord's gift, must not Samuel be continually reminded of the efficacy of prayer—himself the living witness or monument of its effectiveness? So that we should be prepared to find him most peculiarly and entirely combating and surmounting the troubles of God's people by prayer, of which, from being the offspring, he is the witness.

In Samson, the last of the judges, we saw that power committed to man, though performing great exploits now and again, yet accomplished more in the death of the witness than in his life. In Samuel, a new state of things is called into existence. The afflicted one, calling on God, is heard, and the answer, even Samuel, becomes the channel of deliverance through prayer. The very power which brought himself into existence he is now to exercise on behalf of his suffering people. Not as the man of physical strength, as was Samson; but as the man of prayer. Moreover, a true principle is enunciated in Hannah—the blessing which God sends us for ourselves becomes large enough for all His people.

In prayer there is not only a sense of dependence, but also the soul when truly praying expects an answer or communication from God. But often before we have learned the deep reality of what prayer is, we may be in the place of the praying one, the Samuel, and yet not understand the Lord's voice. And thus we find in the first recorded account of Samuel's practical life (chap. iii.) these words, “Samuel was ministering before the Lord, and he had laid himself down to sleep ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord.” The whole scene declares the moral condition of the nation at the time. “The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” “Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes waxed dim that he could not see.” Samuel had lain down “ere the lamp went out.” This implies that it was allowed to go out habitually, which was contrary to the commandment. Everything indicated feebleness and inanition. Samuel is given in answer to Hannah's prayer—Hannah the type of the sorrowing remnant. Therefore Samuel enters the temple as the exponent, the apostle, of the power and value of prayer—as we read of him in Psa. 99, “Samuel among them that call upon his name.”

But in order to render such a service, or fill the place appointed for him, he must first learn to understand the voice of the Lord. One may take the place of nearness to the Lord, and yet know not the living blessings connected with that place. Samuel is marked out for us as one who, by waiting on God, can repair the disasters which Samson, by his great strength, could not. Samuel is the witness of the superiority of prayer to personal might. But if he be the witness of the efficacy of prayer, he must be disciplined for his service. And the first great learning after drawing near—after giving oneself to the Lord as Samuel had done, is to be able to determine in the soul the communication of the Lord, to know His revelation. What is the use of seeking of the Lord, or of drawing nigh unto Him, if one never receives any distinct light or communication from Him touching matters of moment around one, touching His own interest in His people? I believe it to be the greatest and most blessed attainment for the soul, and withal most necessary for the one who draws near, to acquire a clear knowledge of the Lord's mode of communicating His mind. I think many draw near, and are too like Samuel in the beginning of the scene, in the place of nearness, but not knowing the Lord so as to be able to recognize and distinguish His communications. I hope I do not go too far when I say that: I am ready to admit that in drawing near to the Lord in the place of nearness which typifies the Lord Jesus Christ, that one is in the sure way of being taught the mind of the Lord. But what I seek to impress is this—that many are, so to speak, praying in the temple, or engaged in temple service, who have not learned the word of the Lord as distinctly addressed to themselves. How many pray, and pray again, who, though pacified and consoled by their prayers, yet have not had, nor have sought, any distinct assured instruction from the Lord touching the subject of their prayers. Now, the praying of such an one will never afford the strength and joy which a soul receives who knows in faith from the Lord what His mind is. I do not say that

the Lord will tell a soul exactly what He will do, though even that I should expect in particular cases, when there was simple waiting on Him. What I press now, and what I see in the opening of Samuel's life is, that the Lord makes him to recognize and distinguish His own voice, and reveals unto him His word at the same time; and this was the sure basis of the testimony which his life expressed, namely, to seek the Lord in every exigence, and to be known among His prophets as he that called upon His name. Samuel has now learned not only the voice of the Lord, but also the word of the Lord, i.e., His purposes. When we learn the voice of the Lord, we shall readily comprehend His mind as conveyed in His word. Samuel now knows what are God's thoughts about the state of things, and His word came to all Israel. We have power to testify when we are taught of God. A man who would prove and testify of his resources in God, must not expect a smooth easy course. Elijah could order the trenches to be filled with water, because he would magnify the power of God in which he trusted.

Now, Samuel, in the beginning of his testimony or service, sees Israel reduced to the lowest condition, discomfited before the Philistines, the ark of God taken, the priests slain, and Eli dead. Disasters do not daunt the man of prayer; yet it must have exercised Samuel's soul to see such a crash just as he had entered on his service. All seemed lost, but the soul that has learned to distinguish the Lord's voice and to understand His word, will not be disheartened, though all the bulwarks and marks of God's government be forfeited and lost. Samuel was such an one, and he could count on God; and he says, “gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.” It is worthy of remark that previous to this he warned and led the people to renounce the strange gods and to serve the Lord only, and that they had done so. “Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth and served the Lord only.” If I understand God, I understand His nature, and I cannot draw nigh to Him in prayer without feeling that I must simply and distinctly own Him as the one Lord, and His name one. If there be misapprehension of the true God or any intervention of man's ordering, there must always be a barrier and a delay to me finding Him. Samuel called on the people to serve the Lord only, and to put away all strange gods. This is all that is essential in seeking deliverance from the Lord. And to this can be traced all our want of success in prayer. The Lord is not simply and entirely our God. Covetousness is idolatry, that is, the heart is seeking something else which it passionately desires besides God. Such an one could not say that he served the Lord only, and consequently he ought not to expect to receive a deliverance from the Lord which, if vouchsafed to him, would not attach him more to the Lord, but possibly, by affording him relief from a momentary pressure, enable him to pursue the desires of his heart more uninterruptedly. Samuel led the people to that state of soul in which they ought to seek the Lord. It was a new and wondrous way he was about to disclose to them, how God would deliver them from their enemies.

We read, “And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said, We have sinned.” (1 Sam. 7:6.) Such is always the true way to have the soul restored with God before we enter into conflict with any especial enemies. Samuel leads God's congregation to this, and now they are prepared and waiting for the Lord's intervention; but the moment a soul or congregation prepares for the enemy by waiting on God, that moment Satan urges on his emissaries (the Philistines) to oppose and renew the strife, “When the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the Lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.” Israel, though contrite and restored in the presence of God, are

not yet experienced enough in God's power, as exercised on their behalf, to be undisturbed by fear of the violence of man. A soul may be quite assured before God, and resting in His acceptance, who yet may greatly fear the violence of the wicked and the power of darkness. Nothing can relieve the soul of this terror but (if I may so say) experience. I mean by experience, the soul making use of the power of God which it enjoys in its acceptance. Like Peter, after his rescue by the angel, said, “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod,” &c.

The fear of man remains though the soul be at peace with God, and therefore it ought to say (and this would be experience), “The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.” It is therefore not to be wondered at that the children of Israel, when they heard of the coming up of the lords of the Philistines, were afraid, but they had learned the value of prayer for themselves in the sight of God; and the soul that has not, must be confounded and helpless when afraid of man. We read, “The children of Israel said unto Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.” They knew wherein Samuel's great strength lay; “and Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord. And Samuel cried into the Lord for Israel: and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder that day and discomfited the Philistines, and they were smitten before Israel.” The Lord always vouchsafes to the praying soul depending on Himself a deliverance beyond our utmost conception. It is no ordinary or human way. As Paul's in the jail at Philippi, so here the Lord acts in quite an unexpected way, a way not wished for, because it was beyond human conception. The thunder of God is the answer to the prayer, and the Philistines are discomfited; Israel follows up the rout, and “smote them until they came under Bethcar.” When we see our enemies routed, if we have valor at all, we can easily pursue and follow it up; but in our feebleness we have little power to act until the Lord's intervention assures our heart that we may do so. When God is felt to be on our side we are strengthening ourselves in the sense of “who can be against us.” Samuel must commemorate this signal mercy of the Lord: for any deliverance we have known in connection with our waiting on God is always an Ebenezer. It is a refresher to us of our Lord and Savior, the chief corner stone. He always is the exponent to us of the tender love of our God, and when mercy is vouchsafed to us the heart is revived in remembrance of Him. Then is renewed the sense, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;” and I know in a new and distinct way His virtues. I have the exhilarating consciousness that He is my stone of help. What happy service for Samuel, after the anguish he must have passed through on account of the grievous desolations around. The mercy was a permanent one—every Ebenezer is! The Philistines were subdued, and they “came no more into the coast of Israel; and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel” —the man of prayer.

Samuel had now established his title to judge Israel. By dependence on God he had enlisted and received of the resources of God, and now he takes his place as judge of a delivered people. He went in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh; the latter must not be forgotten, for there he had proved his commission. Samuel dwelt at Ramah, and at home he cultivated what he proved abroad, for “there he built an altar unto the Lord.”

We have now traced how Samuel learned by prayer and dependence on God to deliver His people out of the greatest degradation and impotency, and how, in consequence, he could take his seat

among them as their judge. And here (as I may so say), one era of his life, or the life of dependence closes; but another begins—for that is the peculiarity and blessing, too, of the life of dependence, that no sooner have you reached one goal, perhaps at the end of a long, laborious exercise, but you have to enter on another, consequent on the very position which, through the Lord's mercy, you have attained. Samuel, by dependence on God, has been vouchsafed signal deliveries from outside enemies. The Philistines are subdued, and he himself judges Israel. But, alas! it is with him as with us all; when nature comes in and works, he is at fault, and disaster is the result. It was clearly nature in Samuel to perpetuate his rule through his own sons, whom we read he “made judges in the land,” when he was old.

He had enjoyed for a long period of his life the fruits of his first great and deep exercises of dependence; but now, when he is old, he seems to lapse into worldly arrangements, in making his sons judges. It is not dependence on God now, but carnal policy, and it is unsuccessful: “his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and prevented judgment.” We read in 1 Sam. 8:4, 5, “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah; and said unto him, Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a king to judge us, like all the nations.” This, a trying moment for Samuel, but one of great instruction for him, and for us through him. When the soul who has known the blessing of dependence on God, has been drawn aside into thinking and acting for itself, no greater mercy can be vouchsafed to it than that it should be involved in such straits that nothing but the resumption of dependence on God can offer any relief. There were two painful truths in the petition of the elders which must have greatly affected Samuel. 1st. The failure of his policy through his own sons: where every man, and the better the man, would feel it most. 2ndly. The willfulness and ungodliness of the nation in asking for a king. Poor Samuel, his family had disappointed him, and his nation had grievously requited all his labors and service. It is not now the Philistines: it is their own inward corruption. What a moment! What could the aged Samuel do? We read, “And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.” The astounding, perplexing strait has been effective in restoring his soul into the old and well-known channel of dependence; and, as ever, to the really dependent one seeking His glory, God answered him in a most gracious soothing way, entering into all his servant's feelings, as follows: “they have not rejected thee; but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” Samuel was the link between the judges and the kingdom, or the type of the faithful in the interval between the manifested failure of Israel, as a people governed by God, and the setting up of the kingdom. Samson properly closed that period, which mainly was characterized by power through human agency, of which he was personally the greatest example. Samuel presents to us quite another order of power, more successful than any preceding it, and that was, as a man of prayer depending on God. He is the link between Samson and the king. Samuel illustrates to us how blessed dependence on God is, and how great are the deliverances which flow from it; but he also must connect us with the kingdom, and suffer himself to be superseded by God's anointed king, even David. But even before then, he must give place to Saul; for the witness of dependence on God, the man of prayer must be prepared to encounter in patience all the antagonism, however protracted, which arises to counterfoil his faith. Saul was the representative of Israel's thoughts about a king, and therefore God sanctioned his appointment. As Ishmael was to Isaac, so was Saul to David—the natural and the spiritual; but the natural is always before the spiritual. Man's king is first tried before the Lord sets up His king. The aged Samuel, the man of prayer and dependence on God, is called on to appoint and anoint Saul. God approved of

the man who was truly the impersonation of Israel's real mind. And more than this, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesied.” As the law exposes to a soul, seeking God through it, how really guilty it is, and yet the law was good, so Saul exposed how incompetent Israel were to help themselves by a king of their own choosing, even when sanctioned of God. Samuel is now educated in dependence on God, in a very different line from that in which his public history opened. Now, an old man, and at the close of his life, and of his testimony to the blessedness of dependence on God, he must endure with patience, and co-operate, as long as he can. While this experiment is being worked out, he must suppress all the bitter and vexed feelings which crowd on him at every moment—he must wait on God, and wait for the end, until God brings it to an end. And his manner and spirit in this sad and dreary work is very encouraging to us. It is easier to rise up and repose in God, reckoning in His deliverance from open enemies like the Philistines, and quite another thing than to acknowledge and co-operate in all that professes well around you, though you feel it has sprung from an unsound principle, and you are bearing and forbearing, protesting and warning, oppressed by the instinctive sense of the unsoundness of it all, but patiently enduring until God shall, in His own time, manifest how weak and incompetent are all human devisings. Samuel, in obedience to the Lord, submits to the dispensational trial of man's king, accepting him and owning him as acknowledged of God, until the contrary was manifested; but, at the same time, observing two lines of action, namely, faithfulness to the people, the human element, as to their apostasy, and retribution, and also faithfulness to God, disallowing and disowning the king of the people, the moment he evinced any relinquishment of the principles ordained of God. We must remember that Samuel had led Israel by dependence on God into security and deliverance from their enemies—that he erred in supposing that his sons could sustain his own position. He is rebuked and afflicted by their incompetency and evil. And now the people, by their elders, renounce the position of dependence on God, which, in the person of Samuel, ensured such blessings to them. They will return to personal valor, not now in instruments raised up of God, but in a king like the nations. The difference between the judges and the kings was this—the former led because of a direct commission from God, the latter by popular acceptance. Samuel is now in something of the same position as Moses was. When the people with acclamation proposed to keep all the words of the law, and to do them, he had to stand aside and let them try; and when they failed, as assuredly they must, to be able to come forward and apply and establish God's remedy. Samuel fully and explicitly expounds to the people their apostasy and its consequences; but, at the same time he equally commends himself to us by his ready help and continuance to Saul, so long as it is morally possible. What education this was! Can we at all follow him in the season when the value of dependence on God is more proved and needed than ever How it fructifies in his soul! His sons a failure and reproach, the nation renouncing dependence on God, seeking a king who should supersede himself, and yet Samuel moves on through it all.

Samuel is directed by the Lord to protest solemnly unto the people, and show the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And he fully and explicitly does so. The man of faith is told to expose and denounce every step contrary to it; but yet he can, having done so, endure patiently whilst man's independence is on its trial; nay, he will sanction and acknowledge, so far as he may have divine authority. Samuel's manner to Saul is very beautiful. He not only receives him as an honored guest, he announces to him that in him is all the desire of Israel. And not only this, but he made him sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden. And to distinguish him still more,

the shoulder is set before him. While Samuel said, “Behold that which is reserved.” And, finally, he “took a vial of oil, and poured it on his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? What a discipline for Samuel to act after this manner! He illustrates to us the graceful action and calm submission of one practicing dependence on God, and of one, too, who had practiced it; for it is ever grateful and satisfactory to such an one. He is only the really dependent one, who will not anticipate events, but submits patiently to an order of things which, though ending in failure, are not yet manifested as such.

We next find Samuel calling all the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh. (1 Sam. 10:17.) There was an association connected with Mizpeh, for there they had turned to the Lord, and under Samuel had learned the blessing of trusting in God. (1 Sam. 7:5, 6.) Here Samuel presents Saul to them. And Samuel said unto all the people, “See ye whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like unto him among all the people.” Samuel can see himself, and the principle of truth of which he was the witness, set aside, with dignity, grace, and even cheerfulness, because it was the will of the Lord. It is only the meek, dependent servant who will understand the will of the Lord as new and diverse circumstances arise. Continually you find an inclination to press an ascertained principle of right under every conceivable circumstance. The principle, doubtless, remains true, and its truth will be vindicated. But God often confounds the opposer before He brings forth His judgment, and the really dependent soul like Samuel will accord with His mind, and move on righteously and charitably. We next find Samuel (chap. xi. 14) saying to the people, “Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.” There is nothing grudging nor of necessity in Samuel's actings. When Saul by his prowess had proved himself worthy of the kingdom, Samuel comes forward and proposes to the people to take the highest ground—to renew the kingdom at Gilgal—to crown Saul in the spot sacred to all the great energies of truth and power which marked the brightest hour of their history, Abraham did not give place to Lot in more dignity and self-surrender than Samuel to Saul; nay, Samuel exceeded, for he honored and guarded and counseled Saul, while it was of any use. And from that time he retired to his own house, leaving the issue to God. But though Samuel is full of charity, he is also righteous: and if you have one without the other, you will have little moral weight: and therefore Samuel at length proclaims to the people that their wickedness is great in asking for a king. And at the same time, he called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain.

Samuel does not shrink from declaring to the people their great wickedness, though he has shown every readiness to bear with them, and now assures them he will not cease to pray for them. Who but one depending on God could combine both so freely and perfectly? How marvelous the ability one gets to be both charitable and righteous at the same time, if really walking in dependence on God Charity will suffer and sanction all it can—it hides a multitude of sins; but the moment there is any dishonor done to God, or there be any infraction of His laws, then righteousness asserts its inflexible claim, and the delinquent, be he who he may, meets his desert. Thus it was with Saul. Though Samuel had honored and supported him while he was walking amiably as a man among men, yet the moment he infringed on the ordinances of God (when Saul offered the burnt offering), Samuel spared him not, but said, when Saul went to meet him to salute him, “What hast thou done?” and then added, “Thou hast done foolishly, thou has not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after

his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." Thus in faithfulness did he pronounce the Lord's sentence on that failure which already began to develop itself; and we do well to mark how the Lord leads Samuel to realize the value of depending on Him. When we walk in full charity, and at the same time are truly faithful to God, we may be assured that the Lord will, when He has proved us, expose the concealed evil which we had treated charitably only because it was not disclosed. It is a charity to bear with any one's professions or pretensions so long as they are permitted by God's word, as Saul clearly was; but charity for man stops when any inroad is made on God's commandment; then every feeling for man gives way in order to vindicate and advocate the decrees of God. And the one who, like Samuel, has learned to walk in forbearance and charity toward a Saul, but at the same time protesting against the principle of the people's acting, will at length be afforded full opportunity of denouncing this representative of independence, on account of some expressions of it, in which he will be openly convicted of profane assumptions and ungodly precipitancy.

Samuel has seen how Saul exposes and condemns himself in trenching on the priestly service; always (we may note in passing) the ripened expression of human independence, a Cain is consummated in a Korah. (See Jude 11.) And therefore, though Samuel knows the kingdom cannot be established in Saul, he proves him, or rather once more tests him, by sending him against the Amalekites. Saul fails again; and Samuel is greatly distressed; he cried unto the Lord all night, like Jeremiah. He did not wish for the evil day, though he had predicted it; and he is so grieved at this break down, that he cries unto the Lord all night; and, in consequence, when the time comes for action, how timely and faithfully he acts! He "hews Agag in pieces," and reads to Saul a censure, not only most pointed, but fraught with divine principles far beyond the light and revelation of the dispensation in which he served. How elevating and instructive it is to us to watch and imbibe the spirit of Samuel in this scene! He had adhered to Saul as expecting that help to God's people would accrue through him; but now convinced that there was no hope, Samuel went to his house at Ramah. And Samuel came no more to see Saul unto the day of his death, not that he was indifferent about him, for it is said, "Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul." Samuel had reckoned, more than one would have supposed, on help flowing to Israel through Saul; and he, too, had to be taught that the representative of the people must be a failure. He is graciously conducted to know this, as every soul will be who is truly faithful to God. Samuel's faithfulness and his single eye, insured that he should be "full of light;" and if he acknowledged for a moment, what God allowed to be put on trial, he learned that in charity to men and in faithfulness to God, his vision would be cleared of every uncertainty, and at last he was fully justified in abandoning entirely and forever man's king; a great and fine lesson for the servant of God. No doubt, Samuel mourned for Saul, and so did the Lord for Jerusalem; he was distressed at the ruin, to all human calculations and hopes. But the blessed God who had led His servant into his present sorrowful retirement, overwhelmed with the failure in the throne, will now complete His mercy to him by introducing to Him his own king, and by appointing him to anoint him. How it must have relieved and rejoiced the heart of Samuel to find himself, at last, in the presence of God's own king, the man after God's heart. And not only this, but that when David was persecuted by Saul, his companion in exile was Samuel: "He (David) and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth." (Chap. 19:18)

What a close! How blessed and suited for such a history! Samuel is lost in David. After dwelling with him (ç■éæðÈ dwellings) during the season of his rejection, Samuel, the man of prayer and dependence, passes away (chap. 25:1) from the scene of his former ministry, of his exercises, and discipline, ere the rightful king—God's anointed, whom Samuel had owned—takes the scepter. May we have, like him, the blessing of dependence on God, and understand the discipline, which, however searching and sifting, is but leading us to Naioth, to dwell with our Lord and King; and, finally, to be lost in Him, who will yet take the place in which our hearts have set Him now, even the throne!

Chapter 16

Discipline: 14. David—Part 1

In order to understand the discipline to which David was subjected, we need to bear in mind the great elements of character which he typified, and which, through divine teaching, and the mortification of his nature, were expressed and foreshadowed by him. He was, as to his position, constantly a type of the Lord Jesus Christ; but, being a man of like passions as we are, the higher his calling, the more he required to be self-mortified, in order that he might be in a state of soul corresponding and suited to his elevated position: and therefore we shall see that the great aim of all the discipline which he undergoes is to fit him for the place to which God in His grace appoints him.

And is it not thus with us all? Do we not need to be disciplined and prepared for any place which grace confers on us? The higher we are raised through the same grace into the apprehension of the grace itself, the more do we require to be subdued and purged: and how this is done, our own private histories, if faithfully recorded, would detail. In order, therefore, that we may learn to note and observe this His discipline with ourselves carefully and accurately, our blessed God presents to us a recorded history of His ways with others who have gone before us; and that of David is a striking exemplification of that wondrous nurture and admonition by which He educates—subduing and mortifying in order to suppress what runs counter to His grace and purpose.

The first notice we have of David is where Samuel is sent of God to anoint him king instead of Saul. (1 Sam. 16) Here, in the first circle of his life which is presented to us, we trace the elements of the character and position of one who was so largely to engage our attention afterward. We find him, the youngest son of Jesse, absent from home, caring for his father's sheep in the wilderness; and his countenance, that true index of the innermost being, announcing what manner of man he is— “ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to.” “And when Samuel anointed him, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward.”

Typically, David as anointed represents our Lord after the baptism of John, when the Holy Ghost descended from heaven and abode upon Him. And as the Lord entered on His public ministry, consequent on this anointing of the Holy Ghost, so also does David, the type, enter on his. As to our Lord, the concentrated goodness in Him exposed the evil around: or, rather, the perfection of the witness supplanted all shadows and figures of it. So now, as soon as the Spirit of God comes upon David, “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” David, doubtless, little knew, when the Spirit came upon him, that his first essay as God's man would be to assuage the violence, the spiritual violence, of the head of the kingdom. Saul had been advised to seek out a man who was a cunning player on the harp to chase the evil spirit from him; and the very man recommended to render this service is David, who is fitly described as one “cunning in playing, a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.” “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” What an apparently humble service for God's anointed king, one

might be ready to say! But what moral pre-eminence! It seems but a small thing to play on a harp; but small services done under the power of God's Spirit effect the most remarkable result. The Lord, while on earth, filled this place with reference to the evil and violence of all power that surrounded him; but to David it was also discipline. Whether he understood what the anointing in its full bearing indicated, we are not told; but coupling this with the fact of the Spirit of God coming upon him, he must have felt that he had abilities for a higher office. But here the genuineness of true power and subjection to God are proved. It was God's appointment that he should fill the place; the king required his services, and he rendered them without gainsaying; nay, rather, he discharged it with consummate ability. Faithfulness in the least proves competency for the greatest; and David is taught in his first public start to use the great abilities which God had given him to promote the greatest good required at the time. And what can be more noble or kingly!

Though David was greatly beloved by Saul, and became his armor-bearer, it appears that he was only occasionally with him, and that he had not surrendered the care of his father's sheep in the wilderness; for when Saul gives battle to the Philistines in the valley of Elah (chap. 17.) David is not with him, and we are expressly told that he had returned to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem, and that it was from thence that he, by his father's instructions, came to the scene of the battle—I suppose about forty days after the commencement of it. I note this, because it shows us the alterations so useful and necessary for divine discipline. David had been an inmate of the palace, the king's armor-bearer, greatly loved by him, and, moreover, had rendered him the most signal services; but he passes from this to the humble place of caring for his father's sheep in the wilderness, and in obscurity serves with as much zeal and satisfaction as in the highest sphere; thus proving, by the facile way in which he passes from one to the other, the true metal of his soul, and the singleness of his purpose, as a faithful servant, in whatever he is called unto.

A more signal and glorious service is, however, now in store for him; but it is brought about in a very humble way; for he emerges from the wilderness and the care of the flock by order of his father on a very simple mission, viz., to take supplies to his brethren and see how they fare. But while diligently executing this order, an opening or demand on him arises for testifying for the glory of God. And for this demand the man of God is ever ready. David, having just discharged the object of his mission, is arrested by hearing the Philistine defy the armies of the living God, and his spirit stirred within him—like Paul. He immediately determines to encounter him. How prompt and self-possessing is the power of God! Though commissioned for so simple an errand, he is ready at a moment's notice to enter on the most notable, with the utmost zeal and prowess, though at the same time with the greatest simplicity. Refusing Saul's armor, which he had “not proved,” he takes what is most natural to him—five smooth stones from the brook; thus indicating that he need not be invested with any greater circumstances than those in which God had placed him, or with any greater means than those which came within the range of his calling. So, with the simple equipment of a shepherd he is content and fearless, and can face the terrible foe with a staff, a shepherd's bag, a sling and five stones—smooth ones, too! What a grasp divine power must have had on him! And how full was his possession of it, to be able to apply it with such quietness and composure! David meets Goliath as calmly as he might have met a child, and returns his challenge with all the dignity which invests a soul which knows that the divine power, which it implicitly rests on, will thereby be a weapon in its grasp. And dependence on that God, whose deliverance it has proved in its own private wilderness-conflicts with the lion and the bear, renders

it fearless and calm in facing a more terrible adversary, before whom the whole host of Israel quailed. One stone sufficed, and the giant fell! David, still equal to the moment, though he had rejected Saul's armor as means of vanquishing, is now rightful possessor of that which he had vanquished; so he took Goliath's sword, stood upon him, and “cut off his head therewith” —in all of which action we notice the adroitness and wisdom of divine power. He must have had a glowing sense of what God had wrought by him; and it must have been an immense gratification to have to be the means of so great a deliverance; yet, like the greater than David, no popular honors are decreed him. And it must have been discipline to him to find, after all that had passed, he was unknown to Saul; and though taken into his house, it is without any promise of favor. True, Saul had set David over his men of war, and the women celebrated his exploits in songs; but none of these in any way expressed a due sense of the services rendered or the deliverance wrought by him—none, save one, and that one God had prepared as a solace for David's heart, amid all the ingratitude and violence which was to be displayed in the very scene of his service and victory. The love and devotion of Jonathan is as yet his only compensation. Like the Lord Himself, he must find his greatest services unacknowledged, save by the little remnant attached to His person; and who, like the poor woman (Luke 7), felt that He was everything to her, while the Pharisee and the great ones were hollow and irresponsive to Him. The Lord surely valued the love of His disciples, and it cheered Him in His course here, while so slighted and unknown of men. David was allowed still more solace, in the wonderful and touching attachment and devotion of Jonathan, who ever remained faithful to him; but he had also to learn that this is all he must reckon on, let his services be ever so great. He must not depend on those whom he has served, but only on the one whose affections he has won. It must be heart-allegiance, not popular or royal favor—a blessed lesson for any servant, a fine and holy line for the soul to be led into!

But ingratitude soon gives place to enmity. Saul now envies David, and “eyed him from that day forward.” “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house.” He seeks David's life with the javelin in his hand. Saul, I apprehend, is a type of the world, assuming a religious title, just as Christendom is sustained by the world: and the more faithful we are to it, the more do we provoke its enmity. But how useful is this enmity to the man of God! It eventually, if he continues faithful, drives him away from all association with it; for, however he may serve, he can never win. I do not say that David had no right to go to Saul's house—he, typifying the Lord, was there as the deliverer; but that, in the end, he is compelled to abandon it: as every faithful servant will find ere long that he must either fall or abandon all association with the world.

Various are the methods which Saul resorts to for David's destruction. And such bitter and undeserved hatred may surprise us; but it only discloses to us the malice of the worldly professor, which no amount of goodness or service will disarm. While David presents to us the picture of one who likes to serve in the midst of his people—a noble desire, and most fully exemplified in the true David, who served the most, and was the most social of men.

Saul now tries to entrap David by offering him his eldest daughter, on condition that he should fight the Lord's battles; for he is not yet so hardened in iniquity that he would publicly lay hands on him: but he said, “Let the hands of the Philistines be upon him.” David never gets Merab, though he evidently would have regarded it as a most unexpected honor; but it was not to be realized. “It is the continual dropping which weareth the stone,” and this was always the character of schooling

necessary for David. How he must have winced under each vacillation and deceit for which he was so little prepared, when he entered the royal circle! And the noble and strong can ill brook the meanness of envy; but David was being taught thereby the deceitfulness of this present evil world. Saul, contrary to all probity and honor, bestows Merab on Adriel; but still intent on David's destruction, he offers him Michal as a snare, on condition that he should obtain for dowry “an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.” David readily acceded; and not abiding by the limit of the contract, he, according to the greatness of his nature (for he will be no man's debtor), exceeds the condition, and “slew two hundred men.” But the more we are above the spirit of the world, the more it will hate us; and Saul now “becomes David's enemy continually.” And this faithful servant must now have learned that all the goodness and service in the court was for naught; for increase of nominal honor only brought more deadly and inveterate hatred. He must have experienced, at a distance, the feelings of Him who said, “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.” “They hated me without a cause.” There is now no longer any cloak to this hatred; for “Saul spoke to Jonathan and all his servants that they should kill David;” and the latter is warned of this intention by Jonathan, “who delighted much in David.” Touching and gracious are God's ways with His people! If He sees it needful to teach His servant by a bitter process the evil of association with the world, and that he must needs separate from it, He, at the same time, provides for him a devoted heart, in which He could entirely confide. David had one green spot, one fond enclosure, which, like a guardian angel, preserved him from the machinations of malice and all uncharitableness—a resource which David's antitype knew but little of on earth, though none appreciated it more than He. Jonathan warns David, mediates with his father, and Saul relents, and “he was in his presence as in times past.” All these alternations of discipline are necessary. When we are brought so low as to “hide in a secret place,” the reality of our resource in God is not only proved, but ascertained for ourselves; but when prosperity is again renewed, the soul can contrast the quality of its rest, when apparently resourceless, with that which it experiences when natural resources are abundant: and this produces, I doubt not, if we are faithful, a growing depreciation of the natural, in comparison to the divine; for, however we may try, we can never find in the lower resource that rest which we have in the higher.

David, restored to favor, serves with diligence, but is soon assailed again, and only escapes by a stratagem of Michal, of her whom Saul had provided as a snare for him. And now, convinced that he cannot abide in the royal house any longer, he flies, renouncing his position, and everything dear to him as a man except his life. And whether does he flee? Where does the break with Saul naturally drive him? To Samuel at Ramah. Samuel, after undergoing another line of discipline, had also, from godly sentiment, retired from association with Saul. And now the true king, after every effort to serve and win the existing power, being forced to retire also, he cannot fail, as he walks in the divine path, to meet the one who had already traversed it. David and Samuel, the servant and the prophet, are congenial—the one just entering into, the other emerging from, the School of God: for David was as yet a youthful, while Samuel was an aged and well-trained, learner in that school; but being of kindred spirit and aim, they meet and dwell together. And this is the true, holy, and divine way to attain association with the godly. If you have traversed the divine path, and I enter thereon, we must meet and walk together, for though man's paths are many, God's is but one.

But what had David learned in all this? When obliged to flee for his life, he seeks shelter and sympathy with the separated prophet? He had learned by experience what it was to endeavor to

maintain his place in the world which professedly owned God; and now convinced of the futility of his attempt, and still more of the wickedness which opposed him, he enters on a new line, even to learn what it is to walk under God's hand alone, and separated from all whom he was ready to serve, as he had tasted of the world's acceptance, so dangerous and uncertain in its nature; so now he must be disciplined in the sorrows of rejection. We must remember that David was God's own selection for the throne of Israel; and not only so, but that in the very commencement of his course he had been anointed for this high post; but in order that he should occupy it according to God, he must be educated in the qualities which become God's king. It is always God's way to appoint first, and then to qualify. With man it is the reverse: he requires qualification before appointment; but we may rest assured that God will fit us for whatever office He has destined us, after he appoints us thereto. This is the divine principle, as one has so fitly expressed it: “First wears the laurel, then begins the fight.” Thus God's first action towards David was to appoint him king, and from thence date all his experiences, exploits, and difficulties; for I fully believe that it was after this that he killed the lion and the bear; but how long a process of probation did he require before he was fit to enter on the high place for which he was destined! At the stage of process which we are now considering he had passed through two courses of education; one at home, feeding his father's sheep in the wilderness, in which he had proved himself most valiant and successful; and the other in the highest position in the world, and withal the religious world—loved by some, the people's delight, but envied by the king, the object alternately of favor, deceit, and enmity, and at length compelled to surrender his position and escape for his life. The first circle in cur histories will always be found to embrace and disclose the chief qualities which will distinguish every subsequent circle of our lives; consequently nothing is more important to a Christian than how and under what guidance he commences and describes his first circle. David's was of a fine order and contained all the elements of moral beauty which the succeeding circles so amply developed, as we shall see. He now entered on his third course, which extends unto the death of Saul, and may be designated the period of his rejection, when the ruler of Israel thirsted for his life; a time of peculiar suffering, but of ample, manifold, and blessed experience of the goodness of God, and at the same time of the weakness of his own nature.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 17

Discipline: 15. David—Part 2

We have seen that David fled to Ramah and dwelt with the prophet who had retired in sorrowing faithfulness from the scene and associations from which David was now driven, and surely Ramah must have been a scene of mourning then, as in later times “a voice was heard at Ramah, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.” David and Samuel doubtless mourned together deeply and sorely over the misrule of Saul, who, relentless as Herod, pursues David even here. But when he attempts to intrude on their retreat, the spirit of God subdues him, and David, apparently unprotected, is taught at the opening of this new and sorrowful path how distinctly God can shield him. But he is not yet prepared to relinquish his former position without a struggle, and he leaves Naioth to seek Jonathan and ascertain from him whether it is irretrievable. (Chap. 20.) They meet—a signal is agreed upon, which confirming Saul's implacability, David's fate is sealed, and he, emerging from his retreat and one with Jonathan, gives vent to the agonizing sorrow of a full heart. Still self-possessed and courteous on approaching Jonathan, he “fell on his face to the ground and bowed himself three times, and they kissed one another and wept with one another until David exceeded.” What a scene was this! what a wrench! The last link which bound David to the useful and once glorious scene in which he lately moved, is broken. Bereft in a moment of all he valued and loved, honor, position, service recede from his view, and even the companionship of the heart that remained faithful to him. He must henceforth give up his public career, his relationship to the king, his valiant service to the people against their enemies, the love and sympathy of Jonathan. He must retire to obscurity and, as it seemed, uselessness; and we all know what it is to human nature to relinquish what it has expected or possessed—how difficult to return with any contentment to its former condition. And for what cause was all this? None, but the unjust and deadly hate of the ruler of Israel; and unless David discerned, as we do, that there was another cause, that God himself was setting the springs to work in order to educate and qualify him for future greatness, he must have been overwhelmed; for the conflict with the lion and the bear, with Goliath and the Philistines, were as nothing to this. Great must have been the desolation of that hour; and when the blessed Jesus wept over Jerusalem, surely sorrows of the same order, though surpassingly deeper and holier, harrowed his tender heart. David and Jonathan part with an oath and undisturbed attachment between them; but their lives diverge. David, the rejected king, must suffer awhile, and find other companions for his sufferings and rejection; while Jonathan must “return to the city,” his father's house, with which he cannot break the link. Then the whole scene has also its typical aspect—the true David in his rejection, and the Jewish remnant, which neither suffer nor reign with him.

Chapter 21. - David was now cast in complete reliance on God, and his first act after the wrench which we have been considering is to go to the high priest; for the soul, taking the place of dependence, turns ever without distinct consciousness as to its motive to God's recognized testimony on earth for continuance and help. I believe that whenever we take the place of exile in the world for the Lord's sake, however ignorantly, that we instinctively seek the Church as God's established witness on earth. Thus David in principle does the same, though we may justly

censure his untruthfulness to Abimelech; but seldom does the new man act that the old man in its effort to co-operate does not betray weakness and moral degradation. He receives from Abimelech both bread and a sword (the very sword of Goliath, a remembrance of his first public victory), and he at the moment typified the place the Lord occupied in Israel, when His disciples were driven to appease their hunger by rubbing the ears of the standing corn as they passed through it. But how the mere human type breaks down when the strain is too great, and thus displays in fuller distinctness the perfection of the divine yet human antitype. He supplies the broken and lost link, and at the same time disciplines the mere human vessel in its failure into association and sympathy with His own path. And now David fails still further. So great is his fear of Saul, though with the trophy of his victory over the giant in his hand, that he deserts the land, abandons the place of privilege, and flees to Achish, king of Gath! But just fed and armed from God's sanctuary, he yields to unbelief and leaves the Lord's inheritance! But unbelief always leads us into the sorrow which we peek to avoid, and from which we learn eventually that faith would have preserved us.

The servants of king Achish soon recognize him, and David's next expedient is to feign himself mad! How humiliating! But now it is that his soul becomes solely occupied with God and all the previous discipline bears fruit. It is necessary for him not only to see all he prized in the world fade away before him, but he must also feel that he himself is personally humiliated, and then it is that the full nature and value of the resources of God are appropriated. It is at this moment that the spirit of God passes though David's soul the sweet, confiding notes recorded in Psa. 34, “He will bless the Lord at all times.” He exclaims, “I sought the Lord, and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears.” Through bitter trials he had reached this blessed utterance, and in the same spot, so to speak, does the spirit of God still utter it for every one who will pass that way. Driven out of the world, humiliated in himself before men and in his own eyes, denouncing his own “guile,” he can now say, “The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.”

Chapter 22. - David leaves Achish chanting the thirty-fourth Psalm, and escapes to Adullam. He is once more in the land, though it be but a cave; and there not only his own house, but all that were in distress, or in debt, &c., congregate to him. Having learned the place of dependence for himself, he can become a center and guide for the poor of the flock, whose hearts did not own the rule of Saul; and they can follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation. Why David placed his parents with the King of Moab I cannot say, unless he desired to escape from their influence and fears. (We know how our Lord had to rise above his parent's counsels.) While in this cave he utters three psalms—cxlii., hi., and lvii.—the latter, I think, after he was joined by the prophet and priest. He expresses full confidence in God “until these calamities be overpast,” though at the same time sensible of the dangers with which he is surrounded. His “heart is prepared,” therefore he will “sing and give praise.” We naturally shrink from trials and sorrows, but when we find ourselves like David, enjoying the resources that are in God, which our trials have caused us to have recourse to, we remember no more the path of affliction which led us thereto.

Psa. 52 is David's utterance when he hears of Doeg's conduct. He sees God's discipline in all his sorrow: “I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it.” How the Spirit of God was converting every trial into an occasion for engaging his soul with the deep chords of spiritual song and the day of glory! If Paul in Arabia was caught up to heaven, surely in the cave and the

wilderness the outcast David was hearing in his soul the sublime strains of God's victory over every foe. He not only heard the harpers harping with their harps, but his own heart was attuned of God; and the divine music cheered the spirit of the rejected king.

Keilah is the next page in this interesting history, chapter 23. Whatever be the pressure or trial of our own position, if we are in the spirit and condition of soul answering to Psa. 57, we could not hear of the distress of any of God's people, which we could alleviate, without being ready to aid them. Consequently, when it was told David, “Behold the Philistines fight against Keilah, and rob the threshing floors,” he inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I go and smite these Philistines?” And the Lord says “Go smite the Philistines and save Keilah.” The man of real might and experience in God's succor, appeals to God before he embarks in anything. David's men try to discourage him from it, and, after he had mastered his own heart and its sorrows, he must learn to be superior to the unbelief of his associates. He inquires yet again; and a further assurance being given him from the Lord, he goes down to Keilah with his men, and is completely successful; he saves the inhabitants. But this was only to bring about another order of trial and exercise of heart for him. Once more his services are unrequited. Saul goes down to besige Keilah, and David inquires of the Lord as to whether the men whom he had just delivered from the Philistines, will deliver him up; and the divine answer is, that they will. And here let us mark the difference in David's mode of inquiry in this and in the first instance. (Ver. 1-4.) It does not appear that he made use of the priest when seeking counsel as to relieving Keilah; but here, when “he knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him,” and he wanted to know what should be his own line of action with reference to it, he says to the priest, “Bring hither the ephod;” and thus he makes the inquiry. This difference is interesting. In the first instance, it was a simple question as whether he should or should not serve others; and, without questioning his motives, he has only to turn to the Lord for direction; but when our own interests are concerned, we are much more likely to be led by our own will, and to lack singleness of heart and purpose. We never are outside Christ, but in serving others we are directly acting with Him; whereas, when it is in any wise a question of self, we need to realize our full acceptance and to sift our motives; and here the priesthood comes in. But in either case the answer is prompt and distinct; and it is most instructive to note the manner of the intercourse between David and the Lord; what confidence and simplicity there was between them. David asks his plain simple questions, and the Lord answers as plainly and distinctly. He had no resource but in God; and this condition he was learning more and more in each stage of his life. Any soul in the Lord's presence, and truly reliant on Him, would experience the same. The simpler such a soul is, the more is it qualified for great and exalted service. The one great with God is he who can devote all his energies according to God's counsel to aid and serve others, but whose dependence is entirely on God, proving that his resources place him above recompense from those whom he serves. It is plain that we are not told all the services which David rendered, or the experiences which he passed through. I suppose a specimen of each particular line is recorded for us. That of Keilah I should designate, as “how the rejected king serves this people without requital;” and this is necessary discipline for him, nay, for any one who will walk with the true David through this evil world.

David now goes “whithersoever he could go” (verse 13), and eventually remains in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. Here Jonathan comes to him, and “strengthens his hand in God,” fulfilling that vision of faith which he had expressed in Psa. 142, “The righteous shall compass me about.”

How graciously the Lord cheers us by human sympathy when we have entered the wilderness only depending on Him! How sweet to the soul to realize these instances of His compassion for us! But the cheer and encouragement of Jonathan's visit is soon checkered by the uncalled-for hostility of the Ziphites, who, in order to please Saul, inform him of David's retreat. Whether it was on this occasion, when the treachery of the Ziphites was first known to him, that he uttered Psa. 54, or subsequently, it is immaterial to inquire: what is interesting for us to know is the state of his mind at the time, and this the psalm discloses. “Strangers had risen up against him;” but he can add, “Behold God is mine helper.” Fully was this realized. Just as Saul and his men had succeeded in compassing him about to take him, a messenger comes, saying, “Haste thee and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land.” David is delivered, and the spot is commemorated by the name of “the rock of divisions.”

We may continually remark, that it is after this manner that the power of man is rendered ineffectual. Man can never contend with two distinct enemies, and he is obliged to let one escape in order to encounter the other. David has been taught in this strait, when all hope was well nigh gone, how easily and simply the Lord can deliver him. It is very important for high spiritual attainment to be led experimentally in these various expositions of God's care of His servant, so that, “strong in the power of His might,” he may be able to say, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me.” This is another distinct lesson for David during the period of his rejection. At Adullam and the wood, he is provided with companions and sympathy; at Keilah, he is permitted signally to serve, and baffles Saul by not depending on the recipients of his service; in the wilderness of Maon, when almost in the hand of the enemy, he escapes through the Lord's interposition. Thus variously and wonderfully was he learning the ways of God in an evil and hostile world; and according as he learned, was the better qualified to lead and rule God's people in such a scene.

His antitype—the blessed Lord Jesus—needed not such instructions. He knew what was in man, and He alone is truly Lord and King. But David is a fine specimen of the human vessel, with large capacities and ready mind, to receive the divine mind and ways. His circumstances vary very much, but whenever he was true to his lesson, dependent on God, he is in the right path.

After a short respite in the strongholds of Engedi, David is again sought after by Saul, who now goes out against him with 3000 of the chosen men of Israel. No longer content to pursue after him singly, he, with an organized force and deadly purpose, persists in his design. David must endure this pressure, but in the end he shall know that the greater the violence urged against him, the simpler and more effectual are the means used of God to deliver him. Saul was defeated at Keilah by its being abandoned by David; he was foiled at the Rock of Division by the invasion of the Philistines; and Most ingloriously is he defeated at Engedi by the moderation and loyalty of David, to whom he owes his life. Little did he know, in the malice of his heart, how, by entering the cave, he thrust himself into the grasp of his desired victim; or how deeply he was to be humbled, morally, by the contrast between them which this scene evinces; the generous elevation of one in its superiority to evil and enmity blazing forth in such vivid colors as to draw forth the acknowledgment of it from the lips of the persecutor, who is made so conscious of his own comparative abasement, that he for the moment sues favor from, and acknowledges the title of, the fugitive, whom, with all his royal power and chosen army, he had come forth to destroy. As for David, by acting in grace instead of vengeance, he maintained God's principle of action toward the

world, which now lies under the sin of having rejected its rightful King.

Chap. 25. presents us with another line of experience. And here we shall find that David for a moment forgets the lesson of the power of grace which he had just so remarkably acted on and illustrated—a warning to us of the treachery of our nature, and how it may betray us into a very contrary line of action to that which we have only a moment before displayed. And still further, it teaches us that we are more likely to fail in grace toward one whose friendship and gratitude we have a title to reckon on than to an open enemy. David is so irritated by Nabal's ruthless conduct, that he prepares to take summary vengeance on him, but is diverted from this avengeful course by the most interesting event and association which is ever known to God's servants in this Christ-rejecting world. Abigail is in type the Church; and regarding David in his typical relation to the Lord, she is his compensation in the day of his rejection for all he had lost in the kingdom. She is with him where even Jonathan cannot follow him; and after becoming his wife and companion in suffering, she shares his throne and glory. But we have also considered David as the faithful servant, not perfect like the Lord, but under God's discipline and training; and in this aspect the influence of Abigail on him typifies that of the Church, whose position and sentiments, when made known, suppress all notions of vengeance. Nabal is the old Adam, spare or Abigail's sake; but when Nabal dies, David owns Abigail in the closest relationship; she who not only on first acquaintance provoked and confirmed in his soul the blessed and dignified path of grace which became him in his rejection, but who also gladly shared with him his toil and sorrow. Thus the wilderness of Maon was an eventful scene for David; just as it is a great day in our lives as Christians when the Church, as to her calling and nature, is first made known to us. For many a servant of God who feels the usurpation of professed religion as David did in the person of Saul has not found the Abigail—has not so learned what the Church is in the mind of Christ, as to find therein an interest, sympathy, and companionship, as well as a support in the path of grace in passing through this world. As Abigail was a green spot in the wilderness to David, so the Church is the only green spot for the heart of Christ or His servants now on earth, the center and object of His interest.

It is very necessary, while studying the lines of instruction in which God educates His servant, to keep in mind that these lines are always in relation to the place for which the servant is destined. David is now only preparing for his great sphere of service; and previous to entering on it, it is necessary that he should know the ways and grace of the Lord in several distinct lines.

We have just seen how the Lord helped and cheered him in the wilderness in a manner most unexpected to him, the whole circumstances unfolding in a remarkable way the Lord's tender and abounding love. If Adam required the company and help of Eve in the garden of Eden, how much more did David an Abigail in the desert! But “the greater the need, the greater the boon;” and this David's soul must have acknowledged. But after this bright moment, the waters of persecution again encompass him. (Chap. 26.) Saul, instigated by the Ziphites, again pursues him into the wilderness; which plainly intimated to David that the desperate issue was at hand. To the spiritual man oppressed by the world there is always given a very clear perception of the state and condition of the power brought against him. This grace is now given to David. He reconnoiters Saul and his army, understands what his own course should be, and having sought a companion, forthwith entered on it. And for what object? Simply to show that though his enemy was in his power he would not injure him. “Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the

ground at his bolster," &c., when David and Abishai approach. The latter would have killed the sleeping king, in the power of nature, but David interposed, alleging very distinctly and solemnly his confidence that God would be his avenger. The only trophies which he takes are the spear and the cruse of water, which indicate the true nature of the exploit. The spear (the implement of war) was returned, but we do not hear that the cruse was. Saul a second time acknowledges David's victory of grace, and in reply to his expostulation says, "I have sinned; return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day." What evidence had been accorded to David in this transaction of the mighty power of God! What authority for that sentiment which he uttered after his final deliverance: "He sent from above; he took me; he drew me out of many waters."

But, alas! when our greatest deliverances take place, we are often least sensible of the mercy vouchsafed. The very ingratitude for it provokes a reaction, unless we are so humbled and broken as to be occupied in magnifying the Lord, instead of dwelling on ourselves and our own insufficiency. Having been in the Lord's hand, unless we abide there, subject to Him in praise, we are the more sensible of our own powerlessness. Now, powerlessness with faith binds us the more to God, as the sure rock of our strength and the fountain of supply; but powerlessness without faith always drives us to seek human succor: and after great deliverances we often make a false step, partly because we have got out of the energy of that faith which the pressure required, and partly because our nature would escape from the restraint which faith entails—it wishes to get into circumstances where faith will not be required. Thus David, after this great moral victory over Saul, becomes a prey to his own feelings and fears (chap. xxvii.), and says 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," &c. This idea was in positive contradiction to the language he had so lately uttered to Saul. But how soon one forgets the convictions of faith when one confers with nature! Just before he had said, "So let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation." But now he is so desponding, that he expatriates himself from the Lord's inheritance. "And David arose, and the six hundred men that were with him and passed over unto Achish, the son of Maoch, king of Gath." We have seen that once before he had sought refuge with Achish, and was glad to retire from it in humiliation. Why does he go there again'? He now practically exemplifies the most peculiar and necessary discipline that any one can be subjected to. Whatever be the first cause of our failure at our start, even though surmounted at the time, it is sure to beset us again, and, if we be not effectually delivered from it, in a more bitter and desperate form. This is necessary; for if that particular line of my nature still flourishes, surely divine discipline must be directed to the subjection of it, for nature, though summarily expelled, is sure to betray itself again and again, until it be worn out: and therefore when an exposure recurs again (necessary because it has not been thoroughly mortified), it is always met by a severe chastening. David ingratiates himself with Achish, and obtains Ziklag from him. It is wonderful how the Lord allows his servants to work out their own devisings; but after they had been corrected and have seen the end of them, he advances them to greater and higher service, provided they have been in principle true to Him. Deep as was David's failure here, I believe this was the case with him. We never hear that he worshipped false gods or forgot that Israel was God's people. He deceived Achish, and thus morally degraded himself; but he was true in principle to God, and when his nature was subdued, he was delivered from his humiliating position into open and active service. Ziklag was the last touch of the master-hand that was preparing him for the throne, and

must therefore be especially interesting to us. He goes there in unbelief, tarries for more than a year, ingratiates himself with Achish by false representations, and even essays to join him in battle against Israel, which act we must from his former course consider that the lords of the Philistines rightly interpreted! for however he could deceive, he never would have taken the sword against his own people, except with the intention to aid them eventually. This they forsee, and Achish is reluctantly obliged to decline his services and lead him away. And now being delivered from this false and painful position by the Lord's indirect interpositions, discipline follows. While this duplicity had been going on, judgment falls on Ziklag, and David and his company return to find it burned with fire, and their wives, sons, and daughters taken captive? We now know what David did not know at this distressing moment, that the same God who was then so sorely chastening him was preparing the kingdom for him, for the very same hour Saul was being slain on Mount Gilboa; but David was not fit for the throne or any such tidings, until he was chastened and brought into real dependence on God. The first and last step to the throne is dependence, and the only title for it which God owns; consequently, at Ziklag, David is more humbled and deserted than at any other period of his life; for not only was his own sorrow poignant on account of his great loss, but (as is the case in all great sorrows) the whole of his past history must have intensified his misery; and, in addition to this, the greatest blow of any, his old and attached followers speak of stoning him. Such a moment he had never known before, and never knew again. His enemies (the Amalekites) had baffled him and were beyond his reach; and what is more fretting to the man of might than to be circumvented without opportunity of avenging oneself Truly he was under the arrows of the Almighty, and made to feel the chastening rod for having committed himself to so false a position as that outside the land or place of privilege. Human help or support there was none? on the contrary, danger and conspiracy surrounded him: God chastening him, his friends incensed against him, his enemy unreachable. But what was the result? “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” It is deeply interesting now and again to turn to the Psalms and listen to the breathings of his heart in the varied circumstances, the narrative of which is given in the history of his life. We find that Psa. 56 was uttered in the distress of his soul, entailed by his wrong and humiliating sojourn in Gath; and whether or not it was at the period we are considering, it is an utterance fully expressive of what he must have passed through. Bereft of all human trust, he turns to God, though in the full consciousness of his own failures. “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?” It is a blessed thing to have received at any time a right knowledge of God; for if we have, when our failure is paramount, we shall then best know that God is our only resource, although His chastening be very sore, and we be forsaken and helpless. There is no fear for David now; he has “awaked,” and he shall “have light.” (See Eph. 5:14.) “Bring hither the ephod,” he says to Abiathar, the priest; for when the soul re-enters the path of faith, it is specially conscious of the necessity for acceptance; and now he has got into his old line of confidence, and doubtless with renewed energy. As at Keilah, he inquires of the Lord, “Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?” And He answered him with peculiar assurance and encouragement, “Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake, and without fail recover all.” Thus in a moment has the earnest soul recovered itself with God. “So David went, and the 600 men that were with him;” but 200 remained behind at the brook Besor, from faintness. The path of faith always tests our strength, and every embarrassment only presents an opportunity for some greater display of the grace which is

sustaining us. This contretemps gives rise to a “statute for Israel unto this day,” and one fully characteristic of the grace which at the moment was blessing the pursuers.

David fails not: wise and gracious as well as strong (as the man walking according to God's counsel ever is), he can turn every incident to account. The almost famished Egyptian commands his attention; on any ground he ought not to have neglected him, as we in our haste are too ready to do; and had he done so, he would have lost the proper clue to the desired end. The recruited Egyptian guides David to the camp of his enemies, and he smote the whole troop, recovered all they had carried away, rescued his two wives and all; “there was nothing lacking, David recovered all.” And now, returning to the brook Besor, he exemplifies how a soul in the enjoyment of grace, flushed with its glorious exploits, will know how to testify of that grace to others. He overrules the selfishness of the natural mind, and proclaims that divine principle: “As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.” What a monument! What a commemoration of the last hours of David's rejection! and what a herald, morally, of the reign about to open! This ordinance has a momentous meaning; it embodies the principle by which the Church is now, by its members, morally affected; it is the offspring of the victorious but uncrowned David; the place which our Lord now holds towards His people here. And this ordinance conveys to us the principle on which each member in the body is dependent on the other for loss or for gain, It is new and wonderful, but worthy of the hour in which it was enacted. It is the Holy Ghost and not merely life who unites in one body the members of the absent Lord, and makes them dependent and inseparably one from the other. May we apply our hearts unto wisdom, that we may understand the deep things of God.

We have now reached the completion of the third course or circle of David's eventful life; and the close of that wonderful process of moral preparation which was necessary to qualify him for that high and glorious position for which he was so early destined and anointed. His entrance thereon we must defer considering for the present.

(Continued from page 109.)

Chapter 18

Discipline: 16. David—Part 3

We now enter on another chapter in David's history. The period of his rejection is over, and the new and glorious position which he is to occupy is being prepared for him. That course of education which belonged to him as a fugitive and a sufferer, though rightful heir to the throne, closed at Ziklag, the scene to him of bitter sorrow and retribution, but of wondrous deliverance and restoration; and it is there, after having returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and having sent presents of the spoil of the “enemies of the Lord” to all places where he and his men were wont to haunt, that the momentous tidings of the death of him whose throne he was to fill reaches him! What a remarkable coincidence! The charred ruins of Ziklag testified of the chastening which he had so deeply tasted and needed, while the presents which he was sending hither and thither, proclaimed the compensation and victory which had been vouchsafed to him. The contrast between the two testimonies is striking, the one notifying his own failure; the other still more generally and positively the goodness and favor of the Lord.

Right royally he was acting before he knew that he was actually king, or that the one who had barred his way to the throne had fallen on Mount Gilboa. It is in keeping with God's ways that we should be in the spirit of our position when the time arrives for us to be owned in it, for the condition indicates the position; may, the condition is ever unsatisfied until it reaches the position which suits it. The preparation of his heart is from the Lord, and we may rest assured that unless we are acting in the spirit of any desired position, we are not fit for it, and if we were set in it, we should be found in an element unsuited to us. It is true we do not, and need not know how to act in the promised position until we are actually set therein, for faith's activities are for the present; but we may and should act in the spirit of the better position, and if our tastes for it are not gratified, the divine life is not matured; for it seeks its own region, and the tastes are only the claims of its vitality.

David was two days at Ziklag after his return from conquest before he heard of the death of Saul; for it was on the “third day” that the event, and the manner of it is related to him by an Amalekite, who says, “I stood upon him and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen, and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was upon his arm, and have brought them hither to my lord.” But how does David receive these tidings and trophies? “He took hold of his clothes and rent them, and mourned, and wept, and fasted until even;” and as for the bearer of them, he ordered his immediate execution. When judgment from God falls on His people, however deserved by them and predicted by the faithful, yet to the godly it is always solemn and affecting; and at such a moment no true David could remember the benefit that might accrue to himself from the event. The soul enters rather into the cause of the divine interposition; and the sense that God is acting silences self. How many and great were the revolutions which had exercised David's spirit those three days! He had not only known the Lord's peculiar mercy to himself, but now he is made cognizant of this singular judgment, which occupies him so much in its connection with Israel, that for the moment he overlooks its importance to himself. Moreover, he could not suffer the Amalekite, who had reported the news, to live; for he was proving his title to

the throne in his unflinching war with the Amalekites, in contradistinction to Saul, who had morally lost the kingdom by sparing Amalek (1 Sam. 15), and who now, by God's unerring retribution, is slain and stripped of his kingly ornaments by an Amalekite! It was consistent therefore with God's way and will that David should establish his title by relentless vengeance on Amalek, and doubtless the Lord in His mercy exasperated him thus ere he reached the throne against the enemy of. Israel by allowing the Amalekites to wound him where he was most sensitive. Blessed God! this is often thy gracious way!

To the godly soul there is a fresh demand for counsel from God as each difficulty or opposition disappears, because he requires to ascertain how he may use the advantage aright, and there is often much lost for want of judgment. David now “inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.” (2 Sam. 2:1.) What simple, happy, and interesting dependence! In what a different spirit he leaves Ziklag to that in which he entered it! What blessed fruition of God's discipline does he now enjoy going up into Hebron, led and sustained by the plain word of God! What power and simplicity characterize the walk of the man upheld thereby! David goes to Hebron, and “his men that were with him, every man with his household.” When faith in God is undistracted by nature, it embraces all that concerns me. I learn that God's interest in me must embrace my interests, or it would not be perfect consideration for me.

If a hair of my head cannot fall to the ground without Him, it is plain to faith that everything which concerns me is now within the circle of His hand. David therefore, acting in this mind, brought up all his men, and every man his household. Nothing less would suit but faith in the word of God which had said to him, “Go up unto Hebron.” When we begin in faith and dependence, every circumstance will establish not only the faith but the wisdom of our course; hence we find, in verse 4, that the “men of Judah came and anointed David king over the house of Judah.” But though now set up in royal dignity, it was a position very far short of that for which he was destined and anointed by Samuel. Seven years and six months must still elapse before the whole nation acknowledge him as king. (Ver. 11.) And there was still to be “long war between the house of Saul and the house of David,” though the latter should wax stronger and stronger. By what slow and measured steps the Lord leads his servants to their appointed place; doubtless, never attained in this world. Even though a Paul can say, “This one thing I do,” yet he must own that he has not attained that distinct place which he will occupy in glory; though the more he presses thereto, the more he fulfills his suited service. How often is God's servant, like David, set in Hebron for a season, i.e., only in partial possession of his appointed service; and how necessary this is in order to develop in him the suitable qualities. We may shrink from antagonism, but if there were none we should never feel the emanations of grace, elicited from us by the Holy Ghost in order to rebut them. Many opportunities are now afforded to David for proving his qualifications for the office he desired, which he never would have had, or probably never availed himself of, if he had been at once enthroned king of all Israel.

His first act is to send a message of approval and encouragement to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, who had owned Saul. This was great grace, and the true dignity of a man of might, capacitated to lead and rule. The throne is established by righteousness, and the one who cannot render impartial justice is not a God-made ruler. A Christian walks in righteousness and charity, rendering to every claim fairly and fully; and supplying to the impotent and suffering what they require. Even

to an enemy David is able to render deserved praise, and this establishes his moral weight; and though he has also his disappointments and mistakes, he waxes stronger and stronger, and is all the while learning his true course before God.

Abner, in anger, deserts the house of Saul (chap. 3:9, &c.), and espouses David, who consents to make a league with him on condition that he should deliver to him his wife, Michal, Saul's daughter. It is difficult to understand his motive for this demand. It may have been regard for Michal, for he owed his life to her, or it may have been mixed with policy, as evidencing his alliance with Saul; but whatever it was, the act was not attended with honor to either of them. If the surrender of Michal was gratifying to David's nature, the base assassination of Abner by Joab must have been a bitter reverse. Just as he might have reckoned on this man of valor as the appointed instrument to bring about the desired consummation, he is cut down. Deep discipline was there in this sad occurrence. No wonder he should mourn for Abner. In the mourning he realized his own dependent state, and must have felt what a terrible blot it was on his government that the sword of his own captain should thus frustrate his hopes and gainsay his righteous rule. But he must learn not to build his hopes on any; and even this, the Lord in the end turned to his advantage; for the people took note of his great grief, and it pleased them. What man would pronounce a great misfortune, God can convert into the opposite for His servant. David might justly say, “I am this day weak, though anointed king.” But this humbling is only preparatory to exaltation. We must feel and know our need of God before He can openly help us. This event, which seemed to human vision so great a misfortune, eventually weakened the hands of Saul's son in a remarkable way (chap. iv. 1), for Ishbosheth is slain by two of his captains, and David's rival removed without any reflection on David, which he could not have escaped had it been brought about by the sword of Abner. Oh! if we could but trust the Lord, we should find that what we, in our feeble judgment regard as against us, He has ordered as entirely for us. David humbled before God, and waiting on Him, deals with this treachery as became him; righteously visiting with death the perpetrators of the murder, and accepting the result as from the Lord, for the last obstacle to his acknowledgment as king of Israel was now gone; for we read (chap. v. 1), “Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.” In 1 Chron. 12:38, it is detailed to us the character and quality of the multitude of Israel, who gathered to Hebron to acknowledge him as king: “All these men of war that could keep rank came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were of one heart to make David king.”

Thus, after an interval of about twenty-one years, has this much-disciplined servant attained his appointed place. Slow had been the steps by which he had reached it; varied and deep the education which had prepared him for it, not the least part of which was the last seven years and a half, during which he was only in partial possession; and now, having attained it, we have to trace how he fills it, always remembering that the instruction still goes on, though in a different line.

The first recorded act of David after his elevation to the throne, is his attempt to bring back the ark of God; a true and godly desire—for to render unto the Lord the first fruits. of our increase is the natural action of the soul which is consciously receiving from Him; but how often we mar in execution our best intentions, on account of the influence of our associations, for associations are always in keeping with our practical state. David, in his spirit, desires to see the ark of God restored, “for it had not been inquired at in the days of Saul.” But he, doubtless, much engrossed

at this time with the heads of the army, as the means by which he had reached the throne, consults with them about bringing back the ark, instead of with the Lord; the consequence of which is, as is ever the case, a human devised plan is decided on; a cart drawn by kine is appointed to carry it, instead of the hands of the Levites, which was the divine way. What could result from such an arrangement but chastening in the display of God's holiness? Uzzah is slain; a great check to David, and reminding him that the Lord was near, and that if he would do the works of God he must do them to the mind of God. But he does not seem to have apprehended this at once. We read he was displeased and was afraid of the Lord, and said, “How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?” And, moreover, he kept it in the house of Obededom, the Gittite, for three months.

Now, in 1 Chron. 13-14, we read of two conflicts with the Philistines engaged in by David, between his first essay as to bringing up the ark and the final accomplishment of it. Whether they actually took place at that period, or as related in Samuel, may be a question; but the Spirit of God always gives us the moral order of events in Chronicles, and I fully believe that it is thus related in the latter, with the intent to show us that the lesson which David needed to be taught then, and for the need of which he failed the first time, was that so far from borrowing any of the devices of the Philistines, he was to have nothing to do with them, except to overcome them. If he had truly and deeply apprehended the nature and extent of the power of God, as at Baal-perazim (the master of breaches), where God “broke in upon his enemies like the breaking forth of waters,” in answer to the simple and blessed dependence with which he inquired of God, and waited on Him, step by step, he would have been saved from the sorrow and humiliation of Perez-uzzah. We obtain signal victories over the world in dealing with itself; but how often, alas! do we introduce some worldly element into our worship, and thus neutralize the leadings of an honest purpose. Be I a Martha with the Lord at the tomb of Lazarus, or a Mary Magdalene at the sepulcher of Christ, or a Peter in the holy mount, if I do not realize the entire setting aside of the world and my affinities with it, I am sure to introduce, in the most unseemly way, some idea borrowed from it, which contravenes the truth and grace of God. In the first of these conflicts David is taught what personal victory the Lord vouchsafes to His servant when he trusts Him; for here he had inquired of the Lord in as full dependence as when a refugee in the wilderness of Maon; and dependence yields all the more savor when our position is such that might seem, humanly speaking, to place us above it. God had promised that He would deliver the Philistines into his hand; and so great was their defeat that he burst forth, “God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters: therefore he called the name of the place Baal-perazim.”

Now it is one thing for me to feel and know that I am personally victorious over the world (I can have no rest until I do); but quite another thing to know that it is God that setteth me on my high places; i.e., that He is subduing my enemies for me; and still further, that it is when the sound of God is heard that I bestir myself and go forth to conflict (1 Chron. 14:15); for then I know that He has “gone forth before me, to smite the host of the Philistines.”

These were the blessed experiences through which the Lord was leading His servant, enough surely to prevent him from stooping to adopt the modes and plans of the Philistines, without consulting the Lord and His word!

At the end of three months, however, David having been warned, chastened, and most graciously instructed, and hearing of the blessing vouchsafed to the house of Obededom from the presence

of Him whose holiness had so lately broken forth to wither up the presumption of nature, prepares to bring up the ark of God to the city of David with gladness, and now makes an announcement which virtually is a confession of his own mistake, even that “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites, for them hath God chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto him forever.” The details of this interesting event are given to us in 1 Chron. 15; 16, and we shall do well to note the spirit of David on the occasion. The priest is merged in the king, who orders and appoints everything, and is, moreover, himself clothed with an ephod and robe of fine linen, and dances before the Lord with all his might. In fact, his whole course and way is a practical expression of Psa. 132, which was the utterance of his heart at the moment. How different to his first essay as to the ark was this, in power, testimony, and joy of heart! How imposingly expressive is the gladness of the heart when engaged with the Lord, and how indifferent to all carnal judgment! This must have been the happiest moment in David's life, as also the most honored one, when he said, “Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength.” And then it was that he “first delivered a psalm to thank the Lord,” &c. (Chap. xvi. 7-36.) What a bright and blessed moment, after all his sorrows and discipline! What fullness of joy does his engagement with the Lord give him, and with what divine skill does he direct all the details of the Levitical service? There is no jar in the scene, save that of the daughter of Saul, whose spirit, antipathetic to the whole scene, can have no sympathy with him, nor can she understand it, but despises David in her heart. Thus in this bright hour, he suffers from unsuited association. And how often is this the case! Many a one who passes acceptably in the muddy light of profession soon betrays himself, if placed in the bright light produced by God's nearness. But if this was a cloud in the fair sky which now favored David, it bore a blessing and deliverance for him too; for this unequal association was to fetter him no more. The line of separation is from henceforth drawn between them forever. In the wilderness God had given him an Abigail, a kindred spirit to share his rejection; and now, as he conducts the ark of God to its rest in Mount Zion, in the boundless joy of a soul rejoicing in the Lord's exaltation, he breaks the last link of his alliance with the world. His holy joy alienates the heart of her whose deadly worldliness of spirit is hereby discovered, so that morally they can no more be united.

It seems likely that it was when David returned to bless his house (1 Chron. 16:43) that he uttered Psa. 30 He could then say, “Thou host turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.” He had now risen to the height of prosperity and could say, “I shall never be moved.” His soul was simply enjoying all at the hands of the Lord; and here he exclaims, “I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou host lifted me up and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.”

In this spirit it was that David sat in his house (1 Chron. 17) and said to Nathan the prophet, “Lo I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains.” This was a very natural and godly feeling, while enjoying a vivid sense of the Lord's loving-kindness, and as such, Nathan commends it. Nevertheless, it was not the Lord's mind, and we are thus taught that the truest and most apparently spiritual desire and intention is not to be trusted or acted on without seeking direct counsel of the Lord.

“That same night the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go tell David my servant, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in,” &c.; and he goes on to say how the Lord will build him a house! When our cup is filled, we are liable, in the elation which

the sense of God's favor has secured for us, to propose services and assume with an honest purpose a place and a power of devotedness for which we may be unqualified. The word of God will always define our proper place to us, as it here does to David so blessedly accompanied by an enlarged and wonderful unfolding of the Lord's interest in Him personally. It is well to have great ambition for His glory, but the word which corrects us in our inopportune designs is sure to unfold to us the measureless nature of His own interest in us. This David learns here, and he can now go and sit before the Lord in full communion with His mind, and in that self-abasement which His presence alone ever produces. However we may praise Him for His gifts and receive them from Him, yet shall we sit in the “house of cedars.” We may mistake our due calling and place; but when we “sit before the Lord,” listening to the unfoldings of His mind and interest for us, all things fall into their right place, and we exclaim, “Who am I that thou host brought me hitherto?”

After this (chap. 18.) David subdued the Philistines, smites Moab, and the king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to stablish his dominion by the river Euphrates. The Lord preserves him wherever he goes: he puts garrisons into Edom, and the Edomites become his servants; the Syrians flee before Israel, neither would they help the children of Ammon any more. In short, the Lord vouchsafes David in an unexampled way the full tide of prosperity. How does he bear it? It was a double prosperity that he had been blessed with—spiritual and temporal; spiritual when he was led into communion with the mind and purposes of God, when, entering into God's infinite interest in himself; his imperfect ideas were lost in the boundlessness of God's promises and purpose, and temporal in the magnitude of God's ways and gifts to him. Is he able to stand all this? Adversity tests the character, being a demand on the resources in ourselves. Prosperity tests the nature and our power of self-control. In adversity we ply all our strength, and prove it, too, in order to emerge from the difficulty. In prosperity there is opportunity for the action and rule of our natural propensities, and, if not controlled, it is sure to show itself.

God having shown to David in a remarkable way how full and unsparingly He could open His hand to bless him, his prosperity was boundless; and in it an opportunity is offered to his nature, and he falls! (1 Sam. 11)

How eagerly the poor heart runs after prosperity and mercies, never remembering that, to such as we are, there is no new mercy without a new order of trial to our flesh; and the more we are at case in natural things, the greater the opportunity for our nature to expose itself. The Lord knows that the spring of the evil is there; and though we are so much more humbled when the evil is exposed, yet the exposure being needed, in order to lay bare the spring to ourselves, we are really no worse in God's judgment, because He already knew what we were capable of.

David truly convicted of his sin, is now, as we learn from Psa. 51, bowed unto a “humble and contrite spirit,” in the sense of his own corruption. He had before shown the humble and contrite spirit, resulting from the exposure of the weakness of his nature: now he feels it in the depth of degradation, through the wickedness of his nature; and in this utterance he gives expression to the heart of Israel in the latter day, when they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and be humbled before Him in the sense of their “blood-guiltiness.” Painful as is the moment both to David and to Israel, yet it is that in which God's salvation is most fully revealed to both. For the lower I am sunk, the better I can appreciate what it is to be delivered.

David, through God's wondrous grace, enters from this on a deeper knowledge of salvation. He learns what God is for the sinner, while also learning that sin against our neighbor must meet with temporal judgment. God is just, ruling among men; and the man who sins against others must be judged openly. Many sin only against God, and then their flesh is judged, as between themselves and God; but when the sin affects other men, then the judgment must be public.

David's child dies. (2 Sam. 12:18.) But soon the blessed fruits of discipline reappear in his soul; he is again the dependent and subject one. While the child lived, he besought the Lord for it; and so far from despising the chastening of the Lord, he evidently felt it most intensely; but when it is dead, he accepts God's will in perfect submission. “He arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself.” It had been a moment of thickest darkness to him, for there had been no communication from the Lord to alleviate the sorrow of his heart. And I believe this is generally the case when we are suffering judicially; it is necessary that we should feel the righteous government of God. And while passing under it for our sin, we are not conscious of either light or converse; but nevertheless, we may emerge from it with renewed strength and power, as did David; for we next find him warring against Rabbah (ver. 29) in the full fide of victory. He resumes the right path, and honor and blessing are again vouchsafed to him; and God shows him that, however inflexible He be in righteousness, His love and interest in him are unchanged.

But, nevertheless, the word of the Lord spoken by Nathan (chap. 12:10, 11) had passed: “The sword shall never depart from thy house.” And though David's soul had been so far chastened in the proximate fruit of his sin, because he had not judged himself, and also so far restored, he must further suffer judicially from God's righteous government to humble him among men.

This brings us to that period in his history when he was afflicted and humbled by the evil of his own children. In whatsoever way could a man be made to feel the evil of his nature and publicly humbled? David as king ought to have been the example of righteousness, for by righteousness was the throne to have been established; and if the head fail, the leaven must spread, and increase throughout the system. Defects in a parent's self-government will be extravagantly betrayed in his children; and from their infancy he is taught in a painful way what needs repression and crucifixion in his own nature, though he may never have committed sins actually similar to those of his children; but children are his continuation on earth, and portray his nature to him.

According to the law, I judge that Amnon ought to have suffered death for his sin. (Chap. 13:4.) David fails to be “just, ruling in the fear of God.” And judgment overtakes Amnon by the hand of his brother Absalom; who thus guilty of murder, flies the kingdom; but David, yielding to the stratagem of Joab, is weak enough, not only to allow him to return, but after a time to reinstate him in favor. (Chap. xiv.) This weakness and injustice before very long bears the bitterest fruits; for, when we unrighteously spare another in order to indulge our own feelings, we always expose ourselves to the evil of the nature which we should have controlled and condemned. The very next verse to the one which tells us of Absalom's reception by his father announces to us Absalom's parricidal rebellion. (Chap. 15:1.)

David must now flee. Sad and humiliating is it to see him, after being raised to such honors and high estate, descending from the throne and retreating from Jerusalem before the wave of tumult and rebellion evoked and fomented by his own son. He had passed through another moment similar, yet different to this. The suffering of Ziklag was retributive also, but it was more from man

on every side. Here it is the loss of Jerusalem, the Mount Zion that he loved, his position and everything, and by the hand, not of the Amalekite, but of his own son.

But he surrenders it all, leaving it to the issue, “If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation,” &e. “And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot.” How the discipline of that hour entered into his soul! Psa. 3 tells us, “Many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.” But what then? “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.” The true value of sorrow and trial is to lead the soul into simple and felt reliance on God. David had failed in this; and as he had neglected his appointed work, and thus exposed himself to temptation and sin (chap. xi. 1), so now he is subjected to a war with his own son. When we shrink from the services we are called to, not only does trouble befall us, but, like Jonah, we show that we need to be subjected to deeper exercise of soul in order to render us fit for our calling. But in this unnatural and bitter war, the suffering servant renews his confidence in God; and from the moment when he “laid him down and slept” (which I am induced to place where it is said, “And King David, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there,” 2 Sam. 16:14), all things went favorably. He says, “I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.” “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.” There is no fear of man, however great or near us, when we are able to sleep because of reliance on God. Ahithophel's counsel is despised, and David returns to Jerusalem. But Absalom must fall!

David has other sorrows; his history pre-eminently teaches us how continually the exercise of his soul must be kept up. When delivered from Sheba (chap. xx.), there is a famine in the land for three successive years (chap. xxi.), which again leads him to the Lord in inquiry, and He tells him that it is for Saul and his bloody house, the last of whom is thus extirpated. After this (ver. 15), David had one more war with the Philistines. In the end of his course, even as at the beginning, he encounters a giant—not the same giant; for what we once really conquer, we have no need to reconquer. But other giants arise which test our strength, and we are made to feel that what is easy to faith is critical to one walking without its exercise; and that if our dependence on God be less, our ability is less, whatever may be the extent of our experience and attainment. David here “waxed faint;” and when the giant “thought to have slain him,” Abishai succored him and smote the Philistine. “Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt no more go out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.”

But another and peculiar discipline is necessary for this already much-disciplined servant, and that at the close of his life. Years before he had desired to build a house for the Lord—a desire good in itself, but which he was unprepared to carry out; therefore the Lord, while at the same time greatly blessing David in his own soul by the revelation of his personal interest in him, refused to sanction the execution of it. But it is only at the end of his life that he is shown how ill prepared he was to build it, for he did not even know where it was to be built; and this he must learn through his own failure, as the fruit of God's discipline. The site of the temple is revealed to him in its moral value and suitability; so that, his own soul having learned the nature of that grace which was the basis of it, his last hours might be spent in preparing for the erection of it.

When David had rest from all his enemies, and naturally felt his exalted position, Satan takes advantage of him, and tempts him to number the people, in order to exult in the greatness of his resources. (Chap. xxiv.) It was God who had raised him to his present position, but the heart of man will count up God's gifts, in order to be independent of the giver. He owed everything that he had to God in so distinct and wonderful a way, that it betrayed the working of nature in a very open and shameless manner, that he should, at the end of his course so publicly show his desire to be accounted great because of the number of the people, rather than because of the help of God who had so supported him. For this the Lord visits him, but permits him to choose one of three afflictions. When we err, there is need of discipline to correct the flesh; but if our error be a private one, then the chastening is private, though none the less painful; but if public, the chastening must be public, for God shows His justice to all his creatures. David is restored in soul, for he chooses the affliction which is most immediately from the hand of the Lord, thereby showing that his dependence was revived.

And now a new and wondrous field of blessing opens to him. The most touching evidence of how God's grace flows from His love is, that when restoration is established it is always with a fuller revelation of how fully and happily we are accepted by Him. When the sword of the Lord was stretched over Jerusalem, and David was cast on God in a true sense of his evil, God declares His mercy; and the prophet Gad is directed to toll David to go up and set up an altar in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite. “And the Lord answered David there, and the plague was stayed.” But still more. Having found at this altar acceptance with God, while afraid to go to the altar of burnt-offering in the high place of Gibeon, which belonged to the first tabernacle under the law, he learns for the first time the site of the temple. Long before he had essayed to erect this temple—this type of the Lord Jesus Christ; but never till now was he humbled enough to be taught of God the right place for it; nor did he, like many of us, know those exercises of soul and lessons of grace which he should submit to ere he knew the most preliminary part of the work which he had conceived himself equal for. It is good to desire high and great services, but we must be prepared to reach them in God's way. If James and John desire to sit the one on the right hand, and the other on the left in Christ's kingdom, are they prepared to drink of the cup He drank of, and be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized? David has now acquired a sense of God's grace unknown to him before, and which qualified him for determining the site of that building which would illustrate the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who had in Himself declared, that mercy rejoiceth over judgment; and therefore David said, “This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel;” and there the temple was erected.

It now only remains for us to notice the close of David's life. It appears that after the discipline and instruction of Mount Moriah, he applied himself assiduously to prepare the materials for the temple. (1 Chron. 22) And more than this (chap. having made Solomon, his son, king over Israel, he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and Levites, and divided them into their courses. (Chap. 23. - 28.) Beautiful and blessed conclusion to his eventful and remarkable life, which his address to all the chiefs of Israel properly terminates as to testimony! Here is the end of his public course; but what were his private musings? His “last words” (2 Sam. 23) give utterance to them. There we learn his own practical feelings and judgment about everything:—God's grace to him; his own imperfect condition: the hope of his soul and the object it rested on; and, finally, his estimate of the world—in its antagonism to God, expressed by the “men

of Belial.”

With the remembrance of these deeply interesting and experimental “last words” on our souls, and amid the circle of faithful and valiant ones who had accompanied him, and who are not to be forgotten (ver. 8, he.), we may close the history of this “man after God's own heart;” while we sing aloud, “Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord, and that my soul knoweth right well.”

(Continued from page 126)

Discipline: 17. Elijah

The place which Elijah occupied in God's dealing with His people lends a peculiar interest to his character and history. The nature of the services required of him during that remarkable time necessarily developed the quality of the grace that was in him, and at the same time subjected him to the discipline which would mold and fashion him for those services. God, in every stage of His counsel, appoints the servant suited to sustain His will; but though that servant be endowed by Him with power to do so, yet, unless he be controlled and disciplined directly by the hand of God, he will be continually rushing into devisings of his nature, no matter how godly and divine may be his intent. For we greatly err if we think that to have the divine thought is all that is necessary as to our service; our bodies and minds must truly and efficiently become instrumental in expressing the thought; and this subjects us, as servants of God, to discipline which we often cannot understand. Discipline for known faults or shortcomings we can easily comprehend; but when it is that peculiar order of training which fits a man to be God's instrument for witnessing His name, we can no more understand it than the plants of the earth can understand why they must pass through all the vicissitudes of winter in order to bring forth a more abundant harvest.

The first notice we have of Elijah is in 1 Kings 17, when he appears as a herald of judgment to Ahab. But though his public career commenced here, it was by no means the beginning of his private exercises, for we learn from James 5:17 that the judgment here so confidently announced was granted in direct answer to his own prayer. “As the Lord liveth,” says Elijah, “before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” And why had he prayed for this? Ahab's wickedness had, in the sight of the Lord, surpassed all who had preceded him. He had married Jezebel, the daughter of the King of the Zidonians, and had reared up an altar to Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. Elijah, “a man of like passions with us,” but a righteous man, and one whose dependence was on God, could not witness these abominations in the midst of God's people with indifference; and he earnestly entreats that God would thus speak to the nation in judgment, and vindicate His own name. His trust was in God, and he looked to Him to correct His people, and lead them to understand that dependence which he himself had learned. Suspension of usual mercies was the way of all others to effect this: the loss of dew and rain for three years and a half was fitted to make them feel and remember the source from which their blessings flowed. The deprivation of natural mercies by superhuman means has always the effect of impressing man with a sense that he must look to the Creator. The course of nature has been suspended by a power unknown to him; and though, while he enjoyed the usual blessings, he little thought of God, the moment they are suspended, he is made to feel that he has no remedy but in appealing to Him whom heretofore he had abandoned and disobeyed. Elijah, grieved and oppressed by the apostasy of Israel, finds relief for his heart in prayer, and thus obtains from God the remedy for recalling His people, and Ahab their king, to a sense of how they owed every mercy they had to the will of God, What a striking and interesting light is this in which his history opens to our view! Having prayed in secret, he comes forth for the first time to declare the result of it, and is thus a blessed and prepared witness for such evil and

disastrous times, and a witness, too (as the Holy Ghost, ages afterward, testified), that every soul thus disciplined to wait on God in any emergency will obtain the same result. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” What peculiar dignity and assured power does the man taught of God stand forth to testify against the corruption of his day! Witness his first meeting with Ahab. (Chap. xvii. 1.) How instructive to see a lone and hitherto obscure man rise up in the power of God, and tell the king of Israel, “Thus saith the Lord, There shall not be rain or dew these years, but according to my word!” Elijah takes the supreme place which Ahab had forfeited; for Israel's king ought to have been God's most distinguished servant; but having so grievously departed from God's way, the Lord now sends His own servant, disciplined in secret, to deliver a message and testimony which asserted His supreme control of everything. The rain, on which depended the fruits of the earth, should not fall but according to His servant's word.

And now, having delivered this message on behalf of God, this same servant is to be dealt with individually. “Get thee hence,” says the Lord, “and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.” He is not to be outside the afflictions and judgments with which God visits His people; but he is, through dependence on God, to be above them. So is it with every true servant; so was it with Elijah. The period, which is one of unmitigated affliction to the willful, becomes a peculiarly profitable season to the man of faith. If his prayer has been signally answered, he must learn that for that very reason he must live more in dependence than ever; and also, that the afflictions which he had prayed for must fall on him too, unless he adheres strictly to the path of faith. Very often when our petitions are graciously answered, we are less careful to retain the place of dependence, whereas the very benefit we have reaped therefrom should make us the more so. It is faith in God which sets His servant above the afflictions of God's people, and not any ordinary set of circumstances especially preserved for him. Elijah must “hide;” but, like the blessed One whom he foreshadowed, he is to linger in Israel to the very last, though hidden and unknown, for it is within the precincts of the land that God first provides for him. With His own hand, as it were, He feeds and nourishes him; the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and evening; birds, so voracious that they neglect to feed their own offspring, are transformed by God into ministers for His servant's need; “and he drank of the brook Cherith.”

But after a while, he is made to feel still more keenly the drought and parching dearth of Israel; the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land;” he was sensibly to feel the sufferings of God's people even though they had not been incurred by his own willfulness, but at the same time to reckon on God and say, “The Lord is my helper.” This was our blessed Lord's experience, only in the perfection, which always characterized Him; and to this very scene He refers when, in Luke 4, He felt the rejection of Israel, and how dried up and parched were their hearts towards Himself, and makes use of it to illustrate to His audience, that He was not without resource. If acceptance failed in Israel as water had in time past, the same blessed God who had provided a Gentile widow to be the hostess of Elijah, would provide hospitality and reception for the Lord of the earth in the hearts of the desolate Gentiles outside Israel.

Elijah there, having been taught to wait on the Lord for daily support in the land of promise, is now to hear the word, “Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee.” This was a hard line of discipline, and service is therein opened to him. He, an Israelite, has to leave the land of promise, dwell with a Gentile

widow and be supported by her; just as the Lord during His rejection by Israel, is now dwelling with the Gentile widow; and blessed it is to see that every subordinate is to be led by a path in one way similar to His. Elijah obeys; and, like Him, there serves in the wondrous history of God's grace to man. At the gate he met the widow. When faith is simple (and it is always simple when generated exclusively by the Word of God), we find the right thing in the right place. He might have passed by the widow who was to support him, because she was poor, and have sought one better off; but his eye was fixed on God, and nothing daunted by the extremity of her poverty (for faith is always confirmed by its own activities), he without embarrassment or questioning, says to her, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” A soul led of God, always, I may say, feels its nay; it does not doubt its way, but at first only asks for the least; and by the way that compliance is rendered, it is emboldened to pursue its full requirement. So here with Elijah, when he found that she willingly discontinued her own work, forgetting the claims her necessity had on her, he is emboldened to ask more, and becomes assured too, that this is the widow to whom God has sent him. She was willing to share with him all she could, but when the prophet solicits from her what she had not, she is compelled to disclose the full tale of her poverty; and then it is that Elijah rises up in all the greatness of Him whose servant he was. How bright is that moment to the soul which has been carefully and stealthily threading its way, following the ray of divine light, clear to itself but as yet shedding no light beyond, when it is suddenly launched into full consciousness of God's purpose by the demonstration of His power! Thus it was with Elijah. The Word of the Lord had now reached him, and he declares it to the widow, and forthwith takes up his abode in her house; and for a full year was supported in this remarkable way by the Lord. We often fail to receive the Word of God, because we do not advance where it can reach us, i.e., we do not come to the point where the Lord can use us to set forth His name; but when we do, we are able to declare it in full power; and not only so, but we are sustained in the enjoyment of the blessing into which it has introduced us. Must it not have been enjoyment to Elijah to learn day by day how God could sustain him in that poor, desolate home? Must not the bread and oil, which he ate there day by day, have been sweet, while his soul realized that it came directly from the hand of God? for I do not believe that there was one grain of flour more in the barrel at the end than there was at the beginning.

But he was not to leave that roof without entering on another line of discipline. The widow's son dies, and Elijah, though not without resource, passes through deep exercises of soul before he appropriates the grace that is in God to meet the need. (Ver. 17-24.) But how fully is that need met! What blessed and momentous revelations were vouchsafed to the soul of Elijah in that widow's house! He was there carried experimentally into the full range of God's blessing to man; he had communion, though at a distance, with the scope and circle of the achievements of the Son of God. Be learned how God could preserve from death, how He could meet the distress in averting the evil on the earth; in a word, he learned the range of all temporal blessing known or enjoyed on the earth. And more than this, he is now conducted into the deepest of all mysteries, even that of resurrection from among the dead; he had seen death arrested and its terrors assuaged; but now being brought in contact with the depth of sorrow (for a widow losing her only son, her last link to earth, is the most penetrating illustration of human sorrow and bereavement), he is used of God to display His power and grace in overcoming death and introducing life anew: and thus in a pre-eminent way is educated in the mightiest work of God. The exercises of his soul at this time, because of death charged on himself by the sorrowing widow (ver. 18), and the experiences of his soul because of the power of God in giving life from the dead, must have been

peculiar and wonderful, and very grateful must have been the testimony of the widow after the resurrection of her son. “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the Lord in thy month is truth.” God was honored and His servant vindicated in the great work of resurrection. Elijah having learned these deep lessons of the grace and power of God in the house of the Gentile-all of them foreshadowing the glorious disclosures of that same grace and power which have been made in the Gentile home here on earth, during the dry day of blessing to Israel, is now directed to go and show himself to Ahab and testify that “the Lord will send rain upon the earth.” (Chap. 18:1.) He had been hid to Israel, and Ahab had sought him in every nation and kingdom but in vain; but now at this juncture, when the king had arranged with Obadiah to divide the land in search of grass, he comes forth to present himself. His first meeting is with Obadiah.

The faithful remnant is ever the foremost to recognize the prophet of God; and though the faith of the remnant may waver, it is finally reassured and able to announce to the ungodly one the approach of him in whose hand was the blessing. Ahab on encountering Elijah charges him thus, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel,” on which Elijah denounces the king and his father's house as the guilty cause. The man who has learned grace, and comes before the ungodly as the witness and minister of it, gives a strength and point to his denunciations which the man of law never could give. The one comes to rectify and repair every defect which he may expose, the other exposes with the feeling that he has no remedy for what he deprecates. The prophets of Baal are now challenged to open competition with the Lord of hosts, and the most glorious moment in any servant's life is Elijah's, when he stands forth alone to maintain the truth of God against all the assumptions of pretenders. He proposes a test and God answers by fire. (Ver. 21-39.) Let me say in passing that the highest evidence of our God and of His truth is accorded by the acceptance which He certifies to each soul who knows Him in atonement; that is to say, who has been received by Him. God answers by fire. Now in this mode of answer, figuratively expressed by fire, the accepted soul has the sense that while God receives, He does so in all the strength and terribleness of holiness; so that the reception is not, so to speak, a matter of impulse, but established in the stern holiness of His nature, which assures that soul, that while he receives it as a sinner, he has pure and holy ground for doing so; and thus not only is the divinity of the acceptance authenticated, but the perpetuity and perfectness of it is incontrovertibly assured. God always testifies of His acceptance by the holiness of His presence-by fire. The soul who knows acceptance has a sense of the holiness of Him who accepts, and this is the best evidence of divinity.

What a season of strength and education was this when, confounding and confuting the pretenders of his day by one simple test, a test well understood by the people of God, he stood forth alone, valiant for God and waiting on Him! How his soul must have been enlarged while he held counsel with God, confronting the king and all the people of Israel! What calmness the sense of competence gives! He can patiently allow the pretenders to make full trial of all their powers, and when they have exhausted themselves and proved their powerlessness, he comes forward to repair the altar of the Lord, after the divine order. He is acting for God and with God. He will not only repair the altar, but he will show how bountifully God can display His power to His forgetful people. What deep and happy conceptions of God Elijah must have had when he ministered thus for Him! He had so learned God at Cherith and Sarepta that he is prepared for those public demonstrations, and can enter on them with calmness and dignity.

But now the people having acknowledged their evil and again turned to the Lord, and Elijah having vindicated the truth by the execution of the pretenders, the judgment will be removed. The people were afflicted with drought in order that they might learn that the God whom they slighted was alone the source and fountain of all their blessings. Having learned this, in God's gracious way, the affliction will cease, for God always removes chastisement when it has accomplished the purpose for which it was sent; and the servant who has been faithful in maintaining the truth in the face of the opponents, is proportionately used as a channel of God's mercies to His people. Elijah can now say to Ahab, “Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.” But what does he do himself He goes to the top of Carmel, casts himself down upon the earth, and puts his face between his knees. The strength and power with which God furnishes His servant for public testimony never supplies the place of the deep exercise which the soul must pass through when made a channel of His grace. After a day's work in supreme, mighty power, the Lord spent His night in prayer, in order, if I may so say, to commune with His Father touching the result. Active demonstrations of power hence supersede that close engrossing communion with God which the real servant seeks and values all the more for having acted publicly for God, in order to know His mind and follow out His purpose. Elijah is waiting on God; and very instructive it is to us to note how a man, who a moment before could use so much power as to call fire down from heaven, must with intense earnestness, wait on God for the manifestation of His mercies. Seven times does Elijah send his servant to see whether there was any indication of the coming and promised blessing. At length there was the very smallest token, “a little cloud like a man's hand.” It is enough for faith. The prophet not only announces to Ahab that this insignificant token was the very blessing prayed and waited for, “but the hand of the Lord being upon him, he girded his loins,” and sees Ahab safe to the very gate of his city.

What a height of success had Elijah now reached through his faith and labor! Could anything, we might ask, henceforth move him after such signal honor and power being vouchsafed to him by God? One who knows little of the human heart might say, it could not; but, alas! it is no rare page in the history of God's servants for discouragement and withering to set in, from the very point of their greatest success. So was it with David. After a marked deliverance from Saul, he exclaims, “I shall one day perish at the hands of Saul,” and he retreats to Achish. So was it with Jonah. When his preaching produced such an effect that God's judgment was averted, he was so angry that he would do nothing more. So is it with Elijah. After the signal instances and proofs he had known of that God's power and present help, when he heard of Jezebel's intentions against him, “he went for his life, and came to Beersheba, and left his servant there, but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree, and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers.” (Chap. xix. 4.) What a contrast between a man of faith and a man of unbelief! Who would have thought that Elijah under the juniper-tree was the Elijah of Cannel but a day or two before! How feeble and weak is the most notable of God's servants without faith! But such reverses and hours of darkness are necessary for such a servant; aye, as necessary in God's discipline as are his brightest moments, for then it is that he learns for himself the power of the Invisible. This was the secret of Moses' strength. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible. And when a soul has been much engaged with the external marks and evidences of God's workings, it needs all the more that education which will establish it in that which faith pre-eminently seeks and rests on, even the peculiar, private, unseen education of God to itself.

Elijah leaves the land and wanders alone into the wilderness, seeking isolation apart from his fellow men. What a journey! trusting in none, attended by none. What living death, when a man feels only safe when entirely separated from his kind! Our blessed Lord could not “commit Himself to man,” because He knew what was in man; but Elijah shunned the company of men in fear and bitterness of soul, and sought his death at the hand of God. Blessed God! thy compassion fails not; thou wilt save the afflicted soul. “He remembereth our frame.” The first relief which his weary spirit has is in unconsciousness: “he lay and slept under the juniper-tree.” And there the angel touched him and said, “Arise and eat.” “And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.” This was a deeper and a closer token of God's interest and care for him than the supply of the ravens or the widow's barrel. The cake baker on the coals and the cruise of water at his head, intimate to him how God provides for him; but the presence of the angel to point out and urge him to partake of them, displays the Lord's own personal interest in him. Solitary as he was, he was not left alone or unattended. An angel is sent as his companion and servant; and a second time he touches him, after watching him doubtless as he slept, and with increasing solicitude for him, says, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.” Whither was that journey to be? To Horeb, the Mount of God.

I have no doubt that this twofold eating had a deeply mystical meaning, and illustrates to us the peculiar supplies which the Lord vouchsafes to our souls as preparatory to a season of deep exercise. Such a time forty days in the wilderness typify, when the sensible connection between all things of human interest and support are palpably suspended. Moses and our Lord went through this experience, but without the previous preparation accorded to Elijah; but the latter represents to us the way common to man. At the outset, supplied and strengthened, he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights. These forty days in the wilderness without food or human sustenance is the path that must be traversed by the soul that would learn God in His great reality to ourselves and His purposes on earth. At Horeb, the Mount of God, all things are naked and open; and the soul of Elijah has to do with God, and God alone. These individual communications are opened on the part of the Lord by the searching question, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” He was then instructed to “go forth” from the cave where he had retreated, and “stand on the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by.” Elijah's own true state is now brought out. The Lord is not in the whirlwind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire. These were the demonstrations of God; but for Elijah there was something deeper, holier, more personal; he learns the superiority of the still small voice of God to all the outward demonstrations; a lesson which he needed much, for doubtless the wondrous scene at Carmel had unduly filled his vision at the expense of that personal link which would have sustained him under subsequent disappointment. To re-establish this link was the interesting scene under the juniper tree and the ministry of the angel; and to lay bare his soul, was the forty days' journey to Horeb, apart from the region of humanity, terminating in this blessed instruction, which brought God Himself so very nigh to his soul. Well might he wrap his face in his mantle and listen. And if he could not satisfactorily reply, to the question, again repeated, “What doest thou here?” he is instructed to “go, return,” and execute his Lord's counsels. Willful as he had been, now, brought to Horeb, the still small voice of God will unfold to him His purposes on earth: the wicked king was to be replaced, and the sword was to be drawn in Israel; but seven thousand souls, a faithful remnant, were still left to testify for God. This was to silence all Elijah's self-consequence: he had said, “I, only I, am left.” But the Lord now shows him that He had seven thousand more witnesses, and, still further, another prophet was to be anointed

in his room. Great as had been his services, God's truth and power did not depend on him; but though his earthly testimony was to close, God was purposing a higher and more blessed portion for His servant, which, however, is not disclosed to him here, as far as we see. What wonderful education was all this! With what different ideas of God towards himself and towards man must he have departed from that sacred mount! Truly humbled he was, truly interested for God, truly linked to Him in his secret soul, and esteeming others better than himself.

The first fruits of this instruction at Horeb are seen in his first act, being the call of Elisha; and to him, it appears, he committed the anointing of both Hazael and Jam. (See 2 Kings 8; 9) That he had profited by the discipline, his whole subsequent course evidences. In chap. xxi. 17, &c., he encounters Ahab at Naboth's vineyard, and fearlessly denouncing him, declares the judgment of God against him and against Jezebel also. He is used by the blessed God to pronounce how grievous it is in His sight for any one, much more the eminent, to deprive any of His people of their divine portion and inheritance, and how such an act will draw down the severest judgment: a fine service for one who had hitherto but partially comprehended the heart of God towards His people. Elijah now fears not to be the exponent of this Magna Charta, viz., that God will not suffer any one to deprive or divert His gift from any of his own, without terrible and summary judgments. “He that defiles the temple of God, him will God defile.” “I would that they were cut off who trouble you.” “Woe unto him by whom the offense cometh.” All these Scriptures breathe the same principle. Ahab humbles himself, and God in His never-failing grace intimates to His servant a respite of the sentence he had pronounced on the king. Unlike Jonah, whose education being less complete, had rebelled against the goodness of God, thwarting his own predictions; Elijah is content, and fully accords with God's mind. He who has learned grace for himself can understand the ways of grace for others.

We now come to Elijah's last act of public testimony, (2 Kings 1,) when he comes forth to rebuke the king of Israel for sending to Baal-zebub to inquire about his sickness, as if there were no God in Israel. The apostasy had become so fearful and abandoned that the existence of Jehovah is ignored, and, in the very center of it, Elijah is to stand up to declare that death must vindicate the truth and existence of God when unbelief disowns and disallows all other evidence. “Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up: thou shalt surely die.” If we do not believe that God is, what awaits us but death? The mission of an Elijah is to announce this deeply solemn truth, and then to depart from the guilty scene. Thus did this honored servant, and retired and sat on the top of an hill, unassailable and in the conscious power of moral separation and elevation. Is this the same man who had fled for his life into the wilderness? Captains and their hosts are as nothing to him now. The fire of God (though, as he learned at Horeb, it contained not the voice to his individual soul) is now at his disposal for the destruction of his enemies. Twice God thus miraculously certifies the authority of His servant, and then tells him to go down and complete his mission. Apparently his life would be at their mercy, but in the power of God he was as unassailable in the king's court as on the top of the hill. Elijah obeys, and in the presence of the king reiterates God's solemn judgment, fearlessly vindicating the name of God in the very center of the apostasy, where its power and evil were most dominant: a fit finale this to his blessed and honorable career of public service. When we transport ourselves into such a scene, while we must be filled with admiration of the man and of his work, we are still more compelled to lay our hands on our hearts and say to our God, “How dost thou fashion thy servants for thine own glory and

purposes!” But though Elijah's public career is now over, his personal history as to earth has yet to close, and that in a flood of glory, far beyond anything that had been vouchsafed to him in his earthly service. “The Lord would now take him into heaven,” to Himself, and in a way above and beyond the common lot of mall. Like Enoch, he was to be “translated that he should not see death.” Doubtless he knew what was about to happen; for the way in which he spends his last hours on earth is deeply significant and blessedly instructive, when we think what a prospect was before him in his exit from earth, and the nature of that exit. In these his last hours he connects himself personally, and by personal toil with all those places in Israel most commemorative of God's ways with his people. Gilgal was where the reproach of Egypt was rolled off; Bethel where Jacob saw the ladder of God reaching from earth to heaven; Jericho where God would make His grace rise above all man's rebellion and evil; and lastly, Jordan, which was his point of exit, the crossing of which, while it recalled Israel's glorious entry into the land, told of death the end of man in the flesh. In prospect of being conveyed by a chariot of glory far away from those scenes of slighted mercy and apostasy, Elijah's heart, like that of his great prototype, is still true to God's interests on earth, and he must visit them once more, though at great personal costs (for he must have traveled many miles to do so). The fact of his own personal lot being so glorious does not detach his heart from the interests and glory as to earthly testimony of that Lord for whom he had been so faithful a witness. As to himself, it was at that spot where in type the waters of death had closed over the old man in his corrupt and fallen nature, that the chariot of fire awaited him to bear him away to the glory in which he has since appeared in close converse with his Lord upon the Holy Mount, and in which he shall again appear when He comes for the deliverance of the faithful remnant which are morally identified with that seven thousand of whom Elijah was told in the days of his discouragement, and who after purging the land of its defilement and apostasy, will share with all His redeemed ones the joy of His kingdom.

What a course was thine, Elijah!——fraught with trials and death-struggles, but still more fraught with instruction in the heart of Him whom to serve was thy joy and glory; a course entered on in secret prayer and waiting on God, and ended in a chariot of fire to bear thee to Himself !

Chapter 20

Scripture Query: Does Man Make a Covenant in the Sacraments?

Q, Does Man Make a Covenant in the Sacraments?

A. If he does, he is lost; for he will certainly fail, and there can be no consequence of failure (for it is sin) but condemnation; for man's entering into a covenant is not grace—the grace of God. I account Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be precious institutions of the Lord Jesus—one as admitting publicly in the kingdom on the principle of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, spiritual fellowship of His death in the unity of His body, as sitting by grace in heavenly places. But talking of making a covenant with God is total ignorance of the place we are in as Christians. What do such as so talk think of redemption? Where is a word found in Scripture about a covenant in connection with the Lord's Supper, The whole Christian position is therein lost, and we are put simply where a Jew under the law was—and worse; because he was placed there that we might learn that we could not possibly stand there.

Chapter 21

Burning and Eating the Sacrifices

(Heb. 13:7-16.)

There was a twofold character in the offerings which has its counterpart for us in Christ: and the want of firm grasp of this, to distinguish and yet maintain them together, lies at the root of much want of enjoyment and of feebleness in the children of God. The first and most fundamental point was, that in the offerings there was that which was consumed. Being identified with the sin of man, it was consumed under the wrath and indignation of God; or it went up as a savor of rest, as that which was sweet and acceptable to God, as, for instance, in the burnt-offering. In the sin-offering, there was God's judgment of sin, and therefore the greater part was burnt outside the camp. But besides this, there was another character that entered into the sacrifices. In very many cases, men partook of them. In the meat-offering and peace-offering, such was the fact; and even in the offering for sin, the priest had a portion.

And I believe that this is what is referred to here. These Jewish Christians were in great danger of forgetting their privileges. They had abandoned everything they had once revered as the religion given them by God: they were no longer gazing on things that shadowed His glory. The grandeur, the magnificence, the glory, of the Levitical institutions—all was left behind. God was not now, as of old, thundering from heaven. He had wrought with infinitely greater moral glory. He had sent His Son from Heaven: pardon and peace had been brought, and joy and liberty in the Holy Ghost; but all this was unseen. It is, however, one thing to enter into the comfort of the truth when all is bright and fresh, and another thing to hold it fast in time of reproach, shame, derision, and the falling away of some. When the first joy is somewhat lessened, the heart naturally returns to what it had once rested on. And there is always this danger for us—when evil is felt, the blessing not being so present to the soul. Who among us that has long known Christ—known His ways—but has not felt this snare? And what is the divine remedy? It is just that which the Holy Ghost here uses— “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” We must not sever this verse from the succeeding one: “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines,” &c. The Holy Ghost would guard these Jewish believers against that which, compared with our own proper Christian blessings, is mere trash, earthly—priesthood, holy places, offerings, tithes, &c. These things, after all, were but novelties compared with the old thing, which is Jesus. Looked at historically, Christianity might seem a new thing. He had been but recently manifested; but who was he? and whence had He come? He was “the first born of every creature “yea, the Creator! “All things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” He was the One whom God intended to manifest, from all eternity. And here we see Him in His complete person— “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” Through Him God could bless. With Him He would have us occupied. We are told to remember them that had the rule over us—to follow their faith, even if themselves were gone. But these all pass out of the scene—while “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” This is the only thing that abides unchangeably, and establishes too. “Meats have not profited those who have been occupied therein.” Many might have abstained it was God's bidding that they should; but if occupied with the

thing, it was not for their profit. Christ was the substance: all else was shadow. Therefore he goes on to say, “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” If others have the husk, we are feeding on the kernel. (The “tabernacle” was used to express the Jewish thing.) Everything had passed away in Christ. In Philippians the apostle could speak contemptuously of circumcision in contrast with having Christ, even though it was of God. To be occupied with it, now that Christ was come, was to be outside, to be of “the concision.”

“To eat.” It was not merely the offering, nor the burning of the offering, but the partaking of it. We have got Christ Himself, and our sins put away—sin, root and branch, dealt with by God. There is not now one question unsettled for us who believe. Has He one question unsettled with Christ? and if not with Christ, He has not with us, for He died and rose for us, and we are one with Him. As in the Jewish system, God and the offerer had their portions in the sacrifices,—so now we may say that God has His own portion in the same Christ on whom we feed. The entrance into this exceedingly blessed thought is one of the things which the children of God greatly fail in—that we are seated by God Himself at the same table where He has His own joy and portion. Of course there is that in which we cannot share. In the burnt-offering all went up to God. The sweet fragrance of all that Christ was, goes up to Him. We must remember that God has His infinite joy in Christ; and not only for what He is in Himself, but for that which He has done for my sins. When we think of this, all of self is absorbed, and must sink before it. The old nature we have still; but it is in us, to be crushed. We have to treat it all, its likings and dislikings, as a hateful thing. But the new life needs sustaining. It grows by feeding. As in natural life, the mere possession of riches will not sustain life, but it has to be nourished; so in spiritual life, it is not only true that Christ is my life in the presence of God, but I must make Christ my own for my food—eating of Him day by day. (John 6) He is in very deed given to us, to be turned by faith into nourishment for us. And the sweet thing is that we are entitled thus to think of Christ, given by God to be this food to us. It is not only that Christ is God's, but He is ours too: our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Chapter 22

The Translation of Elijah

(2 Kings 1&2.)

WE might read these two chapters in connection with this event, though it is only in the second of them we have it recorded.

Ahaziah, of the house of Omri, and the successor of his father Ahab on the throne of Israel, appears before us here, as in deep apostasy from the God of Israel. He was sick—and in his sickness, he seeks to a god of the nations; and being withstood because of this, by the servant of the God of Israel, he sends officers to take him.

This was a full expression of apostasy. And, accordingly, his death is to be read as condign, specific judgment. It was a judicial death, and so was that of his captains and their fifties, who had entered into the spirit of their master, and were the representatives and executors of his iniquity.

This was all in righteousness. The king of Israel had perfected sin, and judgment was executed upon him.

In Luke 9 this is referred to. When the Lord Jesus was refused entrance into a Samaritan village, His disciples would fain have acted the part of Elijah upon Ahaziah's captains, but the Lord forbad them. They did not know what spirit they were of; that is, they did not discern the time; they did not understand the Lord and His business in this world. They mistook the dispensation, and would have treated it as a time of judgment. It was in intelligence—in that light which distinguishes things that differ—that they were wanting. Their affections were right; their purpose and design will be answered in due season, when the day of vengeance comes. So that it was not in affection that they erred, but in dispensational knowledge; and, thus, in true holiness, or in the holiness of the truth. Their Lord had come to save, not to kill. He was here among men to bless them, not to judge them.

This is important, for it tells us, as many other witnesses do, that true holiness is conduct according to light or truth, according to the way and place of God at the given time. “Everything is beautiful in its season.” That which is holy, in divine seasonableness, is unholy when found elsewhere.

This may surely instruct us; but the scene in chapter 1 has but little relief in it. We are in the next place, however, introduced to a very different thing. (Chap. 2.)

We are encouraged to enter upon it with the brightest expectations, being set on the eve of the translation of Elijah; for the time, we are told, had come “when the Lord would take up Elijah to heaven by a whirlwind.” But there is much incidental instruction here.

At an earlier moment, Elisha had forfeited, as I may express it, the mantle of his master. He had not proved himself to be fully up to the possession of it; his heart had not been thoroughly single, and from that moment to the time of this chapter we had not seen him in company with his master.

(See 1 Kings 19:19-21.) This subjects him to a fresh proof; and Elijah himself, and the sons of the prophets, are made the instruments for conducting the process under the hand of God.

Elijah tells him again and again to go back, as he himself was pursuing the stages of his journey from Gilgal to the eastern side of the Jordan. And the sons of the prophets, whether at Bethel or at Jericho, came forth again and again to exercise his spirit, and try the earnestness and stability of his faith, by casting a shadow across his path, and thus bring his soul into perplexity and doubt.

This is a common case. The Lord, at times, with some of His choicest servants, will enter upon severe processes of purifying. He purges the vessels of His house, that they may be fitted for the Master's use. And in doing this He will use different instruments, as He pleases, in His wisdom. It may be the direct action of His own word and Spirit; it may be more immediately through His saints, or through the people of the world. Here He exercises Elisha by the word of Elijah—His own word, I may say, expressed through His prophet. He will prove, after this manner, by the patient, successive stages of a long journey, whether Elisha's heart were indeed now freed (as once it had not been) from the entanglements of mere human influences, from the honey of home and kindred associations. And He also allows him to be exercised by the ways of those who were not in his elevation, a generation of saints who were not standing in the light and certainty of his own spirit, and who, therefore, by their communications, were well fitted to cast a shadow across his path, or introduce some perplexity into his soul. But he stands these tests, and pursues his way, in full and close company with his master, the prophet of God, who was about to be translated to heaven. He has his answers ready, whether for Elijah or for the sons of the prophets; and we find him calm, decided, patient, undistracted all along the way from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, and then across the river, to wherever, in short (for he knew not the way any more than Abraham of old), Elijah, that is, the hand of God, the God of glory, might be pleased to call him or to draw him.

Surely this was recovery. There was no longer a going back to kiss father or mother, but a single heart that made the Lord and His presence its place, the Lord and His pleasure its business.

The sons of the prophets at length retire. They stand to view afar off, while Elijah, with a stroke of his mantle, divides the waters of Jordan, making a passage for himself (and for Elisha, too, if he should have courage to follow on in such a wondrous, perilous path) to cross the river. And he does so. Then Elijah himself also closes the severe and heated trial through which he was putting his friend and minister. For when they altogether reach the opposite side of the river, he says to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.” For every testing time shall end—every process for purging shall have its measure. Men's iniquities against the Lord shall close in the judgment of righteousness; God's discipline of His saints shall close in the possession of glory. Elijah yields; and Elisha, has to write his own story for the future. “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.”

This reminds me of Solomon in 2 Chron. 1; for after he had approved himself as taking his throne in right spirit, God appears to him and says to him, “ask what I shall give thee.” And Elisha's answer to Elijah is as Solomon's answer to God. Solomon does not ask for the life of his enemies, nor for riches and honors for himself, but for wisdom to execute the service appointed him over the Lord's people. So Elisha here simply replies to Elijah, “Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”

This was beautiful. This was aiming high; this was purposing great things; this was asking as for the right hand and the left hand place in the kingdom. “Are ye able to drink of my cup and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized,” we might say, would be the spirit of the answer. And Elijah accordingly says to him, “Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless if thou see me, when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.”

The single eye is the secret of pure spiritual energy. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” These were the terms then, and these are the terms now. It is not a question of life, but of strength in the Spirit. Elisha must stand it—and through grace he does. They still go on together, he and Elijah; and as they walk, they talk. But all the time the eyes of Elisha was open. His heart was upon the word of his master. He had hid the promise there; and though he may be still passing on, there is no distraction, and so with us it ought to be. We may take up one circumstance after another, and converse with them too, like Elisha here; but what is the heart affecting, where is the eye directed? Is it like this dear man's, in the right place? The walk and the talk, the circumstances of the journey, had not disturbed his spirit, nor diverted his eye; so that at the moment when the horses and chariot appeared, and Elijah was about to be carried up to heaven, Elisha's eye was upon them. He saw his ascending master, and got the mantle.

This is certainly beautiful—to be walking and talking still, still occupied with the circumstances around us, but all the time the eye kept towards the object which God had proposed to it. It is like Abraham again, whose ear was so attempered to the voice of the Lord, that the moment that voice called him, he had only to say, “Here am I.”

Elisha at once used what he so prized. He took up the mantle of his master, and with it, after the manner of his master, divided the waters of the Jordan, and returned to Jericho: Here, however, I would pause to notice a matter. It is in the name of the Lord God of his ascended master, and not in that master's own name, that Elisha does this. This is so; but this is not so in the case of the apostles and their ascended master. Peter preaches that it was his ascended Lord who had sent down the Spirit; that it was His name which carried salvation with it; that it was in His name in which sinners were to be baptized for the remission of sins; that it was His name which had made the lame man to walk. (Acts 2-5) The name of Jesus of Nazareth is to them what the name, not of Elijah, but of the Lord God of Elijah, was to Elisha.

And further. The ascending Lord needed not a convoy, as did the prophet. He who had, afore His death, said of Himself and of His body, “destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,” now, after His resurrection, “not needing (as another has expressed it) the cleansing of that fiery baptism, nor requiring a commissioned chariot to bear Him up, did, in the far sublimer calmness of His own indwelling power, rise from the earth, and with His human body pass into the heavenly places.”

This is so; and this way of distinguishing the Lord Jesus is to be seen elsewhere. As when Joshua commands the sun and the moon to stand still, much is made of it, and that day is declared to have had none like it; but when the Lord Jesus did like things, things which shewed His sovereignty over the forces and the course of nature, it is treated as no wonder at all. (Josh. 10) But then, as to the great fact of this chapter (the translation of Elijah), it has, I believe, its own place and character. In my sight (may I so speak?) it stands in company with the translation of Enoch in patriarchal days, and with the death and burial of Moses on Mount Pisgah, in the stricter

days of Israel and the law. It took place in the later times of the prophets, as we know.

In the progress of other ages or dispensations, earlier times and seasons, times of the fathers, of Moses and the prophets, it has been the way of the wisdom of God to give forth certain notices of His future purposes. The coming kingdom, when the Son of man shall take His lordship, and the Son of David His throne, has been the subject not only of prophecy but of types and shadows. There have been historic pledges of it, and the faint foreshadowing of it in certain distinguished eras in the course of Old Testament times. But so also as to the deeper mysteries of the call of the Gentiles and of the heavenly calling, yea, indeed, of the mystery of the Church. And so, too, of the glorified “children of the resurrection.” And I read the story of Enoch in the days of Genesis; the story of Moses with the Lord on Mount Pisgah; and this story of the translation of Elijah in the later days of the prophets, as witnessing that mystery in three distinct successive eras in the Old Testament times. Moses and Elijah, as we know, appear in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. The shadowy pledges which God gave by them of old, were then, in the days of the gospel, redeemed and substantiated. Moses represents the dead and risen portion of the glorified saints; Enoch and Elijah those who shall still be alive, and those translated in the day of 1 Cor. 15, or at “the coming of Christ.” This has its deep interest for us.

Soon after this, the sons of the, prophets betray the low, uncertain state of their souls. They are saints, but not in Elisha's elevation; and they propose to search for his master, though they reverently acknowledge him. They, as it were, go to the empty sepulcher, and have to return rebuked and confounded. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” Why search on the mountain or in the valleys for one that has gone to heaven? But the grace that is to be seen (and some of us have good reason to appreciate it) in thus delineating various measures and different elevations among the people of God, may be deeply and thankfully owned by us. “Some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold.”

The lessons of this Scripture are surely various, and each of them healthful for the soul. “Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”

Chapter 23

Remarks on Ephesians 1:1-3

It must be manifest to the most casual reader of the epistle that we are upon very high and holy ground here. Let none suppose that this is to impeach other portions of the inspired scriptures. But who can deny that in revealing His mind, God has been pleased to employ different instruments and with various measures? He could, if He pleased, have written all by one; He could have revealed Himself by all according to the full height of His own glory and nothing else. But we may be quite sure that the ways of God are as admirable in the forms which His revelation takes, as in all other things which He has made for His praise. These diverse manners of developing His nature and character, His counsels and ways, display His glory in an infinitely more blessed light than if there had been one unvarying blaze of brightness. And the same wisdom, which works best for His majesty and praise, is precisely that which is suited to the wants, and efficacious for the blessing of His children. Need I say, that a revelation, while it is from God, is for His people? No doubt, it does glorify Himself; but God, when He speaks, has an object in view, and provides graciously for those to whom He addresses Himself. The revelations of God, therefore, necessarily, while they flow from God, and are worthy of God, presuppose, and are adapted to, the condition of man. Now this, far from, in the smallest degree, lessening the divine glory which manifests itself in the successive parts of God's word, on the contrary, enhances it infinitely, and proves that it is His, by nothing more than its wonderful suitability to poor sinners, brought out of their low estate, in His rich mercy, and adopted into His family by faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, of all the epistles of Paul, I am not aware of any one which rises so high as this to the Ephesians; and one cannot doubt that there was a harmony between the condition of these saints themselves, and the manner and measure of the Spirit's communications to them. We find it so elsewhere. In addressing the saints at Rome, they were not called a church; they were in a very infantine state. There were blessed saints of God there, but the assembly was not founded by an apostle. Years passed before ever an apostle went to Rome. God saw well that this very city of Rome would arrogate to itself enormous claims of a spiritual character. Therefore He took care that in more inconsiderable places, such as Corinth, He should have an apostle to found churches and labor there for a considerable time; while the great center of the world's glory was unvisited by an apostle till there were many assembled there, through persons going there from one cause and another. When we consider the circumstances of the Roman saints, we can understand the propriety of an epistle addressed to them which most strongly resembles a comprehensive scheme of Christian doctrine from the very A B C. And hence the very first thing that we have proved there, after the introduction, is the total ruin of man, and of man looked at in every point of view—man examined and weighed in the balances of God, from the flood downwards. After man had possessed a knowledge of God of an outward sort, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. In fact, we have the origin of idolatry shown; and also the time after the flood before idolatry came in. The verses that I have referred to in Romans 1, bear upon the time when there was simply man possessing the knowledge of God. But man departed from it, corrupting himself; and we have the awful picture of human depravity traced in the early chapters. Next, we have

philosophic man, and then man under the law: man in every point of view, before the subject of redemption is treated of; or anything is said of the way to be justified. The reason is this: the apostle never having been there, the saints at Rome were comparatively ignorant, and required to be instructed in the nature and completeness of the fall. They needed to learn what the history of man was, as God looks at and thinks of it. Therefore we have him seen as ruined in every way, and no help for him in the creature, the law, or anything else. The result of it is, that all are gone out of the way “there is none righteous, no, not one.” In a word, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. Then, and not till then, we have the provision God has made in His righteous mercy for man, in chapter 3 and 4; and from chapter 5, consequences shown and difficulties met, winding up with the triumphant conclusion of chapter 8. Thus we have a weighty summary of Christian doctrine, beginning with the actual condition of man, Jew or Gentle, and leading up to the firm footing God has given in Christ, dead and risen, to him that believes. But in all this you have, most important as it is, only the individual. It may be man lost or man saved; but you have nothing about the Church. It is what pertains to those who are members of the Church, but no such thing appears as the assembly treated as an assembly. Man's ruin and redemption is the theme, with the effects of redemption, and the order of the dispensations, and the practical duties flowing from all. But in Ephesians how totally different! Here, comparatively speaking, man disappears, and God is viewed as acting from Himself.

Hence there is no preface nor proof of what man's state is. This is not necessary, nor is it the starting point of his teaching there. In Romans it is; and nothing can be more simple. But in Ephesians, instead of our being raised up from the pit of corruption, in which man lay buried, the very first thing the apostle does is to speak of God in heaven. It is God showering blessing upon man, and not man brought up to God. It is God shown in the ways of His grace and the thoughts of His heart before even there was a world at all, entirely apart from all questions of Jews or Gentiles. It is God forming a scheme of glory and blessedness for His own praise. God delights in the display of His goodness, and this for the purpose of blessing, and the very highest, fullest character of blessing. Hence you will find that it is not simply God as God acting towards man, but He has Christ before Him, and hence there is no limit to the blessing. He would have some channel of grace toward us to the full content of His own heart. Now there is no object that could draw out and sustain the delight of God, none that could be in itself an adequate object to look upon with complacency but one, even Christ. As for the angels, He charges them with folly, and yet were they holy. If He scanned lower than the angels, what is there but a world lost in sin? Thus there is but one capable of satisfying the heart and affections of God — Christ Himself.

Having therefore introduced this great truth — God blessing, and Christ the object before God, through whom God is going to bless according to all that is in His heart, now we find that He names Himself as a Blesser in a twofold way. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” These two titles are the key to the epistle. And I must be permitted to press strongly the importance of weighing words in Scripture. When we have to do with mankind, we must not make man an offender for a word. But God needs no excuses for His word. Whatever allowance we might make for the slips of one another, with Scripture the occasion can never arise. When we draw near and listen to Him, the only proper attitude is to bow and worship. And therefore in this epistle, which is so full an expression of His love, the apostle opens it thus, “Blessed be the God and Father.” He

could not write to the Ephesians without breaking out into the praise and Worship of God. Elsewhere you will find him blessing God, but where he does so, as in 2 Corinthians 2:14, there were special circumstances that called it out. But not so here. At Corinth there was a blessed intervention of God's grace, breaking down the proud hearts of those wayward disciples, making them ashamed of themselves. But in Ephesians it was apart from passing circumstances, save that he saw them in such a condition of soul that they were capable of going on with God, entering into His thoughts and counsels. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” was not because of some special mercy or comfort; but it flows from what He always is to us. For this very reason many saints may be unable to enter in. Some are apt to be particularly alive to, and touched by, sensible tokens from day to day, and now and then peculiar providential interventions of God. Perhaps they are in great trial, and God brings them a fresh blessing too out of it. But here the Ephesians were so simple and willing to go on with God that the apostle, instead of being detained by their state, could but speak in praise and thanksgiving. It is very blessed when there is such happy communion given in having to do with one another.

It is true, again, that before he enters upon what I shall endeavor to develop, he introduces himself as an apostle. He does not say “servant” here; in writing to the Romans he does. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.” He was indeed Christ's bondman. Why should Paul be writing to them? He was His servant. Did not they belong to Jesus? There was no such thought as “independency” sanctioned in those days — no, such practice as little districts or assemblies belonging to this man or that; but the Church committed everywhere to the Lord's servants. He is a true servant who is able to realize that he is the servant of Jesus Christ; and he will serve Him best who most realizes what it is to serve the Lord. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle.” He was an apostle by the calling of God. At this time there was no such thing as a congregation giving a candidate “a call.” Paul was an apostle called of God, and they were saints, called of God, and they knew it. It was very sweet for them to think they had been thus called. They were in their measure treading the path of Christ, and the apostle was His servant and an apostle also. His object was to bring his apostleship into relief. But they at Corinth were in danger of beginning to stand in doubt of him, and of thinking that to Jerusalem they ought to look. He thoroughly owns the common place of a brother; but if persons like the Corinthians were raising their heads too high, he says, “An apostle” simply, without adding “servant.” If a dispute arose about the point, he shows the reality of his call. In addressing the Galatians I have shown elsewhere that there is peculiar force in his introduction of himself— “Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man).” Here you have controversy at once, but of divine temper and strength. There were false principles in Galatia, and therefore he uses energetic, urgent language in writing to the saints. They were adopting Jewish notions about earthly succession. The apostle therefore takes the very highest ground, and shows that while he fully acknowledged the twelve in their place, he would not, in what touched the truth of the gospel, give place by subjection — no, not for an hour; so that the whole Epistle bears the stamp of the unqualified reassertion of the call of grace and its heavenly character, founded upon the death and resurrection of Christ.

In Ephesians he has no object of a controversial kind, nor of laying down the Christian foundations of truth, as in the case of the Roman saints. But he does put forward his apostolic function — “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” He shows fully out of what it sprang — that same “will of God,” out of which flowed their own blessing. He is about to trace, first the individual blessing, and then

the corporate. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the former is a deeper thing than the latter. On the contrary, our highest blessings are connected with what we have as individuals. Fully acknowledging the blessedness of what is corporate, what we have individually is higher still; and it is the way of God's Spirit to begin with this before entering upon what is common. Hence I think he here addresses “the saints which were at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus,” as such. They were the Church there, not only gathered formally, but intelligently so. They had had the Apostle Paul there, who had been God's instrument in that work. There were twelve men who believed before Paul went there; but they never received the Holy Spirit after the Pentecostal sort till Paul's visit. It is the personal presence of the Holy Spirit, founded upon our faith in Christ dead and risen, that brings us into this church character. But the Holy Spirit, besides making us members of Christ's body, the Church, also gives us the consciousness of our relationship as sons with His God and Father. He addresses “the Church of God at Corinth” as such, when he is speaking of points that concern order and discipline. Here he is going to look at Church in a far higher point of view; yet he begins with what is individual: “To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then he introduces the twofold title of God already referred to — the same that our Lord announced when He rose from the dead, and sent the first message given to His disciples, by Mary Magdalene: “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God” — not “to the Almighty God,” or “to Jehovah.” Our Lord stood in a twofold relation to God; He was Son of God, not only as a divine person, but as man in the world (Luke 1); besides His highest personal glory which shines through John's Gospel, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” This last title refers to Christ, viewed in humanity in this world; and it is therefore stated only in the Gospel of Luke, which is pre-eminently the human biography, if I may so speak, of Christ. But it might not have been known, unless God had told us, that He carried that same relationship as man into His resurrection. He teaches us that death and resurrection gave Him title in God's righteousness to put us in His position. So that He could for the first time say, in the fullness of meaning which those words convey, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” He is now not merely “my Father” and “my God,” but “your Father” and “your God.” The death of Christ had completely obliterated all that was against the children of God; the resurrection of Christ, after redemption was accomplished, enabled Him to give them His place of resurrection and sonship before God. And what a wonderful place is this! To think that now, even while we are in this world, our Lord would have us to know that we are sons, in and through Him, before our God, and that we are instinct with resurrection life— “alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;” that we stand before God without a single charge or condemnation, and this, because He had taken by grace the “same condemnation” with the guilty on the cross. He was the “holy thing” —we unholy, altogether undone. But on the cross He was made sin for us, and entered the same condemnation—made it His own on the cross; and now there is none for me. I am brought into the same place that He had as the risen one before God. Of course I am not speaking now of His divine glory. The notion of the creature, no matter how blest, being in any other position than that of looking up to God and worshipping Him, could not enter a renewed mind. The Lord Jesus was Son in His divine nature from all eternity; but as man, too. He was Son; and also as risen from the dead. And by His death and resurrection He brings us in before God and His Father, having the same position as Himself, so far as to be sons, absolutely without sin in our new nature, and freed

from condemnation before God because of the old nature already judged. The new nature requires none to die for it, but the old did, and all is done. In Christ crucified, God condemned sin in the flesh, and to faith all the evil is gone; the blessedness of Christ is now made ours, and we can look up and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” One great mischief that is done to the practical power of Christianity is the putting off the blessing, which the Holy Spirit attaches to us now, till we leave this world and get to heaven. Suppose you were to tell the great mass of God's children on the earth, You are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” they would think it enthusiastic or mysticism. They are not prepared for such truth, and, in general, either do not inquire what the verse is, or evacuate it into some mere emotional sentiment. They have no notion that it is a present fact, true of all Christians. We are not displayed in it yet, nor is it a question of feeling. May we believe it! Feelings may deceive me, but faith never can. If I see a thing, it is merely my eye that sees. If I believe a truth on God's word, I am looking at it, in a measure, so to speak, with God's eyes. The world has a notion that faith only implies confidence as to a thing which is not sure. This is not the meaning of “I believe” in the things of God. My own vision is a poor range of sight; but what of God's eye! The believer stands upon the highest ground; he rests upon the certainty of what God says. Happiness, too, is the result; for when you believe, you soon begin to feel. If you believe that God has blotted out your sins, you before long, if not at once, begin to enjoy it. If I look at myself, I shall always see something wrong. How is this? My sins all gone, and yet, if looking within, I see so much that is painful, loathsome, humiliating. The putting away of sin is not a thing that goes on in my heart, but a mighty work that God wrought in the cross of His beloved Son, on which He calls me to rest, because on it He rests. Am I looking for its sign and token in myself? If so, I shall never have an assurance of it on the right ground. If I think that my sins must be forgiven because I am a changed character (as men speak), can I ever have an hour's real peace. The result must be, that the more one judges himself, the less happy he will be. What God puts before His children is this—that they should be thoroughly happy in the certainty that their sins are gone, through the blood-shedding of Christ, and yet that they should spare nothing they find within them; judging themselves day by day, because Christ has been judged for them, and God has blotted out their sins, and they cannot endure trifling with that which cost the blood of His son.

Here, however, the first great thought is this: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” It is not redemption, though of course based upon it. I am here upon the earth, and yet I know that I am blest there where Christ is at the right hand of God. Not only have I blessings there, but I am blessed “with all spiritual blessings.” The highest blessing God can confer is that which He gives every child of His in heavenly places in Christ. In these few words you stand at the height of God's wonderful counsel about us and love for us. He has thus blessed us according to the fullness of His value for Christ. The expression “heavenly places” is in contrast with the portion of the Jews, who were blessed in earthly places. Looking at Ezekiel 36, that is seen which brings out more distinctly the character of our blessing in contradistinction to theirs. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Thus, there are spiritual mercies mingled with their blessings; but they will be in the land of their fathers, which God is to make good to the generation to come. It is chiefly learned but unspiritual men who make confusion about these matters. If people were only simple about

Scripture, they would not fall into such mistakes. The prophet says, “Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers.” Nothing can be plainer than this. He is to bless Israel on the earth—in their soul too, no doubt: but the sphere of this blessing is the Holy Land. It is His earthly people, not the Church, as we shall see lower down. “I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.” Evidently the blessing is in earthly places. I should not find fault with good men trying to give this a spiritual turn, and to preach the gospel from it, provided they do not blot out from it the hopes of Israel by and by. Primarily the people there are Israel, and they are to be blessed in this manner. We see the land of Palestine now, desolate like a wilderness; but “the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose” in that day. There are certain blessings that apply to the believer now, it is true. To the “water” and “Spirits” in a wonderfully enlarged and deepened scope, our Lord alludes thus in John 3, but I object to the inference that God has abandoned His people, and that this prophecy about the earthly places should be confounded with our heavenly title: The earth and earthly blessings are here dwelt upon by the Spirit of God. Why should we be jealous about the Jews or the earth either? God has shown us such overflowing and surpassing favor, that we may well delight and thank Him that the earth is reserved for His ancient nation.

Now, if we turn from this—the predicted blessing of Israel upon the earth—to our own proper blessing in Ephesians, how totally different it is! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” It is God revealing Himself in the fullest manner conceivable. Who was it that knew God, and who was the object of God's love as none had ever known Him or had been before? If ever there was one who knew the full meaning of the word, “My Father,” it was the Lord Jesus. And who but He knew the depths of “My God?” Now, that Blessed One, by redemption and the gift of the Spirit, has capacitated the believer in Himself to enjoy the same privilege with Himself. Just in proportion as we receive it with simplicity and judge the old nature (which never enters into it, but only comes as a thick cloud over our blessing), shall we enter into the realization of our blessing. Israel's hope is not inward only but outward, in earthly places to be made the most exalted people here below. The scene of our blessing, on the contrary, is in heavenly places, and we are blessed there now in Christ. In a word, a Christian is as one who belongs to the family of the sovereign. There might be reasons of state to make it desirable for the Queen's heir to pass as a stranger through a foreign land, unknown and unregarded. So with the Christian. He is not of the world nor of the age. His body is of the earth, but that which makes him to be what he is as a son of God, has nothing to do with the present scene or circumstances. He belongs to a glorified Christ altogether. When God begins to deal with Israel, it will be another thing. The attention of the whole world will be directed towards them. There was a time when, even in the midst of all their sin, the people of Israel exercised an enormous influence in the world, spite of their being a small nation, and having only a narrow slip of land to dwell on. Their priests and kings gave up the true God, and God has made them to be the witnesses of His judgments. But the day is fast coming when they that smote will acknowledge their rejected Messiah, and then will shine the real splendor to which Israel is destined of God. He will fill them with blessing of every kind here below. All the nations of the earth will bow down to Israel; kings and queens will be their nursing fathers and mothers. Christendom, despised as a proud and effete political engine, and more and more degenerating into apostasy, will be set aside like Vashti; God will bless His people of Israel, the Esther of the great King, with all outward blessings in earthly places, not revealing Himself as the God and Father of the Lord

Jesus Christ, but as the Lord God Jehovah, Most High, identified at length with the lowly Jesus of Nazareth. Is that the way in which we are spoken of here? Not at all. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. A Jew could not understand what it would be to be blessed in their Messiah. But to be joint heirs with Christ, not only blessed by Christ, but in Christ, is an idea that could not possibly enter the most intelligent Israelite's mind. In a word, their portion will always be under their Messiah, to be blessed by Him as an earthly people. But ours, who believe in Christ now, will be to have the same blessing which God the Father confers upon Christ risen from the dead. What has He done for Christ? He has raised Him up, and put all things under His feet. But all this He will not take alone. He is waiting for His bride—for those that are now being called out of Jews and Gentiles to the knowledge of His name. So that our Lord, while personally exalted, holds it in abeyance because He is waiting for the companions to share it with Him; heirs by His grace, not merely of the fathers, but of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Nothing can be larger or higher than the blessing spoken of here. Christ will have His heavenly ones above, and His earthly ones below; each fully blest though in different spheres. May I commend the truth brought out in Ephesians 1 to the serious study of God's children? While it becomes us to hear the word of God, it claims from us earnestness of purpose and searching into it as for hidden treasure. We must not expect to be really and fully blessed through the word of God, unless there be diligence of soul.

Chapter 24

Remarks on Ephesians 1:4-14

We have already seen the twofold title in which God blesses His saints now; in both the form of the blessing being found only in Christ. Had God merely revealed Himself as the God of Abraham or Isaac for instance, He would not ensure a blessing beyond that promised to the fathers. Now He does. Instead of having merely the Jewish blessing before Him, He has Christ in His eye, whom He raised from the dead and set at His own right hand, where He never put David nor any one else. It is a place that belongs to Him in virtue of His personal glory and His suffering unto death. We may sit with Christ on His throne, but that is a very different thing from Christ's sitting at God's right hand. Now it is as the God of the Lord Jesus Christ that He blesses it is the full blessing that would be suitable to Christ Himself as the object of blessing. Grace puts us as common objects with Christ in order to be blessed by God who blesses after this manner and measure. Nor this only. He is the Father of the Lord Jesus, and as such also He blesses us. So that these two characters, the very highest possible in which to look at God, are those according to which we are blessed. The characters of God, both as God and as Father, as they deal with Christ, issue in a blessing, a commensurate blessing which He gives to us. Hence there is no limit. He has blessed us “with all spiritual blessings,” and moreover too, as we saw, not on the earth, the comparatively lower part of the universe, but in the highest scene of God's power, “in the heavenly places;” and in order to crown and complete all, it is “in Christ;” secured in His person.

Verse 4 particularly belongs to the first of these characters in which God has revealed Himself, as verse 5 belongs rather to the second. “According as He hath chosen us in Him (that is, in Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Now it is as the God of Christ that He thus blesses us; not as Father but as God. In verse 5 it is as Father, because we there read, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.” There at once is that which answers to the character of the Father. It brings in special relationship to Him. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children;” not merely chosen, but “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Now that language is not used in verse 4. He does not say that He has predestined us to be holy and without blame before Him in love. Neither does He say that He has called us into this wonderful place according to the good pleasure of His will. And the reason is most manifest. When we hear of the good pleasure of His will, we have language suitable to sovereign special love—that which He displays in order to manifest His own favor. But when we hear of “holy and without blame,” it is God who has chosen us for it. It could not be otherwise. If God would have any brought near Him, and so near as to be in His presence in heaven, if chosen in Christ at all, somehow they must be holy and without blame before Him in love. And all is really of His grace. The one verse flows from the necessary character of God as God; the other flows from the special relationship into which He enters towards us through our Lord Jesus. Choosing us is a necessary part, because it is evident there was no one but God to choose. It was before the foundation of the world, when God alone was. Man had no voice nor choice in the matter. It was purely God acting from Himself. It was a matter of God's own choice

that He would have others to be in heaven besides Himself. But if they were to be near Him and before Him, how could they be so with sin upon them? Impossible. How could God have persons, even in the most distant part of His dominion, with sin upon them? Still less could it be in heaven, the throne of His majesty. The day is coming when all evil must be banished into the lake of fire. How much less then could He tolerate sin in those who are to be brought into His very presence? It was the positive necessity of His character and nature, that if He chooses to have persons with Him in heaven, they must be there “holy and without blame before him.” But that could not be all: it must be “in love,” because nothing could be more miserable than that they should not be able to enter into His own affections. Merely to be in the most blessed place of creatures without taint, without anything that could sully the presence of God, would not be enough. Man was made to have a heart, to have affections, and there could not be happiness in creatures, who know what affection is, unless there were that on which affection could rest. If God had such beings brought into His presence, and necessarily without sin in any form, it must be in love also. He will give them a nature not only capable of being before Him without reproach and fear, but also answering to His own love. “We love him because he first loved us.” In Christ alone that love is known; but St. John so speaks of God and Christ, that there is great difficulty in deciding which is meant. He uses “Him” thus indiscriminately, and slides from one into the other. This flows from their oneness: “I and my Father are one,” which is said by John only.

Here we have God's choice of us personally. For it is not merely to have a people, as if it were some vague thing, or as if there were a certain number of niches to be filled up in heaven. There is no such notion in the Bible. It is persons He chooses. There cannot be such love without a person to be its object. And if it is true even among men, that love is not a vague feeling—which is rather a fancy—much more is it true with God. He loves us individually. Hence He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to show how entirely it was a thing independent of our character and ways; and if so, it must always flow back to God in a way according to Him. And so it does. If there is this choice of God in Christ before the foundation of the world, He will have them before Him in such a way as God alone could. He will never have what is unworthy of His love and presence. Hence then it is said, “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” This is not merely holiness, or blamelessness, or love, any or all in part. Hence it does not refer to what we have been. If we look at a person now, we shall find grievous faults in him. Even as a Christian, he is very far indeed from being what is due to God. He is ashamed of himself—grieving over the little his heart responds to the favor God has shown him. And would this suit His presence? Will God be satisfied with that which even a Christian finds fault with? Impossible. It is not looking at the complex man here, but at what He makes us in Christ, His Son. In the saint now there is that which is very unsaintly indeed, unlike God and His beloved Son: pride, vanity, foolishness, all kinds of evil ways and thoughts that never flow from Christ, and have no kind of resemblance to Him. But for all this, are they not saints? God forbid they should not be. And yet this is the steady thought of God. He has chosen us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. How can that be? The answer is because God looks at us here according to that which He gives us in Christ, and nothing less. All is ignored in this verse save that new nature which flows from His own choice, His own grace. He has chosen us to be so, and He will have us so perfectly, and nothing else, when the time comes for us to be in His presence. But even now it is true in the essence of the thing, inasmuch as we have the life of Christ in us. Can I find any fault in Christ? If Christ is without blame in love, in the very nature of God Himself,

He is precisely the life of every Christian, let a man be called by what name he may among men.

But even this is not all. Blessed as it is to answer to the holy character and nature of God—and that is what every saint will do by and by in the glory, and what every saint ought to say in the spirit of his mind now—yet this is not enough. We might be there holy and without blame before Him in love, yet simply as servants. Her Majesty the Queen may surround herself with servants to do her will; she may bring one and another into her presence, and they ought of course to think themselves greatly honored by being thus made the ministers of her pleasure, though no family relationship of course exists between them. But nothing less than this will do in heavenly things. This is the wonder of God's grace. In the very next verse we have the fact that God is not only acting from Himself to call into this wonderful place, to be the reproduction of His own moral nature and character. God is holy and without blame, and He is love in His own nature. This belongs to our life now, and will belong to us altogether when we are brought into heaven by the power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, shortly. But it is not as mere servants, but as sons we shall be there—consciously as sons: not merely standing there, like angels, as ministers of His pleasure, but there as those who take an interest in what He is interested in. We shall feel not merely for Him, but with Him. We shall have a common interest with Him—the same kind of feeling, if I may use the same illustration, that members of the royal family have with the crown.

This is what the Holy Spirit brings before us in verse 5. We are planted in Christ before God, and we have a holy and a loving nature. But besides this, there is a positive relationship formed; and that relationship, in which we are brought to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is nothing less than being sons according to the pattern of the risen Son of God. As the eternal Son of the Father, none could have such a place with Him. The very thought would be repulsive to a renewed mind. But Christ was pleased to call us His brethren when He rose from the dead, and not before. And it is on earth, the place of our sins, where we have been servants of Satan—it is here that, through the faith of Christ, we leave behind us all that we were and enter into this blessed and glorious and most intimate relationship with God. “He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children.” The word predestinated is a more special one than “chosen,” which signifies God's electing us out of the world. None but an unbeliever could fancy that every one is to be in such a place as this, or that men who have lived in blasphemy against God all their days are to be holy and without blame when they die. God has a choice, and our business is to bless God for His great love—not to judge or find fault with His ways. “Who art thou that repliest against God?” That is the answer of God to all vain thoughts and reasonings. But then if He chooses according to His nature and holiness, He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. So that now we find the special privilege and glorious relationship of sons before God in His presence by Jesus Christ. He might not have done it, but it was “according to the good pleasure of his will.” It is not merely that He would have persons and that He chose persons; but here is a peculiar display of His pleasure, and therefore He puts them in this blessed place “to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” This 6th verse shows us that which answers to both the verses before. I think “to the praise of the glory of his grace” takes in both the choice of verse 4 and the predestination of verse 5—the character of the choice of God, and the special favor of the predestination of the Father. “To the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” “Accepted” is rather a cold word to express what is meant here. It is not what persons doctrinally call acceptance, which is rather

more of the nature of reconciliation. But here it seems to me there is the fullness of divine favor, which goes far beyond merely acceptance. It is God making us objects of favor according to all that is in His heart, and in order that this should be most fully brought out, He says, “in the Beloved,” not merely “in Christ.” There was one object that satisfied God, that met every thought, every desire of His heart; and this was Christ, the Beloved One, of course in a sense in which none could be so in Himself. In order to bless us fully, God has made us the objects of His favor in this Beloved One, and all is “to the praise of the glory of His grace.” This takes in all the heights and depths of His grace who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessing us in Christ. In fact He could not go farther. Could He show favor to any one so much as to Christ? Just so He loves and blesses us. He could not do more and He will not do less. He has risen up to the fullest character of love and blessing in the way wherein He regards us in the Beloved.

But, then, what was our previous state? It is said, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” It is only alluded to passingly, but it supposes that we were wretched slaves of Satan. In the same person, in whom we become the objects of such favor, we have redemption. God does not in the least degree forget what our condition was when He thus blessed us. He is aware that we had to be brought out of all we were, for indeed we had nothing but sins. With only the previous verses, there might have been the idea that such blessedness and glory could not have been mixed with such as we were. But he adds, we have redemption in Christ. Still, he never touches on redemption and forgiveness of sins, till he has brought us into the height and depth of all privilege flowing from God Himself: so entirely is all question here of what man is out of sight, that we only as it were incidentally get hold of the sad truth of his condition. It might not have been known from the first few verses that persons so blessed had ever been guilty of a single sin. But here we find that they needed to be redeemed, to have their sins forgiven; and the same Christ, in and through whom we have all our other blessings, is He in whom also we have “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” There is a difference between “the glory” and “the riches” of His grace. “The glory of His grace” takes in all these privileges referred to before. The Holy Spirit has brought out in the seventh verse the riches of His grace—the means and provisions for us as poor sinners. But this would not suffice for God, if He is acting so as to show not merely His rich resources in dealing with poor wretched individuals, but the glory of His grace. He would show His own character—what He is, and not merely provide for what we were. The praise of the glory of His grace flows from what God feels, and in consequence will do, in order to manifest Himself for us. Observe, before we have done with this, that later we have another redemption, that “of the purchased possession,” two very different things. We have redemption as far as the forgiveness of sins is concerned: we are waiting for redemption as concerns the inheritance, which depends on the coming of Christ in order to take it actually under His government. The purchased possession has to do with the inheritance, not merely with what affects our souls. As regards the soul, we have redemption now as completely as we ever can have it; which we do well to bear in mind. The soul cannot be more forgiven than now, nor could God do more to put away our sins than He has done already. He has given His Son, and the blood of His Son was shed, and it is impossible that God Himself could do more to blot out sin from before His face. What a comfort for our souls! If we think of our sins, we may also enter into the comfortable assurance that all is gone from before the face of God. We may fall into sin: it does exist; but it is a matter of self-judgment, instead of a fearful looking for of judgment by and by. There is just the difference. As a matter of

divine judgment, sin is gone in Christ; as a matter of self-judgment, it is always there if we slip into it. Nor is self-judgment ever thorough until we know that God's judgment of sin is ended for us in the cross. Under the Old Testament there was no such self-judgment because of sin, as there ought to be under the New. We find accordingly that although God never could treat any sin with indifference, yet is it often left without a word of comment. But this is not light dealing, God leaves the thing to speak for itself. He exercises so much the more the hearts of His children. If they are in a willful state, they may use the fact of sin to make light of their own evil ways; otherwise conscience is brought into exercise. It is not until the full condition of man comes out in the cross of Christ that we see what God's judgment of sin is. Since then we first hear of “the flesh” in the sense in which the New Testament speaks of it. You may find the expression in the Old Testament, but it never wears the same strong, determined, full character of wickedness as it does in the New. It had not yet proved itself, and God always waits till a person or thing proves its real character, before He pronounces judgment. And we ought to learn from God as to this. The patience of God in judgment is one of the most marvelous of His ways; and we ought to be, as to this, imitators of God. He awaited the cross of His Son before the full character of man's iniquity was fully brought out. Under the Old Testament we read of things borne with because of the hardness of men's hearts; but in the New Testament there is a different measure, and no evil tolerated for a moment. The mind of God is pronounced upon evil: the darkness is past, the true light now shines. There is no hiding either of God or man; all is out; man is lost. God is known not merely as a lawgiver, but as a Saviour-God; and if I do not know Him thus, I do not know Him at all. “This is life eternal: to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

From all this we learn that the full character of evil has only now come out. The Old Testament commanded that evil should not be done; but, as we shall see in the next chapter, the full issue of the trial comes out here: and what is the issue? That man is dead—morally, spiritually—dead in trespasses and sins. God perfectly understood the character of man before, and He wants us to understand it. We needed redemption and we have it; forgiveness and we have it. But we are waiting to have the redemption of the purchased possession. This takes in the whole creation of God, including, perhaps, our bodies too, as a part of the creation of God. But the redemption of verse 7 is a closer thing, and we are put in a position now of thoroughly judging ourselves, because we know that we shall not be judged of God. He puts us thus into a common interest with Himself; put us on His own side, to take His part against ourselves. And this is what repentance means; and therefore it is called repentance towards God.

But the next verse opens up another subject: “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” It is not said, “abounded toward us in forgiving us,” because the forgiveness is simple and complete. But when we hear of “wisdom and prudence,” it is a question of God's counsels about His Son. So to speak, you are able now to enter into My thoughts, and understand them when I speak. You are delivered from anxiety about your sins, and are free now to enter into My purpose. “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in himself.” And this secret of His will is “that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” We have clearly here, in this central verse, the fact that we are capacitated (the question of sin being settled in our souls) to hear what God has to say to us about all other things. He has not now merely to tell us

what He is going to do upon the earth, as He dealt with Abraham. The relationship is higher than that which was made known to the patriarchs. Now He abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Whatever brings out God's character and glory, He makes known to us. He treats us, not as servants, but as friends. He has one thing nearer than aught else— what He is going to do for His Son: and He imparts to us the secrets nearest to His own heart. If a person say, I do not want to understand mysteries, I answer, You do not want to know what God wishes to teach you. Unbelief always shows itself in some character of hostility to God. He, in His perfect wisdom, gives the comfort of salvation, and then opens out these other things. “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will.” This does not mean something you cannot understand, but what you could not know before God told you. Do not turn away and say, All I want to know is to be saved. We ought to desire to know all God desires us to learn. The word “mystery” means what God was pleased to keep secret—something that He had not before revealed, but quite intelligible when it is told. “Mystery,” in popular sense, is totally different from its use in the Word of God. There are many things very wonderful in the prophecies, but they are not called mysteries. Brought out now for the first time, it is the mystery of His will. There are many mysteries explained in the New Testament as those of the kingdom of heaven. Babylon, too, is called a mystery. The mystery here is, that God means to unite all things in heaven and in earth under the headship of our Lord. He does not mean to have the heavens, as they are now, completely severed from the earth, but to have a united system of heavenly and earthly glory, all under Christ—this is the mystery of His will.

But there is another part of it—He means to have us to share it along with Christ. Thus there are two great parts in the mystery of His will. The first is Christ, and the second is the Church: and therefore it is said in this very Epistle, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” It is not “the Church” only that is the mystery, but “Christ and the Church.” The Church, however blessed, is but a subordinate part of it. That she is so at all is solely because she belongs to Christ, the heavenly Head of all things. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times” —when all the various times of God that are now running on have exhausted their course—when the time of the groaning of the earth is over—when the time for Israel to be blinded is over—when the time for Satan being allowed to torment men is over—the time when the Gentiles are allowed to rule as if God were taking no notice, and the Church of God to be broken in weakness here below. All these things are now going on—man himself subject to sickness and death—all creation groaning. But God Himself will put an end to everything of the sort. He means to bind Satan and deliver man from his power—to have Israel blessed and united under their Messiah—the Gentiles blessing God, and God sanctified among them—the earth itself no longer the poor, groaning, miserable earth that it is, but the curse removed, and the wilderness rejoicing and blossoming as the rose. All these things God will yet accomplish; and when the various times that now intervene are accomplished, He will change all, bringing forth Christ as the head, center, and means of every blessing. Christ is the strong man that is to bind Satan—the bruiser of the serpent's head—the Lord of heaven and earth—the Messiah of Israel, and Son of man ruling supremely over the Gentiles. All these things are to be accomplished most simply and efficaciously, but not by the power of men—not even by the spread of the gospel.

If men had a just sense of the present state of the Church, they would put on sackcloth and ashes instead of blowing trumpets. What we have to do is to humble ourselves before God, because of what we are and see around us, even in the best. It requires a great deal of patience not only to

bear and be borne with, but to go on in love. If we really have a heart for God and for His children we shall feel these things deeply, and shall seek the blessing of those who are led away by it, yea, thoroughly and heartily, remembering that the blessed day is coming when Christ will be exalted as the Head of all things, heavenly and earthly. While it becomes us to humble ourselves, we need not be disheartened. We know that our hope is one that maketh not ashamed. It is not founded upon what the Church or any society is going to do, for our hope is Christ. We know that God has made known unto us the secret of His will. Where there is not an exercised conscience, this truth May not be rejected; but it is not realized nor applied in such a state. God's blessed cure for the world's disorder is Christ brought out for His present hidden position, and the moment that He is so, what a change! All things in heaven and earth are united in Christ; and when that day comes, we shall enter visibly on our inheritance. We have the title already, but are not in manifest possession. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ.”

We have first of all (verse 5) our predestination as children and now as heirs—heirs of glory now and the inheritance, Christ being made the head of the universe. The prevalent interpretation is to apply it to Christ's position now. People imagine that “the fullness of times” here means the same thing as in Galatians 4, but “the fullness of the times” differs widely from “the fullness of time,” which meant merely the time which closed with the incarnation of Christ, or was completed by it. Christ's birth is a very different thing from Christ's exaltation, as the Head of all. Deadly error is at work, putting the Son's incarnation in the place of redemption. Our union with Christ is made to depend upon His bare incarnation, not upon His being risen from the dead and entering upon His headship thus. But if Christ's union with us is founded upon His being a man, He unites Himself with human nature and there is no special union between the Christian and Christ, because humanity belongs to the whole race or man in sin. This naturally leads to the further heresy of making Christ take up humanity in its fallen condition. God looks that we should be making advance in His own ways. He calls us to diligence and desire of heart to enter into our privileges.

It is said, again, “That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ.” The meaning is, before the Jews (of whom it specially speaks) behold Christ in the appointed time and way. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.” Now, he says, we are those who first trusted in Christ, whose hope was founded upon Christ before He is seen and believed in by the rest of the nation. The “we” in verse 12 does not go beyond believing Jews. “In whom ye also trusted.” The “we” and the “ye” refer, the one to Paul and his fellow-believers out of Israel, the other to believing Gentiles, such as the Ephesians. If this be so, the meaning is “that we [Christian Jews] should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ.” The nation of Israel will not be exactly “to the praise of His glory.” They will be the subjects of His glory. “Arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” His glory will work for their salvation; but “the praise of His glory” is that there were those out of that unbelieving nation who received Christ before they saw Him. Blessed those who receive Christ when they behold Him, but still more blessed those who, though they have not seen Him, yet have believed.

Chapter 25

Remarks on Ephesians 1:13-14

We have already seen that the apostle, in verse 12, introduces the believing Jews as being brought into all the blessings spoken of in the previous portion. Then, addressing the Gentile saints at Ephesus, he says, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” It may be profitable to enter into a further development of the Holy Spirit's presence and action. Men soon departed far from the truth of God. Before the three last centuries we know that a thick cloud of darkness hung over Christendom. But even since the light that shone at the Reformation, Christians have been struggling to realize in their own souls that they were born of God and justified in Christ. One fully admits the immense importance that a soul should be thoroughly established. But were regeneration and justification intended to be the sum and substance of the Christian's research, efforts, and desires. On the contrary, are they more than the very threshold, or at most, the foundation on which a Christian has to build? Does not God look for it, that being born again, instead of occupying ourselves with continual searching after signs and tokens that we are so, we should be making progress in Christ? To be born again is the first essential work of the Spirit of God, without which there is no life towards God, no possibility of advance in the things of God. It is the universal condition in order to any soul's having part in the blessing of God at all times and in all dispensations.

Hence, when Nicodemus came to our Lord, wishing to be taught of Him, our Lord at once begins there. The Rabbi owned that Jesus was a teacher come from God, by whom He wanted to be taught. But our Lord stops him in a peculiarly solemn manner: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus, astonished, asked how such a thing could be? Our Lord, however, meets his unintelligent question with a re-assertion, only in still stronger terms: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” There we have clearly the explanation of what it is to be born again. It is to be born of water and of the Spirit. Nicodemus still expresses his amazement at this, that a Jew, a moral, religious Jew, who was no heathen, had the law and seemed to have been peculiarly honored of God, should need to be born afresh; that he himself, a master in Israel in a pre-eminent sense, should thus be met by what was really a rebuke to him, that pressed the necessity of a vital change, which so far from having realized, he did not even think to be necessary. This was indeed a thing that arrested Nicodemus at the very start. Our Lord, however, shows that he ought to have known these things from the prophets themselves. Mark this, because it is a thoroughly satisfactory answer to those who wish to connect the being born of water with baptism. He who is acquainted with the views taught here cannot fairly think that there is any depreciation of that institution of Christ. For I hold, that, nobody ought to be owned on Christian ground till he is baptized with water. I do not mean that he may not be a believer; but if he have not submitted to baptism in the name of the Lord, he is not yet ostensibly off Jewish or Pagan ground. And our Lord elsewhere insisted on the necessity of being baptized as well as believing. (Mark 16)

But important as baptism may be as the appointed sign of death and resurrection in Christ, yet our Lord did not directly refer to the rite with Nicodemus. For He says—not, “Art thou a disciple of Christ's?”, but — “Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?” That is, as a Jew he ought to have known this. How could he know Christian baptism as a Jew? To such an one this was a novelty; it did not even exist at the time. How could that be known which was not yet brought out? He ought to have known what was meant by being born of water and of the Spirit, and to have felt the absolute necessity of it. What then was meant? This, that no matter where, when, or who, everyone who should see or enter the kingdom of God must be born of water and of the Spirit, must have the Holy Spirit communicating a new life to him. And how is that life produced? By an ordinance? No. By Christian walk? No. By what means, then? By prayer? Nay; but by the reception of God's Word revealing Christ. Therefore it is written that we are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” With the testimony of Peter there is that of James also: “Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” The instrument employed for God's begetting us is “the word of truth.” So that water is clearly used in this passage in John 3 as figurative of the Word of God applied by the Spirit. The two are joined together that it should not be supposed it is merely the Spirit using an ordinance, but rather applying God's Word with quickening power to the soul. Therefore, when speaking about believing, it is said, “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” It is necessary the Word should be preached. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Compare also 1 Corinthians 4:15. It is no matter what positive passage of Scripture you take up, all teach the same thing. Our Lord insists that every one who enters the kingdom must enter by that door. What, then, is to become of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Some may say that circumcision is equivalent; but do not believe the dream for a moment; if so, what would become of so many before or outside both circumcision and baptism? All these explanations are mere clumsy guesses at Scripture. Even if there were no real difference between baptism and circumcision, when our Lord lays down the new birth He refers to neither. He does not insist on a rite with certain exceptions, but an absolute and universal spiritual necessity. He is not speaking of the comparatively modern rite of baptism—of that which, as it came late into the world, will not abide in it. For there is no ground, that I know, to suppose that during the millennium baptizing people with water will proceed. It is a rite peculiar to Christian times, at least baptism into Christ's death.

But John 3 speaks of what every person must pass through without qualification or exception, if he is to see and enter the kingdom of God—what was as true of the thief upon the cross as of Saul of Tarsus. All children of God, past, present, or future, are born again; all have this new life given to them. There is the communication of divine life to them. But as far as regards those who hear the Word, it is plainly through the Holy Spirit using the Word as a means of life. It is emphatically the presentation of Christ. In John 4 we enter on another operation of the Holy Spirit. “If thou knewest the free-giving of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” The living water is plainly the Holy Spirit, whom Christ gives. Here it is not the quickening operation of the Spirit, indispensable for all times and under all circumstances, if any souls are to belong to God; but it is a special privilege that Christ bestows personally. And you will find in the discourse of our Lord which follows, and is connected with what He had said to the woman of Samaria, that the Holy Spirit is given to believers now as the means of worshipping their God and Father in Spirit and in truth. Thus we

have in John 4 a totally different operation of the Spirit from what was urged in John 3, and to whom did our Lord disclose this? To a poor, wretched, abandoned woman; not even a Jewess, but a Samaritan. Our Lord is there showing the grace that goes out to the very vilest. God was now no longer, as before, putting the law forward. He displays Himself as a giver: under the law God is rather a receiver; He asks, demands, insists that the creature render Him the honor due to His Majesty. In the gospel, God is the giver of His own Son. Instead of seeking something from guilty, lost man, He confers His very best on one who did not even ask Him. “If thou knewest the gift—the free-giving—of God (what a new sound to the Samaritan!) thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” This is what He does—He is giving the Spirit, the power of eternal life. The consequence of this most precious opening out of the truth is, that we have the Holy Spirit in us as the spring of communion and power of worship. It is not so much as using the Word of God to deal with us in our natural uncleanness and to communicate a new life which cleaves to God and hates sin, with new feelings, new desires, new wants, which are only answered in Christ, and which every regenerate soul must have, if it were a poor nun, or a superstitious priest going through the mass. Yet if one were born of God, he could not but have a yearning after what he had not, and find, in the long run, Christ the object that attracted his soul—Christ the contrast of all that was found on earth or anywhere—Christ the only One that suited him, and the One, too, whose glory it was so to bless him. Of what would this be the proof that he was born of God. For there is no proof but what may turn out a delusion save this—that my wants turn me to Christ, and make me find in Him the only One that can satisfy the soul.

But in John 4 it is not the case of a proud ruler of the Pharisees who is made to feel the need of regeneration, but a depraved woman, that had lost her character, to whom no one would have spoken, except—wonderful to say—the Son of God! It is to her that the Lord brings out this great truth, the gift of the Spirit: no longer merely acting morally on the soul or quickening, but Himself dwelling in the heart, the Holy Spirit —the power of divine fellowship and worship. What a joy! The Holy Spirit dwelling in believers, the Father seeking such to worship Him. Do you know this? Or are you still trammeled by what is now past, what once existed, and then had the sanction of God? By the rule of a past dispensation for an earthly people? By rites which no longer have the slightest value in His sight who reveals Himself as Father? The day of forms and ceremonies is entirely gone. How often people say, We do not attach importance to such things? The truth is, that they are now a very bad thing, and contrary to God's actual order. It is not only that fine sights and sounds should not be an object in worship, but it is a positive sin to seek or admit them. It is, in principle, a going back to idolatry and a condemned world. Therefore, in John 4, our Lord brings in “The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” There is the truth enunciated about worship. At Jerusalem the splendor of ceremonials had been at its height; but now all this is over, and any one fighting for it now unwittingly rebels against Christ. Our Lord shows that it is no longer in that mountain nor at Jerusalem that God should be worshipped—there was just about to dawn a new condition of things. But what does God value now? The true worshippers adoring the Father in spirit and in truth. Who are they? His children. “The Father seeketh such to worship him.” He is gathering children, forming them for His own praise, putting the Holy Spirit within them to give the consciousness of their relationship with Himself, and, having this, to draw near to Him as their God and Father.

It is plain, then, that the notion now of having a mixed worship of people, some converted and some not, is a direct contradiction of Christianity. It could not be otherwise before the cross. There was then no such thing as God separating His children from those that were not thus related to Him. It would have been a sin for a believing Israelite to have said to an unbeliever, I cannot worship with you, because you are not born of God. But now the sin is to join in God's worship with those who are not His children; and for this simple reason, that the Father is seeking true worshippers, and none but such, to worship Him. I do not mean that it is a sin for those not converted to be in the same place as spectators and hearers. But the attempt to join every body in the worship of God is a fatal delusion, dishonoring to Himself and destructive to the souls of those that are not true worshippers. But people have not faith to stand separate from the world. They like to have the countenance of men; and of course it is trying to have to act decidedly. We are warned of God that if we seek to please men we should not be the servants of Christ. We must run the risk of paining them, but faithful are the wounds of a friend. Some confound hearing the gospel or other truth with worship. But they are totally different. In worshipping God, Christians offer up to God services of praise and thanksgiving. Worship is what goes from the believer to God; whereas in the gospel or other ministry it is a message coming down from God for the good of souls, for the instruction of believers, or for the conviction and salvation of unbelievers. But whether it be one or other addressed, it is always that which comes from God to them, and not what goes from them to God; so that the confounding of these two things is a serious evil. Among many the thing which makes them attached to the old walls and routine is not the prayers, but because they hope to hear something good in the sermon. They entirely thus pass out of the condition of worshippers. Worship is the true expression of the heart's praise and thanks by the Holy Spirit, whether by an illiterate man or not. We know in the case of the apostles that they could not speak correctly (Acts 4); but, for all that, they were the chosen vessels of such a power of God as never visited this earth before or since, in men of like passions with ourselves. And I believe it is so still and always will be so. God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. Although there may be a Paul brought in occasionally, these are the exceptions, and God never intends that the exceptions should become the rule.

Thus, besides regeneration, which is the first operation of the Spirit of God, there is the further gift of the Holy Spirit. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” They were born of water and of the Spirit. They heard the word of truth, which we find in this very epistle set forth under the figure of water. “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (ch. 5:26). It is not only that the Church is washed by the word, but the poor sinner is born of the word when he believes the gospel—born of water and of the Spirit. But was it merely that they were born of water and of the Spirit? “In whom also, after that ye believed (or having believed), ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise.” It is very startling to many to find that, after they have been born of the Spirit, there is such a thing as being sealed by the Spirit. That is the reason why men invented confirmation. They felt from the Scripture that there is something over and above being born of water. Therefore a religion of forms first made baptism to regenerate everyone, and then confirmation to crown it. But forms are no better than idolatry: it is putting something in the place of Christ. After the apostles left, this grew apace—ceremonies, done by the hand of men, were substituted for the power of the Holy Spirit acting on the souls of men. Finding from the Word of God that there were these two things, regeneration first and then the subsequent gift of the Holy Spirit, they adopted two different

ceremonies—in one sense very properly, if there should be a religion of forms at all. But it is a total mistake of the very nature of Christianity.

Yet the truth remains that there were two different operations of the Holy Spirit. The first is, when a man is brought to a sense of sin. What makes a man abhor himself? He is born of God. He has no happiness at all, perhaps, but a deep sense of ruin; yet his heart cleaves to God. That man is born of God—truly converted: no comfort as yet perhaps in his soul, but his heart is open to listen further to the word of the truth, the gospel of salvation. He believes it. What then? He is sealed of the Holy Spirit, as a believer, not only in Christ, but in the gospel of our salvation—the work that Christ has done. For I do not think that you can have a soul sealed with the Holy Spirit, unless he enters into the work as well as the person of Christ. This accounts for the fact that there were persons born of the Holy Spirit who never were sealed. For instance, the Old Testament saints were believers in Christ; they all looked for Christ. All were born of God, but not one was sealed with the Holy Spirit. To be born of the Spirit and sealed with the Spirit are very different things, which may or may not be united in the same person. All must be born of the Spirit, but it is never said that all must be sealed with the Spirit in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Wherever the Holy Spirit speaks of the sealing of the Spirit, it proves the contrary. Who was the first person said to be sealed with the Spirit? Our blessed Lord Himself. He had it in a way peculiar to Himself. When was He sealed? When redemption was accomplished, and He went up to heaven? No; but when Christ was upon earth. “Him hath God the Father sealed.” It was as Son of man He was sealed, and as Son of man on earth before redemption—without bloodshedding, because He knew no sin: there was no guile found in His mouth. He was absolutely sinless: He could have the Holy Spirit abiding on Him entirely apart from blood, because He was the Holy One—the Saviour. He needed no work—no blood—no redemption; but yet He died, and there was blood shed and redemption effected. Why so? That we might be sealed—that we, who had no natural title to be brought nigh—that we, in whom the Holy Spirit could never take up His abode, might have the same Holy Spirit who dwelt in Him abiding in us.

This is what our Lord gradually brings out to view. “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have giving thee living water.” Therefore it was that the Lord taught the disciples to ask for the Holy Spirit; and this, after they were already regenerate. Yet he tells them to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit. (Luke 11) Is it the same thing now, seeing that He has given the Spirit? Am I to ask for the Holy Spirit, when I have Him dwelling in me? It would have been the most flagrant unbelief after Christ was in the midst of the disciples, had they asked God to send Christ. And now, when the Holy Spirit is sent from heaven, and given to be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life, what is it for persons to entreat for the Holy Spirit to be given?—for Christians to be praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit? It is a practical denial that the Holy Spirit is sent down from heaven, and is dwelling in us. It is quite right to pray that we may not grieve Him, and that we may not quench Him. To pray that we may be strengthened with all might according to His Spirit in the inner man is according to the Word of God; but we ought not to say one word that implies the Holy Spirit is not here when He is. A most grievous cloud of darkness rests on the minds of many children of God as to this subject. They do not believe their privileges; they do not know that the Holy Spirit dwells in them. Does not the Holy Spirit feel this? If you had one caring for you day by day, and you were to write, either reproachfully, or doubting his care of you, it would show that you did not feel what was being done. There is a mist over your eyes, and you are

asking for the very mercies that are already given. This is neither wisdom nor faith. It is quite true that we may ask God to bless the gospel to the unconverted and to regenerate them. But people pray for a pouring out of the Spirit—a different thing from conversion, and only mentioned in connection with the Holy Spirit's being given, first to the Jews, next to the Samaritans, and thirdly to the Gentiles. From that day to this, there is not the smallest ground to ask God for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is an unintelligent prayer, founded on unbelief of the truth that the Holy Spirit is poured out. Even God Himself could not add to the blessedness of the gift He has already given. There was a great difference between a Jew, a Gentile, and a Samaritan; and therefore it is mentioned expressly in connection with the three. The Holy Spirit never will be poured out again upon the Church. It is ignorance of the ways of God to look for it. He has been poured out upon the Church as truly as it is possible for God to give. But when the heavenly saints have been taken to be with Christ at His coming, there will in due time follow an outpouring of His Spirit on a new people, when the Jews and Gentiles will be brought as such distinctly to the knowledge of Jesus. But as long as the Church is on the earth, there never will nor can be such a thing. Can it be repeated, any more than there can be another dying of the Lord Jesus upon the cross? Nor is this a mere matter of speculation. It is connected in the deepest possible way with our worship.

You will find that faith in the presence of God's Spirit, or unbelief of it, is that which puts to the test saints in the present day. It behooves us to look to it well that we really do enter into the mind of God about it. Let us understand that which constitutes us Christians is not only that we believe in Christ, but that we are now sealed with the Holy Spirit. This was the decisive proof of a man's being a Christian. Peter thus alleges the fact: “Can any man forbid water, that these should be baptized which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?” It was not merely that they had believed; but God had given them the Holy Spirit, and could they dare to refuse persons in whom the divine Person dwelt, on whom God had conferred such a signal grace Such is the ground of all Christian unity—the presence of the Holy Spirit. The question is not merely, Is there life?, but, Have you believed that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? It was the possession of the Spirit, and not life merely, that was made the turning point. It was not until they had received the Holy Spirit that the Gentiles were acknowledged as part and parcel of the Church of God. (Acts 11) The Church is not only bound to accept life, and to believe that there is life in the soul, but is also authorized from the Word of God to wait till there is such a manifestation of it, as to be plainly manifest that they have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. There never was such a thing as owning as an assembly till there was recognition of their being on common ground with the Church by the reception of the Holy Spirit.

All this makes the true way of dealing with saints now very manifest. The Church would be justified in expecting this manifestation of the power of the Spirit. It is not true charity which does not look for it. “In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” Without dwelling on the last verse, I would make this remark again—that as the seal of the Spirit could not be till the work of Christ was done (the Son only being sealed upon earth who needed no redemption, but who came on the contrary, to redeem us to God), as we now, on the footing of redemption, receive the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, so we receive the earnest of the inheritance. This last, I believe, to be as peculiar to the Church of God since Pentecost, as the sealing of the Spirit. As the disciples were not sealed with the Spirit, so neither had they the

earnest of the inheritance till the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven. This earnest is the power of the Holy Spirit giving a believer now present joy, present anticipation of the glory to which he is going. This may be hindered in many a believer's heart by a want of knowledge of the truth, or by the workings of the flesh, worldliness. But still it remains true, that, now the Holy Spirit is given, a believer ought to look up and pray to God if there be anything that hinders his entering into the joy of His blessed inheritance, that it may be detected and put away. I am quite sure that the caring only for being born of God has acted greatly to the injury of the children of God; it has stopped them short, as if the only object were, that the children should learn this and no more. But our business is, having believed, to go on and learn other truths, and above all, Christ Himself. So it is precisely that the Holy Spirit's regenerating a soul is to occupy the soul with the fact that it is regenerate; but being born of God, we have to go forward, to enter into the blessed truths of God, which cluster around both our redemption and our future glory.

As the seal, the Holy Spirit is the witness of the perfectness of our being cleansed from our sins—the effect of the work of Christ. That operation of the Spirit is meant which supposes the work done, and that we are set apart to God on the ground of redemption. We are sealed because redemption is finished. If I look at glory, it is not finished. Therefore the figure is changed when he speaks of our inheritance. “Sealing” would not do in connection with that, because we have it not as a fact; we are not yet put in possession of what we are to have along with Christ. Hence the Holy Spirit is spoken of as “the earnest of our inheritance.” The same Spirit who seals us is the earnest of our bright future “till the redemption of the purchased possession.” First of all, we have the privileges of divine grace that chose us in Christ; predestined us to the place of sons; took us into full favor without a single question, “in the Beloved;” gave us redemption even now in Christ through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. But no sooner has the Holy Spirit thus established us in the full knowledge of God's love to us, and the present effect of it in putting away our sins, than He brings before us the inheritance. Hence comes in the relation of the Holy Spirit to these two things. And as there are two great parts in God's choice of us personally, so the Holy Spirit takes a double relationship. He is the seal of the grace and blessing that we have in Christ, and He is the earnest of the glory we are going to have with Christ. These are the relations of the Holy Spirit to the individual believer. All the general dealings of the Spirit have a secondary place compared with His ways with the soul individually, which, requiring some further development, has now received a measure of notice.

Chapter 26

Remarks on Ephesians 1:15-23

We have now the Holy Spirit leading the apostle into a remarkable prayer flowing out of the subject (or, at least, a part of it) already brought before us. It will be found that all is in the most orderly connection which it is possible to conceive, even when revealed to us; an order that we never could have conceived, unless God had made it known, but which, once communicated, approves itself immediately to the spiritual judgment. For the blessing which the enraptured apostle had poured out in the earlier verses flows, we have seen, from a twofold title of God: “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Accordingly in this epistle there are two prayers, answering to this double title. The first prayer is given in the portion now before us, and pertains to His title as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in chapter 3:14 we have a corresponding prayer, which answers to the second title, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both clearly have Christ as the foundation and center; but, then, Christ regarded in a wholly different point of view. In the former of the two Christ is viewed as man, as one who calls God His God; in the second of them, Christ is regarded in His still more intimate relationship as Son, who therefore brings before us the Father. We, too, have communion with God in both respects; we have to do with Him as God and as Father. It is said in John 4, “The hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” But then our Lord adds, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” There is an immense difference between the two things. As the Father He is seeking worshippers, communicating the unspeakable favor of bringing them to the knowledge of His love. He forms their hearts after the display of Himself in Christ, causes them to overflow with thanksgiving and praise, and thus constitutes them worshippers in spirit and in truth. But then it is added, that God is a spirit. Whatever the form in which He might have manifested Himself in Judaism, for special reasons—whatever displays of His judicial majesty, in tangible ways, Himself properly hidden, He is a spirit, and consequently He must have spiritual worship. Thus it is not merely the exceeding love that is seeking and making and gathering our worshippers, but it is the necessary character of the only worship that He admits now. From the moment that He reveals Himself fully, He can own nothing but real worship in the Spirit. The day of forms, rites, and ceremonies is totally passed. Hence it is not only that He does not look for them, but He scorns them; He treats them as a libel upon His nature, a slight on His Son, and Satan's substitute for the power of the Holy Spirit. They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. I think it important to bring out the connections of the blessed Word of God so as to show that the distinction pointed out is not imaginative. Alas! that men should be beguiled to invent, in presence of the untold treasures of the Bible. All we have to do is to bow before what is given us there. We may have, no doubt, to learn; but where the truth is known, what a mercy to be entirely delivered from the vain desire or the need of any invention! It is natural to unsatisfied man to seek out exciting novelties. But God is infinitely above man, and His Word rich beyond all thought; so that all we have to do is to submit our souls to Scripture, assured, too, that the revelation of God, old as it is, offers practically that which is ever new to the heart.

In this epistle we have these two prayers; the first of them introduced by the apostle, who says, “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.” Now, inasmuch as our love would bring in the thought of something on man's part that would give importance to us, although he is about to speak of love to the saints, he introduces the matter by “faith,” because this throws us not so much on our love to Him as His love to us. “Wherefore,” he says, “I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus,” and then gives the consequence of this, “and your love unto all the saints.” This is a very important word in judging of our love. We are all apt to form a circle, even among the saints of God—to have those that we prefer, those that suit us best, whose thoughts, feelings, habits, are more or less the same as our own, or, at least, are no great trial to us. But, then, this is not love to the saints. There is more love to ourselves in it than loving them. The flesh likes what is agreeable to us—what does not cause us pain, what is, perhaps, a gratification to the amiabilities of nature. All that may be where there is really no exercise of the new nature, no mighty power of the Spirit of God working in our hearts. We have always to test our souls, and ask how we stand in this. Is the prominent motive and object of our hearts the Lord Jesus? Is it with Him and for Him that we think of and feel towards all the saints.

I fully admit that love towards the saints cannot, and ought not, to take the same shape towards all. It must be in the energy and intelligence of the Spirit, varied according to the call upon love. While one ought to love even a person who is under discipline, it would be a very great mistake to suppose that your love must be shown in the same way as if he were not. You do not cease to love him; indeed you never are in a position and spirit to exercise discipline with the Lord where there is not love; righteous hatred of the sin, indignation it may be, but real charity to the person. It would be better to wait upon God if it be not so in our hearts, till we can take it up in the spirit of divine grace. There must be, of course, a dealing in righteousness; but even in dealing with one's child there ought not to be such a thing as chastening in a passion. Anything that merely arises out of a sudden impulse, is not a feeling that glorifies God about evil. Therefore, in cases of discipline, there ought to be self judgment, and great patience, too, unless it be something so flagrant that to hesitate about it would be culpable weakness, or want of decision and jealousy for God; for there are some sins so offensive to God and man that they ought, if we are sensitive to His holiness and obedient, to be met with grave energy and, as it were, on the very spot. The arena of the sin God would have to be the scene of its judgment according to His will.

Supposing something done in the public assembly, false doctrine in the midst of God's people, if there were the power of God, and a heart for His rights, it might be due to His majesty to deal with it without delay. This is sufficiently plain from the Word of God, where in a case of direct hypocrisy and lying against God, we find the promptness of the Holy Spirit through the apostle, in the very presence of the Church, which at once judged the fraud that was attempted to be practiced upon Him who dwelt there. I deny there was want of love in this: rather was it the necessary accompaniment of divine love acting, through the Holy Spirit's might in the assembly, or at least, by Peter, as the special instrument of His power therein. It was a stern judgment, doubtless; but it was the fruit of intense desire for the saints of God and of horror that such a sin should get a footing and shelter among them, and the Holy Spirit should be thus foully dishonored, and be grieved with the whole Church, if it were connived at. But in ordinary cases the same love would wait, and let time be given for the fault to be owned and repented of. In nine cases out of ten mistakes arise from precipitancy, because we are apt to be jealous for our own reputation. O how

little have we realized that we are crucified and dead with Christ! We feel the scandal, or something that affects the public mind: this is not the power of the Holy Spirit, but the selfish egotism that is at work in our hearts. We do not like to lose our character, nor share the sorrow and shame of Christ in those who bear His name. Not, of course, that one would make light of what is wrong: that never could be right about anything either great or small. We ought never to justify the least wrong, whether in ourselves or in others, but accustom our souls to the habitual clearing of the name of the Lord, even if it be about a hasty word. If we begin to be careless about little offenses, there is nothing to preserve us from great sins but the mere mercy of God. If love unto all the saints were working in our hearts, there would be less haste.

We sometimes misconstrue things, and endeavor to give, as we take, a very somber impression, where evil was but in appearance. Let us beware of judging according to the first blush, where the reality may prove to be otherwise: it is not righteous judgment. We should seek to judge things by a higher standard, and in the light of God. In these serious matters we are bound to be sure, and never to yield to suspicion. All judgment, if it be according to God, must proceed upon what is known and certain, not upon what is a surmise—too often the effect of an unfounded pretension to superior spirituality. We find the importance of this constantly; and were our souls more simple about it, fewer mistakes would be made.

Christ has the first place where the heart is true; and next, “all the saints” become the object of our love. If there are two cases of persons in fault, and the one were a prime favorite, and the other but little liked, the latter is in imminent danger, I need hardly say, of going to the wall. My object of aversion would labor under a cloud which obscures the truth, no matter how evident it might be to the dispassionate; whereas, on the contrary, the favorite would derive that which outweighs the proofs of guilt, from the unwillingness on the part of his friends to pronounce anything wrong about him. Both these feelings are thoroughly at issue, in such circumstances, with the mind of God. Indeed, both favoritism and prejudices are utterly condemned by His blessed Word. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17.)

“Love unto all the saints” is enjoined because they are saints. To love them because God has separated and brought them into an eternal relationship with Himself, is the only true and Christian love to such. Our great difficulty always is that our thoughts, feelings, actions, should flow from this ground. Do not mistake me. I do not mean that it is wrong to have friends. Our Lord had. He loved John as He did not love the others, and yet there was a sense in which He loved them every one alike; as His saints, they were beyond comparison precious in His sight. He might prize the faithfulness of some of His servants; He might have to encourage, reprove, correct all round; and we must leave room for all these things. There is the grand basis of love to all the saints; but it is clear we are not bound to open out matters of a personal nature to every one because he is a saint. For example, saints are not always the wisest of men; and while we are not to disown their saint ship, we are not bound to lay bare our difficulties, or to seek counsel in what may require ripe spiritual judgment from those who could render no help whatever in the case. Love there must be always. This brings in the value of that divine principle, “esteeming others better than ourselves.” This I hold to be true of all saints. It might be a man that had not two ideas, and yet have Christ before his soul. He might be very ignorant and very foolish—hasty perhaps in spirit, strong in prejudice, weak in his sympathies, and worthless as a counselor; but if there is evidently a soul

that cleaves to Christ, and values Him above everything, can I not, should I not, esteem him better than myself? Do not I see there is that which admonishes my soul—which refreshes and edifies so much more than if he were merely the staunchest friend and the wisest adviser? In the least saint of God there is that which both cheers and humbles the heart. I am not to esteem a person for a quality which he may not possess: God does not, could not, put such a phantom before us. On the other hand, it is well to bethink ourselves of the preciousness of every saint as such. Show me the very weakest and most trying of them all—yet we may and ought to cultivate a real, genuine respect for them as God's children. There is not only God for them, but what is of Christ in them; and this may commend them above all other considerations to Him who values communion with the Father and the Son.

On the contrary, in thinking of ourselves, ought we not to feel how much there is that is unlike Christ? May we ever be especially alive to that in which we break down and grieve the Spirit of God! This would have the effect of lowering and putting down our own self-esteem. Could we think so highly of ourselves, if we felt as we ought our exceeding and, alas! frequent failure, in presence of the rich, perfect grace of God to our souls? Whereas, if we had before us in others, not their failure, but Christ's love and life on and in them, and the glory to which they belong, what would be the effect? “Love unto all the saints.” It is Christ discerned in the saints, which is the power of the love He would have going out towards them. Under certain circumstances, with a person whom you trusted God might bring out as a saint—whom you have prayed for, and whose good you have sought in any way, yet at the given time it might be a sin to associate as a Christian. I am speaking of one who had by filthiness of flesh or spirit brought dishonor upon the name of the Lord. But though we may for the time abstain from all the expressions of loving intercourse, yet love always finds a place in which to show itself, though sometimes it may be only in the presence of God, and not manifestly to the human eye. So that, as to the manner of showing love, we must search the Word of God. But the general principle cannot be doubted, that God would lay upon our hearts all the saints. He has them all upon His own heart, and He will have us to cultivate this largeness of family affection.

Accordingly Paul, who entered into this in a measure which even the saints addressed perhaps knew little of practically, adds, “Wherefore I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” There is the title so often referred to— “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is about to speak of the divine dealing with man and even with Christ as man; for of course it is only in that sense that one could so speak. But if dealing with us accordingly, working mercies through the risen man and fresh blessings suited to this character, yet He is “the Father of glory” as being the great Head and Fountain of all heavenly blessedness, the One from whom it all came to His own name and praise. This at once lets us into the secret of the prayer. Glory is the main thought—not the only, but the most prominent, feature of the prayer. Hence then the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, purposes and works by Him to give certain blessings to us; and it will be found that the basis of the bright pillar of blessing is Christ risen and glorified at the right hand of God. If you look at the prayer in chapter 3, there is not a word about His being there exalted, “far above all principality, and power, and might;” for its subject is not glory at all—not what God has done: it is not anything conferred upon Christ, but Himself and His love, the sum and substance of my blessing; as it is said there “that Christ

may dwell in your hearts by faith." Here the prayer in chapter 1 is the contrast in every way of that in chapter 3.

In the latter, love is the parent idea, and not glory. It is well to bear in mind always this wonderful connection of love and glory; because the one would not do without the other. And although glory be its bright manifestation and effect, yet love is still deeper and is never fully known except in the immediate presence of our Father. The kingdom is not the evidence in our case of the love of God; the proof of it on our behalf is that we are to be with the Son in the Father's house, and that we shall appear with Christ in glory. Who brings us there? The world knows nothing about the Father's house. It is a scene outside the earth that no eye of man here below can possibly enter into. But He will also display us to the world.

Hence it is that in John 17 you will find that the glory which the Father gives the Son and which the Son gives to us because of His all—perfect love—this glory is in order that the world may know that the Father sent the Son and loved us as He loved the Son. But mark, the glory there, as here, is set prominently forward. As we have the prayer of glory in Ephesians 1 and the prayer of love in Ephesians 3, so the glory that is given in John 17 is to prove what otherwise would not have been so clearly made known to the world. Men here below may see the glory, but they cannot enter into the love. The world will gather from our being in the glory with the Lord Jesus that we were loved with the same love wherewith the Lord Jesus was loved. Glory expresses itself outwardly, but love goes deeper still and brings into the scene where the Father reveals Himself in His beloved Son. This is what I may call an intimate, family scene outside the world, the heavenly rest and home. It is not merely brightness, glory, majesty, or power. All these things will have their full display; but there is something deeper than all and which lies at the root of all. It is the love, though it be the least entered into, yet at the same time was really before all, and that to which all will turn. It is the highest of all, and it is eternal. The kingdom may terminate—the love never. The display before the world will have a beginning and an end. But as the love will never end, so it always was in the bosom of God the Father.

Thus we have the prayer that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him." There might be a little difficulty if it were simply "the knowledge of Him." The proper meaning of the word is "the full knowledge of him." They already knew Him, but He prayed that they might know Him more. He wanted them to be fathers in Christ, and what constitutes a father is a deep and growing knowledge of Christ Himself. The Spirit of God alone could give them this entrance into it; but it was in the full knowledge of Him. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." We have three things here brought before us. First, "the hope of His calling."

Now I conceive that there he is referring in measure to what we have already found in the early part of the chapter. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." At any rate, I think verse 4 is before his mind's eye here. Verse 5 brings in His place as Father. "The hope of His calling" is founded on the full blessedness that pertains to us according to that

purpose of God which is already ours in Christ—already made known to us and received by our hearts—the calling of God that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. But then if this be the hope of His calling (for everything is made to flow from God Himself), he adds, “and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” There clearly he refers to what we found in the body of the chapter: the inheritance and not only the calling. The calling was the effectual work of God's grace, and the riches of the inheritance rather the glory suited to such a calling. But, besides this character of glory, there is first the hidden portion suitable to being chosen to be holy and without blame before Him in love—called to be the reflection of His own holy, loving nature, which, of course, we have got in the life of Christ, and which we shall have perfectly developed when changed into His image, from glory to glory. For His calling has its own proper hope of what we shall enjoy in His presence.

Then there is, secondly, the inheritance. He wished them to know the riches of its glory, to know it better. But he uses a remarkable expression— “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” You must carefully guard against prevalent error on that subject, namely, that the saints mean the inheritance. This is not at all the force of the phrase; nay, I have no hesitation in saying that it would falsify the chief blessedness of the Church's calling. If we look at the Old Testament, we find that Israel was His inheritance and His people; and that God, by virtue of Israel, took possession of the land. When the day comes for God to be king, and more than king, when He takes under His government the entire universe, how will this be done? Will it be by Israel? No; but by virtue of His heavenly saints—the Church of God. The expression seems to be purposely large. Most decidedly it means the saints changed or risen that are in the likeness of Christ, in an entirely heavenly condition. Such is the mode in which God will challenge and assume the inheritance by and by into His own hand. When He took Canaan, He did not come down and possess it by heavenly power, but by means of His people. But when God expels the wicked spirits from any connection with the heavenly places—when He puts down all power upon the earth—everything that contradicts Himself, and reduces the whole universe into subjection to the name of Christ, what people will take it in His name as Israel entered on the land of Canaan? The risen saints. Hence the meaning of the words, “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” The common notion that the saints constitute the inheritance is unscriptural. For most carefully throughout the New Testament, the saints are always represented as (not the inheritance, but) the heirs, “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” They are nowhere treated as the inheritance, but, on the contrary, what is revealed as the inheritance, means the things in heaven and things on earth; and the Church is always sedulously separated from them. This I consider to be a point which cannot be left as an open question; the testimony of the Word is too abundant and precise. We ought never to allow what is clearly revealed in Scripture to be debatable or uncertain, because doubt always has an injurious effect upon the spirit, no less than it insults God and grieves His Spirit. Another's certainty will not do for us; but we need not hesitate to speak plainly where we have no doubt of God's mind upon a subject. And when we look at it in this point of view, it quite falls in with the structure of the chapter. As we have found “the hope of His calling” in the first clause answering to what we had in the earlier verses, so the “glory of the inheritance” answers to the middle verses of the chapter. God means to have the whole universe blest and happy under Christ; not merely glory given to Him in heaven, or a people subject to Him here below. We have here an incomparably larger view of what God intends. Christ is to have universal blessedness and glory, all things in heaven and earth being put under Him; and we have obtained

in Him this inheritance.

The remaining point is “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” Why not draw attention to the power that was put forth when He made the world? When Israel are addressed, He speaks of Himself as the Jehovah-God who clave the Red Sea, and brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

But what to us is the Red Sea crossed? The resurrection of Christ; not the incarnation nor even the cross of Christ, though we could not do without either. The cross, though the most essential of all things for God's glory and our need, does not give us the power of God. It shows us what God calls His weakness, and if I look at Christ there, He was “crucified through weakness.” It was One who submitted to everything, who put Himself in the power of His creatures; who went down under the judgment of God and sank even under the puny hand of man. But when we look at the resurrection, all trace of weakness is forever past away and nothing is seen but the most triumphant power of God; a power far beyond anything connected with either the law or creation. It was a question of going down into the grave not merely of a man, but of that man who had borne in His person the sins of every soul that believes in Him. And so completely was God glorified about these sins that He takes up the despised, rejected, forsaken man from under the unheard-of burden, and puts Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

We have there the astonishing contrast between the grave in which Christ lay and the glory into which He is now exalted, still as man—the glorified man, far above all creatures, be they ever so high or blest: above creatures which were far above man in one sense and never known taint or fall: above the principalities, authorities, dominions, powers on high, the heavenly orders, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come. There will be the display of angelic hosts then, when the Son of man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him. But He is raised above them all now. To be above them as God would be nothing new; He is so always. But He has carried humanity above them; He is there exalted in our nature—risen, of course, but still the nature of man. He has given us present association with the throne of God. For the application of all this is given to us here— “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead.” It is not merely the exceeding greatness of His power towards Christ, but towards us in Christ. The power that wrought in our deliverance from Satan, that gave us our place of saints before God, is the self-same power that raised up Christ from the dead and put Him in the most glorious place in heaven. Is there anything difficult after this? If we knew we had at command the power which called the world into being, should we not laugh at impossibilities? But we have an energy greater than that—no less than what raised up Christ from the dead. The word of God positively tells us so. Why then are we so weak? Because we so feebly believe it. The great mass of God's children never hear about it at all. But even they, who through the mercy of God have heard, how little do they enter into it! It is one thing not to deny it doctrinally, another to apply it and live in it, not only for great straits or heavy blows, but for the ordinary train of daily duty, of that which becomes us as saints, subjecting ourselves to the will of God. We forget, if we are in circumstances of difficulty, if in the midst of foes, if we have to do with unseen enemies, what it is the apostle prays for us. That we may know the exceeding greatness of

His power towards us who believe, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. If the power of the Holy Spirit so wrought in Paul, it was but the answer of the servant to the Master's heart, who was so pleading above, that we might know the power that is above all obstacles. No saints could know this till after the resurrection was accomplished. It is to usward who believe—strictly to the New Testament saints, called in after the Lord's death and resurrection. Supposing that a deliverer were expected for anything at all, it would be perfectly right to cry for that deliverer—to feel that he was long in coming. But when he came, do you think it would be proper and suitable to urge him to come? It is the mistake people make now. They take up the language of the Psalms and apply it to Christian experience. But you could not have in the Psalms the revelation of that which we have here. God's love you surely have previous to the resurrection of Christ; but there was no such thing as that power at work which raised up Christ from the dead. Their mistake is profound who pervert the Old Testament so as to make it the language of our experience. It would be a sin if one did not use the Old Testament for our own profit and good; but that would be abusing, not using, it.

This, then, is the measure of the power at work towards us—the same power that wrought in Christ. How are any of these things to be known according to God? “In the full knowledge of him.” You will never learn any truth in power excepting in the deepening knowledge of Christ. It is the lack of this which is the cause of weakness among us; bare doctrine is not connection with Christ. When the flower is separated from that which is its source, its sustenance and support, it becomes a dying flower from that time. We have that which is lovely and full of blessing in Christ; but if we are to know it such, to prove its truth, to enjoy it always, it must be in taking these things as connected with Christ. Let me look at Christ, and I see there the very life that God has given me, and the hope of it too, even as to the inheritance. Who would dare to say, it is presumption for Christ to have it? Nay, but it is what is due to Him. God loves and delights in Him as man so well, that He could not keep back a single thing that He has made from Him. He is the heir of it all; and we, hidden in Christ, can enter into the fullness of His calling, and into the inheritance, because we merge in union with Christ. And as you can only know the calling and the inheritance in this full knowledge of Christ, so it is also with “the exceeding greatness of His power.” The measure of that power is, what God put forth when He raised up Christ “from” the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” He has given Him the supreme seat of glory. No matter what could be conceived of the highest angel or archangel, Christ has received a higher dignity, and this place He holds in present association with us while we are here. It is One who not only owns us and is kind to us, and uses the greatness of His glory for our good, but far more. The sovereign that is exalted to the throne can use the throne for the good of his subjects, and the glory of those whom he desires to honor; but there is no positive, immediate, personal association with him. This is what the Christian has with Christ. Nothing less than to be one with Christ is what we have here. Therefore it is added, that this blessed One, under whose feet God has put everything, He has also given to be head over all things to the Church. It is not said, “head over the Church,” but “Head over all things to the Church.” The Church shares His place of headship over all; as His body, but still in inseparable union with Him. The glorified Man has universal exaltation over all the creatures of God; and this He shares with us, and will soon manifest as our portion with Him. The Christian is now a member of Christ's body; now, therefore, by the Holy Spirit, in the most intimate association with Christ, not only as having life in Him, but as enjoying oneness with Him who is the supreme exalted Head over all. He is a member of His body; and although it was not to Eve

directly that God gave the dominion, yet did she share it by His will. It was given to Adam, but by association Eve had it along with Adam. So the Church has it as the dependent and associated Eve of the heavenly Man, the last Adam. This gives us at once a bright view of what our calling is, and why God looks for complete separation from the world. In the time of the Protector in this country, it would have been improper for any one that held to the royal family to seek or even accept a post of honor. So with the Christian now. We belong to One who is hidden away from the earth—exalted now into this universal headship. The world that we see is not yet put under Christ practically, though to faith all things are; but we know that He is exalted, “head over all things to the church.”

We belong to Him, and He would have our hearts lifted up above all the present scene. The Church is “His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” It is the complement, or that which fills up Christ, looked at as man risen from the dead. As Son of God He, of course, requires nothing to complete His glory; but as man He does. He would no more be complete in His resurrection-glory without the Church, than Adam would have been without Eve. And God has, in the counsels of His glory, so ordered it. He meant, from all eternity, that when His Son became this blessed, glorified man, He should share for His own honor and praise all the glory He had as the risen man, with those who were by nature poor, dead sinners, but now delivered from their sins, and made one with Christ on high. By the Spirit now given He communicates the knowledge of it to them while in the world, that they might be in spirit and ways entirely above the world.

Chapter 27

Remarks on Ephesians 2:1-7

We now enter upon a new portion of our epistle, if not so exalted in its tone as that which we have glanced over in chapter 1, equally important in its place and of the utmost moment to us. But then we must carefully bear in mind that what is of interest to us is not an adequate measure in looking at either the word of God or His ways. God never acts for anything short of His own glory. So that although we find many parts of the word of God which in the very closest way touch our condition, wants, blessing, and glory, we invariably fall short of the just scope and standard of the truth of God, if we limit our thoughts by its application to ourselves. Never do we reach the full extent of any truth in its bearing upon us, unless we also take into account its infinitely higher range as the revealed display of God's glory, character, and purposes. Hence it is, that although we find in the Scripture grace already shown to us, and glory that we are soon to participate in, yet how infinite the blessing, when we no longer look at it as that which is directly toward creatures so limited and poor as ourselves! When we realize that it is the grace and the glory of God, how all is changed completely! We then hear and find out this grand truth—He does speak of us and feel for us. He enters into all our little wants as well as all our greatest. But still if it were the least thing He meets in us, the supply of that want flows from One who has no limits; and if it be suited to our capacity for the present moment, it will not be always so. God will never rest in His love till He has not only given us by the Holy Spirit now to taste in measure the sweetness of the display of His own character, but made us in every way worthy of it. He has called us to be His children. The day is coming when not merely His love will not be ashamed so to call us, but when there will be no reason why it should be: when, on the contrary, everything that pertains to the family of God will savor just as much of what He is as, alas! now our poor, pitiful, worldly ways often tell a painful tale of self and not God.

In this chapter then it is, not the unfolding of God's counsels and magnificent purposes as they flow from His own mind—consequently going back to the beginning of time, and before creation had a place at all as a matter of fact, when all was but God Himself in the eternity of His own existence. Even then, as chapter 1 told us, before His hand had been put forth in anything, there was this blessed thought in His heart: He meant to have a people, yea, sons, out of the scene that was yet to be created, gathered by His own sovereign grace out of sin to be the partakers of His love and of His holiness, along with His beloved Son. This was His counsel. Chapter 1 showed us this, not only what was in God's mind from eternity, but the answer to it in the day of glory that is coming. For two great thoughts were brought before us there: first, the calling of God; and next, the inheritance that is yet to be displayed in the bright display of glory when Christ will take everything that God has made, and will be the acknowledged, glorified Head of it (all things, whether in heaven or on earth, being put under Him); and when we who believed in Him shall be called to the place of sharing that inheritance along with Him, our Lord and Bridegroom. Thirdly, we see an added and most weighty point—that the same power of God which raised up Christ from the dead is at work toward believers now. This was only alluded to passingly in the prayer of the apostle at the end of chapter 1. What we have here is, to a certain point, a kind of development

of it. Chapter 2 is mainly based on His resurrection-power; nay, not this only, but, if I may so say, ascension-power. The energy which raised up Christ and set Him at the right hand of God, is now put forth on behalf of and working in those that believe in Him. We shall see the consequences of this. But now let us weigh for a moment what the Holy Spirit here brings out. It is the application of the mighty power of God to the believer. It is not, therefore, simply the purpose of grace, nor the execution of that purpose in glory by and by, but it is the exercise of His power after the pattern of Christ risen and glorified, and the application of it to the believer even now.

Hence we have necessarily first brought before us the condition of those in whom the power is put forth, what they were when it began to work in them. Accordingly it is only in chapter 2 that we begin to have any development of the actual condition of those with whom God is so nearly linked. Chapter 1 is mainly occupied with what God has in His mind, and what He will yet accomplish. Now we have the question raised and answered, Who are these people and what was their state when God could so deal with them? And it is most marvelous, that, when we come to hear His word, there is in no other epistle any portion that gives us so deep, searching, humiliating a picture of the desperate, degraded state in which those were whom God destined to be joint-heirs with Christ. The laying bare moral corruptions we have in Romans, fully proving what man is if he takes the ground of anything within him. Whether the favored Jew under the law, or the Gentile with his conscience, all is thoroughly discussed there, and every pretension of man is ground to powder. But in Ephesians the proof of guilt is needless. Man is viewed as so completely dead, that it is but the removal of the cloth from off the corpse. Therefore the apostle says, “You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It is not simply, How is a sinner to be forgiven, justified? but “You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The words “hath He quickened” are inserted, it is true, in italics, but it is the evident and necessary sense; without it, to an English reader, the sentence would be embarrassed. It is not till verses 4, 5 that we have the completion of the thought. It is plain that the quickening affects those that are called— “you,” as well as those designated “us.” I shall hope to show the meaning of the distinction presently, but I only refer to it now in order to guard against the notion, that there is no sufficient reason for inserting in English the expression “You hath he quickened;” whereas it is implied in the language that the Holy Spirit used, or at least in the sense.

The grand fact remains. It is not merely a question of disease in the moral state of man; but they are “dead.” What a blow to all the thoughts of man— to the notion that he is in a state of probation—that he is in a mere sickly state of soul; and if you only soothe and comfort and educate him, after all he is not so bad! Some people think there is a difference between believers and unbelievers in their unconverted state: this I deny. As to men being born, some of them more worthy of having mercy shown them than others, the idea is contrary to every word of God that treats of the subject. On the contrary, what the Holy Spirit insists upon is the real death and equal ruin of all. In Romans it is said that we were “without strength,” but here we were “dead.” The only way in which death is spoken of in Romans is as a privilege, the happy condition into which faith brought us when baptized unto the death of Christ. We are thus viewed as being dead to sin and alive to God.

In Ephesians, on the contrary, death was our misery.

It was the expression of God's mind about the extreme ruin in which we lay. We have both Jews and Gentiles (neither now first or last)—man as such—morally dead; so that it becomes a question of what God can do. God above, and man here below, are in the presence of each other; and if man is dead, thanks be to God! He raises the dead, and can and does quicken souls. I am not denying the immortality of the soul; but what Scripture calls “life” is not bare existence, but a blessed spiritual nature, given to a man who naturally was without it and merely felt or acted after a nature under sin. Such is the condition of every person until the Spirit of God has wrought this good work upon the soul. Our Lord reproaches Nicodemus for not understanding this. Even as a Jew he ought to have done so; but as a “master in Israel “was it not a shame that he should not know these things? When he heard of the necessity of being “born again,” or on an altogether new principle, he imagined that the Saviour might speak of some repeated natural birth, which, if possible, would have been but the old thing over again. But the word “afresh” (■νω■εν) is exceedingly emphatic; and so is the opening out of the truth. Hearken to this: “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Flesh never can become spirit. There is no such thing as changing the old nature, and making it new and holy. What the unregenerate soul wants is a new nature, or, as the Lord explains it, to be “born of water and of the Spirit.” It is the word of God figuratively presented thus, and applied by the power of the Holy Spirit to the soul, which is the meaning of the passage. Baptism may set forth that which is conveyed by it, but it is only a figure. Our Lord shows that there must be a new life imparted; and as we are told elsewhere, “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth.” And this is brought out not only by James but by Peter also, where he shows that we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” We know positively from the Apostle Paul, that the washing of water by the word is God's own explanation of the figure. Again, what could Nicodemus know about Christian baptism? It was not then instituted; and the disciples' baptism was only a sort of modification of John's rite, that is, a confession of a living Messiah, coming or come on earth. But proper Christian baptism is founded upon the death and resurrection of our Lord. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized unto His death?” Christian baptism is the confession of the death and resurrection of Christ, and was instituted by our Lord when He rose from the dead. Then, and not before, He told them to go forth, baptizing all nations, or Gentiles, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He laid down the grand, full, Christian revelation of the Godhead, into the power and confession of which the believer is brought by his baptism.

In the Scriptures just alluded to, we find clearly that where unfigurative language is used, the means of giving the new life is said to be the word of God applied by the Holy Spirit; and that when figures are used, water is what is chosen. But the sum and substance of the entire teaching is, that the testimony of God is the divine means of communicating life to the soul when applied by the Holy Spirit—that is, by faith. And if we want still further to know what specially in the truth of God is used to quicken those who are dead in sins, it is always, more or less, the revelation of Christ. My believing that the creature was made by God, will not quicken my soul. I might believe any facts in the Old Testament, and be assured of all the miracles, discourses, and ways of Jesus in the New, and yet my soul might still be unquickened. But believing in Christ Himself is a very different thing from not doubting things about Him. It supposes that I have, more or less, come to an end of myself; that I have bowed to the humiliating sentence of Scripture upon my nature, and that I own myself to be only a poor, lost, dead creature in the sight of God. Some men are proud of the

affections we share with the brutes, and some still more deify themselves because of conscience; but even conscience was acquired by sin. Adam, before the fall, could not have told what good and evil was. He did not avoid eating the forbidden fruit, became he knew it was in itself evil; nor was there indeed anything morally wrong in its own nature in eating the fruit of that tree. But the command of God made it a test—a moral test that Adam would have known nothing about unless God had told him, “Thou shalt not eat.” Thus, for the purpose of exercising a child's obedience, it might be said, You are not to go out of this room; it might have been all right before. It was only after eating of the forbidden fruit that Adam obtained the distinctive and intuitive knowledge of good and evil; but he knew evil only by being under its power. Had it been said to Adam before the fall, “Thou shalt not lust or covet,” he might have said, What does it mean? I do not understand. But the moment he listened to the devil, and took the fruit that God forbade, there was another element infused into Adam's nature that had not been there before. Unfallen, he had body, soul, and spirit; and then what Scripture calls “the flesh” after the fall. This is not mere “flesh and blood.” Our Lord had these (else He could not have been truly a man), but not “the flesh,” which is the principle of self-will, or liking our own way, and not God's. This is sin, and what Scripture means by sin: that strong, restless craving to have what we wish, whether God wills it or not. Satan blinds the soul as to what is God's will, God's mind. This love of one's own will was not in the original nature of man. “The flesh” was gained through the fall, and shows itself in love of our own will and independence of God. Paul constantly dwells upon it, and it is what John (1 John 4) really calls “lawlessness” —rather than, as we have it, “transgression of the law.” It is the wish for our way in despite of God's will and way, whether expressed or implied. It is the essence of sin, the sad inheritance of sinners, from which, thank God, the believer is delivered. So that, when a man receives Christ, he has still his old nature, not only body, soul, and spirit, and even “the flesh” —for this, too, he has still, and it may be, alas the occasion of many a slip and sorrow, if he be unwatchful; but besides these, there is a new nature that we had not before.

God has given us a new life, and this is just as distinct in its workings as the old life is. But God has quickened us and given us a new life. Look at a man: what is there? Self-love; a little bit of pride here, and of vanity there; love of one's own will everywhere— the characteristic of the sinner under all circumstances. Search and see, and you will not have to search long before you find that which betrays not Christ, but Adam. Look at the history of man, as given in Genesis, and there see what he is. He might be enticed by his affections. But why allow his affections so to work as to carry him into disobedience against God? Had God told him to listen to his wife? He ought to have acted as the head, and have reminded her of what God told them. And God's order is never forgotten with impunity. So man, having allowed the wife to take the lead, soon reaped the bitter consequences. But in Christ I have the exact contrary. What more remarkable feature morally can be than this?—A person, who, while He was everything, was content to be nothing; who, while He was man here below, never acted upon His own independent title; who always, under every circumstances, great or small, sought and was subject to His Father's will. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” says He, in Luke 2, when only a child. It was not only when He came publicly forward, but He had the consciousness of it always. And if I want to know what our Lord was as He grew up to mature years, there, too, I find it. And wherever I look at Him, this crowning feature shows itself in all times and circumstances—One that never sought and never did His own will. There, I say, is another sort of man altogether. No wonder the Holy Spirit says about Him, and Him only, “the Second man.” All other men only were just so many reproductions

of Adam—so many sons in his own likeness, after his own image. As far as they were men, viewed simply as such, they bore that one common character of Adam. But now comes forth another man; and from and in this dead and risen stock we become new creatures, having His life communicated to us by faith in Him. As by natural birth we have the life of Adam, so we have what would naturally flow from such a frightful beginning—the same self-will, weakness, boastfulness, dread of God, dishonesty and insolence towards Him. Such is man: such, too, is just what I find in my own self; and if I read the Bible aright, God will force me to own it. When quickening a soul, He always obliges it to take up the picture and say, That is myself, black as it is. Then, when a person is broken down under the awful discovery of sin within, and judges it according to God, this is what Scripture calls repentance. It is owning not only what we have done, but what we are also. How is it to be remedied "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Spirit has given a new life, and in this world, through the knowledge of Christ. Hence it is by the word of God ("faith cometh by hearing"), not by baptism, or any other institution of the Lord, blessed as they are. We must take care that we put things in their proper places. It is the Word brought home by the Holy Spirit that produces faith, and this not by mending the first, but by revealing the last, Adam. God has come down from heaven to accomplish this great purpose—to give me this new life—to deliver me from sin and self: and how is it done? It is the Holy Spirit who effects it by the Word of God. But here the apostle does not enter into the detail of it; he is merely telling out the grand facts: "you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins (the worst of all deaths); wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Does it not show how active in evil was this kind of death? These dead were at the same time walking according to the course of this world; which, indeed, was the proof of their moral death. They had no desire to shape their walk according to God's Word. As Job says (ch. 21:14), "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And was not this the condition of our own souls? Can we not remember when it was a painful thing to have to meet God about our sins? I must have to do with God. And here is the solemnity of it. If I do not meet God now about the Saviour, I shall have to meet Him about my sins. And if I despise meeting the Saviour about my sins, meet God I must in my sins—to be lost forevs. You put a sort of honor upon an enemy by paying attention to him; but you cannot more deeply insult a friend than by paying neither heed nor notice. So it is as to indifference about Christ. Perhaps we try to settle accounts with God once or twice a day—what a wrong to God and a wrong to my soul? If I have sins upon me—and in that condition we all are and have been naturally —what is to be done It is easy to say what we have been doing—walking "according to the course of this world." This is not merely gross things. Supposing that people were all as courteous and kind as possible— that there were no such things as jails and judges, nor convicts punished: supposing that men could be reasoned out of their wickedness, what would still be the condition of men? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man, as such, never can see the kingdom of God. The only way by which I can be brought into His kingdom is by being born anew, and having that new nature which is of Christ and not of Adam. Baptism is the sign of it. Paul had already believed on the Lord when Ananias said to him, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." There is the figure of washing; but the only effective means or instrument in the sight of God is the blood of Christ. "To Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

The thought, then, of quickening leads the Apostle to bring out the condition from which they were delivered. They were walking according to the course of this world; and not only so, but according to the devil. The title, “Prince of the power of the air” was to set forth his all-permeating influence. As the air surrounds and penetrates everything, so does the devil the realm of nature— “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This was the way they showed that they were under his power by their disobedience. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past.” Why is it “we?” Why this change from “you” to “we?” When addressing the Ephesians who had been Gentiles, he uses the word “ye;” but he includes now in this moral sentence, “dead in trespasses and sins,” Jews as well as Gentiles. When God was measuring man by Christ, this was their state—not a single one that was not dead. And there can be no degrees of death. If a man is dead, there is an end of him. So that, although, if you look at men morally, you may draw distinctions, and say, There is a man going further and faster on the downward way than others, yet if you look deeper still, these distinctions vanish, and they are all indiscriminately ruined, yea, dead, in the sight of God. So he says, as proving this, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” No matter who we were, or what, he calls it all “the lusts of our flesh.” But some of them might have been philosophers, and some benevolent and moral, some gross people living in open and atrocious wickedness. But take the best of them, and judge them by this:—was it their life-breath and governing motive to do the will of God? Not at all. They might have been gratifying their own kindly nature; but God was not in their thoughts. Or it was a kind of bribing God to let them off. For in heathenism there was a tradition that a sacrifice was necessary; but it was corrupted and degraded and perverted in all sorts of ways.

Here, then, we have the common condition in which all, Jew or Gentile, were by nature. Yet he distinguishes “the desires (or wills) of the flesh and mind,” by which he means the grosser tendencies, and the more refined, intellectual desires. Supposing a man devoting himself to science, and making it his object, is this to do the will of God? Nay, but rather the indulgence of the desires of the mind, and as thoroughly self as with others who might be given up to the coarser appetites of nature. The grand thing is, that I have no right to myself—I belong to another. Am I doing His will? Then when we enter the relationships of faith, we are not merely the Lord's creatures, responsible to do His bidding as a natural duty, but redeemed by the blood of Christ, and alive in Him from the dead, that we henceforth live, not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again.

Let it be the choicest men that the world can boast of: this is their state— “by nature the children of wrath even as others.” What a word! Even the Jews, who had the light of God as far as outward light was Concerned, were “by nature” the children of wrath, as much as the degraded, idolatrous stock-and-stone-worshipping Gentiles. So that there can be no more complete annihilation of all man's religious privilege as well as creature-standing, than what we have in this verse. It is not only that people have done wrong, but they were by nature the children of wrath. God did not make man so: it was man who chose the path of disobedience, who gave up God for the devil. He did not, of course, intend this; for Satan comes in as an angel of righteousness; but however he may work, this is the one result to which all are reduced without exception— “by nature children of wrath.” And what does God? For there is the absolute necessity that God should act in order to bring in one ray of light into the midst of this hopeless wreck and ruin. But people will not believe

that they are ruined; they will think that it is a good world after all, and a state of things God has given man to cultivate, forgetting that God “drove out the man,” and that all the inventions of man are only expedients to cover his nakedness, and to lead him to overlook that he is an exile from Paradise. Of course these inventions we can use if we do not abuse them. But let us bear in mind that, as Christians, our life, our home, is not here; we belong to another scene, where Christ is. We are not of the world; we are redeemed to do God's will, sanctified to obedience, to the same kind of obedience as our Lord's. Do we weigh and apply this earnestly, assiduously, conscientiously, within the bosom of the family of God, or wherever we may be placed? In our Lord was life, and He was ever happy in the consciousness of His Father's love. The believer, too, has life in Him, and is loved as He was loved. God may use the ten commandments to crush a man in the flesh; but as a believer, he is called to obey as Christ obeyed, to walk as He walked; for He left us an example that we should follow His steps.

Here, then, we have this mighty intervention of God, who, “rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Not only are we quickened—this would have been true, looking at any saint that ever lived on the face of the earth. But could you have said that all were raised up together with Christ? seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? Is it not a fuller statement of the blessing that belongs to us as Christians now, which could not be predicated of any till the resurrection and ascension of Christ were facts? Our Lord says, “I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.” Why does He draw the distinction between life, and life “more abundantly?” On what principle is it that Christ quickens at all Because in Him, the Son, is life; and this life becomes the portion of the believer in Him: “For the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.” He was always the source of life to the soul, no matter when or where, though it was, of course, only in virtue of foreseen redemption that sinful men could receive it. Before His death and resurrection, however, it was simply life. But our Lord adds, “and I will give it more abundantly.” The disciples that surrounded Him then had life because they believed in Him. But when our Lord rose from the dead, the first time He appeared among the disciples, He breathed upon them and said “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” What was this? The Spirit as the power of life more abundantly (not as gift yet). He gave them life while He was here, and when risen He imparted it more abundantly, life in resurrection. What is the difference, people may ask, to us? Immense. But the difference in the mind of God is the main thing and how it bears upon His glory. Therefore, whether understanding it or not, I desire to bow and bless God, perfectly sure that there is a wise and good reason for everything He does and says. We are to be raised by and by from the dead: our bodies are still unchanged. The body of the believer decays and crumbles like the unbeliever's, yet he has the resurrection-life of Christ, this life “more abundantly.” “As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” was not a word merely for the twelve. No doubt they had a mission that none of us has. But while this is true, and none now can be put on a level with them as apostles, yet at the same time I maintain that they also had ministerial functions, apart from their special apostolic character, and in those, not in this, they have successors. Our Lord met, on that day when He rose, “the disciples,” which embraces a far wider thought. It was the then Christian company, all that were there, whether men or women, if they were disciples. It was upon

these He breathed. They were all to have His more abundant life. The effect is, that all are brought into liberty. Compare Romans 8:1-2.

I do not enter further into the very blessed accompaniments of this new life, but only remark that as to being raised and sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, all is spoken of as being now true of the believer. There is no such mystical notion meant by this as that we are not on earth or in our bodies here. Everything in Scripture is the very reverse of extravagance. Mysticism is the devil's imitation of God's mysteries, and the mere mist of men's fancies. “Mystery” in Scripture means nothing vague, but truth the human intellect would never discover, which, when presented by the Holy Spirit to the new nature, is perfectly intelligible. Some things are of a profounder character than others, and there may be that which is beyond all knowledge, as, for instance, the nature of the Son of God. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father; and it is not said of the Son, “He to whom the Father shall reveal Him.” The Father maintains with holy jealousy the inscrutable glory of the person of His Son. But apart from this, the mysteries of Scripture are truths once locked up but now revealed and intended to be known, and in fact the portion and joy of the believer.

Chapter 28

Remarks on Ephesians 2:4-10

We have already glanced at the strong contrast drawn between man's condition in the first three verses, and the mighty intervention of God's grace that follows. We have seen the Gentile brought out in the dark portrait of abject moral corruption and senseless idolatry, the Holy Spirit laying everything bare in a few mighty touches. They were “dead in trespasses and sins,” thoroughly subject to the prince of this world. They were merely pursuing the course of this age, children of disobedience, without reference to God in their ways. There is no thought of bringing out in detail the frightful forms of human impiety, or the depravity and degradation to which man has fallen under Satan's instigation. Nevertheless, we have a far deeper view of the hopelessly evil condition of man here, than even when all the details of impurity, superstition, and rebellion are entered into at full length. In the word of God, how little the energy depends on the seeming strength of language! Still less is it what we find with men when they wish to put a thing forcibly. Of violent, exaggerated expression there is nothing in Scripture.

We have simply (and what a fact it is!) God Himself sounding the condition of man, no longer looking at the heart as if it were a question of restraining its desires, which He did under the law. But now it is the utter death of nature in the presence of God—the power of Satan substituted instead of God's government—man himself evidently and hopelessly ruined. But into this scene of death God enters—God who is rich in mercy. And the great love wherewith He loved us is just alluded to as the spring of all that He has done. “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins” — “we,” whether Jews or Gentiles, but more particularly referring to the Jew here. At least he had contrasted the two in verses 2-3. In verse 5 he may possibly be bringing them both in; but if any are particularly alluded to, it is the Jew, for he is as dead as the Gentile—there is no difference as to this. “Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Having already entered into the general subject of regeneration, I would only just add, that although, now that Christianity is divulged, we have regeneration going on at least as much as ever, we have in fact the Holy Spirit stamping upon the regeneration of the present time a deeper character. For it is not only that there is life given, or souls quickened only, but they are quickened together with Christ. I doubt that this could have been said before Christ's death and resurrection. There can be no hesitation that all the life which any saint ever received from the beginning of the world, was of and through Christ. “In Him was life.” He is the eternal life that was with the Father, and other life there is none for a sinner. There was a tree of life before man fell; not only a tree of knowledge of good and evil, but a tree of life. But this was only creature life that might have sustained an innocent creature to the end. But what if the creature fell? What when Adam became a sinful man? Would the tree of life avail for him then? Not for an hour. “So he drove out the man.” God would not permit that man should touch the mere natural tree of life. For supposing he had eaten of it after sin, what would have resulted? Only a perpetuation of evil in a wretched, remediless condition of sin: an eternal existence in a condition alienated from God, from which there was no escape. So that although

death came in as the sentence upon a guilty man, there is in a sense mercy in it, now that man is born into a sinful world, and is subject to every kind of misery, which an enemy has brought in, and which, if you look at death as a part of it, may be the just sentence of God upon man's iniquity. But all this is laid hold of by Satan, and turned to his purposes, mingled with a bad conscience, on which Satan works, so that a man is filled with dread and horror of God. From this, God, by presenting Christ, delivers the soul. It is not only that the soul finds a life that is suited to its every need—it is not at all a mere perpetuating one's existence in misery, but a life that ensures deliverance out of evil and all its effects and curse, flowing from God in His grace, founded upon holiness; and a holy blessedness in the presence of God in that same Christ who brings in this life. There is also God recovered by the soul, as surely as He recovers it to Himself. It was not only that man by sin lost natural life, but he lost God; and it is not only that Christ gives me now a new and better life than the tree of life could give, but He gives me God; He brings me to God and puts me in the presence of God. He makes known God to my soul, and gives me to be sure of His love, of His interest in me, of His deep pity and even complacency: for God cannot only love in a natural way, but with a love of complacency and relationship.

This, then, is what we find in Christ; and although life could be spoken of in connection with all the Old Testament saints before Christ died and rose, still I doubt much that the Spirit of God could speak of the life which they received, as being life with Christ. Life by and in Christ it could not but be; but quickening with Christ goes a great deal farther. And this is what we have now. For God points us to Christ under the burden of our sins, under the whole consequences of that which my nature deserved because of its distance and enmity to God—its spirit of disobedience and self-will. All the evil was charged upon Him, and He was treated as if He were it all; as if He, in His own person on the cross, had the entire sum and substance of the evil of human nature in His own person. Of course, had there been a single particle of it in Himself, He could not have atoned for others—the judgment of God must have been upon it; but the total absence of it in His own person was what indicated His perfect fitness to be the victim. God was dealing with the whole height and length and depth and breadth of sin in the person of Christ upon the cross. But God raised up that same blessed One who went down under the wrath of God, and who, when He had tasted what it was to be forsaken, and God's face hid from Him, did not and could not depart from this life without saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” which showed the perfect confidence of His heart and delight in God. “Our fathers trusted in thee they cried unto thee and were delivered.” But He could not be heard till the full trial was closed. He was only heard from the horns of the unicorn. He must go through it all— unutterable sorrow and anguish, intolerable to all but Him; and yet to Him what was it not—all the wrath of God if the deliverance was to be complete and according to God. But He has done so; and He lets us know, in departing from the scene, that however He might suffer, yet His heart truly rested in God; and He confessed unwaveringly, not only that God continued holy, but that the Father was full of love. “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

But now we have another thing altogether—God interposing to deliver to the uttermost. He would not say that He quickened Christ absolutely. It is always qualified somehow, because Christ was life Himself. He was the eternal life with the Father, in due time manifested on the earth; and how say anything that would imply that He owed His life to another? He might say that, as man put to death in the flesh, He was quickened of the Spirit, but His intrinsic personal glory abides, which indeed gave its value to the whole extent of His humiliation and suffering unto death. The Father,

too, gave Him as a man to have life in Himself. This was the perfection of Christ here below: He would not take it as His own right. He would not speak a word nor do a work that He had not heard from and in God. He was the perfectly dependent man. The same Gospel that dwells as none other does on His divine glory, shows us also His absolute dependence on God. On the other hand, how sweet to see in Scripture how God the Father watches over the glory of Christ! He would not say one word that could in any way impair the dignity of His Son. Here, therefore, it is said, He hath “quickened us together with Christ.” It was we that needed the life. Christ might have gone down into death, but He has quickened us together with Him. Christ had died in a more solemn manner than any mere man could die. He was emphatically the Holy One of God, the only holy man, and yet even so had He died. Of course no unholy one could die as He died. He knew what it was to taste death in all its bitterness, God's judgment and wrath, as none other could; and yet He was one who felt it so much the more because He was essentially in the bosom of the Father. But this blessed One having gone down thoroughly under death as the judgment of God upon our nature and our sins, thereon ensues the mighty power of God, who has quickened us together with Christ. In a word, the life is in the most intimate association with Christ, and we are in union with Christ Himself, put to death in the flesh, but now quickened by the Spirit. As to the life that He had here below, it was given up and gone; and now He rises in a new life, in resurrection. It is therefore immediately added that God not only has quickened us together with Christ, but has raised us up together; and more than this, has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Thus the full value that belongs to life as it is now in Christ is also given to us; so that we can be spoken of even while we are in this world according to the complete blessedness of life as it is now seen in Christ at the right hand of God.

Let us consider what such a marvelous thought as this involves—what it brings us into association with. We know what our old nature loves, and does, and is; we know too well what the life, or rather the death, of Adam, brought us into. What have we derived from our first father—what have we deserved and brought on ourselves, but sin, sorrow, suffering, sickness, death, a bad conscience, and a fearful looking for of judgment? All these things we have as the workings and effects of that existence which we have inherited, our sad heirloom from the first man. But now comes the new and supernatural source of life in the Second Man; and where shall we best know its character? Let us look up at Christ. How does God the Father look upon Him? Is He delighted in Him? He was always so; and was never more than when He traced Christ's steps as He walked a man among men. But there was the terrible question of sin—our sin. Is it a terrible question now? Or has Christ in very deed answered it forever in the cross? Yes, it is the very thing that has given occasion for God to show His love as nothing else could. How should I have known how much God loves me if I had not had such depth of need as an enemy of God, fathomless save to His saving mercy in Christ? I do not say it to lighten the sin of my enmity to God, nor to allow the notion that there was or could be the smallest title to the favor of God. But my hopeless evil becomes a measure of the depth of His love; and that because this brings Christ into the scene, and Christ as a Redeemer and Saviour on God's part —Christ the infinite gift of God's grace—Christ, who would be turned aside by nothing—Christ, who endured everything from man, Satan, and God's righteous judgment, that we might be saved after a divine sort. And so in truth we are. And what do we not owe the Saviour, and the God who gave Him? But what did not Christ bear? Our frightful ruin and sin has just brought out what God is in His great love to us, and what Christ is in His value and the mighty power of the life in which He is risen and gone up, seated,

and ourselves in Him, in heavenly places. Do you still ask what the character of the life is that the Christian has got now? Look at Christ, and see how precious He is to God—how He cannot have the Blessed One, who is the full expression of that life, too near Himself. He has raised Him up, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. In Ephesians 2 it is simply “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” It is not added here, as in Ephesians 1, “at His own right hand.” I am not aware that such words are ever said about the children of God, nor do I think they could be. Do they not rather seem to be the personal place of Christ? But it is said, “in the heavenly places,” because it is to them, and not to the earth, that we belong. Israel, as such, in their best days, belonged to the earth; and so did we in our worst; but now it is not only that our names are written in heaven —though that very expression shows the wonderful love of God that destines and enrolls us to be above—that connects us with heaven while we are upon the earth —all that is true; but we have much more in Ephesians. There we find that, in virtue of our union with Christ, we are said to be not only raised with Him, but seated with Him in heavenly places. In a word, what is said of Christ Himself is true by grace of us, only excepting what may be personal in Him as God the Son, or used of the Lord in a necessarily pre-eminent degree. For after all there is a distinction between the Head and the body, even as such; though, on the other hand, the very difference shows the closest possible association: we are His fullness or complement.

We learn, then, from this that we have Christ's own title while we are in this world—nay, more than that, Christ's own life in us, by virtue of which we are said to be quickened with Him, yea, raised and seated in Him in heavenly places. But let us carefully bear in mind that all this is never said of any in purpose or election, but only where faith exists. It is not applicable to us before we believe: it would not be true of any person before there is positive, living association with Christ. What is commonly called Calvinistic theology, much truth as it embodies, is totally false on this head. One of its main features is the endeavor to make out that, the love of God being from everlasting to everlasting, our relationship is always precisely the same—that because God has the purpose of making us His children, He always regards us as His children —that if a man is elect, supposing he is still an infidel or a blasphemer, he is as much a son of God as when he is regenerate of the Holy Spirit and walking in the ways of God. It maintains that God loves him with exactly the same love (while he is, for example, a sot or a swearer), as afterward. What among believers can be conceived more dishonoring to God and destructive to man than this doctrine? Manifestly the apostle is speaking here, not of persons elect merely, though of course they were elect, but quickened—that is, they had actually life. Not only was there a purpose of God about them, but they were then living to God as those who had faith in Christ. You could not say that a man has life before he has faith. It is the reception of Christ by the Holy Spirit which, on the one side, is called faith, and on the other life: You could not rightly put one before the other. If you could not say that faith was before the life, certainly life is not before faith. The first exercise of faith is the first also of life. It is the power of the Spirit of God presenting Christ to the soul. Hence it is said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” The living is there, if there be any difference at all, the effect of hearing, rather than the hearing the effect of living. This is very important; because none can say that persons are quickened with Christ until they are here to be called; and it is impossible to say that they have life till they have heard the voice of the Son of God. The first proof that a man is a sheep is that he hears the good Shepherd's voice. He is not thrown on certain, or rather uncertain indications, of life within himself, but on the grand, objective test and evidence which God demands—not merely

what I am doing or not doing (the law asked this), but whether I receive and rest on the Son of God. Am I drawn away from all the sounds of this world, and is His voice attracting my soul? As sure as this is so, you have life. “He that believeth hath everlasting life.” “He that hath the Son hath life.” I prove that I have it by the very simple, sure, and blessed fact that I hear the voice of the Son of God. Thus only I have life—then only am I assured of being quickened and raised with Christ. This is an association with Christ after He had gone under death for our sins, which is the Christian character of quickening. We are also said to be seated in heavenly places because we have the life of Christ who is there, and we are spoken of according to the place which He has entered who is our life. So that Scripture does not merely mean that we are so in God's decree or thought when it says that He has raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places. The reference is not to our future resurrection, but it teaches the present association of the believer by virtue of our union with Christ, who is in the presence of God. And in referring to this first part of it, the apostle says, “By grace ye are saved.” This is the source of all the blessing. And the expression is very strong. For what the form of the word implies is that the salvation was complete, and that they were now enjoying its present result. Salvation in Scripture is not always thus treated: there are whole epistles where it is never so spoken of. Thus, particularly in Philippians, salvation is regarded as a future thing—as not complete till we see Christ in glory. Salvation, there, is a solemn but not precarious process, which is now going on, because it is plain that we are not with Christ in glory, but in our natural bodies. And accordingly Christ is therein seen as a Saviour, not merely because He died and rose, but because He is coming back for my full deliverance and joy. This explains the meaning of the text which has perplexed people so much— “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” because, in the sense intended there, we shall only get salvation when we are glorified with Christ. Meanwhile, we are working it out with fear and trembling, remembering that Satan hates us because we are to be in glory with Christ. We are viewed as persons in this world, who know that there is not the slightest doubt that we are to have the prize, but we have to fight and run for it, though we ought to hold fast the assurance that we shall have it when we see Christ coming for us from on high.

But when we take up the language of the Ephesian Epistle, all is different. There salvation is regarded as an absolutely past thing: “By grace ye are saved “not merely that it is going on, and is to be completed by and by; but we are saved, and cannot in Christ be more so than we are. Whereas, according to Philippians, Paul himself had not his salvation yet: “not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” The perfection there spoken of entirely and solely refers to the time when we shall be changed into the glorious likeness of Christ: then he says, We shall be saved. If you applied the same sense of salvation to both epistles, you make the doctrine contradictory. Take again the Epistle to the Hebrews. There, too, salvation is always represented as a future thing. “Wherefore,” it is said, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” God's people are meant, not the unconverted, as coming unto God by Christ. For whom is He a priest? For the believer only. Thus it is the saint that requires to be saved in the Epistle to the Hebrews; because salvation there applies to all the difficulties of our wilderness journey. The whole doctrine is founded on the type that we are now, like Israel of old, going through the desert, and have not yet entered into Canaan; whereas, the characteristic teaching of Ephesians is that Christ has gone into Canaan, and that we are in Him there. It is because we are occupied with a part of the Word of God, and not the whole—because we see one truth strongly, and not the truth generally, that we get confused and faulty views, which lead to wrong practice.

The reason of these differences is most interesting. You have exactly in each epistle what is suited to its own character. In Ephesians the revelation is not of Christ as one interceding for us before God: this we have in Hebrews. Why is He a priest? That He may have compassion on the ignorant, and on them which are out of the way. This is exactly, as we journey here below, our danger: we are ignorant, and always exposed to the temptation of slipping aside through an evil heart of unbelief. Therefore we need the Epistle to the Hebrews. The doctrine of Ephesians would not of itself suffice to meet me in my weakness, difficulties, and sorrows. Supposing I had wandered, what is there to recall and comfort my soul in Ephesians? “That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Nay, but I have gone astray, and I cannot get any relief to my anguish from this. I may try to stay my heart on God's election and high counsels, but if I have a tender conscience, these alone will make me more miserable. If God really loved me so much, how comes it (the heart will reason) that I should so dishonor Him? In Hebrews 1 find nothing at all about my sitting in heavenly places, but Christ at the right hand of God, and pleading for me, after He had by Himself purged out my sins. The very first chapter starts with the glorious truth—that Christ took His seat on high only when He could go there on the ground that He had completely blotted out our sins, and this “by Himself,” that is, to the exclusion of all other help. It was His own task, and He has accomplished it, and would not rest even in that, to Him, familiar glory, save on this ground. Therein we have a most sure foundation. But although we have the purging of sins through Christ, we are in a place of temptation where, through ignorance and weakness, and a thousand things that may arise, we are in constant peril of turning aside and slipping. What is to become of us then? What is to sustain and carry us through! God reveals this blessed Priest who cares for the soul—One who has the full confidence of God the Father; who has given the most entire satisfaction to Him—One who is seated at the right hand of God, and who there is unceasingly occupied with our need, on the ground that we belong to God, and are already redeemed, and that we have no more conscience of sin. We can perhaps hardly make out how it is that persons who are so blessed of God should be so weak and wretched; so little like Him who, at His own cost, has brought and secured us our blessing. But faith receives, and asks of God what He intends to be our strength and comfort in the midst of our weakness and dangers? His answer is, that Christ is there to plead our cause, as surely as the spirit is here to render us sensible of it. And it is through Christ's intercession at the right hand of God that we are brought to feel our need and failure. For we never judge it, without getting moral blessing through that judgment. All power of Christ resting on us is in proportion to the depth of the moral estimate produced in our souls by the Spirit of God in answer to the intercession of Christ; and it is part of Christ's intercession for us that we are made to feel when we have in mind and fact gone astray. In Hebrews, salvation could not be spoken of as a past thing. We know that we shall be fully saved, and that Christ is coming for it. And although it is appointed unto men to die, it is not necessarily so for the saint. We know that they may never fall asleep, as for certain they will never be judged, though all they have done will be surely manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. But He has gone through death for them, and therefore there is no necessity that they should die; and He has endured judgment as none other could, and we have His own word for it that into judgment at any rate we shall never come. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment.” The consequence is, that though we look for Him to come, we know that when He does appear the second time, it will be without sin unto salvation. He has so perfectly put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, that when He is thus seen the second time of them that look

for Him, it will be “without sin,” apart from all question of sin, as far as they are concerned— “unto salvation,” and not unto judgment. Salvation and judgment are the two things above all others most in contrast. You cannot have judgment and salvation exercised upon the same individual. In Hebrews you have salvation connected with our Lord's appearing the second time.

In Ephesians, on the contrary, we are saved already, and there Christ's return to receive His people is not throughout referred to. In the epistles where salvation is said to be consummated by and by, there we have Christ coming to finish it. In Philippians he says, “Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” There we have our Lord changing this body of humiliation into the likeness of His glorious body, proving Himself to be the Saviour; because it is not a partial salvation, but a complete salvation for the whole man. But in Ephesians, where our Lord's coming is never referred to, this links itself with the fact that salvation is already supposed to be an accomplished fact, which we now enjoy. This is a way of looking at salvation rare in Scripture: it is generally looked at as something we have before us People confound salvation with justification or reconciliation to God; but in Romans the evident distinction is drawn— “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Thus, we have the reconciliation, but not the salvation, in the sense spoken of there. “We shall be saved.” He is living for us, and, as a consequence, we are being saved. The salvation is going on; and when Christ comes again in glory, then salvation will be complete. Hence, in Romans 13, we have the doctrine applied again: “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” We have not got it yet; but it is nearer; and we shall have it all perfectly by and by. Before we believed, we were enemies and lost; then believing, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Now He lives for us; and soon He will come again for us, and then all will be complete.

Again, take Corinthians, and you will find the same doctrine there. Salvation is not regarded there as complete. Hence the apostle says that he is keeping under his body and bringing it into subjection. He will not allow any evil lust to get the mastery over him. He might preach to all the world; but if evil got mastery over him, how could he be saved himself? He puts it in the strongest possible way of his own case; and shows that preaching (of which some apparently thought more than of Christ) has nothing to do with a man's being saved, but life in Christ; for the grace of Christ manifests itself in holy subjection to God and self judgment of evil. These are the inseparable consequences of having the life of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul. “I keep under my body,” says he, “lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” This last word I take in the strongest, and, indeed, the only scriptural, sense—that is, of reprobate. A castaway in the New Testament means not merely that a, man was going to lose something, but to lose his soul, and to lose Christ. There are no instances in the epistles where the word is used in a modified sense: it invariably means lost forever, and it is neither faith nor intelligence to modify its force. It was not that Paul had any fear of being lost; but he transfers the case to himself, to make it more energetic, supposing that he were to renounce Christ and holiness. What is the consequence? He might have been ever such a preacher, and yet be a castaway; but no man that ever was regenerate could be a castaway; and so he does not say, Though I were born of God, I might be a castaway. Such a thing could not and ought not to be

supposed. But he does illustrate most seriously, what, alas! has been far too common, that a man might preach to others and be a reprobate. We know that one of the apostles preached and wrought miracles; but the Lord never knew him.

This will show the importance of leaving room for salvation in every way that Scripture looks at it. In the largest part of Scripture it is not regarded after the Ephesian manner, but in the way I have been describing, in Romans. No question is fairly raised of falling away when the apostle speaks of salvation in this sense; but the fact is that all the result of the blessing—all the fullness of the deliverance, is not yet our portion. And who can say that it is? Here we in suffering still: then we shall be out of the scene of temptation altogether. In Ephesians, when looking at the character of our life, he says, It is entirely outside all danger, all temptation, and everything of the sort. “By grace ye are saved.” By this he means that we have been and are saved; that is, we have the present enjoyment of that which is already past and complete before God. It is a fact accomplished, because it is in Christ, and everything here is regarded as being in Christ, as, for example, our very peace. Hence He is called “our peace” farther on. Hence, too, so truly is the salvation viewed as being in Christ, that, the Saviour being seated on high, we are said to be, not in process of salvation, but completely saved, so as to need nothing more as far as this is concerned. In full accordance with this it was added, that God “hath raised up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” What plainer than the completeness of the salvation? How manifestly it has a character of association with Christ, that is entirely beyond all human conception! It is easy to conceive that such blessedness might be by and by; but the wonderful thing is, that this could be predicated of poor, weak Christians in the world now. If we dwell much upon human things, they become cheap and common, and we cease to wonder; but with this glorious work of God in His beloved Son, the more we think of it, the more we stand amazed before it. Observe, too, it is for this very purpose: “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” That is, it is not merely God looking at us, and giving us what we need, but God acting for the indulgence of His own affections through His Son. God says, as it were, I want to show what I am, not merely to supply what you want. Thus, it is God rising up to the height of His own goodness, and acting from what He is, entirely irrespective of what we are, save that we become the occasion for God to skew His matchless love; and this, not merely now, but “in the ages to come,” or, I suppose, for unlimited time.

Nor is this all. There is a fresh guard against certain misconceptions by taking up or repeating the expression, “For by grace are ye saved,” with the addition, “through faith,” a strong confirmation of what has been already said. We are not saved by the electing purpose of God, true and blessed as it is, but through faith in our hearts, through that divine persuasion which the Holy Spirit works in the heart of a man once an unbeliever. “By grace are ye saved through faith.” There is no such thing as God introducing one into the relationship of a child without the action of his heart and conscience. The Holy Spirit gives such a man to feel his own condition as seen of God, and yet what God is toward him in Christ. A cold parchment-deed, mechanical salvation there is not, any more than such a change of the old nature as could be a ground of hope toward God. But if human feeling cannot be trusted, neither can ever so orthodox a recognition of God's decrees. When God speaks in and of His Son, it is a real thing, and he who hears must more or less deeply have the

consciousness of its solemnity. He is no longer unwilling and indifferent to Christ. He may feel sin, hate himself as he never did, just because he is under the hand of God and under the teaching of God, and the very things that you bring to prove that you are not one of God's own, is rather a proof that you are. If you were dead to God, would you feel what grieves Him? It is when Christ has begun to dawn on the soul that you begin to realize that you have been lying in all that is dark and loathsome, though a glimmer of hope breaks through the clouds. You are seriously conscious of evil things to which you were insensible before. This is an effect of God's mighty and gracious operation; but there is no such thing as life without faith or with unconsciousness. There will always be something that awakens new thoughts and feelings about God, a fear and a desire after God, a horror of sin and a hatred of self. All these things and more will pass through the spirit of him that is born of God, and what produces all these feelings by the Spirit of God is Christ—nothing else will. Otherwise a man might be attending a church or chapel—going to the best or the worst testimony. But he is there on this principle: he thinks it is his duty to attend perhaps every day. It is the notion of a religious service which he thinks he ought to pay to God, and that if he does it diligently, God will remember him on his death-bed and in the day of judgment. Such is one part of the duty man pays in the hope of escaping hell. But all this goes on the ground of man's putting God under a kind of obligation to himself. Man is doing something because of which he thinks God ought to show him mercy. What can more flagrantly deny both sin and God's grace? Now, it is “by grace ye are saved, through faith.” And the meaning of being saved by grace is by what God is toward me in His Son, apart from a single thing deserving it in me. Are you willing to trust your salvation to God only, in His beloved Son? This is faith. “By grace we are saved through faith.” If I mingle a particle of my own, it is properly neither grace nor faith, for faith renounces self for Christ, and grace is God's pure favor to me a sinner on the cross. When I listen to Christ, then the Word of God begins to deal with everything in me that is selfish and contrary to God, and I must not attempt to modify or accommodate the Word of God to my own thoughts, and thus to make provision for a little indulgence of the flesh.

I maintain, therefore, that the salvation spoken of in Ephesians is already complete for him that believes; so absolute, indeed, that none can add anything to it, because it would be adding something to Christ, and to what Christ has done. And this may not be, cannot be, seeing that it is all the free, unmerited, unmingled mercy of God. And this is the great thing for the soul. Am I able, without question of what I am, or what I hope to be, or what I ought to do for God, to trust Him now? Can I rest all that I have been and am upon Christ, without any promises or pledges of mine—without any hope or thought of what I may do, because God might take me away in a moment? Can I rest entirely and implicitly in Him? Think of the case of the dying thief, which is a living and notable testimony of salvation by grace throughout all ages. Others may have a work to do afterward, but there we have one who was saved by grace in the last hours of his life. And there is no other way. Had he lived for a thousand years afterward, he would not have been a whit more saved by grace than he was then. It is of great moment to bring our souls to the touchstone from time to time—whether we are resting solely upon the grace of God toward us, not upon what people call grace in us, that is, our faithfulness toward Him. For this is a common notion of grace. They mean a great change that has taken place in the heart in respect of God. This, however, is not what God calls grace, but what He has given gratuitously in the work that Christ has done for me. “By grace are ye saved through faith.” The Spirit shuts out all thought of man's contributing the faith or taking any credit because coming to Christ; for He says immediately after, “And that not of

yourselves; it is the gift of God.” This probably refers, not only to the salvation, but to the faith; it was all the gift of God, and not man's production: “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” On the contrary, instead of being a question of our works, we are God's handiwork, the new creation for His own praise. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” There you have a most plain proof that there could be no carelessness as to the walk of the believer; but the same verse cuts off all thought that man's doing can be the ground or means of salvation.

Here, then, we have the believers the workmanship of God in Christ, and this “unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” This is a very remarkable expression, and one that we cannot too much weigh. It is not the good works of the law—not those which might seem so in human judgment, but an offering of a new character, heavenly and of grace, which was in God's mind and all determined about us before the scene existed into which we are now brought. The same God that had a purpose of saving us and blessing us with Christ before the world was made, had a certain line of walk, a special course of action, in which He expected the recipients of such favor to walk. It is not the thought of the good that we ought to do as men, as a means of showing that we are willing to obey God under the law. It is not loving God, and one's neighbor as oneself simply, but another type and display of love altogether. It flows from our new relationships, and if it be exercised in loving God and loving those around us, it is according to the rich love which God Himself has shown us in Christ. It is not merely duty, let it be the very highest form of obligation. If a man were to walk merely in this, though ever so well, he would fall short of what a Christian ought to be, and they are not the “good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” The law was brought in by Israel's presumption and self-conceit; it was not something that God had before ordained for His people to walk in. Therefore it is said in Romans, the law came in by the way (παρεισ■λθεν). It was a thing that entered temporarily, as a sort of parenthesis brought in for a special but very momentous purpose. And it has done its work, and the believer, even if he had been under it, was brought clean out of it and made alive to God. He has a new husband, and is dead to the old one. But here it is put in a very beautiful form, in harmony with the character of the whole epistle. As the calling, and the purpose, and all that God thought about us were before the world was, so even the character of the believer's walk was ordained before ever we came into the world, and is in its own nature entirely above it. It is a question of our manifesting God aright, as He is now displaying Himself, “Be ye followers of God as dear children.”

What a wonderful place is this that we are put into! We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. We have a new character of life altogether, that the law never contemplated, and we have a correspondingly new character of good works.

Chapter 29

Remarks on Ephesians 2:11-22

HERE opens a very distinct section of the epistle. It is not God's thoughts of grace unfolded, reaching forth from before the world's foundation unto the inheritance of glory when all things shall be subjected to Christ, the Church being one with Him in His supremacy over them all. Neither again is it the means whereby God takes up souls that were dead under the power of Satan, and by nature children of wrath, one as much as another, quickening them with Christ, raising them up and making them sit together in Him in heavenly places. We have had this in the earlier part of chapter 2. But now we have the present working of the plans of God in the world. Chapter 1 gave us the counsels of God about them; chapter 2:1-10, the way in which He wrought in them; but now we have the manner of His plans upon the earth. Accordingly, this brings into very distinct relief the condition in which man had been before. There had been already dealings of God here below. After the flood, when the whole world had departed from God, and set up a new form of peculiarly malignant evil—the worship of false gods—the true God called out one man into a place of separation from all others, and made him to be the depository of the promises and the testimony upon the earth. This was Abraham, and Abraham's seed. Accordingly there it was that from the call of Abraham we find the scene of the workings of God's power, goodness, and government. But the cross of Christ terminated these trials. God might linger for many years after, as we know, in forbearance, but the fate of the Jewish nation was sealed in the cross of Christ; and from that very moment God began to bring out these much deeper purposes of His love. For the Jewish people, at the very best even, had they been converted and received the Messiah, would never have been more here below than an earthly people. They might have been regenerate, but they would have been earthly. The promises that were so fully and richly accorded them in the Old Testament had to do with the earth. I do not say that they had nothing deeper, or that there was not in the hidden mind of God something outside this present scene. But, I repeat again, they were an earthly people; they had the “earthly things” of the kingdom by the distinct gift of God; and it is in reference to this very circumstance that God declares that His gifts and calling are without repentance. He had given earthly blessings to the Jews, and He had called them out for the purpose of enjoying the land. It is in a condition of glory under their Messiah. He will never repent of His purpose, nor withdraw His gift. But meanwhile the whole history of Israel's rejection of God has come in; their worshipping of idols, and finally the crucifixion of their own Messiah; and for the time being they are dispossessed of their land, and scattered over the face of the earth.

But during the time of the dispersion of Israel, and even before it began, from the moment that their guilt was consummated, this heavenly purpose of God was gradually manifested upon the earth. But we must remember that the Church, beside being the object of God's eternal counsels, and having a glorious place in heaven along with Christ, for which we are waiting, has also an existence upon earth, and enters into the dealings of God here below. This is the point at which we are arrived in this epistle. We have had the deeper thoughts of God, but as the epistle does touch upon the ways of God on the earth, we should not have had a full view of the Church's place if it did not give us the dispensational succession here below. Accordingly we have the elements

which compose the Church: “Wherefore remember that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands.” Here we are on totally different ground. It is no longer “children of wrath,” persons that were by nature one as bad and dead as the other; but here men are distinguished on earth: the uncircumcision on the one hand, and the circumcision on the other. So that you are on earthly ground, the ground of dispensational dealings, where you have God separating one part of mankind from another by His own will; not because the one was better than the other, but for the display of His own wisdom and purpose. The great mass of the Jews were just as bad in the sight of God as the Gentiles; and some of the Gentiles were converted, such as Job, while there were many of the Jews that perished in their sins. But for all that, God did put a difference between Jew and Gentile; and He says, “Remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh.” You were among the rest of mankind, left out of the call of God; you were not brought into a place of separate witness for God as Abraham was; you are called the uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision. “At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” They had no part in the polity of God set up in Israel; “and they were strangers from the covenants of promise.” God gave glorious promises in the form of a covenant, and bound Himself to accomplish them. The Gentiles had no part nor lot in them. There were promises about Gentiles, but none to them. Israel were the direct parties concerned in the promise—they, and they only. And we must carefully remember what these promises meant. They were not made to Abel or Enoch, much less to Adam and Eve, though it is common to speak of the promise made in the Garden of Eden, but Scripture never talks of promise there. And if you examine Genesis 3, you will find the wisdom of God in this, for it could be in no sense a promise. To whom could it be a promise? To whom was it said? To that old serpent. No believer could imagine a promise to him. It was a threat of the extinction of his power. God was judging the sin which had just entered the world, and that is not the time when promises are made. It is strictly a revelation of God, not in the form of a promise at all, but a revelation which comes out in denouncing judgment upon the serpent, and which showed that the seed of the woman was to bruise his head.

“The promises,” then, do not go up higher than Abraham: they are connected with the dispensations of God. It may be asked, Have we not promises? I answer, We have all the promises of God; but how and where? They are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. If we have Christ, we are Abraham's seed, and inheritors of the promises, though in a way totally differing from that in which the Jews had them of old, or will have them by and by. We come in on the ground of pure mercy, and as outside covenant altogether. There is no such thing as a covenant with the Church, or with us Gentiles. I do not mean that we receive not the blessings that are in the new covenant. We have all that is blessed in it, and better too; but not as Israel. They come under them as subjects of the promises of God; whereas we are sought and reached and blessed by sovereign grace—having a title to nothing, and yet some better thing provided for us. We come in as filling up the gap between the rejection of the Messiah and His reception by Israel by and by; and we form part of this parenthesis rather than the dealings of God here below, in a very interesting manner, as I hope to show. But here the difference is first brought out. He wants us to know what our condition was. We have right to nothing; we have not the smallest claim upon God; we had no such prescriptive place conferred upon us as Israel had through the promises. They had a place even as unconverted men in the world; and the day is coming when, being converted, they will have a signally conspicuous position in the world, an earthly distinction and glory which never was

and never will be our portion. Do not suppose that we shall not have far better, but we shall never have such a place on the earth. We shall have one with Christ over all things; but then it will not be while we have our bodies here below. It is in the resurrection-state that the Church's glory is destined to be brought out, in all its fullness as far as manifested to the world. So that here he reminds the Ephesian saints of what their condition had been as Gentiles: “At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” They had no hope. They were not expecting any divine intervention to deliver them on the earth: they might dream of what people dream still—a perfectibility of man upon the earth. They had no connection with God in the world; whereas the Jews had Him to direct all their movements—how they were to live, and how their inheritances were to be settled—God entering into all their domestic affairs as well as their worship—everything was entirely under the distinct ordinance of God. If they had God thus in the world, the Gentiles knew nothing of the sort. Out of this miserable condition, what are we brought into? Into the position that Israel had? That is treated of elsewhere. In Romans 11, the great point is to show that the natural branches of the olive tree were broken off, that we who were wild branches might be grafted in. The subject here is not the Church, but merely the possession of promises, and the place of testimony to God here below. These are distinct things. Every baptized person—that is, every one who outwardly professes Christ—belongs to the olive. All such have a special responsibility, as not being heathen (nor now Jews), but in possession of the oracles of God, and as bearing the name of Christ in an outward manner. But in Ephesians 2 there is a far deeper line: the apostle treats of the body of Christ and the assembly of God. And we must remember, that at the beginning of Christianity these two things closely approached each other: in other words, the assembly consisted of hardly any other than the members of Christ's body, true believers united to Christ by the Holy Spirit. But soon individuals crept in, not born of God, and of course not members of Christ, who nevertheless entered the assembly of God. Thus, by a Christian now is meant one who is not a Pagan or a Jew. Hence, in Romans 11, you read of branches being cut off; hence the branches that are grafted in are said to stand in the goodness of God, and warned to continue in it, lest they also should be cut off. It is a question of profession, of its danger, and its sure doom if faithless. But in Ephesians there is no such thing as cutting off, because there the main subject is the membership of the body of Christ. Some now talk of not rending the body of Christ; but there is no such phrase or idea in Scripture. You will find passages that insist much upon the firm standing of true believers, and others which warn of professors coming to nothing of themselves or judged of God. There is no such thought as cutting off a member of Christ's body. There are solemn warnings to Christians for preserving them from evil, but no such a thing as their insecurity.

Proceeding with the chapter, the positive side of the question appears. The Gentiles did not possess the privileges of the Jews by nature. “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one,” —both Jew and Gentile,” and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” There we have it plainly set forth, that the very institutions God set up in His dealings with the Jews are now cast down. God Himself has destroyed the middle wall of partition. He alone is competent so to do. It would have been a sin for any one else to have attempted it. On the other hand, you will find persons who, in their ignorance of Scripture, will argue that, because God had commanded these things once, He must sanction them always. Nothing can be more unfounded. It is entirely limiting

God, and shutting their eyes to the plainest statements of His Word. Throughout a large part of the New Testament God Himself sets aside the Jewish institution, in all its parts. Doubtless there are moral principles that were true before the law—revealed ways of God from the first that always must regulate man's conduct with God; but these have nothing necessarily to do with the law. Under the legal institution they might be more or less embodied into the law and take the shape of commandments; but their roots lie far deeper than the law given to Moses. It is founded upon this misconception, that when you speak of the Christian's deliverance from the law, some think you are going to destroy morality, and overthrow God's holy standard of good and evil. But it does not become us to judge what is most for the glory of God. Humility is found in, and proved by, obedience; and obedience depends on subjection to the Word of God. The same act in different circumstances is a duty or a crime: the only unerring test for the believer is God's Word. It was a sin in the Jews not to destroy all the Canaanites: God commanded them to do so, the only one competent to judge, and entitled to command of His sovereign will. For a Christian now to do the same thing would be to mistake His mind. The world is bound to deal with murderers as stringently now as ever: God has not revoked in any wise the word He uttered as to the sanctity of human life. That is what God had set up long before the law of Moses, or any distinction between Jews and Gentiles. It is annulled neither by the law given to Israel, nor by the gospel that now flows out in grace to the world. Government among men stands upon its own foundation and was involved in the commission given to Noah; but the Christian is outside and above it all. He is called unto a new calling, and this we have here. “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Our task is not the preservation of the world's order or the punishment of its disorder; but a new building grows up on the blessed, holy, divine ground of the blood of Christ, by which we are brought nigh to God. Nor is it only what we shall be by and by, but what we are now. We are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Nothing can be more distinct, “For He is our peace;” a most wonderful expression. Our peace is not merely a thing of enjoyment within us, but it is Christ outside us; and if souls only rested upon this, would there be anxiety as to fullness of peace? It is my own fault entirely if I do not rest in and enjoy it.

But even so; am I to doubt that Christ is my peace? I am dishonoring Him if I do. If I had a surety whose riches could not fail, why should I doubt my standing or credit? It depends neither on my wealth, nor my poverty; all rests on the resources of him who has become responsible for me. So it is with Christ. He is our peace, and there can be no possibility of failure in Him. Where the heart rests upon this, what is the effect? Then we can rest and enjoy. How can I enjoy a blessing before I believe it? And I must begin with believing before I enjoy. The Lord in His grace does give His people betimes transports of joy; but joy may fluctuate. Peace is or should be a permanent thing. That the Christian is entitled to have always; and this because Christ is our peace. He is not called our joy, nor God the God of joy, but of peace, because He Himself has done it; and it rests entirely upon Christ. “He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” There prevails a notion (unknown to the Bible) that Christ was making out our righteousness when He was here below. Now the life of Christ was, I do not question, necessary to vindicate God and His holy law, as well as to manifest Himself and His love; but the righteousness that we are made in Christ is another thought altogether—not the law fulfilled by Him; but the justifying righteousness of God founded on Christ's death, displayed in His

resurrection and crowned by His glory in heaven. It is not Christ simply doing our duty for us, but God forgiving my trespasses, judging my sin, yea, finding such satisfaction in Christ's blood that now He cannot do too much for us; it becomes, if I may so say, a positive debt to Christ, because of what Christ has suffered. It is not seen that the law is the strength of sin, not of righteousness. Had Christ only kept the law, neither your soul nor mine could have been saved, much less blessed as we are. Whoever kept the law, it would have been the righteousness of the law, and not God's righteousness, which has not the smallest connection with obeying the law. It is never so treated in the word of God. Because Christ obeyed unto death, God has brought in a new kind of righteousness—not ours, but His own, in our favor. Christ has been made a curse upon the tree. He has been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Were the common doctrine on this subject true, we might expect it to be said, He obeyed the law for us, that we might have legal righteousness imputed or transferred to us. Whereas the truth is in all points contrasted with such ideas. Surely Christ's obeying the law was not God's making Him sin. So, in the passage that is often used, “by His obedience many are made righteous.” How is His obedience here connected with the law? The apostle does introduce the law in the next verse, as a new and additional thing, coming in by the way.

Further, Adam would not have known the meaning of “the law,” though undoubtedly he was under a law which he broke. What, for instance, could Adam in his innocence have made of the word, “Thou shalt not lust,” or “covet”? No such feeling was within his experience. Accordingly, as we see, it was only after man was fallen that the law in due time was given to condemn the outbreak of sin. But Christ has died for and under sin—our sin. And what is the consequence? All believers now, whether Jews or Gentiles, in Christ Jesus are brought into an entirely new place. The Gentile is brought out of his distance from God; the Jew out of his dispensational nearness; both enjoy a common blessing in God's presence never possessed before. The old separation dissolves and gives place by grace to oneness in Christ Jesus. When did this begin? An important question, for it is really the answer to the question:—What, according to Scripture, is the Church? Ask many of God's children. Would they not say, The aggregate of all believers. But is this the body of Christ as shown us here? There were saints from the beginning, all who were born of God; but were they formed into an united assembly on the earth? Did anything under the Old Testament correspond to one body? It never was heard of, excepting as a thing promised, till the day of Pentecost. It awaited the cross of Christ. Therein God abolished the enmity. Before that God had commanded the Jew to be apart from the Gentile and our Lord maintained it most strenuously when He was upon earth. He forbade His disciples to go into any city of the Gentiles. He told the woman of Syrophenicia that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She had gone on the ground of promises, but He shows her that she had no part or lot in the promises. Had she addressed Him as Son of God, would our Lord have kept her waiting? She appealed to Him as the Son of David; and as such His connection was with Israel. She had to learn the mistake of going on the ground of promises that she had no title to. And this is often the reason why people do not enjoy peace. They plead God's promises, but what if I cannot say that they are promises to me? Need I wonder that the answer tarries? Hence, too, there is in general little solid peace. How well for the poor woman, how well for us to know and confess what we really are! She owns that she was not a child nor a sheep at all. “Yet the dogs eat!” She sees why it was that she could not get what she wanted on the false ground of privileges she did not possess. She is brought to own herself as having no promises at all; and then there is no limit to the blessing in the grace of Christ.

“O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

The two instances in which the Lord admires the faith of those who came to Him were of Gentiles—the centurion and the Syrophenician. Our Lord cannot gainsay His love, and they knew it. They pressed their suit consequently. It was in the midst of dense ignorance; but then the eye was single in the main, and the object on which it rested was a blesser beyond all thought. The blessing consequently could not be lost, and though it might be delayed, it was infinite.

So in this epistle we have the Gentile in a most deplorable condition of distance from God, and separation from all that God had chosen upon the earth. But the cross of Christ has annihilated all such distinctions. It has proved that the favored Jew was, if possible, more iniquitous than the poor Gentile. They had rejected and crucified their own Messiah; and if there were any among the Jews more urgent for His death than others, it was the priests: and so it always is. There is nothing so heartless as the religion of this world; and if it was so then, still more now. What so bad under the sun as spurious Christianity? It may be fair-spoken, and have a good deal of truth mingled with it: but it is without a purged conscience and without divine affection; and the more fearful will be its end. We need take care what we sanction at the present hour: the time is short. The Lord has brought out what His Church is. The will of man has raked up the law of Commandments out of the grave of Christ, and enacts it over again. This is what is found throughout all Christendom. It is inconceivable, except through realizing the power of Satan, how Christians can take up the peculiar institutions of God to His people, curses and all, in the face of such a chapter as this, where we find that all this is gone, even for Jews who believe, by the authority of God. It is a practical denial of the blood and cross of Christ. What a solemn proof of the ruined state of the Church of God! The truth is plain indeed: “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace: and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” To this figure of one new man Christians answer. You will find that such a state of things never was known during the Old Testament times, nor even during our Lord's life on earth. It is only after the ascension that Jew and Gentile are united upon earth, and worship God on the same level. This is the Church. It is not merely that they are all believers, but they are members of Christ and of one another on earth. Of course, when we get to heaven, it will still be the Church; but it begins here, and that with Christ crucified and ascended to heaven. When He thus takes His place there, the work follows of forming the body in union with the Head. All distinction is gone, as far as its own sphere is concerned. The nature of the Church is most plain from this: “That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” —which enmity was in the commandments of the law, which straitly and wholly separated one from the other.

But Christ “came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were nigh.” All is attributed to Him, because founded on the cross; and it is Christ, by the Holy Spirit, who now proclaims this heavenly peace to the Gentiles once afar off, as well as to the hitherto favored Israel. Where this truth is unknown, men may preach Christ more or less, may be descanting much in general on the promises of God; but a Jew would do that; and to them especially it will be given by and by to sing the song that “the mercy of the Lord endureth forever” —the great burden of the millennial psalms. The practically Jewish position taken by most Christians makes them turn the Psalms of David into the staple of Christian communion, and the expression of their own

condition before God. All Scripture is, of course, given of God for the profit and blessing of the Christian. But am I to offer a bull and a goat, because of old it was commanded? To imitate Leviticus is one thing; to understand it is quite another. “By faith we establish the law,” but we are not under it. So, speaking about my walk as a Christian, Paul says that sin shall not have dominion over me, for I am not under law, but under grace. How sad to see that the Evangelicals as a body now diligently preach the contrary! They may preach a measure of truth about other things, but they cannot preach the gospel, and they deny the Church of God. A Christian is under the law for nothing whatever, because he is under Christ dead and risen. Christ was under it once; but then I had nothing to say to Him. He passed out of it on the cross; and my association with Christ begins thenceforward. I am united with Christ in heaven, not on the earth. What has Christ in heaven to do with the law? Hence we are said to be under grace, not under law. Further, this doctrine is most practical. The walk is amazingly lowered where a mistake is made about it; and Satan tries to bring in the law after believing, if he cannot pervert it to hinder believing.

Here, then, it is peace that is preached, “to you which were afar off; and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” There, instead of the law which drew a distinction between Jew and Gentile, the Holy Spirit unites them on a common ground, and puts them on a common relationship as sons, having to do with the Father. This is our position. When God was acting as a governor, He chose a nation; He had His own servants. But now when He has a family, all that order of things vanishes. He has His children, and wants to have them near Him. The end of all the Jewish forms of holy places and days, of priesthood, and of sacrifice, was the cross of Christ. God has fully tried and given up any working upon men by a religion that is visible, or by sight and sounds that act upon the senses. The Holy Spirit sent down from heaven leads the children of God to draw near to the Father. How can a Christian acknowledge that this is what God has given to guide him, and yet be found taking part, were it only by his presence, in that which is positively Jewish? What God has provided for the Jew, and what He enjoins upon the Christian are very different things. We are not Jews but Christians. What He presses upon Christians is far more cutting to nature and more honoring to Christ than anything that He ever did or will give to Israel. He has brought us as His family to Himself, and through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father—we both—Jew and Gentile. How far are we carrying it out? Are we to sanction the unbelief that turns back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world? or are we cleaving only to Christ, worshipping God in the Spirit? We may suffer; but happy are we, if it be so.

He adds further, “Now, therefore, ye [Gentiles] are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” They were brought out of all that condition of distance, and made part of His household, “and are built upon the foundation” —not of the law—but “of the apostles and prophets.” What prophets? Of the New Testament only. God was not taking up an old foundation, but laying down a new one; and this new one He begins in Christ dead and risen. It is the foundation, not of the prophets and apostles, but “of the apostles and prophets.” The phrase in Greek means that these classes, the apostles and prophets, were united in this joint work. They were together employed in laying this common basis. Read chapter 3:5 of the mystery of Christ, “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” These words set aside all controversy. So in chapter 4:11, “He gave some apostles and some prophets.” Some of the New Testament

writers were not apostles, and yet they were just as much inspired. We are said, then, to be built upon this “foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.” Not merely prophecy or promise, but “Jesus Christ Himself” —His person. It is what the Apostle Peter learns from the lips of our Lord: “Upon this rock I will build my Church;” that is, upon the confession of Christ as the Son of the living God. And so here you have Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone. But it is not here, as in Matthew, Christ building; but these apostles and prophets are used in a subordinate way, because they were the instruments of revealing the Church. Thus Scripture confines the Church to that which followed the death and resurrection of Christ, and makes it depend on the Holy Spirit sent down to form them into one body upon earth. “In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” It is not yet complete. “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” God had once a dwelling-place on earth—the temple; and there He dwelt, not by the Spirit, but in a visible manner. Now God dwells on earth in a more blessed way still, even through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit constitutes the saints the divine habitation and unites them as one body. He dwells in the Church, making it thus the temple of God. It is not His indwelling in the individual that we have here. This also is most true and important; but, besides, He dwells in the Church: He makes the Church to be God's dwelling-place. What a truth! It is plain that God looks for it, that we should be walking faithfully in the truth, and according to Christ.

Chapter 30

Remarks on Ephesians 3:1-13

WE have here a remarkable instance of the parenthetical style of the epistle; for the whole chapter on which we are entering is an example of it. We shall find parenthesis within parenthesis, the want of seeing which increases the misunderstanding of the epistle; but once observed, all is easy, and the moral fitness of such a form of describing what is in itself a sort of parenthesis in God's ways has been and should be noticed by the way. We can seek, by the grace of God, to learn and consider the reason for these digressions, which form a parenthesis of unusual length. The whole of chapter 3 comes in between the doctrine of the close of chapter 2 and the exhortation at the beginning of chapter 4, which is founded upon that doctrine. What is the meaning of this turning aside? The Holy Spirit stops short in the midst of the unfolding of the doctrine to lead us into—what? The answer, I think, is very plain. He had just alluded to that which must have seemed a great stumbling block to a Jew; namely, God's forming one body, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Among Christians now, I am sorry to say, the difficulty is not even felt, still less is the truth understood. The reason is because they have so little hold of the faithfulness or the purposes of God. For what is a real trial of faith to a devout mind is when one part of the truth of God appears to clash with another. There cannot be any real discord; all must be in perfect keeping and harmony: But we are not always able to understand how the different parts of truth hang together.

Let us for a moment seek to put ourselves in the position of the Jewish believers, who inherited the thoughts and feelings and prejudices of the Old Testament saints. And let such an one have words of this kind clearly pressed upon him—one body, neither Jew nor Gentile, the enmity slain, the middle wall of partition broken down. What a truth for a Jew! How extraordinary that God should destroy that which he had been building up, and had so long sanctioned; that God who had so formed and insisted on the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, on peril even of death to slight them, that He Himself should reduce them to nothing, and bring in what is totally different from and irreconcilable with the old order! No wonder all this should be a difficulty, if put together as being the mind of God for the same time. But there is a key to the whole enigma. They are not instituted of God for the same time. Hence all the difficulty amounts to is—that God, who at one time ordained the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles, is pleased now for a season to abolish it and to bring in an entirely new thing. Now the early part of chapter 3 is devoted to the explaining of this special part of the mystery of Christ, whereby the Gentiles are brought forward and put upon exactly the same level with the believing Jews that now received Christ, so that in this world they form one and the same body. But the more that a man adhered to the truth of the Old Testament, the more insuperably hard this was, because the Old Testament never speaks of such a state of things. In fact, for a person who only knew the Old Testament revelations, it was a wrench without precedent, and that for which he must have been altogether unprepared. There was this difficulty of apparently going contrary to the plain word of God. This is the difficulty that the Holy Spirit here removes out of the way. And first of all, observe the wisdom of God in laying an admirable foundation for the bringing in of this doctrine. We have seen the counsels of God from all eternity centering in Christ, and embracing the glorious thought of souls gathered out from this world to be

the sharers of the same love and glory in which Christ is now found in the presence of God. (Ch. 1) That He gradually brings down to meet souls in their ruined state upon earth; and we had it in chapter 2. And now in chapter 3 we have the digression for the purpose of explaining fully the nature of this part of the mystery.

We must, however, guard against the notion that the mystery or secret means the gospel. The gospel never was, and never can mean, a mystery. It was that which in its foundations always was before the mind of God's people in the form of promise and of a revelation of grace not yet accomplished. But nowhere in Scripture is the gospel called a mystery. It may be connected with the mystery, but it is not itself a mystery. It was no mystery that a Saviour was to be given; it was the very first revelation of grace after man became a sinner. The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head. A mystery is something that was not revealed of old, and which could not be known otherwise. Again, you have in the prophets a full declaration that the righteousness of God was near to come; the plainest possible statement that God was going to show Himself a Saviour-God. So again you have His making an end of sins and bringing in reconciliation and everlasting righteousness. All these things were in no sense the mystery. The mystery means that which was kept secret, not that which could not be understood, which is a human notion of mystery, but an unrevealed secret—a secret not yet divulged in the Old Testament but brought out fully in the New. What, then, is this mystery! It is, first, that Christ, instead of taking the kingdom, predicted by the prophecy, should completely disappear from the scene of this world, and that God should set Him up in heaven at His own right hand as the Head of all glory, heavenly and earthly, and that He should give the whole universe into the hands of Christ to administer the kingdom and maintain the glory of God the Father in it. That is the first and most essential part of the mystery, the second, or Church's part, being but the consequence of it. Christ's universal headship is not the theme spoken of in the Old Testament. You have Him as Son of David, Son of man, Son of God, the King, but nowhere the whole universe of God (but rather the kingdom under the whole heavens) put under Him. In this headship over all things, Christ will share all with His bride. Christ will have His Church the partner of His own unlimited dominion, when that day of glory dawns upon the world.

Hence then, as we know, the mystery consists of two great parts, which we have summed up in Ephesians 5:32: “This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Thus the mystery means neither Christ nor the Church alone, but Christ and the Church united in heavenly blessedness and dominion over everything that God has made. Hence, as we saw from chapter 1, when God raised Him from the dead, He set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, “and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church.” It is not said, “over the church,” which would overthrow, not teach, the mystery. He will be over Israel and over the Gentiles, but nowhere is He said to reign over the Church. The Church is His body. I admit it is a figure; but a figure that conveys an intense degree of intimacy, full of the richest comfort and the most exalted hope. The saints that are now being called are to share all things along with Christ in that day of glory. Hence it becomes of the greatest interest to know what the nature of the Church is. When did its calling begin and what is the character of that calling and the responsibilities that flow from it?

The Epistle to the Ephesians is the capital seat of the doctrine of the Church; and if the Spirit of God here departs from the current of the doctrine, it is to give us a view of what was one of the

chief difficulties connected with it; namely, the Gentile believers being brought with believing Jews into the unity of Christ's body. A Jewish mind would not feel it so strange that God should bless a Gentile; but he would suppose that the blessing must be inferior to that of a Jew—that a higher place must be reserved for Israel and a lower one for the Gentile. The doctrine brought out now overturns all this. To a mind bred in Old Testament thought it was the apparent undermining of the plain word of God. How was so natural and strong an objection to be removed! It was a new thing for heaven, during Israel's rejection for the earth. Further, it is from not understanding “the mystery” and what the Church really is that the Popish or antichurch system has sprung up. But not only so, Protestants too have departed from the Word of God on this subject through unbelief of our heavenly relationship to Christ and through love of the world—love of present honor and worldly greatness. They have not the faith and patience to wait for the day of Christ. A Christian is called upon to suffer now, to be cast out as evil, waiting to be glorified with Christ—not merely by Christ, but with Christ, to be with Christ Himself where He is. This supposes our place “without the camp,” that is, every form of worldly religion. Does not the world now take the place of being the Church of God? This is the part of Babylon; and though the strongest expression, and, if you will, the center of Babylon is found in Popery, that system of confusion is not confined to Rome. We do well to come nearer home, to examine what we are about ourselves, to look whether we be not drawn away into a grave misunderstanding of what God has saved us for. Do Christians generally realize that they are saved at all? Are they simply, thoroughly, abidingly happy in the consciousness of God's salvation? Look at the hymns that are sung—think of the prayers that are offered. They are the aspirations of anxious, uneasy souls, who call themselves miserable sinners, because they have no conscious possession of the blessing, but only desires after it. Is it possible that it comes to this, that souls count it humility to doubt God? that it is a becoming and boasted part of the worship of God to express the misery and the bondage of redeemed souls on the day that proclaims that their sins are blotted out and their peace made? Where, in all this, is the simple, hearty rest in the knowledge of redemption as a completed thing? of sins being entirely done with for the Christian, as far as regards the judgment of God. Assuredly there remains always the need of our acknowledging our sins, and of judging ourselves; but this is quite another kind of judgment and of confession, the confession of souls which blame themselves so much the more because they have not a doubt that they are sons of God—hearts which are perfectly at peace and which express their happiness in songs of praise and thanksgiving to the God that has forever saved them.

Upon the foundation of salvation as a complete thing, the Holy Spirit leads on to the understanding of the Church. If you do not know and rest in Christ's redemption as accomplished, yea and accepted for us of God, you cannot have a single true idea of the Church. This shows the exceeding wisdom of the Spirit of God in bringing in the doctrine of the Church here, after all question of salvation has been fully met and settled. “For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.” He was a sufferer even to bonds for the sake of the Gentiles. Wherever a person takes his place truly as a member of the body of Christ, how can he have honor, or escape reproach and trial in the world? The proper home of the Church is in heaven; but on earth he who brought out this blessed truth is content to be a prisoner. “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.” Dispensation here means administration or “stewardship” —that for which he was held responsible to God. The Apostle Paul was the instrument chosen of God for bringing out the nature, calling, character, and hopes of the Church.

Mark the ways of God. He would not develop it among the Jews, nor would He reveal it by Peter or James. It was revealed to them no doubt, but not by them. The Apostle Paul was the only one of the inspired writers by whom God made it known. Hence if there were the smallest truth in apostolic succession, Paul ought to be the root or channel through whom the succession comes, and not Peter, who was expressly an apostle of the circumcision. Paul's apostleship was directly from the Lord and with the uncircumcision as its sphere. He was the grand witness that all true ministry must be direct from Christ. He may work by means. He may call a person to preach, and there may be persons whose gift is developed by means of teaching. The same apostle who derived his gift from the Lord, and who insisted upon this so strongly, was teaching others. He communicated the truth to Timothy, and Timothy was enjoined to teach others that which he had himself received. The Lord works by those who understand the truth well, to communicate the truth to those who understand it less. But still the principle remains, that all gift is immediately from Christ, and not derivative from man. There were outward and local appointments, such as elders and deacons; but that was another thing altogether. The elder might teach or not, and might do so formally and publicly, if he were a teacher; but his eldership was purely a certain charge communicated by the authority of the apostles, distinct from the question of gift. I only refer to the underived character of gift properly so called, which the Spirit distributes in the Church. It comes immediately from Christ on high (Eph. 4), and not through the muddy channels of the earth.

In this further statement the apostle Paul says, “By revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).” He had touched upon it in chapter 2, but now he is entering upon it more fully. “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men.” Here you have a positive statement that the secret was a something not revealed in other ages— not that it was obscurely intimated or badly understood, but it was not revealed at all. It was a secret kept hid, as the apostle lets us know in Romans 16 “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest.” It was only now divulged. It was not that the thing had been predicted by the prophets, and only now laid hold of by faith. In truth it was now made manifest, now published and taught; it never had been before. “But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” There is no doubt that the “scriptures of the prophets,” alluded to here, are New Testament scriptures. It is, properly speaking, “by prophetic scriptures,” not referring to Old Testament prophets at all; and for this reason— “Now is made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures.... made known to all nations.” Had the meaning been Old Testament prophets, what could have been more extraordinary than such an expression? He might have said, It was revealed to the prophets, but now it is understood. But he says, It is now made manifest. “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” There were inspired men, not apostles, who were prophets. To both of these it was now revealed; but we cannot say that “prophetic scriptures” in Romans 16 extend beyond the writings of Paul, which develop this blessed secret of God. The unfolding of the Church ensued when the Holy Spirit was given after a new manner. “The Holy Ghost was not yet [given] because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Holy Spirit had wrought before, but He was to be poured out personally; and this is identified with the calling of the Church. At Pentecost, for the first time, we have an assembly that is called the Church of God. “The Lord added to the Church daily

such as should be saved." There we find what is called the Church or the assembly: a body which God intended to have Jew and Gentile without distinction; which state of things never existed before the day of Pentecost. And now we have Jews and Gentiles brought into this new order, new to both of them, to which the former revelations of God no longer applied as a direct description of their privileges.

And here let me warn you to beware of so taking the Scriptures as if everything God says there is about you and me and the Church. The Church is, comparatively, a new thing in the earth; it is exclusively a New Testament subject. If I said that saints were thus new, it were false; but if you say that the Church embraces Old Testament saints, you neglect and oppose the word of God, which confines the Church of God to that which began with Christ set at the right hand of God, and the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven to baptize all who now believe into this one body. What is meant by "the Church? "The assembly of souls gathered by the knowledge of Christ dead and risen, and by the Holy Spirit united to Christ, as the glorified man at God's right hand. Such a state of things did not exist before Pentecost. There was no redemption accomplished before the cross. Christ stands alone as Son of God from all eternity—a divine person equal with the Father. But He became man in order to die for men upon the cross; and risen from the dead, He enters upon His new place of headship to the Church, His body; the Bridegroom of the Bride. Atonement has been made and sin put away by the sacrifice of Himself; and there could be no such thing as becoming a member of the body of Christ till this was accomplished. The Church is founded upon the remission of sins by the blood of Christ already shed, and consists of those that are united with Christ to share all His glory, save that which is essentially and eternally His own as the only begotten Son of the Father.

Then comes in this special part of the mystery "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." The promises of God to Abraham, and the promise of God in Christ, are two things not only different but contrasted. For if I look at the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, "I will make of thee a great nation," is this the Church's expectation? When Christians become great in the earth, it is when they have slipped out of their proper blessing in fellowship with Christ; but when Israel is made a great nation in the true sense of the word, they will be blest and a blessing as they never were before. The promise was given to Abraham, and will be accomplished in his seed on earth by and by. "I will make of thee a great nation.... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Here you have room left for the going out of blessing to the Gentiles; but mark, they are to be blessed in Abraham, and afterward in his seed. In Genesis 22, the promise is renewed to Isaac; and this is what is referred to in Hebrews. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." Is this what we are looking for? I trust not. We want to be in heaven with Christ, and we shall be there through His love and the favor of our God. But Israel is to possess the gate of his enemies, and to be exalted above all people of the earth. In the Psalm we have a sort of commentary upon these expectations of the godly in Israel. Thus in Psalm 67 we have the prayer, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us (Selah); that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." The preliminary of the blessing to other nations is the answer to Israel's cry, "God be merciful unto us and bless us." All hope for the world as such depends upon the blessing

of the Jews. Not so as to the Church, which God is now calling out. Its blessing does not hinge on the promises or the blessing of any people. Hence these Psalm do not apply; yet persons persist in diverting them to present circumstances. No wonder that they are bewildered. The fault is in their perversion of the word of God. “Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee.” Now it extends to others. “O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth.” When that day dawns, instead of the groaning and travailing that as yet prevails, “Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.” Anything like this is very far from being the case now. It is the millennial state that is expected here, when the power of God will be put forth triumphantly, and God will acknowledge His people Israel, and other nations will be blessed in them. Now the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and of the same body. “Fellowheirs?” With whom? With Christ, and with the Jew in Christ. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are fellow-heirs. Grace has put them on common ground. It is not now the Jews set on the pinnacle of the earth's blessing. On the contrary, as a nation they are dispersed, and God is judging them, not showing mercy; there is a complete obliterating of the old landmarks. And for this reason: the Jewish people were the real leaders in the world's enmity against Christ, and in the crucifying of their own Messiah. The cross of Christ terminated the distinctions between Jew and Gentile; and, founded upon that cross, God is building the Church. The vilest sinners upon the face of the earth, whether Jew or Gentile, God takes up; and out of their condition of sin and distance from God, puts them all upon one common heavenly level as members of the body of Christ. This is what God is doing now, and it is of immense importance to understand it, in order to enjoy fellowship with His ways. Besides the whole Bible becomes practically a new and yet more precious book when this is understood. Truth cannot admit of compromise, however rightly we may seek to be patient; the revealed mind of God necessarily excludes the notion of people having their own private judgment. Neither you nor I have a right to an opinion on matters of faith. God is the only one entitled to speak on these things; and He has spoken so plainly that it is our sin if we do not hear Him. But you cannot sever truth from the spiritual affections. Hence, if people do not carry out the truth of the Church practically, they lose it, and become bitter against it. God's mind about the Church always brings him who knows it into the world's enmity, and the special enmity of Christians who do not understand it. It was so with Paul preeminently, and it has been the same tale ever since as souls have laid hold of his testimony; and so it must be. The doctrine that Paul held, if taught by the Spirit of God, never can admit of a party, because the very center of it is Christ in heaven.

The apostle goes on with his statement; and this is the particular phase of the mystery that he brings out here— “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.” What is the effect of this truth? The most humbling possible. “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. It brings out the value of Christ as nothing else does. He adds further, “And to make all men see what is the administration [not, fellowship] of the mystery.” Be shows thus, that besides the aspect of the mystery towards the saints, it has also its application to all men, without distinction; to those outside the Church. Persons who preach the gospel necessarily preach Christ, hut there are few who understand the character of the grace which unites the soul with Christ in the relationship of members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. This was a main part of Paul's work.

Therefore he adds, administration of the mystery, “which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.” Mark, it is not hid in the Scriptures, but “hid in God.” “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” Consider what a wonderful place this is—that God is now making known a new kind of wisdom to the angels above by his dealings with us; and, by us, I mean all the saints of God now on earth. For let them be called by whatsoever name, every saint of God is a member of the body of Christ. All belong truly and equally to the Church of God. The only difference is, that we ought to understand what the Church of God is, and to act upon it; we ought to know what God intends, and how He intends His Church to walk. Christ is equally possessed by all; but all do not equally understand what the will of God about His Church is; how He would have us to worship Him, and to act upon His word together; how to help one another to carry out this glorious truth—God is manifesting by the Church His varied wisdom. Are we walking so according to the will of God for His Church, that He can point to us as a lesson to the angels of God? Such, and no less than this, is God's intention. You cannot, surely, get rid of the responsibility connected with it, by refusing to act according to it! It is not by and by, when we reach heaven, that God will manifest by the Church His manifold wisdom to the heavenly hosts, but now on earth, while the members of the Church are being called. “That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” Does not this bring in a very serious consideration? It is not a question of what men think about us, and whether we are loved or disliked here below. Very sure I am, that if we are walking according to Christ, we never can be anything but hated by the world; and it shows that we value the world if we wish it otherwise. It is a most painful thing to feel that so it must be; but if I believe Christ I must believe this, and I ought to rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer in the least degree. But beside this, the Church is called to be the lesson-book for the angels of God. When we think that God is overlooking with the angels that surround Him; that He is occupied with such objects as we are; that He sees in them the dearest objects of His affections; that He has given them Christ to be their life, and sent down the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, to take up His dwelling-place in them, and make them to be His temple, while they are in this world, what a calling it is. If an angel wants to know where this great love is, he must look down into this world and see it thus. You cannot sever Christ from the Church. But the wonderful thing is, that, before the angels of God, the astonishing conflict is going on—Satan and all his hosts endeavoring to mislead them, by putting them on a false ground, preaching righteousness in a thousand forms, in order to lead them away from grace and from the cross of Christ. On the other hand, there you have God working by His word and Spirit to bring His people to a consciousness of their privileges. But whether the children of God are faithful or not, perfect love dwells upon them and acts towards them (it may be in discipline); God is occupied with them, caring for them, always keeping this before His mind, that He will have them perfectly like Christ. Nothing can cloud this. Weakness may for a time dishonor the Lord, and destroy our own comfort, and help on the delusion of the world. All that may be; but the purpose of God, it shall stand; what God has spoken must be accomplished. Our weakness may be manifested, but God in His mighty love will complete His purpose. And this is the way in which He is teaching a new kind of wisdom that never was seen before in this world, to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. They had seen God's ways in creation, and at the deluge, and in Israel. But here was something that was not even in the Scriptures of God, which was not promised to man, a thing entirely kept secret between the Father

and the Son.

Now it is come out. The Holy Spirit is the One who develops and makes good this glorious truth of the Church of God. How far have our souls entered into it. How far do we content ourselves with vague guesses at it, thinking that it is of no great importance? Willing ignorance of this truth arises from a secret love of the world. There is the feeling in him who declines it, that you cannot take it up in heart and walk with the world. You must thoroughly break with everything that the flesh values under the sun. You have a place above the sun with Christ, and the consequence is that you are called on to submit to the sentence of death on everything here, to glorify the name of Christ and rejoice in Him, whatever may be the will of God about us. For no circumstances shut us out from the responsibility of being the witnesses of a glory that is above this world. The world ought to see in the Church the reflection of Christ. You may find a nun or a monk sweet morally, but all this may be mere nature, and not Christ. I do not say that Christ may not be there too, in isolated cases, spite of an outrageously wicked system. To faith, however, it is a question of doing the will of God and of glorifying Christ in the place of earthly reproach. God looks for the confession of the name of His Son at cost of everything. If the world heeds it not, is it in vain for the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

Chapter 31

Remarks on Ephesians 3:14-21

On the closing verse or two of the portion last before us, I did not comment. A few words now, therefore, on verses 12, 13. The apostle having alluded to Christ as the One in whom, exalted on high, the eternal purpose of God has now been revealed by the Spirit, adds that in that same person, “We have boldness and access, with confidence by the faith of Him. Wherefore, I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Now it is very sweet to find how, even in so vast a subject as that which was occupying his heart, and which he desired to press upon the saints, he can link on with the highest and deepest counsels of God the very simplest of the fundamental truths on which the believer rests. This is most instructive: because while, on the one hand, we saw before now that it is quite in vain to enter into the nature of the Church without having a simple, clear, and full understanding of the peace which Christ has made, and which He is for us in the presence of God; on the other hand, when we do seize in any measure the character of the Church, when we see the astonishing privileges which are ours as being made one with Christ, we regard with a more intense enjoyment the first elements, and we realize the amazing stability of the foundations on which our souls are privileged to stand. Thus one sees God would take care that peace of conscience and of the heart, too, should be kept up practically. There is nothing that is merely given for the wonder of our minds. I do not say that there is not endless matter for admiration, or that there is not an infinity to learn; but every step, and, indeed, the highest attainment of the knowledge of God's purposes in Christ, is intimately linked with the confidence of our souls in His love. So that while we cannot apprehend aright the nature of the Church until we have known simple peace with God, when we do enter into it, that peace is brightened in the heavenly light of the privileges into which the Holy Spirit has been leading our souls. We come back with renewed understanding and deeper enjoyment of the boundless grace which is ours in Christ. Hence it is that having ushered us into this wonderful expanse of God's love and purposes, he for a moment glances at certain practical consequences in us. “In whom,” says he, “we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.” It is not only peace, but “we have boldness,” which refers more particularly to our speech in addressing God: being able, as it were, to say anything to Him; because of our confidence in His love. And “access with confidence,” which is not merely what we utter, but the drawing near to Him, even where there may be no positive going forth of heart in the way of formal prayer; but there is the enjoyment of nearness, “access with confidence by the faith of him.” “Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is—your glory.” There is another practical fruit of this blessed truth. We saw before how he introduces the unfolding of the Church along with the fact that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. At the very moment when he was under the hand of the power of this world, and with the possibility of death before him, the Lord is pleased to bring out through the apostle the glorious calling of the Church. And He reminds them of this again. They might have been cast down at his sufferings. He says, on the contrary, you should not faint; tribulation ought to be rather that which would exercise and strengthen your faith. In 2 Corinthians 1 the apostle speaks of being pressed out of measure, above strength, so that he despaired even of life. But when the Corinthians needed comfort, he had it from God, and was able to give it out to them.

Now he was under the world's power and in prison, and there God unfolds the glory of the Church. They would, no doubt, be called to suffer too, and would have to know what tribulation was. So that the apostle, in the fullness of his own enjoyment of the truth which enabled him to rejoice even in his sufferings, calls upon them not to faint. So entirely has the Spirit of God united together the saints, not only with Christ, but also with one another, that what Paul was suffering was their glory, not his only, They had a common interest in it as being members of the same body.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (vss. 14-16). Here we are on perceptibly different, and I may say higher, ground than that of chapter 1. It is one of the two great relationships in which God stands to Christ, and, consequently, to us. For God now acts toward Christ, in view not merely of His person, but of His work. The consequence is that the work efficaciously puts us in the same place before God which belongs to Christ as man, yea, to Christ as man risen from the dead and in heaven. I carefully guard against saying all that Christ is, for this would not be true. We never can share what pertains to Him as the Son of the Father from all eternity. It were impossible, and even if conceived, it would be irreverent. No creature can overpass the bounds which separate him from God, neither would a renewed creature desire it. For in truth it is the joy of the most exalted creature to pay the lowliest homage to Him who is above him. Therefore I have little doubt that, in heaven among the angels of God, the highest is he who shows the deepest reverence. So, in earthly things, it is plainly the duty of every one to mark respect to the sovereign; but the one who has the place next to the sovereign has the largest opportunities and the strongest obligation to mark what the sovereign is in his eyes. So with us now in things spiritual.

In this portion, then, we have the second of the two great titles of God in relation to Christ and to us. It is not here, as in chapter 1, the God, but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God of Christ brings out Christ more as the glorious man which He is—the glorified man in God's presence, the center of all the counsels of God's power, who is even now exalted in the highest seat in heaven, and all things put under His feet. But it is plain that Christ has that which He values more than all that is set under His dominion—the love and delight of His Father in Him. Even our hearts are capable of understanding and enjoying this in the Holy Spirit. Indeed the time comes in most men's history, even where the world has counted them greatest and happiest, when they find a void that nothing can satisfy. But in Christ's case glory will not be the withering plant that human handling makes it. We know that in His hands it will be equally bright and holy, because God will be the object of it all; and everything, consequently, will be turned to His praise; as it is said, “Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” But then no possession of the universe, no expulsion of evil, no righteous judgment, no blessed control of everything to the glory of God, could possibly satisfy the heart. There will be the salt of the everlasting covenant of God in it: the constant maintenance of God's will and glory will be felt. But there is something sweeter than any power, let it be ever so glorious or howsoever administered; and this we have here. It is the Father's love which is above all. The effect of the one prayer is, that you look down upon the immense scene that is put under Christ; and it is intended of God that you should. But the effect of the second is rather, you look up in the enjoyment of the love that is the secret of the glory—and the glory the effect and fruit of the love, and that which

evidences what the love must have been that has given such glory. But blessed as glory is, the love that gives the glory is still deeper and better. And hence, when our Lord in John 17, prays for the saints—when He says, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them,” what is it for? “That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” This is the object of it. All are made perfect in one in that glory; but the end of that manifestation of glory is that the world may know how much the Father loved them. Thus, the glory that is seen, blessed as it must be, is not the end of everything. There was love before there was glory. And while I would not assert that there will be love after there is glory, still I do say that what produces, gives, and maintains the glory, is better than the glory itself. Aye, and there is nothing in all the thoughts of God more wondrous than that God can love such as we are with the same love wherewith He loves His Son. And He does so love; I know it for myself, and dishonor His word if I do not know it. If He says it, is it not that I may believe it and take it home to my heart, and enjoy it now in this world?—that I may use it as my constant buckler against everything that flesh or world or Satan can insinuate against me? He loves us as He loved Him. Do not say it is too high a thing. I know nothing so humiliating—that so convicts us of being nothing—as this that so loved, we should so little feel it; that so loved, we should so feebly return it; that so loved, we should yield to the cares, the vanities, the thoughts, the pursuits, anything, in short, that is not according to that love. It is the delight and, if we may so say, the desire of God that those who are His should enter into the greatness of His love. For no glory, nor sense of it, nor confidence, nor waiting for it, ought to be enough even for such hearts as ours. It is a most wonderful thing, to think that we are to share the glory of Christ: but we have the same love too. The same God that gives us the glory of Christ, will have our souls enter even now by the Holy Spirit into the community of the same love; and such is the grand central thought of this prayer. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Father of Christ is that relationship which brings out the love, just as the kingdom of Christ is connected with His conferred or human glory. In the one case it is what He is going to do for us. If we think what He did for Adam, what His purpose was about man, what will He not do for the last Adam, even Christ? And all that He does for Him as this blessed, glorious man, He will share with us. But more than that. The love that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ bears to Him, He bears also to us. We know how He expressed it when His Son was here—at what striking moments He brought out His love—how jealous He was lest man should suppose that He was indifferent to His beloved Son. Suffering allowed is no proof that He does not love; yea, rather, the contrary—a proof of how much not only He trusts our love, but how much also He would have us to trust His: confiding in Him, that, spite of all appearances, He loves us as He loves His Son. We may be exposed to all that Satan can array against us; but we are only in the same scene which the Son of His own love has trodden before us. But when men might have thought, from this or that, that Jesus was no more than any other man, see how God vindicates Him. Thus, it was not only that John the Baptist tried to hinder the Lord Jesus from being baptized, as if He needed to confess anything—for that baptism was a confession of sins; and therefore did John show his astonishment that there should be even the appearance of confession on the part of such an one as Jesus. But God had deeper thoughts, and allows that there should be that which unbelief might torture into the insinuation of evil, but which faith lays hold of, and for which only we adore Him and the Lamb yet more. So it was that the Father, when His beloved Son rose out of the Jordan, where all others were confessing unrighteousness—where He was fulfilling all righteousness—where He

who had no unrighteousness to confess, still would not be severed from those who were doing that which became their unrighteousness—who were owning the God whose rights had been forgotten—and in sympathy with the holy feeling that led them there, He would be with them there: then it was that the Father declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” It was just at the right moment, and with the fullest wisdom; but with what love the Father uttered these words! He that served Him as He never was served before—He that glorified Him as God never had been glorified on this earth—He that finished the work which God had given Him to do—was God likely to betray the smallest turning aside of His heart from Him? But yet we know that at the moment when He most of all needed it, when all else was against Him, then, crowning all, God forsook Him. If sin was to be judged and put away forever, it must be judged in all its reality. There must be no sparing, nor mitigating the wrath of God about sin. The whole judgment of God fell upon Him—the work was done—sin was put away by the sacrifice of Himself.

And now all the love which the Father had towards that blessed One can flow out to us on the ground of that work. It is there that the apostle puts us, brought into the place of sons with the Father; and he bows his knee to the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named.” The expression “the whole family” is jumbled up with people's notions about the church, as if part were meant as in heaven and part on earth. But the real force is “every family.” There is no reference to the unity of the church here. On the contrary, he means that when we look at the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, we rise sufficiently high to take in every class of creatures that God has made. Supposing you look at God as He made Himself known of old, it was as Jehovah to Israel. Does every family in heaven and earth come under this title? Not a single family in heaven, and only one family on earth. Under the title of Jehovah there is a separate relationship in which God reveals Himself to the Jews. He was their God in a sense in which He was not the God of any other people. As Creator, He is the God of all; and thus in some scriptures the term “God” is used, not Jehovah, because of a certain dealing with Gentiles. But where it concerns the ancient people of God, he uses the term Jehovah. Nay, in the second book of Psalms, when the Holy Spirit is contemplating the godly Jew worshipping God far from His temple, we have not Jehovah prominent, but “God” —for they are not able to enjoy what is specially given to Israel. He never will cease to be God, and they find their blessing in this—come what may—God cannot deny Himself. They are outside the special place in which He had promised to bless them; but God was God everywhere. So that if they were cast out of the Holy Land, and could not go up to the temple to worship according to the law, God could never cease to be God. It is the very same principle of grace that Christ was bringing down the poor Syrophenician woman to—that we must always come to our true position; and the same thing in substance is verified in every real conversion. I must always be brought down to the truth of what I am, as well as to the truth of what God is, and then there is no limit to the blessing.

I have just referred to this, by the way, for the purpose of illustrating by contrast the phrase “every family in heaven and in earth.” When God was revealing Himself in special relationship with Israel, it was as Jehovah. In Daniel we hear not of Jehovah, but the God of heaven, he is clearly in contradistinction to God revealing Himself on the earth to a certain people that He gave a peculiar land to, and privileges that no other nation shared along with them. They go after false gods: He takes His place in heaven, and falls back upon what never could be denied, and as “the God of heaven” He says, I will choose now whom I will. I will take the very worst people in the whole

world, and will give them the empire of the earth. So He chose the enemy of the Jew—the Babylonians. If God is acting thus sovereignly, as the God of heaven, the vilest may have the power here below. But “there is a God that judgeth the earth,” and when the day comes to verify that, it will be in the midst of His people as Jehovah. Looked at in this way, He has only one family that stands in covenant relationship to Himself: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” But here we have the contrast. He is revealed not merely as Jehovah, having Israel, His people, upon earth, but as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The moment He speaks in such a relationship as this, it is expressly in association with one who made everything, as was said before, “who created all things by Jesus Christ.” All creatures therefore come into view, and finding their due place with Him as the Father, because the Lord Jesus is He that formed all, and for whose glory all was made. Hence all families in heaven and earth, let them be principalities and powers, angels, Jews or Gentiles, as well as the Church of God, all come under “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The title Jehovah is restricted to a particular race: the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is unlimited in its range, and brings in every class of beings that God has made. This puts the Church in a most remarkable position, taking us away from all that is local or temporary. We ourselves may have the most special place within this display of divine glory, but still we have to do with a God and Father who is the proclaimed and supreme source of everything else. We may be, we are, if we understand the calling of the Church, near to Him, in a place that none can share, a nearness that no angel enjoys. I mean by “we,” all the members of the Church of God. We have by grace a place of association with Christ before God, which none others enter. But as He is revealing Himself in connection with Christ as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, so He brings in other classes of beings that He has made for the purpose of His giving blessing in their suited measure. He has brought out the heir and center of all His purposes, and there is not a single class of beings that He has made for His praise, but what are put in their proper place before the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in contrast with the peculiarity of the Jew as being the sole possessor of the privileges God gave to them as Jehovah. The Father is Jehovah, and so is Jesus; but it is not thus that we have to do with Him; nor is this our intelligent character of addressing Him. It is to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ that the apostle is here bending his knees. And we ought to be conscious that we are drawing near to Him in the full nearness that such a title implies. He takes in within His eye and heart all creation as that which He means to bless with Christ. But there are those that have rejected Christ, and remember the very same love of Christ which means to bless the creation through Christ, will maintain His glory against those who despise Him. This is a solemn truth. There is nothing more intolerant of evil than love, and the gospel of God has, as its background, the eternal condemnation of every soul that despises Jesus the Son of God. It must be so. The same disciple that was the favored one of God to bring out love as none other had done, is the one who brings out the eternal death of those who refuse His love. The revelation, therefore, of the endless ruin of those that despise Christ, is in the closest possible connection with the love that brings out the everlasting blessedness of those that cleave to Him. Thus we have this universality brought in, “Of whom every family in heaven and earth is named.”

But there are, by grace, those that will have that which is most peculiar, which is nearest to His heart in the midst of this scene of love and glory; and here they are— “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.” He

does not say what of—he leaves yet there without any ending to the sentence. He brings you into infinity. I do not believe that it means the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ. The passage is often quoted so, and oftener so understood; but the “and” of the next verse indicates another sense distinctly?— “And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” The love of Christ is evidently an additional thought. What then is the meaning? I would not be bold to fill up an outline which the apostle has left thus vaguely, but I venture to think that what he puts before us here, with such singular marks of undefined grandeur, is the mystery of which he had been speaking, and assuredly not Christ's love, which he immediately adds. He had shown how every family in heaven and earth is ranged under the fatherhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In connection with this he prays, “That you may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.” It is in relation to the heavenly counsel of God the Father, once secret but now disclosed. All things were for the glory of His Son—the whole creation, heavenly and earthly—and the saints are to have the very highest place with Him over it all.

But there was something still deeper than this, and which needed to be known along with it. Therefore he adds, “And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Glorious as all these prospects are, still the love is deeper than it all: the best wine is kept to the last. “To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” It may seem to be a paradox to say so, but a blessed one. It does not mean that we shall ever know it perfectly, but there may be the knowing more and more of that “which passeth knowledge.” He supposes us launched upon that sea where there is no shore: we can never get to the end of it. Yet he adds, “To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” You could no more get to the end of the love, than you could get to the end of God Himself. Nothing can be more wonderful than this prayer. He adds further, “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” He does not say, above all that we can ask or think. The Holy Spirit takes particular care not to say so. There is a great difference between what we do ask and think, and what we can ask and think. There is no limit to what we may ask. God is above anything that we can ask of Him, and He loves to hear us asking more and more. He would exercise us in asking more abundantly. “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Whose power is that? It is God's. God Himself dwells in every Christian. It is God Himself who makes every saint, that is, every Christian, to be His temple. Therefore, however poor and weak a Christian may be, looked at as he is, yet what cannot God make such an one to be? He is the temple of God. God will always be above him, higher than any man's expectations of His love; but it is taken into account that there is a power which has wrought in us, as well as a power which has wrought for us, to which we can see no limits. As to the power that wrought for us, we see it in chapter 1. That was the power which raised up Christ from the dead; and it is the same power that works in us in connection with entrance into His love. Do we remember that this is precisely the thing in which we most fail? For there is many a soul constantly saying, I do not think of this power; I am apt to be murmuring, and tried by the very things which, if I only had the sense of His love, I should bless Him for. “To him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” There he gives us the Church in this most special point of view. He intimates that there will never be a time when the Church will not have its own

peculiar place. But it is not only true that the Church will have a wonderful introduction into the love of Christ and the fullness of God, by His power that works in us now; but it would appear also that there never will be a time, in all the ages to come, when there will not be an unique and blessed character of relationship between the Church as such and God Himself—the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is confirmed by the beautiful scene in Revelation 21, where we have no longer nations and kings, but God with men. But it is not said simply, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men,” but “the tabernacle.” It is not only that God comes down to dwell with men, but “the tabernacle of God is with men.” It seems exactly the same thing that is here called the Church. God, dwelling in the Church, will take up His place with men; so that there will abide the peculiar dwelling-place of God in the Church, even when the scene is an eternal one. Thus, when the heavens and earth have passed away, after the great white throne, and when all the saints will be in their resurrection bodies, then not only will God be in face of men, but “the tabernacle of God” will come down to be with men—God dwelling with them in His own tabernacle, which tabernacle I believe to be that which is here called the Church. So that the Church, even in eternity, when all enemies and things shall be subdued, will enjoy the sweet and amazing privilege of being the home or dwelling-place of God. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be in holy conversation and godliness?

Chapter 32

Remarks on Ephesians 4:1-6

Before entering upon the subject of ministerial gifts, which is brought before us later on in the chapter, the Holy Spirit dwells upon the unity that belongs to the saints of God in Christ now. It was necessary that this should be laid down as a grand platform upon and in connection with which ministry takes its course. For ministry rather brings into prominence individual members of Christ, and not so much the entire body. For although it is a common statement that the Church teaches, it is really and entirely unfounded. Indeed the notion leads to the pretense of infallibility; and this finds its most open expression in Romanism. The truth is, the Church never teaches, but, on the contrary, is the body that is taught. There is no such thing as a body that teaches. The Church, no doubt, contains within itself the husbandman that are employed of the Lord; but itself is God's husbandry or the scene on which God labors to produce fruit unto Himself. This is an important truth practically; because it destroys all pretension on the Church's part to create or even define doctrines. The Church is called to be the pillar and ground of the truth; it is bound to take care by holy discipline that nothing contrary to the truth should be tolerated within it: God's assembly cannot relieve itself from this responsibility. But while this belongs to the entire Christian community, that it should be that body which on earth holds out the truth before men, and within which we must come if the truth, having been believed, is to be acted on at all; yet the way in which God has been pleased to work for the spread of His truth upon consciences is by individual members of His Church who are qualified for this particular purpose. Power to teach depends upon the gift conferred by sovereign grace. It is not from an abstract right that every man can teach or preach if he likes. There is no such license in the Church of God. The Lord Jesus has a right to call and to communicate power in the Holy Spirit as He pleases. The Church is not a society of men who hold particular views on this or that: still less is it the gathering into one of the world. It is the assembly of God, of those He calls and wherein He dwells. And as this is true with regard to the whole —that it all belongs to God—that it is God who forms, and guards it, and maintains His own holiness and glory in it, so is it with regard to ministry, which is one very important function that is maintained in particular members of the Church. That is, there is the unity which the believers now have in Christ Jesus, by virtue of which there is the assembly of God—the common unity of blessing in which all believers now stand, and' which is the groundwork, if I may so say, of everything. But in connection with it you have ministry at work, which belongs to particular members rather than to the whole Church. The gifts are in and of some, for the good of all.

This divides the portion before us into two parts. In the early verses, to the end of verse 6, we find rather the unity of the Spirit; from verse 7 the diversity of the members of Christ. First of all, observe that the Holy Spirit has brought us now to the ground of exhortation. We have doctrine in the first three chapters; now we come to practice. “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” This vocation consists of two parts more particularly. First, the saints, all who know the Lord Jesus Christ, compose one body in Him; secondly, they are the habitation of God through the Spirit. Thus, although the assembly of

God is a body existing upon earth, yet it is founded upon heavenly privileges, the body of Christ showing us our corporate blessedness, the habitation of God through the Spirit rather bringing before us our responsibility as having God dwelling in the midst of us. I apprehend that these two things are very feebly entered into, even by true children of God. When they hear of the body of Christ, the idea is scarcely more than that they are forgiven, or are children of God, or they are going to heaven. How very little all this is a measure of what is implied in the body of Christ! Many true believers suppose it to mean the aggregate of those who are reconciled to God—the objects of His favor who are not left to die in their sins. But you might have all these privileges without any of the characteristic features of Christ's body, or God's habitation through the Spirit. It would have been quite possible, if God had been so pleased to order it, that Christians should have been children of God, conscious of their redemption, knowing their sonship, fully expecting to be glorified with Christ in heaven, and yet never have been joined together as one body in Christ, with God dwelling among them by a special presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. This was a superadded privilege over and above redemption through the blood of Christ. And this is so true, that if you search all the Old Testament through, you will find that never are the saints of God spoken of there as being members of Christ's body, the habitation of God through the Spirit.

But more than that. The prophets are full of a glorious scene yet to be enacted on this earth, when the Lord will put down Satan's power. There is a time coming when evil will no longer be permitted to go unpunished, nor good to suffer here below; and when that day comes, Scripture is plain that although God will have a people for Himself upon earth, they will not be joined together as one body, nor will they form God's habitation through the Spirit. It is between the two advents of Christ—between the grace which has appeared, and the glory which is going to appear (Titus 2:11-13)—that we hear of this special Vocation wherewith we are called. For let us consider what the body of Christ is—His body, of course, I mean; not as predicated of Himself personally, but as composed of and applied to those who believe in Christ now, that spiritual corporation to which all true saints of God now found upon the earth and ever since Pentecost belong. What are the blessings which constitute it? What does the Holy Spirit mean by membership of this body? I answer, the cross, being the witness and expression of the guilt of the Jews more especially (the guilt, doubtless, of all men in general, but pre-eminently of the Jew), gave occasion for God to dissolve completely, for the time being, the peculiar place of favor which the Jewish people had previously possessed. God Himself blotted out the landmark which separated Israel from the Gentiles; and instead of making Israel to be the one channel of His promise, on the contrary, the tide of blessing turns decidedly and conspicuously towards the Gentiles—to gather out of Jews and Gentiles a people for His name; and to join together this election out of them both, who believe in Christ, into the possession of new privileges that never had been tasted in like mode or measure before.

One most remarkable feature of the blessing is, that the distinction between Jew and Gentile is gone. The cross united them in wickedness before God. But what does God use it for He says, as it were, I will take that very cross which man has made the scene of his outrageous rebellion against God—which proved that my ancient people were grown violent in hostility against Me in the person of My Son; and I will make the cross to be the pivot on which will turn fuller, richer blessing than had even been hoped for by believing men in this world before. Thus, as the cross was the rallying point of Satan to gather men in an unholy union against God and His Son, so God

makes it to be the grand center where He forms the Jews and Gentiles that believe in His Son into a new body, where all such distinctions are blotted out forever. And if God is pleased to call out a people for the purpose of giving a practical testimony to this new display of His love, who is to gainsay it? The law is righteous; and it would be an outrage upon God to put the smallest stigma upon the ten words. But while the commandment is holy, just, and good, grace brings in what is higher and better still. It is right, of course, if I do well, that —should be rewarded for it; but is it not more blessed, if I do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently This is grace, acceptable with God, and the practical principle on which He is calling His children now to act. It was not the public rule of government in Old Testament times, but the contrast of it. Does God, then, contradict Himself? Far from it. God may have one way of dealing with the Jewish people; and then He may lay down another way of dealing with Christians. Indeed, who can deny that He has? The Jew would have been guilty of a grievous sin if he had not been circumcised; and I believe that, as far as the earth is concerned, even in the bright day that is coming, the Jew will have His land, and priest, and temple. The will of God for the Jews will remain substantially unchanged. I find in the prophecies a state of things not yet accomplished, when all these outward ordinances of God will be fulfilled. Am I not to believe God till I see the prophecies thus realized? It is not thus we treat the word of a good man. But if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. And for a man to receive Samuel and Kinas, and not to believe Ezekiel and Hosea, is to treat God as you would not treat an ordinary man. But if I believe all that He has said, there are peculiar principles of God for the Jews which are still to be carried out by the Messiah reigning in power when the devil is bound. God will accomplish all that He has spoken of in the prophets in the days of heaven upon the earth. But meanwhile the Messiah that was promised to bring in the glory came, and has been rejected. Instead of having a throne, He had the cross; and far from taking the earth for His inheritance, He was cast out of it and went up to heaven. A new state of things consequently was opened; and for this order, altogether different from that contemplated generally in the prophecies, we have the New Testament revelation. Therein we find what meets little intimations here and there in the Old Testament, but at the same time introduces, as a whole, a scene without precedent or successor, where God unfolds privileges that were never tasted before, and looks for a walk that He did in no way demand even from saints of old.

There are, of course, certain plain, fixed principles always obligatory. God never sanctioned a lie or covetousness, or malice: no dispensations can neutralize or weaken the grand moral distinctions between right and wrong. But the God that wrought in earthly power to protect His people, and would have protected them had they been faithful under the law, now, on the contrary, calls His people to suffer in grace. The same God that shielded them and brought them through the Red Sea, and who would not allow any power to gain universal supremacy in the earth till Israel had proved themselves unfaithful, then, when they did manifest themselves altogether unworthy, permitted Babylon, the very worst of the Gentile powers, to overthrow them. And then one empire succeeded another, till finally, under the Romans, both Jews and Gentiles united in crucifying the Lord of glory. Then the world's doom was sealed; the knell of its judgment sounded from the cross of Jesus. You might have expected, had God been then acting upon principles of righteousness, that at once the universe of God would have been convulsed, and Jerusalem and Rome destroyed in His fiery indignation. But, no; heaven opens, but it is to receive the crucified Jesus—not to judge His murderers: it is furthermore to send down the Holy Spirit on earth, to form by grace this new body the Church of God; it is to bring those vile murderers of Jesus, if they only

received Him, into a place of blessing, whose breadth, and length, and depth, and height never had been enjoyed or known before.

And this is grace. The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The gospel of God's grace goes out; but it does not merely save souls—it gathers them, unites them to Christ, makes them members of Him and one of another. The Old Jewish vantage ground has disappeared; the Levitical privileges are completely eclipsed as far as the Church is concerned. The Gentiles were sunk in idolatry, and the Jews self-complacent under God's law which they kept not; but both are brought through the Spirit, by faith in Christ, into this one body, and worship God on the same common ground of grace. They are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. This is the vocation wherewith we are called.”

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord.” He again points to that honorable scar from the world's enmity, because he is bringing out in a practical way what the consequence, even to the greatest servant of God that ever lived (next to Christ), was in this world. After all, he was the Lord's prisoner. What a wonderful honor! There were no fiery chariots to surround him, as with Elijah; no power put forth to preserve him. He is suffering from the same empire that crucified the Lord of glory; and out of his prison he is cheering the saints to walk worthy of that same calling! Even now the world is overmatched: what will it be when Christ comes? “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” There was a danger of the contrary: spiritual privilege might be misused to puff up the saints. He therefore meets this, and shows them the only proper tone that becomes the Christian. “With all lowliness and meekness.” It is a blessed thing to find zeal: but what can redeem the walk of a Christian which fails in lowliness and meekness? There is a time to be firm and a time to be yielding, but neither gift nor position can justify those who seem to think that in their case the exhortation to meekness and lowliness has no place. We must take care, on the other hand, that it is not meekness in manner or lowliness in word only, for God looks in us for what is real. Too often, humility is but a cover for the deepest pride, as love and the spirit of Christ are most talked of where they least exist. Let us beware of this vain show.

But supposing there is that in others which you cannot overlook, as being contrary to the mind of God, how are we to act? No doubt there is to be the fitly spoken word of reproof, if needful; but there is to be “long-suffering” also; and if there be any place where long-suffering is called for, it is where evil touches ourselves. We are not to tolerate evil against the Lord; but wherever it is that which injures us, longsuffering is the word, “forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Here it is not only the lowly grace and patience which the Christian has to cherish, but the spiritual diligence with which he is called to hold fast what is most precious and divine here below.

“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” How perfect is Scripture! It does not say, “the unity of the body,” although including it. But had it been said, “the unity of the body,” people might have built up (as indeed they have) an outward institution and made it a point of life and death not to separate from that. But what the Holy Spirit lays upon those belonging to Christ is, “endeavoring” —showing all needed earnestness—not to make, but “to keep the unity of the Spirit.” It is something already made by the Spirit which we have to maintain or observe. It is not merely that we are to have a nice feeling towards our fellow-Christians. This might be in a thousand different bodies; but if ever so well kept, this would not be keeping “the unity of the

Spirit.” What is meant then? The unity of the Holy Spirit, which is already formed, embraces all the members of Christ. And where are the members of Christ to be found? In one sense, thank God, everywhere: in another, alas! anywhere. Wherever Christ is preached, and souls have received Him, there are His members. And what have we to do? Diligently to maintain the unity that embraces everyone belonging to Christ— “in the bond of peace.” Here we find peace spoken of, not so much for our own souls with God, but rather for enjoying and furthering practically union among saints of God. The flesh is anxious and restless: a peaceful spirit is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and mightily contributes to the binding together of hearts in practice. God's Spirit is not occupied with merely giving right opinions about things: deeper purposes are His. He is bowing souls to Christ, and exalting Him in their eyes. But to bring one soul out of darkness into light, or out of a little into deeper light, is surely precious; and this is what God Himself is now engaged with. We do well, while holding fast our liberty for Christ, not to allow the barriers that men have brought in, but to treat them as null and void.

But then, it will be, as is often, said that every man has a right of private judgment: I deny it totally. No man has a right to have an opinion in divine things; God only and absolutely is entitled to communicate His mind. What people have to do is to get out of the way, that God's light may shine into the hearts of His children. Men, in their self-importance, only cause their dark shadows to pass over each other: they thus hinder instead of helping the communication of divine truth. Whereas, when the desire of Christ's servant is, that God may lead on and strengthen His children, is it in vain? Never. The moment you begin to gather people round a particular person, view, or system, you are only forming a sect. For this is a party, though it may contain many members of Christ, which forms its basis of union, not on Christ, but on points of difference, which thus become a special badge and means of separating between the children of God. The apostolic Church never challenged a convert's faith as to an establishment or dissent—never asked, Do you believe in episcopacy, voluntaryism, or even the Church of God? The true and God-glorifying inquiry ever was and is, Do you believe in the Christ of God? Is it true that in early days, if a man confessed Christ, he was cast off by Jews and Gentiles, and became an object of enmity to all the world; and this was no slight a guard then against people confessing Christ, unless they really believed in Him. But if a man had received the Holy Spirit, through the hearing of faith, he was at once a member of the one body, and acknowledged as such.

Why should this not rule now? Am I not content with the wisdom of God Would I then supplement His word, or do without or against it? It is no sect if you act upon the mind of God; it is a sect if you depart from it. The question, therefore, is, What is God's intention about His Church? How would He have us to meet? Am I willing to receive all real Christians—persons whom all believe to be converted? Doubtless there is such a thing as putting them out if they prove not to be so; for there is no possible case of evil but what the word of God applies to, so that there is not the smallest need for any rules or regulations of men. Unless men are spiritual, they will not keep the unity of the Spirit long; they will soon find abundant ground for faultfinding. But those who hold fast and firm to Christ as the center of the Spirit's unity, as they are no sect, so they never can become one, whatever be the schisms, divisions, heresies, of their adversaries. It is very sorrowful that any souls should go away in self-condemnation, but it is the more blessed for those, who, spite of all, have faith and patience and grace to stay. The apostle said in writing to the Corinthians, “There must needs be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.” These

were the men who in that day clave to the Lord with full purpose of heart. May the same thing be true of us now! I deny that the word of God is made of none effect, or that I am in any way bound to sin now more than then. The unity of the Spirit which the Ephesians had to keep, is the unity which God lays upon all His children. If the word has regenerated my soul through the Holy Spirit; if through that word I know my Saviour and my Father; if to it I am indebted as the means God uses for cleansing my soul from day to day, am I to say that I need not follow His word as a member of Christ's body in the assembly of God, where He dwells in the Spirit? Surely, if my soul owns its divine authority, woe is me if I do not seek to follow it in all things. God calls on us to be diligent in maintaining “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” It is not the unity of our spirits, but the unity of the Spirit.

When we reflect that it is the Holy Spirit who forms this unity, is it not a solemn thought? Ought we not to guard against anything that would grieve Him Our Lord attached special importance to what touched the Holy Spirit; and so should we if wise. If the Holy Spirit is here for this purpose on earth, He becomes a divine test for souls, whether they are prepared to honor Him or not. But people might say, If you receive all Christians without requiring them to give a pledge for the future, tacitly, if not expressly, you may accept a Socinian or an Arian. But I do not acknowledge such to be Christians at all: do you? What is the Church founded on? “Whom say ye that I am,” says our Lord, in the very chapter in which He first notices that He was going to build the Church. “Thou art the Christ (says a disciple), the Son of the living God.” And what does our Lord reply “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Hence there ought to be the strongest, strictest dealing with souls, whether in deed and in truth they believe and confess the divine glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The smallest compromise as to this allowed would be a reason for standing in doubt of any soul. You have no ground to receive as a Christian him who tampers with the purity, glory, or integrity of the person of Christ. The Church is founded on Christ the Son of God: if this rock be shaken, all is gone. “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? To touch Christ is to touch the very basis on which the Church of God rests.

But where a soul confesses Christ really and truly, confesses Him in such a way that it commends itself to your conscience as divine, receive him; for God has. He may be Baptist or Paedo-Baptist: never mind, receive him. If he is living in sin, need I say that Christ and drunkenness cannot go together? Faith in the Son of God is incompatible with walking in darkness. No matter how a man may talk about Christ, if he joins with that confession a disregard for the moral glory of God, he proves by this fact that he is not born of God. Simon Magus thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. It was a mistake that he made, some will say. Yes, but that mistake was vital, and proved that he could not have life from God; and therefore, though baptized, he was not received as a member of the body of Christ. We have no reason to think that he broke bread at all. Baptism would be no reason in the face of such circumstances, why the assembly should receive him whom they do not believe to be a saint.

This will show in some degree the character or limits of the unity of the Spirit. For the Holy Spirit, while He calls souls and empowers them to confess Christ, never leaves them to walk in the mire of their own wickedness. If a believer falls into sin of a certain character, he ought to be put away. What is merely personal should be dealt with in a private way; it would be monstrous to put all failures on the same ground. The first and deep feeling of the soul ought to be, in vindicating God, to get the person right. The Church is a witness of divine grace, and has to seek the blessing of

the unconverted, and the restoration of Christians who have gone astray. Are we endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit? How is it that Christians are formed into different associations? If the word of God be that which they at all cost seek to carry out, why do they require human rules and modern inventions? If God gives a rule I do not want another; I do want to have His in all its strength, so as to bring forth the truth to a man's conscience, and say, That is God's will. Is it well or wise to yield this up?

God has written a word that bears upon everything moral, by which He intended His children to walk: are we doing so You may ask, Are you then perfect? I answer, We are endeavoring to hold fast and in peace the Spirit's unity, we are honestly seeking subjection to the will of God: are you doing the same? This is the main question for every child of God—Am I endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit? And am I doing it in God's way or out of my own head? Have I surrendered myself to His will? Our business is to be dutiful to Him. We have our orders, and our responsibility is to carry them out, subject to Him whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve.

But further this unity is to be kept in the bond of peace. God is forming His Church of all those who belong to Himself. It is not Christian persons holding particular views of this or that; but the Spirit holding to His own unity, that is, to what Christ is to them, not to the points in which they differ one from another. If I want to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, I must have my own soul settled upon this: the Holy Spirit is glorifying Christ alone. You cannot please the Father more than in exalting the Son; and you cannot touch Him more nearly than by slighting His Son. All is secured in maintaining Christ. This brings it to the simplest possible issue. What have we to do with forcing people to give up their views and adopt ours, let them be ever so correct? God's word furnishes a ground, in the name of Christ, on which you can embrace all saints, let them be ever so weak or prejudiced. Let us beware of being more careful of our own reputation or ease than of His will. Let us not be vain of our little knowledge, or of the point we may have attained to in practice. Let us look up to the Lord for faith and patience to own every real member and servant of Christ, wherever found. Let us cleave to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and be diligent in maintaining it, whatever the difficulties may be, and they are great. Faith does not see many bodies and one Spirit, it knows but one body. Bearing with others who in this see dimly or double, let us be rigid in holding fast the name of Christ, and for ourselves be careful to accredit nothing contrary to it. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.” This is our most essential, vital blessing in Christ; “for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” “One Spirit” is added immediately, because it is the Holy Spirit who makes it good; and what we are now by the power of the Holy Spirit, we hope to enjoy by and by with Christ. We shall have it fully and perfectly in the presence of God in heaven. This is the first unity.

There is a difference between this and the following verses. The fourth verse is one character of unity, the fifth another, and the sixth a third; and these concentric unities enlarge respectively. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” Nobody enters into this who is not born and baptized of the Holy Spirit. This one body is on earth, no doubt; but then it is a real thing and of God now, whatever may be the glory proper to it hereafter. But in verse 5 you have a more outside unity, an area of profession, larger than that of real spiritual power. Here “the Lord” is made prominent; and there are many who will say in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”

Hence we hear next of “one faith,” by which is meant the Christian faith. If I talk about faith in the sense of its being the medium by which we lay hold of Christ, and are saved in the grace of God, it is never called one faith. By the latter is meant the common faith that all Christians profess, in contradistinction to the religion or law of Jews and the idolatry of Gentiles. Accordingly “one Lord, one faith,” is followed by “one baptism;” because whoever professed to believe in Christ was baptized with water. Simon Magus received Christ nominally, and was baptized, though he soon proved to be no Christian. Thus, verse 5 gives us, not the unity that is real, and holy, and enduring, but of the Christian profession.

Last of all, we have “one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.” Evidently in this I stand before a still vaster compass. There is an immense mass of mankind that does not profess Christ at all. The bulk of men have gone on with their idols, spite of law and gospel. Are there no claims there? I own one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all. That is, it is a personal God. Not at all the idea that everything is God—which is infidelity in its worst shape, or Pantheism. I own “one God,” not a number of divinities, like the Gentiles, but “one God and Father of all.” The Jew did not believe that He was the Father of all, nor even properly this for the chosen nation; but rather their Governor, even Jehovah. The Christian revelation brings out God in an infinitely larger, as well as for us more intimate, character; but larger, too, as embracing all creaturehood— “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all” (His supremacy and providence—but more than these) “and in you all.” There is His near connection with some, and not with all. For it is not said, “in all,” but “in you all.” The Holy Spirit is speaking of the Father's peculiar relationship to the Christian. Thus nothing can be more full and beautiful, and orderly, than these unfoldings of unity in and around Christ our Lord.

Chapter 33

Remarks on Ephesians 4:7-11

We have now closed the statement which the apostle has given us of the unity of the Spirit, the common place which pertains to all the children of God who are being called through His grace by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. We enter now the special ways in which the Lord calls upon the various members of His body to serve Him—not so much the common position which all must have who belong to Him, but the peculiar privileges and responsibilities of each individual member of Christ. And thus the seventh verse opens: “but unto every (or each) one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” This is the basis. Christ, according to His own good pleasure, as Head and Lord, is giving certain gifts. It is important to observe that this is the point of view in which the Holy Spirit presents ministry in Ephesians. There is no one brought, I need hardly say, into such unequivocal prominence as Christ. In, Corinthians, on the contrary, the Holy Spirit is more prominent than Christ. Both aspects are necessary to God's glory and equally perfect in their place; but they are not the same thing. There is the wisdom of God in each epistle suited to the special object that God Himself aims at.

It is impossible for any spiritual mind to look back upon the Epistle to the Ephesians without perceiving that the great truth of it is the fullness of blessing which belongs to the Church in virtue of its union with Christ. This, accordingly, brings Christ into relief. On the other hand, we cannot study the Epistle to the Corinthians, and particularly that part of it where the subject of spiritual manifestations is treated of, without seeing that it is not so much a question of Christ exalted at the right hand of God, but of the Holy Spirit sent down here below. The consequence is that in Corinthians we have rather the assembly upon earth and the divine person who is pleased to dwell and work in it. Thus the Holy Spirit is brought there into view; whereas, in Ephesians, it is Christ as the Head of the Church, who is regarded still as the giver of these gifts. Indeed in no part of Scripture is the Holy Spirit represented as properly the giver; and I doubt much, with another, that the expression “gifts of the Spirit” is an accurate phrase. You may find in Hebrews 2:4 a text which seems to imply as much; but it is “the distributions of the Spirit.” Wherever giving is simply and distinctly spoken of, it is Christ who is regarded as the giver. So our Lord Himself says of that which lies at the source of all, “the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water.” The water here represents the Holy Spirit. Hence, He is viewed in this place as the gift, and Christ is the giver. And as this is true of that great foundation truth, namely, the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself, so is it of all the details. Christ, the Head of the Church is dealing in the individual members according to His own gracious affection; for this is the blessed side of the truth which is held up here. “Unto each one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” He is speaking about ministerial gift; but it is called grace here because it is regarded not so much as a position of authority (though some of these gifts involve it), but of One who loves His Church and cares for each member of it; and He cannot fail to supply whatever is suitable and worthy of Himself and His love. “Unto each one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

And this leads to another remark of a general kind. In looking at Corinthians you have an ampler field in which the Holy Spirit is presented as working; you have miracles, tongues, healings—the remarkable ways in which the Holy Spirit acts in outward power. All this is left out here. To what principle are we to attribute it? For God does nothing arbitrarily; but always with a love and wisdom worthy of Himself, and surely intended for our profit. What He has not revealed, it becomes us not to inquire; but what He has made known in His word, we are clearly free, nay, bound to seek to learn simply and thankfully. Why then have we also the more external operations of the Spirit in Corinthians. And why, in writing to the Ephesians, are the outward manifestations left out and only those spoken of which pertain to the growth of the soul, the founding of the Church and the carrying of it on—the keeping up holy growth and fellowship and godly order among the children of God? For to these alone the statements of this chapter apply. The key, I believe is found in what we have already hinted. In Corinthians, the prominent thought is the Holy Spirit present in the Church, and whatever He does comes before us. And as the Holy Spirit works in an extraordinary manner, and is the power of that which is sensibly supernatural as well as that which meets the wants of the soul, hence all is brought before us there. But in Ephesians, where Christ is viewed in immediate relationship to His Church, and where it is His love and the care for the members of His body which flows out of that love, it is plain that whatever merely deals with the world and is a witness to unbelievers would be not needed but superfluous: only that which has to do with the members of Christ is in place and season. Oh that we only had more patience and confidence in God and His Word! We should find the answer to every difficulty in due time. God owns the heart's reliance upon Him. By examining one truth or a particular part in the light of the whole book where it occurs, how often we discern that which gives us the right clue to its meaning!

But before looking at the gifts themselves, I would just draw attention to what is of still deeper interest and importance, the basis on which the giving of these gifts by Christ depends. For we have all suffered immensely from mere traditional views of ministry, regarding it as in general an honorable profession among men, or a certain position which has a status attached to it. These things entirely falsify the nature of ministry; and the consequence is, that the full blessing and meaning of the word are so far lost for the soul. Do not mistake me. I deny not that God works where much is unscriptural. He is always right, and the failure of the Church, or of ourselves individually, cannot touch His sovereign goodness, who always watches over all and each member of Christ for blessing. But then He allows failure to show itself, and permits that we should suffer the consequence of it to humble us and make us feel that all the good is from Him, that all the evil is on our part. Throughout the whole history of Christendom appear these two things: man corrupting his way upon the earth, and God showing Himself above the evil that His light judges. This is true of ministry as it is of all else.

Hence if we turn to Scripture and see the ground on which ministry rests, we shall find that nothing can be more glorious; but alas! nothing more contrary to that which ordinarily is its form among men. For its basis is not short of the redemption that Christ has accomplished by His blood, and of His ascension to heaven. For Christian ministry flows from Christ at the right hand of God; it did not exist before. I do not deny that God had His ways of acting in Israel. But there His dealings partook more of the character of priesthood, from which ministry differs totally in character. Earthly priesthood is a caste of men who deal with God on behalf of those for whom they are priests: that is, they undertake the spiritual business of persons unable for one reason or another to transact it

with God directly, and consequently dependent upon these mediators between God and them. The priest goes where the people cannot go, enters the holy place, presents the blood, burns the incense, deals with God, in short, for each spiritual want of those whom He represents. Ministry starts upon quite different ground, being an action, through man, from God toward men, and not from man toward God. The two are clean contrasts of each other. As to the servant of God, if truly one whom God raises up, who has a message from Him and a work to do for Him, that message or work is by God's authority for the blessing of men. Hence, if you take an evangelist, what is he? One who, himself taught of God for his own soul's need, not only knows the way to be saved, but has a power which he did not possess before, given him of Christ, to act upon the souls of others. Every Christian ought to be able to confess truth, to confess Christ; yet this does not make one an evangelist, but so to state it as to act powerfully upon souls, specially of the unconverted, and thus awaken, clear, or establish in the grace of God. The spiritual action is by the Holy Spirit; but it is from God and His beloved Son, Christ our Lord, toward man. Thus, the gift, under the Lord's hand, is exercised in love of souls to seek their good, and implies or is rather power to act upon them.

Take again the gift of teaching. There you have another form of the power of God. Many understand the truth for their own soul's enjoyment, but they cannot help others: they are unable to put the truth so convincingly before believers or so to deal with the affections as to carry home the truth with power to the soul. Where that is done, there is this gift of teaching. But I have only referred to it for the purpose of contrasting the nature of priesthood with ministry, and to show that the confusion of the two things is a lamentable consequence of the state of the Church. If people go to hear a sermon, they say they go to worship. Men are so habituated to confound teaching with worship that the two things are supposed each to involve the other.

I admit there is such a thing as Christian priesthood: still ministry is wholly distinct. All Christians, without exception, men, women, and children, are priests; for the priest is one who has a divine call and qualification, which gives him access to the presence of God. Priesthood, in a word, gives the title of the soul to draw near to God. This is always its distinguishing character. On the other hand, ministry is a very special action for good; but it is only by particular members of the body that Christ thus acts for the good of all. Hence while priesthood is universal, and no person can be a Christian without being a priest, it is only a few among the many that are what Scripture calls ministers of the Word or public servants of Christ. I am not speaking of the vague sense in which all ought to be serving Christ every day of their lives; but the question now is of proper ministry in the Word; and it is plain that all have not the power to preach the Word of God profitably for the souls of others. The great mass of God's children require to have the path of God pointed out and difficulties removed, the right handling of which things depends upon; or rather is, ministry in one form or another.

Ministry, then, as said before, is from God to man; priesthood is from man to God. When we meet to worship God, it is an exercise not of ministry, but of priesthood. Perhaps one or more of the persons who take part in it might be ministers; but for the moment they are not ministering, but worshipping. Worship is the exercise of Christian priesthood, the offering up of praise and thanksgiving. This is from man towards God—it is the direction of priesthood. Hence where there is an outflow of praise and thanksgiving, you have the highest character of priesthood. Intercession and prayer are a lower form, though intercession be blessed indeed, because it takes up the wants of others. But strictly speaking, worship rather consists of praise and thanksgiving.

Hence it is that the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, forms so central a part of Christian worship. It is that which most powerfully, and in solemn joy, calls out our souls in the remembrance of Jesus and thanksgiving to God. And hence, though, of course, the taking the bread and wine cannot be regarded as in itself worship, yet it is that which acts upon the soul and draws out the heart, by the Holy Spirit, in the worship of God. Where the Lord's Supper is regarded as a means of grace, persons repair to it for comfort, or at least the hope of it. It is never so presented in the Word of God. On the contrary, if the communicants did not enter into the mind of God in the Supper (that is, did not discern the Lord's body), it became a means of judgment to them. “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” By this were meant not spurious Christians, but Christians ever so real, who were taking the Lord's Supper in a light spirit and without self-judgment. Where a soul, therefore, is walking in known sin, and comes to the table of the Lord, the effect is that the hand of the Lord is stretched out in one way or another, and it is impossible to escape when thus trifling with God. Again, if one put himself outside to avoid this, he is proclaiming his own sin, and practically excommunicating himself. Thus there is nothing for a soul but to go straight forward, and to look up to God for grace to watch against sin, yea, the least risings of it, and in self-judgment to lean on the Lord, who alone can strengthen us to walk worthily of Him. To such an one the word is, “So let him eat;” it is not, let him stay away; but let him judge himself and come.

These two things, then, worship and ministry, ought never to be jumbled together. There may be a word spoken at the table of the Lord, helping on communion; but this can scarcely be called the ordinary exercise of ministry. A regular discourse there would be, I conceive, most irregular: it would distract from the prime object which the Lord intends. There may be the unfolding of the affections of Christ, or in particular circumstances there might be even more, such as one visiting for a limited time, as when Paul continued his discourse till midnight. But the Lord's Supper, having no connection with ministry, but rather with the members of Christ remembering their Lord, and with their worship coming together to praise Him, it is plain that the formal exercise of ministry, properly speaking, finds its place elsewhere, not at the table of the Lord. A brief word that would awaken the soul's affections and gather them up to Christ whom we are remembering, is most comely and seasonable, if the Lord so give; but it is important to see the scriptural place, and order, and aim of the two things. In ministry you have the Lord providing for the spiritual supply of His people's wants. And on what is this founded? Upon the fact that Christ has gone on high as Head, having first put away sin and glorified God on earth; and from His present seat of heavenly glory He is communicating the needed gifts. By what title has Christ taken His place? Not as God, nor simply as man. Neither did Christ enter into the presence of God, because Satan had not been able to touch Him, when tempted in all points. There was a still more solemn scene—the great hour for which He came—the bearing of sin—the cross, where He made Himself chargeable with every failure—with my sins, with your sins. He has done so. Christ has only taken His place at the right hand of God on the ground of His having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Upon this basis ministry is founded. God's righteous judgment has been borne and vindicated; sin and Satan are completely vanquished for us by Christ. The testimony of divine grace, yea, the fullness of it, can be the portion of the believer now without hindrance. The victory for God in behalf of the guiltiest sinners is won. And Christ has taken His place in the highest seat of heaven as the victorious man. As such He has carried humanity to the throne of God, and is there, as man, set down far above all angels, principalities, and powers. From thence it is that He gives these gifts.

Christian ministry, therefore, owes its very origin to this—the full remission of sins on God's part and the heavenly glorification of man in Christ's person. They are fruits and witnesses of complete victory. Yet is it all and only made known to faith, save so far as miracles once were a sign to unbelievers. What is the consequence? Man goes on in sin. Satan still roams about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The judgment of God is hanging over the world. What, then, is the value of the death of Christ and of His victory? Immense, but immense only for those who believe in Christ; and, therefore, in the midst of this ruined world, and while sin and Satan are there, the judgment of God impending, there is this wonderful link between Him who is at the right hand of God and those who were once poor, lost sinners in the sight of God. He sends down gifts; He calls out this one and that one, and makes them to be the witnesses of His power, who has won all this and more, who has, in short, left nothing undone that is needed for the glory of God and the blessing of man. The world hears the sound only to slight the good news, and even the child of God sees it dimly if he reasons about it; but I believe what God tells me His beloved Son has done, I ought to know that all these things are gone as between my soul and God with as simple a certainty as if they had never existed at all. I ought to be as sure that sin is blotted out, as if I had been guilty of none—that Satan is as thoroughly judged as if he were in the lake of fire—that God's righteous judgment is completely stayed, and that nothing but His grace remains for me. It is true of all His children. It is the only thing that becomes a Christian, because it is what God provides for him. God does not own Christian people in their trouble or hesitation whether all is finished for them. To doubt that all which Christ undertook is settled in their favor, is practically to deny redemption; and if all this is done and accepted, what more can I want? Did not Christ know better than myself what was needed? Did not God feel what was due to His holiness more than you or I? And yet He who was and is God said, “It is finished.” Who or what am I to doubt it? To Christ therefore I owe it to bear this witness.

Ministry is founded upon Christ's work and exaltation. There were the twelve and the seventy sent out no doubt before Christ went up to the right hand of God, but their mission during the days of Christ's flesh is excluded from Ephesians 4. Apostles are mentioned of course, but not in virtue of their call while He was the Messiah on earth. On the contrary, “when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Not that those who had been appointed apostles when Christ was here below, were not also brought into this new place, Judas excepted; but that their being apostles of the church is founded upon their having this gift of Christ after He had ascended on high. Therefore it is here said, “He gave some apostles.” Why had there been twelve? In relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; and so, when our Lord sent them out, He forbade them to go into any city of the Gentiles. But the apostles of the church, are they sent only to the Jews? Every one knows that it is not so. After Christ was crucified, the links with Israel were broken. The rejected suffering Son of man ascends to heaven, and from His heavenly glory He sends down the Holy Spirit, and calls out from the world in sovereign grace, constitutes members of His body, and endows with power to serve Him in whatever way seems good to Himself.

Hence what is called succession, is completely disposed of. In Jewish priesthood there was successional order, and all earthly ministry forms itself on this model. But Christian ministry is not of human appointment, but divine in the fullest sense; and therefore the whole source of man's thoughts on the subject is a manifest and total fallacy. Are we to abandon the clear Word of God for the passing opinions of men If so, I shall never know any certainty at all. The dissenter will say

a church must call a man to be their minister. He may have and be a ministerial gift from Christ; but what makes a man to be their minister is their own call. Thus, it is founded on a particular church electing whom they please to be their particular minister. He is their choice and therefore their minister. But what if there be no such thing in Scripture ? What if such an idea be foreign to the Word of God? There is not even a hint of it to be found there. We have the appointment of men to take care of the funds and of the poor, and this with the concurrence of the assembly No person ought to undertake such a work unless he have the just feeling of satisfaction in the whole Christian assembly. The Church gives what she can and therefore is entitled by God to say who shall take care of their trust; that is, who shall transact the outward business of the Church. But in spiritual gifts, in teaching, preaching, exhorting, ruling, can the Church give? Clearly not. The Word of God contains nowhere such a notion as the Church choosing or appointing, except in such gifts as the Church can confer. The Church gives money and can appoint persons to administer it. The Church does not give ministerial gifts and has no title or room to interfere. Who has? It is Christ alone who gives, as we find here: “According to the measure of the gift of Christ.” “When He ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men: some apostles, some prophets.” This excludes even the true Church of God from any claim of power to appoint; and if it be examined, you will see how the scriptural history agrees with and confirms the principle. Who but the Lord chose Matthias? Who appointed Peter or the rest? Who addressed the multitude on the day of Pentecost? It could not be the Church, for the Church was only formed on that day. Peter preached, and by his preaching the Church was gathered. It was the Lord thus brought such as should be saved; so that ministry precedes the Church, as the atonement and ascension of Christ precede ministry. The Lord from on high calls the vessels of His grace, communicates power, leads forward by His Spirit's guidance, working by and controlling all circumstances, so that His servants shall be more or less faithfully doing His work. The consequence is, souls are gathered and the Church is formed. Thus ministry in the Word never flows from the Church, but from Christ, and the Church is the result. Ministry is therefore antecedent to the Church, instead of being founded on its authority. Hence it is that you have not only the dissenting principle of popular election entirely put aside, but every other human device. It was not the apostles, but Christ who gave gifts. And has He ceased to give them? Is He at the right hand of God still? Then, I ask, is He there as the Head of the Church? Does He not remain now as perfectly and efficaciously the Head of the Church as before the day of Pentecost? Then He was there, bringing the Church into being; and now He is there, to perpetuate the Church and supply all its need. It is as impossible, therefore, for ministry to fail as for Christ to leave the right hand of God before the body is complete. But He is there as the giver of all needful gifts; and the exercise of these gifts is what we call ministry.

But if we look further, there is a most magnificent parenthesis of the apostle on this subject. “Therefore He saith when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.” That is, He led those captive who had led the Church captive. We were led captive of the devil, and Christ going up on high passed triumphantly above the power of Satan. The fallen spirits were completely defeated, and by Christ as man. Man has conquered Satan in the person of Christ, and we can look up as those that are one with Him who has defeated Satan. We ought never to treat with Satan as if he had power against us. We are entitled always to bid a detected Satan depart from us. We may and should always resist him: and we are told that, if so, he will depart from us; not because we are strong, but because He to whom we belong has gotten Him

the victory by death and has given it to us. “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.” This supposes the glory of His person. He that is gone up is the One that first came down.

It is indeed the constant principle of God; He is always the first to come down. We require to be lifted up, and have nothing of our own to come down from. Christ, being God, was the only man who had glory proper to Himself and above all creaturehood. He descended first into the lower parts of the earth. His very humiliation is the proof of His own personal dignity. From His natural supremacy, so to speak, He descends first to do His work here below. “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.” Thus we have here a most magnificent sight of our Saviour. The Holy Spirit gives us in two short verses the grand sweep of His glory and triumph, who condescended to be a man and a servant. He that is gone up now is the same that first came down, and who only would go up again into glory when He had completely put away all that must have forever have kept us from Him. But He came down to put it away and would not return on high till it was done. He so loved us, with a love according to the glorious counsels of God, that our sins, gross and fatal as they were, only gave Him the opportunity to show what it is, and is to us, in His own person. And now it is a question of God's righteousness, not only to Him but to us, because of Him. What a difference! He might come down in love, but that of itself would not give us a place in the presence of God; but He is gone up in righteousness; and this is the reason why our Lord says that, when the Spirit was come, He should convince the world of righteousness, “because I go to the Father.” You have the full display of righteousness now in Christ seated at the right hand of God. Righteousness toward Him in this world was nowhere found, but the foulest wrong and indignity. Where must I look for it? At the right hand of God I see One there to whom God, with reverence be it spoken, is indebted for the display and vindication of His moral glory, to whom He owes the only adequate exhibition of all that which manifested and maintained His character before men, even in the man Christ Jesus. God never had His character at all fully retrieved since sin came into the world till Christ died on the cross. When His blood was shed for the glory of God and the deliverance of man, God shone out in a new light before this world. God was no longer regarded as the hard master that Satan's lie misrepresented Him to be. The veil was rent; the truth could no longer be hid that there was no proof of love the creature could have asked of God but what God had surpassed it in His Son, dead, risen, and glorified above. Up to the death of Christ, God's righteousness must have destroyed every creature that had a sin upon it. Now, on the contrary, it is the righteousness of God to justify me, a believer, though I have been a vile sinner; and for this reason, that, although my sins in the one scale must have sunk myself alone down to hell, yet there was, in the other scale, Christ and His blood, far outweighing all, and raising me up to heaven. What is the consequence? My sins are clean vanished before that precious blood, and the scale of Christ proves itself to be the only one that keeps its weight before God. Upon this now hangs the very righteousness of God. It is no longer a question of legal righteousness; but now He has Christ, and this is what God owes to Christ's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; by virtue of which God righteously clears the guilty, which, as dealing according to the law, He could by no means do. “By him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” What was known of God in creation contained no provision for sin; what was known of Him under the law would have only blasted the smallest hope of the sinner. Whereas now, the more I see what God is in Christ's cross, the more confidence and peace I have. “This is

life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou halt sent."

We see, then, in these verses, the heavenly source of ministry. It is not a position which according to God gives importance in the world. The laborer, we all know, is worthy of his hire. But do you not see, that the Apostle Paul would not use the title to support that the gospel gave him? He would not have what he calls his confident boasting made nothing of; for, though he had power, he preferred to work with his own hands rather than be burdensome. And this is the wonderful liberty of grace; under it there is nothing we cannot do, except sin. But though all things are lawful, they are not all expedient; and, no doubt, it was in the wisdom of God that the great apostle did what many servants of Christ would be ashamed to do. What a fearful declension there is from the whole spirit as well as letter of Christianity? How complete the change from the character of the gospel, that men, Protestants or Catholics, Churchmen or Dissenters, Presbyterians or Methodists, should alike consider as a blot and matter of censure that which was the boast of the apostle. There was a weighty principle involved in his conduct. He received a gift from the Philippians; help was sent to him in prison as well as out. He desired fruit that might abound to the account of the saints. If the apostle had not occasionally received from them, it would have been loss to their souls. Christianity does not mean that saints should use for themselves what they owe to God, and what grace loves to do for all and any one. But the apostle never acted either so that it could be said that he served himself by the gospel, or that he was indifferent to the saints: God took care that it should be so in Paul's case. The smaller gifts there would have been the danger of despising. But the gracious efforts of the apostle was to maintain the less; the greater less needed his ample shield. But where any gave themselves up to gospel service, the apostle takes the utmost care to affirm their title to live of the gospel. Let those who so live take care that in this they serve the Lord Christ.

"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." I apprehend that the apostles and prophets are clearly what might be called the foundation gifts, such as God used for the purpose of laying a broad and deep platform on which the Church was to be built. This was done by those whom God empowered in a special manner. The apostles and prophets were the two classes that first of all entered as instruments into the calling of the Church of God. Evangelists were at work from early days, also pastors soon after. But the first two, apostles and prophets, were peculiar in their full force to the original laying down of the Church of God. There is no ground to suppose that, in the strict sense, apostles and prophets were meant to continue, or do so in fact, though something analogous to an apostle may be raised up at fitting times. Take Luther, for instance. There was a partial recall of the saints of God generally to fundamental truth, which had been long lost sight of. This answers, in a little measure, to what an apostle did. A prophet, again, was one who not merely expounded the Scriptures, but who so brought home the truth as immediately to connect the soul with God.

At the very beginning, men of God appeared who were not apostles, nor necessarily inspired communicators of truth, such as Mark and Luke; but prophets, like Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). The Scriptures were not all written when the Church began, nor were the apostles everywhere. God, therefore, raised up prophets, who, in certain cases at least, were the means of revelation. And why is it that we have not such channels now? Because revelation is complete: we have the Word of God, and want no word more. To suppose another revelation now, would be to impair what we have; so that the need for these prophets in the highest sense is closed with the canon of

Scripture. In a subordinate sense, what would answer to the prophetic work in hand might be the revival of, and powerful action on, saints at large by recalling truths once revealed, but completely evaporated. Take, for instance, the capital truth of the coming of the Lord as the hope of the Church. This truth has suffered a long and almost total eclipse. Within our own day it has again shone out with a certain measure of power from God. In what writing, since the days of the apostles, do you find the nature and calling of the Church set forth? where the unfolding of the Church's hope—the Lord's coming to receive the Church and to give it a heavenly place? These truths had slipped away from the minds of men, until recovered within the last thirty or forty years. Justification by faith had been partially known by Augustine and Bernard. The Waldenses possessed great faithfulness but not clear doctrine. But the nature of the Church as the body of Christ, and the character of the Christian's hope, were most completely lost sight of, as far as I am aware. They had gone from the Church, and it seems to me that the recovery of these truths resembles prophetic work in this particular, though one might hesitate to call any used in the work either an apostle or a prophet, When we come to the next classes of gifts, namely, “evangelists, pastors, and teachers,” it is plain that we have these still at work, more or less in the present broken state; and not confined to these believers or those, but distributed throughout, as the Lord pleases. Men confound ministry with local charges. It may be said, that I have slurred over a part of scripture—the apostles laying their hands on the elders. With the most entire recollection of it, let me say that elders are not the same thing as ministers. Ministry is the exercise of a gift from Christ; elders were appointed by men, but never except by apostles or apostolic delegates, such as Titus was. How do we stand with reference to that question now? Where are the men who are duly authorized to appoint elders today? Do you know any better than I where they are to be found? Some people, no doubt, pretend to thy power of appointment; but the pretension does not make their appointment valid. In civil things, if one man were without full authority to appoint another to be a magistrate, he would run the risk of being punished severely. Is it possible that in the things of God interference with the authority of our Lord is of small moment? It is not, that some sections have apostles and some have not, for no one has them more than another. I do not see that much is gained by assuming to do the work of an apostle, where it is only assumption. Is it not more humble not to pretend to apostolic work, if we are not apostles? We cannot legitimately ordain elders, because we want for it apostolic authority. Is it not most in accordance with the lowliness that becomes us, to abide within the limits of our powers? I do not admit that any one living is entitled to choose elders, or anything else of the sort, because there is neither an apostle nor an apostolic man commissioned by the Lord for the purpose: if any assume to ordain, they should prove their title.

But ministry and eldership are not the same thing—they are almost always confounded, but they differ totally. These two things are found in Scripture: local charges, duly ordained by apostles or their delegates; and ministerial gifts, which never required human authentication. In Scripture, no person was ever chosen to be an apostle, nor called to be a prophet or an evangelist, except by Christ. It was precisely the same with pastors and teachers, as we see in our chapter; and why should it not be the same still? Christ has not vacated His office; and it is His office to call and give pastors, evangelists and teachers. But there is another principle quite distinct from that involved in these gifts, namely, that Christ warranted the apostles to act in the way of authority. In virtue of this, they appointed persons to be elders or deacons, as the case might be. We cannot do what apostles did unless we are clothed with like authority; but we have Christ ever abiding the

immediate giver of ministerial gifts: this is always true. Ministry does not and never did depend upon apostles or the Church, but upon Christ; and therefore it cannot lapse. But as the appointment of elders, according to Scripture, hung upon the apostles, and as there are no apostles now, the rightful power to appoint elders is necessarily and evidently at an end. Scripture may intimate the continuance of gift, but not of authority to ordain. Elders, or rather officials, of the various religious bodies abound; but what is their appointment (I do not say their gifts) worth? Let any one that knows the Bible say whether I am treating fairly this weighty matter according to the Word of God.

The question, then, for us now is, Are we carrying out the will of God? Many have a notion that there is some special value in a human rite of ordination in making a man a minister. But in the days of the apostles themselves, no one ever thought of being appointed to preach the gospel. If a person could preach, he was bound to do it; if he did not, he was like the slothful servant, hiding his talent. If a man took the ground of having a right to preach or to speak in the assembly, you may safely deny his right. None but God has a right to proclaim glad tidings to the world, or to speak to His assembly by whom He will. He, therefore, may call men and put them forward, one to do this work and another to do that work. And here comes in the searching question, Is the Lord to be acknowledged honestly and thoroughly as the Head over His own Church? In ministry, properly so styled, it is not a question of men appointing men, but whether Christ is allowed to be the Head of His own Church. Do not, then, acknowledge that it is the Church's business to appoint ministers in the Word. The Church is not my Lord, but Christ; and we ought never to put the Church in the place of Christ. This has been one of the main and most mischievous sources of Popery.

It follows that we ought to acknowledge all that the Lord appoints. If a man preaches the truth in this or that body, I am not to ignore, but own the servants of Christ everywhere. They may not thoroughly carry out the truth; but in all cases it is not the brethren, but Christ that gives gifts. But does it follow that I am to go to mass, even if a Romish priest preaches a measure of truth? I must examine whether he who may be ever so real a servant of Christ, is doing the will of God in the matter. We are not called to follow this or that one, except so far as they follow Christ. We are called on to do the will of God; and “he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” Nothing therefore can be more simple than the path of the Christian. Let him value the servants of Christ in their place, but not necessarily all that they are doing, unless it be according to the will of God. But is it not said that we are to obey them who have the rule over us? Yes, and it is as true now as ever it was. But supposing you are converted to God, and there is a priest of Rome who says that you must obey those that have the rule over you, and they have this rule, am I not to question what he means and what he is using the text for? Is it to induce me to disobey God? If so, am I not to say, I “must obey God rather than man?” Thus there is always a path for the saint of God who desires to do His will, and that path is simply obedience. It may sometimes take the form of what mistaken or self-willed men might call disobedience; but certainly it will be the obeying of God rather than man. Nothing can absolve us from the positive, invariable duty of obeying God.

This will show that whatever may be the value of ministry, it was never intended to bind down the children of God, and to make it a question of mere blind acquiescence. Ministry, where it is true, manifests what is the will of God wherein there is a simple mind. Ministry puts the truth in so convincing a way as to bring the conscience into the light and feel its responsibility to follow that light. If you do a thing merely because a minister of God says it, influence is at work and not the

power of the Spirit of God. Christian obedience is neither the blind leading the blind, nor the seeing leading the blind; but the seeing leading the seeing. Every believer has power in the Spirit to see the mind of God for himself; and he who is called of God to the place of leading others will, as a general rule, be enabled to bring the mind of God so completely to bear upon the conscience that the simple hearted cannot but see it. But let us remember that it is serious for anyone to acknowledge the truth and not to follow it. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

Chapter 34

Remarks on Ephesians 4:11-13

I HAVE already explained that the first two of these classes of gifts brought before us in verse 11, had for their aim the originating of a new work and testimony. They were destined for, and employed in, laying a foundation for that previously unknown building, the assembly gathered in one out of Jews and Gentiles in the confession of Jesus, the Son of God. The apostles were used not merely like the prophets as the inspired communicators of the mind of God which had not been before revealed, but also as invested with authority in the Lord's name. Hence there was a competent governing power, as well as a sure medium of communication from God to man. The prophets as such had nothing to do with government, properly so called. They did not visit as authoritative agents (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 12:3), nor did they lay down institutions here and there for regulating the church as the apostles did. (See 1 Cor. 7:17.)

Nevertheless, the prophet was used in what was of the deepest importance, in bringing out directly and immediately from God truth that had never till then been known or even disclosed. They were, consequently, connected very specially with the revelation of truth, it might be by word of mouth or by writings; and this is the meaning of Romans 16:26. Anyone who is able to examine the language which the Holy Spirit employed, will see that the expression is not strictly “the writings of the prophets,” but prophetic writings. These refer exclusively to the New Testament Scriptures, which were not all of them written by apostles. Two of the gospels were not apostolic, but they are just as much inspired as if they were. This is as true also of the oral instruction that was given in the apostolic days. For the Church began before any part of the New Testament was written. The misuse of this fact is a favorite argument of those who contend for a sort of inspiration in the Church. They insist that the Scriptures are not so essential as we allege. But I answer, that if the Church at first had the presence of inspired men, the Church afterward had the holy deposit of the apostles and prophets committed to writing, under the perfect guard of the Spirit of God. Here, then, we have the only standard of divine truth: the Old Testament being the original revelation of God as given to Israel—the New Testament being that supplement of His truth, which is necessary to the Church. But before the canon of Scripture was closed or even begun, it is evident there was needed a class of men who should bring out the mind of God in the rising difficulties of the Church. This was supplied in the apostles and prophets. It appears that, among the saints at Corinth, there were such persons as prophets.

Hence we have a remarkable word in 1 Corinthians 14, that I would advert to for a moment. The Spirit of God laid down there as a rule (vs. 29) that in case any one were speaking in an ordinary way in the assembly, if a revelation were given to another, the latter was entitled to stop the former, and to bring in the revelation. Persons may reply, Supposing you had such a thing now, there would be confusion. But I answer, God is no longer now giving new revelations. While you had the state of things in which the full unfolding of the mind of God was not given, and while there were these inspired persons on the earth, God maintained His right, even to interrupt a person by a communication of some fresh truth from Himself. But now, if any person were to plead a fresh revelation from God, he would only prove himself deluded if not an impostor. We have the full

communication and standard of God's mind, now that these inspired persons have passed away. Thus the Church is cast, not upon apostles and prophets, but upon the written word of God as a criterion. Of course, there are the more ordinary means that the Spirit of God used then and still uses—gifts just as truly as apostles and prophets, but not of the same authoritative character in action as apostles, nor having the title to communicate new revelations like the prophets. Now everything is subordinate as compared with these. Whatever measure of authority there may be at present must prove itself to be from God in its character, and end; and it must not pretend to be some fresh revelation of the divine mind, but the right use or application of what has already been given.

On the other hand, the gifts which the Holy Spirit still raises up for the good of the Church, are here called evangelists, and pastors, and teachers. These are not the only gifts that abide, for scripture in no single passage gives, as men would like, a complete list of them. We must search all Scripture. And a wholesome, blessed thing it is for us, that we never can find anything complete from the word of God, by merely examining some particular part of it. God necessitates our searching His word through and through, in order to get at His mind with any measure of fullness. Were it not so, we should be disposed to make favorites of certain portions, and to leave the rest alone. This is the reason why many Christians practically neglect a large part of the Word of God as if it no longer applied. On this very subject of ministry there is a great deal of ignorance and infidelity at the present moment. The idea is that you have merely sanctified intellect. Now, I admit, God gives and forms intellectual power. That is what is called in Scripture “the ability.” But examine our Lord's parable where He alludes to this very thing, and you will find that He distinguishes between “the gift” and “the ability” — “He gave to every man according to his several ability.” God in calling men to serve Him, even before they are converted, fashions the vessel for His purposes. His providence singles out a person from his very birth, and He orders all the circumstances of his after life. Perhaps he is educated as a priest, or as a lawyer. Thus Paul so thoroughly knew all the resources of self-righteousness that he could fall back upon grace, and judge what it is that man's righteousness loves, lives in, and leads to. His own experience proved that even when cultivated to the highest degree, it issues in direct antagonism to the Lord of glory, Still you have in Paul a most remarkable natural character, as well as no ordinary training and acquirements. All this was providentially ordered in Saul of Tarsus; but besides, when called by the grace of God, a gift was put into him that he did not possess before, a capacity by the Holy Spirit of laying hold of the truth, and of enforcing it on people's souls. God wrought through his natural character, and his manner of utterance, and particular style of writing; but everything, though flowing through his natural ability, in this new power of the Holy Spirit communicated to his soul. Thus there are these two things, the ability which is the vessel of the gift, and the gift itself, which is, under the Lord, the directing energy of the ability. There is no such thing as gift apart from the vessel in which the gift acts.

But now let me make another remark. In this epistle the gifts are not regarded as merely spiritual powers. They are regarded as such in Romans and Corinthians, but in Ephesians they are always persons. He gave apostles—not merely the apostolic gifts. I find the gift of teaching in Romans and the gift of a teacher in Ephesians. The two truths are perfectly harmonious. There is a divine reason for the difference, which seems to be this. In Ephesians the love of Christ to the Church is the keynote to the whole epistle—it is the fullness of blessing which Christ's body, the Church, has

by virtue of union with the Head. What acts upon the affections of the Church is not a mere power. You can love, not a power, but a person; and a person through whom the gift flows evidently acts upon the affections of those for whose good it is used. All through the epistle it is Christ, and not (save exceptionally) the Spirit. In Corinthians the Holy Spirit is made prominent. Here it is Christ and in accordance with this, you have these persons who act from Christ for the good of His body. In this is a beautiful instance of the harmony of the truth of God. The active love of Christ is represented in this epistle, as the spring of all the blessing of the Church; and so with the personal gifts of Christ, whom He Himself loves, and uses to keep up His own love in others.

The difference between the evangelists and the pastors and teachers is obvious. The evangelist is the ordinary means of gathering souls to Christ. It may be said as a gift to be wandering in its own nature; not confined to one spot, but called to be here and there wherever the Lord by the Spirit might lead him out for the need of souls. Timothy, who has been by clerical sleight of hand metamorphosed into an archbishop, is called in scripture an “evangelist.” He was marked out by prophecy to a particular work, and a certain gift was communicated to him through the apostle accompanied by presbyters. He goes at the apostle's command to a certain place, and there he takes a cognizance of things. But neither he nor Titus were stationary, like a modern diocesan. Still less was there a provision made for successors. Timothy was to commit what he had heard from the apostle to faithful men who should be able to teach others also: that is, the charge concerns the conveyance of truth, not of authority or holy orders, as men perversely say.

The fact is, that a plurality of bishops were appointed in every Church where there was a certain number of saints gathered together—at least, after a certain time of testing and experience. They were chosen there by an apostle, or one commissioned by the apostles. As it is usurpation for gifted individuals to discharge the functions of the Church, so it is equally usurpation for the Church to assume the functions of the individual gifts. Of course, if there were anything immoral in the conduct of a servant of Christ, he is as much responsible as any other, and more so. The children of God and himself are bound to watch with holy jealousy, because his sin would bring a greater shame and scandal upon the name of Christ than a less conspicuous member of the body. But, except in matters of a moral character in the exercise of his ministry, there ought not to be the slightest interference between him and the Master who has called him to serve Him. Herein dissent is thoroughly and radically unsound, because the Church is supposed to appoint a minister, and, of course, has the power to discharge him if they like. This makes the minister to be the minister of their church, but Scripture never speaks, as all now do, of the minister of a particular church. There is no such thing as “our” and “your” minister. What Scripture shows us is, that all gifts are gifts in the unity of the body of Christ. If a man is a pastor or teacher at all, he is set as pastor or teacher in the whole Church. As far as this goes, it matters not where he may be; wherever he goes he has a call, if walking scripturally, not from a congregation but from Christ, to exercise his ministry fearlessly, of course humbly, and not pretending to more than he has got. For a person setting up for more generally destroys credit even for what he possesses; and, in general, the tendency of the children of God is not to discredit ministry, but to give an undue place to it. But Satan, who is always working to dislocate the means of helping the body on, stirs up the saints to give credit where they ought not, to be captious and to discredit where they ought to be thankful. All these things require to be regulated by the Word. The thoughts of men in general are founded upon the Old Testament and not upon the New: hence the notion of ministry being a kind

of honorable profession, or something known as a title in the world. But if we examine such a portion as this, or all others in the epistles, it will soon appear that there never was such a thing recognized in the world as an apostle, &c. They were despised by the world. Peter was not more honored in his day in the world after he became an apostle than he was before. The world might recognize that he wrought miracles, which is another thing altogether. Many fleshly men wrought great miracles. In Corinth they were mere babes in understanding, because they were so taken up with miracles and the display of external gifts. They liked, too, to hear themselves talk; and the apostle shows that to bring out even a few words for the good of the Church, was far higher and better than any signs and wonders they performed. He could work more miracles than they all, yet he says he would rather speak five words with his understanding “that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” Thus, if the Church is shorn of the miraculous powers which strike the eye of the unbeliever, what is even more important abides, save the fundamental gifts, which did not require to be continued.

The foundation was so perfectly laid that apostles and prophets were not needed. This is intimated here. The Spirit of God does not prepare the saints for the long continuance of things in this world. Christ gave “some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the works of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The believers in those days could not have known but that the whole work of the Church was to be completed in that very generation: there is no such an idea as a succession taught here, though now we may see it is implied. Ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift; and these gifts depend upon Christ always abiding the Head of the Church, never terminating His office as a high priest might, whose office would devolve upon some successor by reason of death. But Christ is in heaven after resurrection, and these apostles are what He gave when He ascended on high. We stand so far on the same ground now as they did upon the day of Pentecost. Christ had left the world then, and it was thence that He gave these gifts here described. The Holy Spirit abides in the Church, and by the Holy Spirit He empowers men on earth for whatever the Church may need. We have evangelists, the great agents the Lord uses for recruiting His spiritual army. Then we have pastors and teachers whom the Lord raises up and gives for the purpose of leading on and guiding and ruling those saints of God who are brought in. All these gifts abide as much as ever. I am not speaking of measure of power, for things are weak indeed; but inasmuch as they depend upon Christ above and the Holy Spirit below, and as Christ never can cease to be Head there and the Holy Spirit does not leave the Church here, these gifts necessarily abide also. So it is added, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith.” There is no divine warrant for the continuance of miracles, but it is implied for the continuance of these edification—gifts for the good of souls.

Our Lord, then, gave these gifts “till we all come.” It does not say He will give them, because the early Church was set in the posture of expecting the Lord Jesus Christ again. Paul and the other apostles directed the saints to be always looking out for Christ. There was no intimation that Christ might come, but they were to expect Him constantly. Hence there is no such thing in connection with ministry as preparing for a long lapse of ages. But Christ is at the right hand of God, supplying what is necessary. “He gave some till we all come in the unity of the faith.” If Christ had come in the apostolic generation, this would have been true. Christ has delayed; but it abides true, “till we

all come.” So that, with the exceptions already stated, we are warranted to expect a perpetuation of ministry of the same character and flowing from the same source as the apostolic Church had. Whatever is necessary for the gathering in of souls, and caring for them when gathered, abides till Christ comes and completes all.

What a blessed thing it is to know that we can accept from God that ministry, which in man's hand has been so proud or servile or both—that we can look for it from Him and recognize it as a divine thing— that we are not driven to the notion that we have only a human ministry now instead of a divine, as of old, but that we have the certainty that these gifts flow from Christ, who cannot fail in His word and work! But how are we to know a minister, an evangelist, a pastor, a teacher? I ask, How do you know a Christian? Every Christian, who is conversant with Christians, has a general idea. I do not say there is any infallible discernment of it. But although nobody can pronounce unfailingly, and we are necessarily dependent for our measure upon God's present help, still we know as a general rule there is that in a Christian which commends itself to his brethren in general. There is that in his confession of Christ which harmonizes with the Word of God more or less. The spirit, the tone, the general life and ways, after they have been a little inured to the trials of the way, may either strengthen or weaken the conviction. It is just so as to judging of ministry. And we are bound to prove all things. A person is used of God to move souls powerfully and with blessing; to gather them in and bring them to Christ. There is an evangelist clearly. On the other hand, you may see one whose heart does not go out so much in putting the gospel before souls, but who enjoys and loves to make enjoy the truth of God, and to develop the character of God. Is not he a teacher? Others may know the truth of God as well, but they cannot bring it out so as to act thus upon others. But if a third person attempts to deal practically with souls and yet habitually makes grave mistakes, can I say, There is a pastor? When there are difficulties, he is at his wits' end, knowing not what to do nor advise. He may be able to explain the Bible, but when it is a question of applying it to the practical life of Christians, there are endless blunders. Again, a pastor supposes not only knowledge of the truth, but the power to urge it day by day on individuals: it involves a dealing with conscience and affection in a way that a teacher does not necessarily imply. A man might be a teacher without being a pastor (and vice versa), or he might be both. An apostle might be a teacher and an evangelist and pastor too. You will find a particular gift in one man and another of a totally different kind in another. Again, there may be a person who cannot bring out truth powerfully, but he can exhort; he can deal with the conscience. This is an invaluable gift not alluded to here; but in Romans 12 we find it. Here are the more prominent gifts for adjusting the saints in their proper order and functions. But while I believe the indwelling Spirit of God is the only power of discerning with the measure of certainly that God pleases, whether a person is a Christian or not, and whether he has a gift or not, of course the degree of discernment depends upon our hearts being above the flesh and its activity. It demands spirituality, and this supposes self-judgment. The whole Church is responsible to judge. An evangelist might make a mistake, thinking a person to be truly converted, and he might baptize him. But something comes out which leads the Church to refuse him. Supposing a person confessing the name of Christ and baptized seeks fellowship, the assembly of God in that place are bound to examine. No one has a right to come: who has rights now but God? We are to be under obedience instead of talking about rights. The Church then examines, and if there be a general fellowship or such a measure of satisfaction as would lead them to say, We believe that this person has received Christ, we should not be justified in refusing his profession to be a member of Christ, the person is then received into

the assembly, and then comes the trial— dependence upon God after one is received. Christ is absolutely necessary for a right walk. Those even that are born of God will not be kept unless they walk in real lowliness and looking up to God.

The Spirit of God works in the assembly. One man manifests ability to preach; another to teach; some to serve the Lord in private, and others in public. What is the power for judging of these? The same Spirit of God. And after all, it is a simpler question than many imagine. Just as a human being knows the food that is good for it, whether it be a babe or a man; so it is inseparable from the saints that they should know in the main what is for their spiritual blessing. If persons are low and fleshly they will be taken with showy trash; but you will find in the main a right and sound judgment from the most matured spiritual judgment down to the mere babe. Although all are not able to point out the right thing, all who are guided of God in any measure are able to find out the value of what is ministered. And as to heresy. How can the assembly judge of false doctrine? Christ is the standard. Whatever scripturally exalts Christ is true; whatever lowers Christ is false, and of the devil. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. But God works by means, and if there is a false teacher who brings in what is evil; there are true teachers who are able to discern it; and though he may try to wrap it up in pleasing forms, yet the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Church works against Satan, and by different members He unveils and brings out the true character of the evil thing before the assembly of God, and all are able, who are walking with God, to pronounce a divine judgment upon it when once it is exposed. If we had to make a railway we should not know how to begin the work; but when the railway is made, we can tell perfectly well the use and value of it, and can judge well enough for practice whether it is a good one or not. So with the Church of God. Though all may not equally discern and expose what is evil, God gives some who can, and afterward all readily form a judgment upon it. These gifts are indispensable to the Church as a whole, though I do not say that wherever there is an assembly of God, it is absolutely necessary for, their walking together that there should be such or such persons raised up in their midst. But we can bless God for this provision for the wants of His Church, as long as He has a Church here below. The existence of the Church and of ministry rests on the same ground; they both flow from Christ's love, and as long as we have the one, we shall have the other; it is the same love of Christ that sees His body and that supplies certain members with the requisite spiritual power for the well-being of that body. All men of God, no matter where they are, acknowledge that God must have to do with ministry, and therefore the dissenter, when he puts his vote into the urn, does not deny that the Holy Spirit must capacitate a man to be a minister. If he was a minister before, he is, of course, a minister after; but they say we want to make him our minister. Would it not be better to drop this unscriptural form and own him as a minister of Christ always? You thus leave him on his own proper ground as one who is bound to serve God at all cost and in all ways.

I admit that we find in the Word of God bishops and deacons; but they are not referred to here. It is not said that He gave some bishops and deacons. But I maintain from the Scriptures that these bishops and deacons required an apostolic or quasi-apostolic appointment. Is it not becoming for us now to say that, not being apostles, we do not pretend to exercise their functions in ordaining, though we do heartily recognize men possessed of the requisite qualifications for these local offices wherever we find them.

But the prevalent system not only assumes an authority which is not really possessed, but it introduces the utmost disorder and the most guilty confusion, if we judge it by Scripture, or even by its practical results; and this too in every human association—Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Congregational. For what can be more fatal to blessing or the Lord's glory than to see an ardent evangelist tied down to a limited sphere and vainly essaying to meet the wants of a body of Christians who need to be built up in Christ to know that a mature teacher, just adjoining, is compelled to abandon his proper gift, because his congregation consists almost exclusively of the unconverted? What can be more painfully calculated to hinder the Spirit of God than this network of canons, ecclesiastical etiquette, which degrades ministry into the bondage of man, and disposes of souls as if they were the serfs of the soil on which they live?

On the other hand, where Scripture ground is taken with conscience toward God, things may be weak, still there is room for the Holy Spirit to enter and work by whom He will. The enemy, no doubt, has his special wiles for distracting, and, if possible, perverting those who are there; nor do any need more watchfulness and prayer, not to say humiliation. But thank God it is the arena of faith; it honors the Word of God; it gives the Spirit His proper place; and it recognizes the Lordship of Christ, welcoming each member of the body where the Head has set it; and because of this, if men plead that there must be order, I ask of what sort it is to be. Is it an order of our devising or God's that you really wish? If we are subject to Scripture, we shall allow no claim, howsoever specious, to set aside the only order which God sanctions for His children now on earth, that is, His assembly, guided by the Holy Spirit, present in their midst to maintain the glory of Christ and to work sovereignly by whom He will, though, of course, only for edification and with the comeliness that befits the presence of God. Disorders there may be through want of spirituality, and this on the part of gifted men as well as the ungifted. But, assuredly, Scripture is a safer and mightier rule to correct all disorders by, than the wisest regulations of men, though nothing will avail without present dependence on the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul, however, whilst meeting fleshly abuses, supposes the fullest opening for every gift of the Lord within the Christian assembly, subject only to His own express restrictions. (See 1 Cor. 14) If this was God's order then, when did it cease? Or has the Church of God no longer divine landmarks for its public services? I cannot envy those who, abandoning God's system for one of their own adoption or invention, do not scruple nevertheless to cite scraps here and there, such as verses 33 and 40, to support human arrangements directly opposed to both letter and spirit of the inspired Word from which they are so abruptly taken. What God has laid down for the Church's worship and service, is and ought to be as obligatory on the conscience as that which He has written for our individual walk and conversation. In a certain sense, indeed, it seems to me that public corporate disobedience is even more insulting to God than any individual's failure, grave as this may be. And what is the present state of Christendom people, with the world mixed up together, have departed from the word of God. I do not speak of them as men or of moral duties; but the Spirit of God is not allowed His own proper place in the assembly, or even in its members individually. His power is not owned as a divine person come down not merely to convert sinners, but to be the guide of the Christian assembly. How is it everywhere with the meetings of the Church (nay, does it meet at all as such?) and with the exercise of the gifts of Christ in the assembly of God, separate from the world? When Christians ordinarily come together, is there not an unscriptural method set up, one thing here and another there, instead of leaving God's

assembly in holy subjection to the Holy Spirit, and trusting Him to work freely, and fully, and mightily by the members as He will, for the good of the whole? Is not the revealed word of God, as to His assembly, like all other truth, eternal for the Church's conduct here below? I maintain that it is; and believe those who dispute its constant authority and their own present responsibility, will have a serious question to answer before the judgment-seat of Christ; whilst such as stand by the will of God in His word, will surely have His blessing now and His approbation in that great day.

But to come out from what is ostensibly evil is not all. Separation from our associations ought to be a pain to us, and should never be done except as believing it to be the clear will of God. And though one ought not to refuse the weakest Christians that come from elsewhere, yet I do not think that a person ought to be quick to receive what is new to them, unless they believe that it is assuredly of God. If they only come because of some happy circumstances, it will not stand: if they say, “There is so much love, truth, union and simplicity among these Christians that we must go there,” by and by some trial comes, and then they are ready to say, “There is no love at all among them—how changed they all are!” These spiritual effects may act upon the affections and win attention; but they are not an adequate ground-work for the Christian in presence of the revealed will of God. Nay, supposing you could assemble a company of happy believers, all of the same mind as to the Spirit, and the Church, and the Lord's coming, beside fundamental truth, I would not belong to it, if adhesion to their mind were a condition. It wants and ignores the divine foundation. Be it mine to cleave only to the name of the Lord Jesus, the sole and sufficient gathering-point for the entire Church of God; and this if those who gather to it are ever so few and feeble and whatever the cost. Perhaps my dearest friend may get astray or I may myself. Of course it is painful and humiliating for one to be judged by others, because of failing to judge self. But I dare not stay away because I know the will of God is against it. We are not free to make of the Church a religious club to suit ourselves. It is God's to choose and to call as it pleases Him for the glory of His Son; it is ours to obey from our hearts. In the present broken state of Christianity we have learned that God's principles always bind the consciences, and we have come together to be where His word is free to be carried out by the Holy Spirit. If some one amongst us falls into sin, our adversaries cry, See! they are no more perfect than their neighbors. But whoever talked of personal superiority? We arrogate nothing to ourselves, only desiring to be led of God to walk individually and collectively, as He would have us to do.

Are you willing to be like the people who gathered round David in the cave of Adullam? Though they were distressed and miserable when they came, they did not continue so. He who attracted them to himself was the center of God's counsels, and God wrought in them and formed their hearts, and put honor upon them, and the day came when those despised ones became the heroes and champions of the Lord's cause when everything was broken in Israel. May it be our lot to serve Him faithfully! I believe that we are ecclesiastically where we ought to be—where the Spirit is free to open and wield, and apply that truth which is calculated to separate us in heart and practice to God and His objects from the world. It is now our own fault only when we do not get on, If all that hindered us once when bound up with the systematic dishonor of the Holy Spirit is removed, may we feel deeply our personal failure! Our principle is not mere human rivalry but divine, because it is neither more nor less than carrying out the Word of God as to His Church in faith, and this as He vouchsafes light and power. If any others could show us wherein we could do His will more perfectly, should we not greatly thank them, and bless God for the help? May we

hold fast truth in subjection to His Spirit, desiring the good of all believers, let them be where they may, and not anxious to bring them out or in, one moment sooner than God gives them to know His mind! I do not acknowledge that any human society, great or small, has the least right to a single child of God. It is only a question of His will. To obey His Word, to urge it upon others, is neither presumptuous nor uncharitable, but faith in God. May we abound in it with thanksgiving!

Chapter 35

Faith, Hope, and Charity for an Evil Day

(Jude 20-25.)

There is no epistle perhaps more solemn than this of Jude in its denunciation of the tide of corruption which the Holy Ghost saw was about to overwhelm Christendom. There is none that puts more strikingly, though in few words, its salient religious features, the dishonor done to God by it, and its sure doom at the corning of our Lord. But it is remarkable that even where the Holy Ghost launches out into so painful though necessary a theme, He could not do so without, first of all, opening the epistle with a very sweet and simple declaration of our blessing in Christ, and closing it with a peculiarly triumphant one. Thus, you see, nothing can be more false than the notion that, because evil abounds, therefore love, or holiness, or faith, or desire for the glory of God, are to grow one whit colder or feebler. It may be so. It is the natural tendency, but it has not the warrant of the Spirit of God. And, on the contrary, I am sure that this very Scripture shows that the Holy Ghost would have the children of God animated to even greater earnestness, because of the sense of the evil that surrounded them. And striking it is, too, that if there is one passage which more than any other insists upon what is due to God by His saints at such a time, it is the Epistle of Jude. Where else is the faith called “our most holy faith?” Peter, in one of his epistles which describes mockers, &c., speaks, “Them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” It was not a thing that could be despised; only unbelief and enmity to God could so treat it. But where there was danger of giving way to evil, and thinking that things were in such a state that they could not be helped or hindered; so far from that, after the Holy Ghost has portrayed all the features of the evil things done in the name of Christ— “ye, beloved,” He says, instead of giving way to these evils and dangers— “ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” That is, He encourages the saints in the conviction that there is not a single thing that is bound up with the moral glory of God and the blessing of His people which we have not still, just as surely as ever. And the truth is, that times of great outward blessing are not the most searching and sifting for the state of the saints. It is easy to be a prophet among prophets—easy to be happy among people that overflow with blessing—easy to speak about Christ among those who love Him: but it is when the difficulties come in, when the trial, the loss, the temptations and seductions of Satan, increase—then is the time for testing whether the heart prefers Christ to everything else.

A sweet thing that we get here is, how persons can be happy in a state of evil around them. There is no reason why we should not be thoroughly happy in the Lord, spite of abounding evil. I do not mean that there is not sorrow too: and assuredly that sorrow will be more felt the more happy a soul is; but there are no circumstances that can exist in the state of Christendom where the saints may not build themselves up on their most holy faith. “Ye, beloved,” is language which supposes that there is community of feeling and affection and desire; no doubt of sorrow and confession also: but they are not disheartened; they do not say, like some of old, “There is no hope; we are delivered to do all these abominations:” but there is a looking straight up out of the church to God and to His Son; and the consequence is, all is bright there. On the contrary, when great grace was

upon all, there was a danger of their looking down upon all, and being occupied with the fruits of grace in themselves. It is always so in a time of great outward blessing; and therefore it is not then we see the most real fruits of faith and separation to God. The depth of power, if I may so say, is lost in the breadth and extent of it; but the Holy Ghost's mercy comes out in a season of difficulty. This is exceedingly cheering. For when things do not go on as we desire, you will find where faith is feeble that there is apt to be a complaining and murmuring spirit, &c. Such things ought not to be. When evil is increasing, these sounds of discontent will never help a soul out of its low estate: for instead of dwelling upon it, and murmuring about it, and perhaps even reflecting upon God and upon His children, there would be the spreading of it out before God, and the seeking out of those that are gone astray. Were this the case, I am sure that the blessing and power of God would be there in a way we have little conception of. There we all fail. But, then, what is the failing of all to a certain extent, may be the fault of some in a very high degree; and therefore it is important that we should watch against this snare—that we should compare our spirit with that which the Holy Ghost urges upon the saints. He turns, after all has come out—and let us remember that He feels evil according to the full character of divine holiness—yet He calmly turns and says, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” I want you to know these things, but not to be cast down and despairing because of the sense of all the evil, but to look up. Is your faith less holy? Are you to relax, and say, We must lower our standard. On the contrary, I believe that instead of declension being the time for being less careful, it is rather one for greater diligence and more careful watching, lest they should be anything profane, anything unholy, or any root of bitterness springing up. “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost.” He was not gone: He was still their power of looking up to God in intercession and prayer. “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” There was God, not only in His special affection towards His people, but in the activity of love that goes out to others, and this for the purpose of strengthening the saints of God in His love towards others; not only in their loving God, but in God's loving them, and others too. For here it seems to be, in the largest sense, the love of God. Of course it means God's loving us; but it includes also the blessed fact that no matter what the state of evil may be, as long as the Lord leaves His Church here, there is room for this energy of love to others. “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” That is, He looks at the accomplishment of the whole thing in glory: when, through the mercy of God, eternal life will have its crown. It is not merely the hope, but it is mercy. Even in connection with His coming again in glory, it is all mercy; and I am entitled to look upon it as mercy, even in such a state of things.

If this, then, be so, I can understand that He should now instruct us how to deal with cases of evil around us. “Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” Some might say, There is partiality. That is never right; yet God calls upon us to make a difference: but we must take care that we do not make differences in order to please ourselves, but because we believe that God would have us do it. Nothing more calls for an exercised conscience than this. Saints very often have a common routine, a rule for dealing with everybody: but this is not God's way. There are numbers of circumstances, principles, states of soul, that have to be weighed and acted upon in the various cases that come before the saints of God. There may be hardly two persons that would have to be dealt with alike; and there is the blessedness and importance of having the word of God for our guide, and not a mere rule which must be always acted upon exactly alike. We have not got a human canon, but a divine word; and one that establishes the very thing that the flesh does not like. Of course it would be easier to have

one routine; it saves trouble: but it is not of the Spirit of God, who exercises the people of God in every case, whether of recognizing Christians, or owning the work of God. There may be some cases where the work of God is most evident—others where it is not so. Nothing could be more foolish than to put it on the same ground. Again, if it is a question of evil, we ought to make a difference. There may be two cases that seem very much the same; but examine them closely, and you will find all the difference in the world between them. That is the true way of looking at all these matters; not as a mere question of habit, or of our way of doing things; but how do the word of God and the principles of God's own mind bear upon these different things? All this requires spirituality and waiting upon God. This is the truth of the matter. Nothing is more easy than to get into a certain settled plan—very rigid in one way, or lax in the other: whereas the Lord would never have us to be either; but to have an exercised soul, and a conscience informed by the word of God, looking at each case according to its own peculiar features and circumstances. “Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” It is remarkable that in both cases it is the activity of divine love seeking the deliverance of that which had got into evil. The Holy Ghost is not telling us here how to deal with a case where there is no hope, but where there is less or more evil. He supposes that these saints were building themselves up on their most holy faith, and that this was not all they were doing. They are thinking of those who are in an evil state, who have gone back; and this is their object—to have them with God, and so thoroughly right. This is not always the case with our souls. Supposing you take a person who perhaps has dishonored the Lord: do we not feel so much the disgrace done to us as to be rather glad to get rid of him? If it be one who has been disagreeable in his manners, and not pleasant in his conversation, perhaps great patience and forbearance have been shown towards him by the saints, and then something occurs which gives them a ground for dealing with him. The danger is, that the poor soul may be left to himself, and left, perhaps, as far as we are concerned, forever. That is not what we have here. “Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” Here there is much greater anxiety of soul expressed, but still it is always the thought of saving—of tenderness in one case, and earnest effort in the other. The person himself might not thank you for acting towards him with so much vigor; but still it is the way of love, though with it the strongest feeling as to the evil itself— “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” Love is intolerant of evil, and the clean contrary of indifference.

But the wind up of all is blessed. Although there are these apparent triumphs of Satan, professing Christians, going on from bad to worse, and then overwhelming divine vengeance to the end, to others occupied with divine love, there comes the crowning word of joy, “Unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, and dominion, and power, both now and ever.” Could there be a more comforting word when not an outward blot defaced the church? And this is evidently given for special profit when we are, as it were, upon the point of meeting the Savior from heaven; for Jude goes up to that point, and even foreshows the judgment which shall follow.

Chapter 36

The First and the Second Man

(Gen. 3)

Man is by nature both a sinner and ruined-shut out by sin from the presence of God: and man, shut out, could not get back as man. The last Adam brings us back, not in the same, but in a heavenly way-not to an earthly paradise, but into the very presence of God in heaven. He does not bring back to innocence, but to the “righteousness of God;” for the believer is “made the righteousness of God in Him:” This scene in Eden shows out God and man.

There is in man the natural conscience; for he acquired by the fall the knowledge of good and evil. A man steals, and he is conscious he has done wrong. Whether or not God's law tells him so, his conscience knows it. Look at Satan's temptation. What was his object? He wanted to make God's creatures think that God was not so good to them as he might be—that He was keeping back from them something that would be for their good-that he was jealous of their becoming as Himself. The natural heart is always calling God in question for having made it responsible to Himself. Its very nature is to question God's goodness.

Satan's great lie was, “Ye shall not die.” It is his constant aim to make men believe that the consequence of sin will not be that which God has said it shall be.

When the woman had listened to Satan, lust comes in. Once away in heart from God, she must follow her own way. And what are men doing now? Helping one another to make themselves comfortable away from God, and in those very things that they know He hates. Beloved friends, should you like to meet God just as you are? You know you would not. If God should say to you come and be judged, you would wish to have it put off. You know you would. And, moreover, you do not like to think about this unreadiness. What did Adam do? and Eve? They hid themselves from God-nay, further, they hid themselves from themselves and from one another; for the covering of the fig-leaves were just to hide the shame of the nakedness which they discovered. And when they were hiding away from God, they were away from the only source of blessing. It was saying, The light has come in, and I must get far from it: just what the conscience of itself does now.

Mark the character of the sin. They believed that the devil told the truth, and that God did not. Whatever thoughts they had in their hearts, they acted upon this. And men are still believing the devil's lie—hoping to get into heaven their own way, when God has said that nothing defiled shall enter in.

He wanted, too, to make them think that God was not so good to them as he would be-that God was keeping back from them the very best thing they could have. And are not men now looking to Satan for happiness, instead of believing God Man cannot believe that it is God's mind to make him happy.

And now, beloved friends, this is not only a history of Adam, but it is a history of man-of yourselves, You may say, I have done very little harm. Well, then, you shall be taken on your own ground. Is it little harm to make God a liar? What had Adam done? He had eaten an apple. Do you say, And what was that? What harm was there in eating an apple?

Alas! Adam and Eve cast of GOD, and that was the harm. Whether it was eating an apple or killing a man, as afterward came out in Cain, the principle was the same. It was casting aside God's authority, and making Him a liar. The root of the evil was there. It had only to bring forth and bud. Suppose I see a plant peeping above the ground. It has but two leaves; but I say, Here is a thistle, cut it up. I do not wait till it is grown to see what it is. And so with sinners. The evil is there, and has only to be developed. A little evil is seen, and there needs only time to manifest all.

Adam hides himself from God. Is there no harm in having so broken with God, as to want to get out of His presence? And it is not God you have harmed (as it is said in Job, “What profit is it to him that thou art righteous?”) so much as it is yourselves. The God of love brings down into man's conscience the knowledge of the harm he has done to his own soul. One weighty reason why God has given His blessed word, is to show man what he has done to himself before God. It is in love He has given it; for if He were dealing with men in judgment, He would have left them under it.

God called to Adam. When God speaks, it awakes the conscience; but this is not necessarily conversion. God speaks, to show man to himself, and bring him back to blessing. Alas! man is afraid of the only place where holiness can be happy. The awakened conscience shows the presence of God. You would not hide yourself from a policeman: and why? Because you know you have not done anything to make you afraid of him. But you would hide yourselves from God if you could: and why! Because you have done that which you know He hates, that which separates you from Him. Man cannot bear to meet with God.

It is remarkable that the only thing in man, as such, which one might in a certain sense call good in him, i.e., conscience, only drives him away from God. Sin has made man get away from God, and it has forced God to drive out man from His presence. See man's sad condition: a sinner-ruined, and shut out from God. And there is no way back to God, except one, and that is through the Second Man, If Christ comes in by the door into the sheepfold, there is no getting in some other way. He is the door, and whoso enters must come by Him. The flaming sword kept every avenue to the tree of life. There was no possibility of creeping up to it by some unguarded path.

Innocence, once gone, can never be restored. It is the same in common, every-day things.

Man cannot get back to God by himself. Everything around us shows that man is out of paradise: toil, and suffering, and sorrow, and sickness, and necessities, and death, tells us of it every day.

There is another character of evil in our souls-and that is, a readiness to excuse ourselves. Adam laid the blame on the woman. “The woman whom thou gavest me,” &c. It was as much as saying, Why did you give me this woman? It was your gift caused the sin. He wanted to put it off from himself as a question between God and the woman. It was not untrue, and yet it was as far as possible from the truth. It is the way of our guilty nature to throw upon another the sin in which our own will is concerned. And God judged Adam out of his own mouth. The excuse he makes is the very reason for which God condemns him. “Because thou hast hearkened,” &e. Our excuses are our condemnation.

There is not a word of comfort in all that God says to Adam or his wife. It is all sorrow and suffering in prospect-toil and pain. God shows man his sin to convict his conscience, not to make him happy. Grace comes in, and salvation, and therein he can rejoice. But God wants sinners to feel their sins, and not to find any comfort except in Him. He must take them out of themselves for that. If my child has been perverse, do I wish him to be happy about it? No; I want him to feel his naughtiness. I am longing to forgive him, winning him to forgiveness; but he must feel his sin.

God did not leave these poor condemned sinners without comfort. But it was to the Serpent He said, “The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head.” It was a new thing that God was bringing in-a new person and a new way. Christ was this “seed.” Where the sin had come in, the remedy was to be brought out. The blessing should come by the seed of the woman through whom the curse had entered. This was the perfection of grace. And grace is perfect in another way. If sin has come in, sin must be—entirely put away. He who shut man out from heaven has fully provided that which shall shut him in again. To be brought nigh to God through the precious blood of Christ is the place of believing souls. And how is this blessing brought? Because of the grace which is in God. Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us.

God must have us see our sin as between Himself and us. We shall be justifying ourselves, till we justify God in condemning us. We are then of one mind with God. To see sin as God sees it is repentance. It is “truth in the inward parts.” It is holiness and truth in the heart. And then there is all grace to meet the need that is thus found out. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” A man judging himself in God's light, without seeing Christ as the promised seed of the woman, is almost in despair; but “God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” We do not want a good Adam, but a great God and Savior. In the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, see all the wrath for sin laid upon another; and that other, who? What the soul wants is pure simple grace to meet it just where it is. If you were driven out of Paradise yesterday (it is as though God were ever saying), here is comfort for you. When you learn that you are ungodly and without strength, behold what has been done to bring you back. Are you so content with God's judgment about you, as to submit to this grace? It is the woman's seed that must be the hope.

Sin must be perfectly put away. The sinner brought back to God must be spotless. Christ does not enter heaven again till He has accomplished this. “When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down,” &c. When all was finished, He took the throne of righteousness. It is a more living, lively truth to my soul, that Christ, as the last Adam, is in the heavenly Paradise, than that the first Adam was cast out of the earthly One.

It is through grace, and through grace alone, that we get to know God. If I could present myself at the door of heaven, and seek admittance on the ground of my own righteousness (supposing for a moment it were possible), how should I stand there? For “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” I might know God as the One who dwelt there, but it would be a cold entrance; I could not know Him as a God of love. What grace is shown in paying a man his wages?

No, it is my joy to find it all in another, and not in myself. God justifies me when He says, “My Son has been given for your soul, and died for sin.” We are clothed with Christ-we have put Him on. If I be asked, On what ground do you expect to get into heaven? I say I am become the righteousness of God. What more could I have or want? If asked what I am in myself, I say, A poor sinner, and

this to the very end; but I am now in Him who is the delight of God. True, I do not know Him fully, but He has redeemed me; and I am in Him that is the life. He is in me and I in him; and where He is there I shall, in due time, be also. Now, I want to serve Him better and to show forth His praise. Perfect power will, by and by, come in, and not a particle of my dust can be left behind. The body is His, as well as the soul. Death has been vanquished for it. We are still in the body, and bear it about with us as yet, in the bondage of corruption; but Satan's power is crushed. The serpent's head is bruised. We have to do with him now, but his power is broken. He has been overcome, for Christ went down under the full power of him that had the power of death: and He came up from it triumphant, for it was not possible He should be holden of it.

We are told, “resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” We are not told to overcome him (that we never could do), but when he meets Christ in me, he cannot stand that, he must flee. “Thou shalt bruise his heel;” the blessed Son of God came down to go through this for us. He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;” and that will was our salvation. “By one offering he perfected forever them that were sanctified;” but then that offering had to be made. See the Lord Jesus Christ coming down from heaven in love, to devote Himself to God for our salvation—and this changes a man's heart. Jesus drank the cup of wrath for sin, full and to the dregs. He tasted death—was shut out from God's presence—endured the hiding of His countenance; and all this, that He might bring us back into the presence of God without judgment—without sin; but with everything that could make us happy and blessed forever. He lived in God's love. He dwelt with the Father; and He knew well what he was bringing us into, what He was giving us to share. But He knew, too, what the holiness of God was, and what His wrath was; and therefore He knew what He was delivering us from. How I shall hate sin, if I have seen Christ agonizing for mine upon the cross!

Well, the moment a poor sinner looks to Jesus by faith as his divine sin-bearer, his sins are all gone—they are put out of God's sight forever. And Christ is in heaven. Could He take the sin there? No; His very being in heaven proves it all left behind. The poor sinner gets the fruit of all that He has done, and all that He is—pardoned through His blood, and brought nigh in Himself. Peace has been made through the blood of the cross. And the glorified Man is in heaven, appearing in the presence of God for us—of His Father and our Father, of His God and our God.

Chapter 37

Fragment: Christian Forbearance

Christian forbearance, we must remember, is never forbearance with evil, and faithful testimony against it is always blessed. Priestly discernment is needed; and the non-allowance of evil far from being inconsistent with love, is rather its genuine expression.

Chapter 38

Fragment: Improvement of Christendom or Calling of a Remnant?

Is the maintenance and improvement of Christendom God's way? or is he calling a remnant to purge themselves from the vessels to dishonor, as well as to personal purity

Chapter 39

Fragment: Loving God's Children

If I love a family of children for the parent's sake, I shall love all the children. If, on the contrary, I love some of them, and hate or despise or take no account of the rest, it is evident that my love for those I do love is owing to some congeniality or other personal cause, not from love to the parents. How is it with you and God's children?

Chapter 40

Fragment: Man's Influence

We are weak in proportion to our importance before men; when we are nothing, we can do all things, as far as human opinion is concerned. We exercise, at the same time, an unfavorable influence over others in the same degree as that in which they influence us—in the same degree as we yield to the influence which the desire of maintaining our reputation among them exercises over our hearts

Chapter 41

Fragment: Remembering Christ

We do not remember a glorified Christ. As such we know Him now. But it is the humbled Christ we remember. There is no humbled Christ now, save in the memories of his people; and to them he says, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Chapter 42

Fragment: Time of Labor, Not Rest

This is the time of labor, not of rest; not rest to be looked for here and now, but laboring to enter into that rest. O how blessed the day of its appearing after toil! It is indeed long patience, but patience is the word; and while we are patient, the Lord makes it short.

Chapter 43

Fragment: Union With Christ

Man could know or see neither the divine person nor the divine glory, without being partaker of the divine nature. And this is what we are brought into—union with Christ in resurrection-life, and the power of the holy ghost—not the poor thing of the renewal of good qualities, but the son himself making us share his own things!

Chapter 44

Fragments Gathered up: All Will Give Account

All will give account of themselves to God—the saints when caught up to be with the Lord, and the wicked at the end of the millennium. The saints will give account of themselves in glory. “We are made manifest to God,” not “shall be.” The Christian stands in the presence of the glory now. We want this light acting on the conscience; but we must have perfect confidence in God, for there can be no happy play of the affections if there is not.

Chapter 45

Fragments Gathered up: Christian Obedience

Where there is spiritually, the heart finds a command in the barest hint and the most remote example of the Word of God; where there is not, all the commands in both Testaments would be in vain to form Christian obedience. Where there is difficulty in the way, and our own will is at work, we often make objections, and cannot say we see things! Christ had the will of God before Him up to death.

Chapter 46

Fragments Gathered up: Will, and Conscience, God's Way

We hardly realize what a dreadful thing it is to have a will. To have none will not make us the less decided. On the contrary, it is when we see a thing to be the Lord's will that there is true and thorough decision. But we are often weak when it is a question of the Lord's glory, and strong when it concerns ourselves.

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In itself learning is a hindrance to the knowledge of God, though His grace does as it pleases. It hinders the knowledge of Scripture and of God's mind in it, because it leads the mind to another access of approach to these things, not the conscience, which is God's way. Learning may meet learning, and if one man give false, another may meet it by the true; but it cannot meet Scripture, and there is no learning in the conscience but that we are sinners. The mind is the subject of the Scripture, not the Scripture the subject of the mind. In God's way only have the Scripture to itself, and it meets all learning and needs none. God may give power to apprehend it to one more than another; but it meets everything the proud heart of man can desire, and wants nothing else, but in spirit judges and divides all things to the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is applicable thoroughly and everywhere. What, for instance, has impeded the intelligence of prophecy so much as mixing up human history with it?

Chapter 47

Remarks on Galatians 1:1-5

I trust to be enabled to show, in looking at the epistle to the Galatians, that this portion of the word of God is formed with the same skill (as, indeed, a revelation of God must be) which we have found occasion to remark in other books of the Old and New Testaments; that it is stamped with the same evidence of divine design; and that, having a special object, the Holy Ghost subordinates all the details to the great thought and task that He has in hand.

Now it is plain, from a very cursory glance, that the object of the epistle was not so much the assertion of the truth of justification by faith in contrast with works of law, as the vindicating it against the efforts of the enemy to merge it under ordinances and human authority-in a word, the Judaizing efforts of those who professed the name of the Lord. In Romans, it is more the bringing out of positive truth; in Galatians, the recovery of the truth after it had been taught and received, the enemy seeking to swamp it by bringing in the law as the conjoint means of justification. The Holy Ghost sets Himself, by the Apostle Paul, thoroughly to nullify all this force of Satan: and this gives a peculiar tone to the epistle. As usual, the first few verses bear the stamp of the whole, and show what the Holy Ghost was about to bring out in every part. We have, of course, the choicest collection of words, and the avoiding of irrelevant topics, so as to reveal in short compass the mind of God as to the state of things among the churches in Galatia. This accounts for the comparative coldness of the tone of the epistle—the reserve, we may say, with which the apostle speaks to them. I think it is unexampled in any other part of the New Testament. And the reason was this: the bad state into which the Galatians had fallen was not so much arising from ignorance; it was unfaithfulness; and there is a great difference. God is most patient towards mere want of light; but God is intolerant of His saints trifling with the light He has given them. The apostle was imbued with the mind of God; and has given it to us in a written form, without the slightest admixture of human error. He has given us, not only the mind, but the feelings of God. Now man reserves his bitter censure for that which is immoral—for a man guilty of cheating or intoxication, or any other grossness. Every correct person would feel those. But the very same persons who are alive to the moral scandal may be dead to the evil that is a thousand times worse in the sight of God. Most people are sure to feel moral evil, partly because it affects themselves; whereas, in what touches the Lord, they always need to be exhorted strenuously, and have the light of God brought to bear strongly upon it. Satan is not apt to serve up naked and bare error, but generally garnishes it with more or less of truth, attractive to the mind. Thus he entices persons to refuse what is good, and choose what is evil. We learn from God how we ought to feel about evil doctrine. Take the epistle to Galatians, as compared with the Corinthians, in proof of what I am asserting. There you would have seen, if you went into a meeting at Corinth, a number of people, very proud of their gifts. They were fleshly, making a display of the power with which the Spirit of God had wrought. For one may have a real gift of God used in a very carnal manner. At Corinth there was also a great deal that was openly scandalous. In the early Christian times it was usual to have what is called a love-feast, which was really a social meal or supper, when men had done their work, or before it, and they could come together. And they united this ordinary meal along with the supper of the

Lord; and one can understand that they might easily get excited; for we must remember that these believers had only just emerged from the grossness and darkness of heathenism. Drunkenness was most common among the heathen; they even made it a point of honor to get drunk in honor of their gods. These Corinthian saints must not be judged of by the light that persons afterward received; and, indeed, it is in great measure through the slips of the early believers that we have learned what Christian morality ought to be. They were like babes coming out of the nursery, and their steps were feeble and faltering. There were these ebullitions of nature that showed themselves among the heathen; and there were, besides, parties among them. Some were ranging themselves under one banner; some under another. They had their different favorites that they followed. Some had even fallen into most flagrant evil, and others, again, were standing up for their rights, and going to law one with another. There was looseness of every kind in their walk. All these things came out in their midst. There was a low moral order of things. Had we not the writing of an apostle to such people, we should have considered that it was impossible for them to be Christians at all. Whereas, though there is the most holy tone and condemnation of their sin throughout the epistle, yet the apostle begins in a manner that would startle you the more you think of it, and bear in mind the state of the Corinthian believers. He begins by telling them that they were sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints. He speaks to them, too, of God's faithfulness, by whom they were “called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” What a contrast with the natural impulse of our minds. We might have been disposed to doubt that any, save a very few of them, could have been converted. But observe the course with the Galatians. Now, why is it that to the disorderly Corinthians there were such strong expressions of affection, and none to the Galatians? In the Corinthians he calls them the church of God. “Paul, called to be an apostle.... unto the church of God that is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming (revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ,” &e. And then he begins to touch upon what was wrong, and continues it throughout.

Writing to the Galatians, on the contrary, he says, “Paul an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia; Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” Not a word about their being in Christ or in God the Father; not a word about their being saints in Christ Jesus and faithful brethren. He just simply says the very least that it is possible to say about Christians here below. He speaks of them as the churches of Galatia; he does not associate them with any others, but they are put as naughty by themselves. He simply says, “All the brethren that are with me unto the churches of Galatia.” He does not speak of the saints generally, but of the brethren With him, his companions in service, whom he joins with himself in writing to the Galatians. He had a reason for this. Looking at the manner in which he speaks of himself, there is something very notable in it. “Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead),” &c. He begins controversy at once. The very first words are a blow at the root of their Jewish notions. They found fault with the apostle because he was not with the Lord Jesus when He was upon earth. What does Paul reply He says, I accept that which you mean as a reproach; I am not an apostle of men nor by man. He completely excludes all human appointment or recognition, in any way. His apostleship was not of men as its source, nor by man as a medium in any way. Nothing

could have been more easy than for God to have converted the apostle Paul in Jerusalem: he belonged to it, and was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; it was there that his first violence against the Christians broke out. But when God met him, he was away from Jerusalem, carrying on his hot persecution of the saints: and there, outside Damascus, in broad daylight, the Lord from heaven, unseen by others, reveals Himself to the astonished Saul of Tarsus. He was called not only a saint but an apostle; “an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” And to make it the more striking, when he was baptized, whom did the Lord choose to make the instrument of his baptism? A disciple who is only that once brought before us, as a godly old man residing at Damascus. God took special care to show that the apostle, called into a signally important place, the most momentous place of any man that ever was called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ—in the gospel—that Paul should be called without the intervention or recognition of man in any shape or form. His baptism had nothing to do with his being an apostle. Every one is baptized as a Christian, not as an apostle. He immediately goes into Arabia, preaches the gospel, and God at once owns him as His minister in the gospel, without any human interference. Such is the true principle of ministry.

It may be objected, however, by some that we do read of human setting apart, and laying on of hands in the New Testament. We do so. But in some cases, it is a person who has already shown qualification for the work, set apart in a formal manner by apostolic authority to a local charge, and clothed with a certain dignity in the eyes of the saints, perhaps because they had not much gift. For the elder, it will be observed, is not said to be “a teacher,” but simply “apt to teach.” External office is not so needed where there is power in a high degree. Power makes itself felt. Saints of God will always, in the long run, be obliged to own it. When a man has got a gift, he ought to be the last to talk about it. God knows how to make it respected in the long run. But when there are men who have grave and godly qualities without much gift, they need to be invested with authority, if they are to have weight with unspiritual people. Therefore it seems that we read of an apostle, or an apostolic delegate, going round and taking the lead in governing, appointing, advising, where there was anything amiss or lacking among the saints. People confound eldership with ministry. Elders were appointed by those who themselves had a higher authority direct from Christ; but there never was such a thing as ordaining a man to preach the Gospel. In Scripture, the Lord, and the Lord only, calls men to preach. There is not in the entire New Testament one instance to the contrary. It is positively disorderly, and contrary to the word of God, for a man to seek a human commission in order to preach the Gospel, or for taking the place of a teacher in relation to the Christian assemblies. There never was such a thing in apostolic days as a person appointed a teacher any more than a prophet. Among these elders there might be some of them evangelists, teachers, &c. Therefore it is said, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” The presbyters or elders, whose business it was to rule, even if they were not teachers, were in danger of being despised. But they were to be counted worthy of double honor. If they ruled well, they were to be honored, and specially they who labored in the word and doctrine. Several of them, besides being elders, were also teachers, and such would have superadded claims on the esteem of the saints. I do not set aside the fact, that there were persons set apart by man but what I deny is, that such was the case in the ordinary exercise of ministry—pastors, teachers, &c., &c. Such were never appointed by man in any shape whatever. The whole body of Scriptural ministers is entirely independent of ordination. The human part only entered in the case of deacons, who looked to external things, just because they might

not have sufficient power otherwise to make itself felt. The elders appear to come under a similar principle. And the weight of the apostles who had chosen them would give them a place in the minds of people generally.

The case of Timothy is very peculiar. He was designated by prophecy to a certain very peculiar work—that of guarding doctrine. And the apostle and the presbyters laid their hands upon him, by which a spiritual gift was communicated to him which he did not possess before. It is evident that there is no man now living who is called to such a work as that. It may be said that, in the case of the Apostle Paul, there was the putting on of hands, which we have in Acts 13 What does this show'? Not that he was an apostle chosen by man. The Holy Ghost declares here that he was “an apostle, not of men, neither by man.” What I draw from this is, that what took place at Antioch was in no sense ordaining him to be an apostle. He was an apostle before. He was a chosen vessel from his birth. And for several years before hands were laid on him, he had been preaching, and was one of the recognized teachers. I believe that this laying on of hands was the setting them apart for the special mission on which they were just about to go out, to plant the Gospel in new countries. So that when the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,” it does not mean, Separate them to the work of God from the beginning. The Apostle Paul had been for years teaching the saints before this. It was purely and simply a recommendation to the grace of God, for the new work on which they were about to enter. Some such thing might be done at the present day. Supposing a man who had already been preaching the Gospel in England, felt it much laid on his heart to go and visit the United States of America, and his brethren felt that he was just the man to go there; and that they, in order to show their concurrence and sympathy, were to meet together with prayer and fasting, to lay their hands upon the brother who was going thither—this would be quite Scriptural. It is what has been done in such cases. But that is not ordaining. It is merely the recommendation to the grace of God of persons already gifted for the work.

But what I believe to be so unscriptural, and indeed positive sin, is the having a certain ceremony through which a man must pass before he is recognized as properly a minister of Christ. That is a positive imposture, without one shred of Scripture to stand upon. It is merely something that man has brought in, chiefly founded upon the Jewish priesthood. If one belonged to the priestly family, before he could enter upon his priestly functions, he had to go through a number of ceremonies which the Roman Catholics imitate in their measure. But the astonishing thing is, that men, who in words denounce popery, have continued to imitate one of the worst parts of it; for it is in this very thing that I believe the Holy Ghost is most grieved. The effect is this, that it accredits a number of men who are not ministers of Christ, and discredits a number of men who are ministers of Christ, because they do not go through that particular innovation. It has the effect of doing all the mischief and hindering all the good that is possible. This is a subject which lies at the core of Judaism, and it is the greatest conceivable check to the energy of the Holy Ghost in the church at the present time. Persons may look grave at this remark, and say it is not charitable so to speak; but such persons do not know what charity means. They confound it with indifference. And indifference is the death of charity. If you saw your child with its hands over the burning coals, you would not be hindered from the most earnest cry, or any other energetic means to rescue it, by people telling you that a loud voice or a sharp snatch were wrong things for a Christian. So, as to this very subject, there is that which is bound up with the blessing of the Church on the one hand, and the

curse of Christendom on the other. How many evils come out of it! The pope himself comes out of it: because if you have got priests, you naturally want a high priest; if you have got the sons of Aaron, you need Aaron represented. The pope was set up on that very ground, and the whole system of popery depends upon it. “Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man,” entirely excludes man as being either the source of his ministry, or the medium in any way connected with it. The great thing that we have to remember with regard to ministry is, that its spring is in the hands of Christ; as he says here, “by Jesus Christ.” He does not say of Jesus Christ. I regard “by Jesus Christ,” in this particular connection, as much stronger, for this reason—that the Judaizing teachers would have said, We fully allow it to be of Jesus Christ, but it must be by those who were chosen and appointed by the Lord Himself when He was upon earth; it must be through the apostles. God was striking a death-blow at the notion of apostolic succession. He was most graciously shutting out for every spiritual man any pretense of this evil thing. The Galatians were probably troubled and perplexed that there should be Paul, an apostle entirely apart from the other twelve. Why did they not all cast lots about Paul, if he was to be one of the apostles in the highest sense? This is what he is meeting here. He connects his apostleship not only with God and our Lord as its source, but also as the medium— “by Jesus Christ, and by God the Father who raised him from the dead.” So that there is another blow at the secessionists. They had been drawing a contrast between Paul and the other twelve apostles, to the disadvantage of Paul. But the apostle shows that if there was any difference between himself and them, it was that he was an apostle by Him who raised Christ from the dead. The others were only called when our Lord was here upon earth, taking His place as a man here below. Paul was called by Jesus Christ risen from the dead. There was greater power, greater glory, greater distinction in the case of Paul's calling to be an apostle, than in that of any of the others. The apostle puts all their theories to the rout, and brings in his own special place with great force. Paul is the pattern of ministers to this very moment. In speaking about ministry, he loves to put it upon this ground, the ground upon which he was called himself. When it is a question of his preaching, he simply says, “We believe, and therefore speak.” He takes it upon the simplest and the best ground—if a man knows the truth, let him speak of it. There was no need for waiting for anything. It is to that the Lord works in the Church. Hence, in speaking about ministry in Ephesians, where we have it in the highest possible forms, on what does he found it? Upon Christ ascended up on high, and giving gifts unto men: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The whole of ministry, from its highest functions to its lowest, is put upon the same principle. If it be urged, it is all well what you have been saying about Paul, but it does not apply to ordinary ministry. I reply that it does: because the Holy Ghost teaches us through the Apostle Paul, that whether you come down from apostles to prophets, or teachers, or evangelists, they are all set upon the very same basis; all are gifts from the same Lord, without the intervention of man in any shape or degree.

But, then, it will be said by some, What about elders? there you are wrong: you have not got them. I answer, We have not elders formally, because we have not apostles. It is plain that in this we do not differ from any section of the Christian church; because I am not aware that any have apostles. So that the true difference between those who meet round the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and others is, that we do not pretend to have what we have not got, whereas they do who pretend to

appoint. You cannot have appointed elders without apostles; but you may have certain persons that have got the qualifications of elders, and such ought to be owned; but to imitate the appointment of an elder, now that apostles no longer exist, is sinful. This may suffice for the subject of ministry.

And what were the Galatians about now? What were they bringing the law on Christians for? If the Lord had already given Himself for our sins, and settled that question, to suppose that he should have given Himself for our sins, and yet the sins not be blotted out, is blasphemous. He is showing them the very elementary truth of the gospel, that Christ gave Himself for our sins. So that it is not at all a question of man seeking to acquire a certain righteousness, but of Christ who gave Himself for our sins when we had nothing but sins. And this is not for the purpose of putting people under the law again, and making that to be their proper standard as Christians, but “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” What is the effect of men taking up the law as Christians? It makes them worldly. There is no exception. There cannot be such a thing as a man separate from the world, when he is under the law. We are not in the flesh, but in spirit. That is the standard of a believer: not of some particular believers, but of all. We are “not in the flesh.” There is that which is of the flesh in us, but we are not in the flesh. The meaning of the apostle there is, that we are no longer looked upon nor dealt with by God as mere mortal men with our sins upon us; but we are regarded by God according to Christ, in whom there is no sin: and if we look at our standing as Christians, there is none in us; for our nature has been already condemned in the cross, and God does not mean to pass sentence upon it twice. What we have now to do is to live upon Christ, to enter. into the blessedness of that truth, “He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” The law spoke to citizens of the world. Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might redeem us—take us out of the world—even while we are in it. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” We are regarded as taken out of the world by the death of Christ, and sent into it by the resurrection of Christ; but sent into it as not of it, yea, not so much of it as an angel. The death of Christ put us completely outside the world. The resurrection of Christ sends us into it again, as new creatures, as messengers of the peace of God, entirely apart from what is going on in the world. Our Lord says, “Now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world.... they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.... as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” He puts the same measure for both: and therefore when He rose from the dead, He says, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

The apostle puts himself with them before Christ, “who gave himself for our sins.” It is the common blessing of all believers, “that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” The remarkable thing is, that when God reveals Himself as the Giver of a law—as Jehovah—He does not undertake to separate men from the world. The Jews were not separate from the world. They were separate from the Gentiles, but they were the most important people in the world; and they were made so for the purpose of maintaining the rights of God in the world. They were not called to be outside the world, but a people in the world. Therefore the Jews had to fight the Canaanites, and hence, too, they had a grand temple. Because they were a worldly people, they had a worldly sanctuary. But this is altogether wrong for Christians, because Christ “has given himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” When God brings out His will, no longer merely His

law, but revealing Himself as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that has been given to die for our sins, there comes out a totally different state of things. We enter into the relationship of conscious children with God our Father; and our business now is to honor Christ according to the position that He has taken at the right hand of God. People forget that Christ gave Himself for our sins, in order to deliver us from this present evil world. They sink down into the world, out of which redemption ought to have delivered them; and that is because they put themselves under the law. If I have to do with the will of God my Father, I have got to suffer as Christ suffered. The law puts a sword in man's hands; whereas the will of God makes a saint to be willing to go to the stake, or to suffer by the sword for Christ's sake: as it is said, “For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us;” but it is by suffering, not by what the world glories in. God is glorifying Christ after the pattern of the cross, and this is our pattern; not Israel—not the law; but the cross of Christ. God says, I have got Christ in heaven; I am occupied with the Only One who has over glorified me and that is the One you are to be occupied with.

Nothing can be more exact and full, nor more thoroughly calculated to meet our dangers of the present day, which takes the form of reviving succession and religious ordinances as a means of honoring God. Scripture meets every case; and a remedy is given for it in the blessed word of God. Our wisdom is to seek to use it all, to be simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good.

Chapter 48

Remarks on Galatians 1:6-24

There is a remarkable abruptness in the way the apostle enters at once into his subject. He had just alluded to our Lord's giving Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, and this had drawn out a brief thanksgiving unto “God, to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen.” But now he turns at once to the great object that he had in hand. His heart was too full of it to speak, to spend more words than need required so. There was that which was so fatal even to the foundations on which the Church, or rather individual Christians, must stand before God, that he could not linger. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel.” “So soon removed,” seems to me to be a somewhat stronger expression than what the Spirit of God makes use of.

It means, in process of removing. They were shifting and being changed “from him that had called then into the grace of Christ.” The evil and danger were not as yet so settled a thing but that he could still look up to God about them. When we think that it was the apostle Paul that had evangelized these souls, that the time was short since he had preached to them, I do not know a more melancholy proof of the ease with which Satan contrives to lead astray. Take children of God that have been ever so well instructed, and yet one sees the symptoms, which hardly ever fail to show themselves, of inclination to that which is weak and wrong, a readiness to follow human feelings in the things of God, diverted from the truth by appearance, where there is no reality. These things you will find, unless there be extraordinary power of the Holy Ghost to counteract the workings of Satan. The rubbish which has entered with the foundation, of which the apostle speaks in 1 Cor. 3—the “wood, hay, and stubble” —all this shows us how it may come to pass that although God it was who had formed the Church, yet there is another side of the Church to take into account, and that is man. Paul speaks of himself as a wise master builder. In one point of view it is God who builds the Church; and in this there is no failure. What the Lord has taken in hand immediately, He maintains infallibly by His own power. But human responsibility enters into this great work, as it does into almost everything, save creation and redemption, where God alone can be. But elsewhere, no matter how blessed, whether the calling in of souls to the gospel, or the leading them on after they have known the Lord, or the corporate gathering of the children of God into one—the Church, man has his part in it; and he too surely brings in the weakness of his nature. The history God gives us in the Bible is that, whatever He has entrusted into the hands of man, there he is weak and fails. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.” Now this is, after all, but the history, not only of the Old Testament, and of the various ways in which God had tried man; but even where you have the far more blessed subject of the New Testament (what God is in His Son and in His ways with men by His Son, since the Lord went up to heaven and the Holy Ghost was sent down), even in respect of these things, we have man's weakness surely showing itself. And it is not merely that unbelieving men have managed to creep into the Church; but the children of God have got flesh in them too. They have their human feelings and infirmities, and that which Satan can find in every Christian whereby to hinder or obscure the power of God. It was by this means that the Galatian

saints were led astray, and that all are in danger of it, at any moment. I gather two important lessons from this. The first is, not to be surprised if there be departure in the saints of God. I must not allow myself for a moment to think that it shows the slightest weakness in the truth itself or in the testimony committed to us, or that it puts a slur upon what is of God; for God may be suffering what is contrary to His own nature and permitting for a time that man should show what he is. But as surely as there is that which is according to God, He will vindicate Himself in it, and allow what is not of Him to prove its true character. But another thing I learn is the call for watchfulness and for self-judgment. To these Galatians, who once were so earnest, who would have plucked out their eyes in their love for Paul, that very apostle has now to write, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ.” Observe the choice of expression—“the grace of Christ.” Because what Satan was using was the mixture of the law with grace, of legalism and Christ. The principle of their call had been simply and solely “the grace of Christ.”

God had made known to the Galatians that they were poor sinners of the Gentiles, that there was nothing for them but mercy, and that mercy had come to them in the person of Christ. And if this is the one thing that He calls souls to—to receive the mercy that He is giving them in Christ, it supposes that they feel their need of mercy, and are willing to look to Christ and none other. But still it remains true that it was alone the grace of Christ which had acted upon these Galatian believers. Now he reminds them of this. What were they removing to now? A different gospel, which is not another. In our English version, it is a sort of paradox— “another gospel, which is not another.” But in the language which the Holy Ghost wrote in, there was sufficient copiousness to admit of another shade of language. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ into a different gospel, which is not another.” So that if the grace of Christ was the spring and power of their calling, the gospel was the means of it. But now they had left this for something different. Observe, it does not say, contrary to it, but a different one: and for that very reason he says, it is not another. It is unworthy to be called another gospel. God owns but one. He permits no compromise about the gospel; neither ought we. It may appear strange and perhaps strong to some; but I am thoroughly convinced that the same Galatian evil that was working then is at work now universally in Christendom. It may take a somewhat different form in one place from another; but wherever you turn, wherever you have either the word spoken on, or the profession of Christ maintained in the way of Christian institutions, you will find the mingling of the law in one form or another along with the grace of Christ. It does not matter what people are called, it is the same thing in all. There are differences of degree. Some are more open, some more intelligent, some more systematic about it; but the same poison, here diluted, and there concentrated, is found everywhere; so much so that the truth on this subject sounds strange in the ears of men. As a proof of this, I take one simple expression that will come before us in the various epistles of Paul, the misapprehension that prevails as to “the righteousness of God.” One may rejoice to know of persons preaching Christ, or even the law; because God uses the preaching of the law to convince many a sinner. Yet we are not to suppose, because God works even where there is a perverted gospel preached, that the children of God ought to make light of error. It is one thing to acknowledge that God works sovereignly; but it is another when the question for us is what is His true testimony. There we are bound in conscience never to allow anything except the simple and full truth of God for our own souls. One ought never to listen to anything short of that, if one can avoid hearing it. I am not speaking now of mistakes that may be in preaching. A slip or ignorance is not a perversion of the gospel. It is one thing to listen to what may be a mere mistake;

but to go where I know beforehand that the law is mingled with Christ, is sin. People may say, This is strong language. But am I going to set myself up to judge the Holy Ghost? For we must remember that what the apostle wrote was not as a private man, but that which the Holy Ghost wrote for our instruction. And what he tells us is this: “There be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ: but though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which I have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Let any person weigh such a word as this, and then judge whether any language of mine can be too strong to insist upon the duty of a Christian man in reference to a perverted testimony of the gospel. For this is what was coming in among the Galatians. Persons will tell me that it was more—that, there, it was the mingling of the ceremonial law with grace, whereas now it is the moral law. I can only say that this is worse still and more deadly, because the ceremonial law may be represented as typical of Christ; but the moral law brings in one's own doing in some form or other; whereas the only meaning of any of the Jewish forms and ceremonies is invariably as connected with Christ. If I look at the Christian institutions now, I say there is no virtue in the water of baptism or in the Lord's supper, save in what they represent, The foundation is gone if anything is brought in to justify a man, except Christ, who ought to be dearer to me than any other thing—dearer even than these means. To care for Christ is the very best evidence of a saved soul. But I do not admit that there is a lively care for Christ, where a soul knows His will in anything, and does not make it of the very first importance. When saints of God have learned the truth with simplicity and are enabled to hold it firmly, a time of trial comes. Perhaps there is a great deal of weakness and unfaithfulness among those that hold the truth; and persons say, I do not see that those who hold this truth are so much better than their neighbors; but there is this difference between the weakness of people's conduct who hold the truth and those who do not—that it can be remedied, while there is no turning falsehood into truth. All the power on earth could not root out legalism from the state of things in Christendom. The religious systems that are established must cease to be earthly systems if they give up the law. You cannot reform that of which the foundation is totally unsound. The superstructure can be removed, but the foundation is worthless and false, and never can be remedied. There is one right course, and that is to quit it altogether. I say that those who see these things owe it to our Lord and Master—owe it to the truth and to the saints of God—to show an uncompromising separation from all that destroys the full truth of this grace of Christ. We may bear with individuals who may not know better. If you see a person very worldly in a religious body„ I think it is an unworthy thing to fasten upon individuals, and take up such a thing as a hunting or an intoning priest. We have much better employment than making remarks upon dancing clergymen. Such a thing may be worth the world's notice. But it is very different where falsehood is preached. There we ought to seek to deliver every child of God from the evil influence. How painful to think some are bound to preach the law, so bound that it would be a dishonest thing if they did not! God gives, not a help merely, hut a deliverance from this state of things. If we believe the word of God, if we believe what the Holy Ghost says about it in the most solemn manner, we ought to have done with it altogether. There may be very good men concerned who are fettered; but we speak of the danger of mingling the law with the gospel, and that is the Galatian evil. Let us consider what is the warning of the Holy Ghost to the souls that were being ensnared by it. People may tell you that they know how to separate the good from the bad; but God is wiser than men, and a spiritual man would discern a going back of soul where such things are allowed. This accounts for the extraordinary strength of the apostle's warning. They were his own children in the faith; and as to

those who perverted and troubled them he stood in doubt of them. What he says is—no matter who it may be— “If he preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. Yea, if we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” They might have taken refuge in this: No doubt it was what Paul preached, but we have additional truth besides what Paul gives. But he says, “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” It is not only what I preached, but what you received. It is not only that there should be no mixture with what he preached, but no addition to what they had received. We have what the apostle Paul wrote as clearly as what he preached. There is no difference except that what is written is even of greater authority instrumentally than what was spoken. In the latter, too, that which is of nature might come in. The apostle had to confess on certain occasions that he had spoken hastily; never that he had so written. It was not a question of taking away the gospel, but of adding what was of the law to the gospel.

“For do I now persuade men or God?” That is, was he wishing to gain them over, or God? “Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men, I should. not be the servant of Christ.” He was perfectly aware that this kind of uncompromising testimony rendered him particularly obnoxious to men, and even produced ill will among real saints of God. So now the same thing would be called want of charity. In fact, it is not want of charity to speak uncompromisingly; but it is to judge so. He says it is the way not to please men but to please God. It was in that very way that Christ had called him to be a servant. “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” There was something no doubt extraordinary in the manner in which the apostle Paul had had the gospel made known to him. He was not converted by the preaching of the gospel as most are. Peter's case was a similar one. Flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but the Father which was in heaven. Peter was the first person who was taught the glory of the person of Christ—taught that glory, not as connected merely with Jewish prophecies, but the deeper glory of Christ, as Christians ought to know Him now, as the Son of the living God; not connected with earth exclusively. Peter was the first to whom the Holy Ghost revealed the grand truth that Jesus was not only the Messiah, but Son of God in a heavenly and divine sense. Peter therefore was honored by God, and put by our Lord in a very special place. He was the one to whom our Lord first named His Church. In the case of Paul, the truth went farther. For if we have the Father revealing the Son to Peter, Paul goes yet beyond, mid says that God revealed His Son in him. Peter could have said, It pleased the Father to have revealed the Son to him; Paul could say, in him. Paul was led of the Holy Ghost into a gradually increasing knowledge of the grand and most glorious truth of the oneness of the believer with Christ. But this is not brought out here. Yet the expression, “revealed his Son in me,” is one that could hardly have been used by one who did not know this truth. As in Hebrews, the apostle speaks about believers having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, though the epistle to the Hebrews does not reveal that we are members of Christ's body; yet we could not be exhorted to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, unless we were members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones: so only Paul could have said, “It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.” It is connected with the truth of which Paul was the chosen witness—the union of Christ and the Church, intimated at his very conversion. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He was persecuting the saints; and the Lord says, To persecute them is to persecute me. They were one. The Church and the Lord are united. We are

not members of Christ's divinity, but of His body. It is only as man that He has a body. But while He was a man upon earth we were not members. The corn of wheat, unless it died, must abide alone; “but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit:” that is, it is founded upon the death and resurrection of Christ, that He is able to associate others with Himself as the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Christ in heaven and the saints on earth make one body. That is what Paul learned at his conversion. Having all this in view, the apostle says, “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.”

And just allow me to state another word or two in connection with the gospel of Paul. He is the only one who characterizes his gospel as the glorious gospel. And one may be interested to know that when the apostle uses that phrase, he does not say “glorious” merely as we use it; he means the gospel of the glory. And the true force of that expression is this: it is the gospel of Christ glorified at the right hand of God. It is the glad tidings that we have a Savior who is risen and glorified. We are called to all the effects of His glory as well as of His death upon the cross. Other apostles never entered into the subject of the Church being made one with Christ; Paul alone did. Therefore Paul was the only one that was in a position to say, “If you add anything to my gospel, let such an one be accursed.” Although Paul added something to their gospel, they could add nothing to his. The apostles announced Christ as the Messiah, and made known remission of sins through His name; but they did not bring out the heavenly glory of Christ as Paul did. He brought out all these truths, and more which they never brought out. That is the reason why he so constantly speaks of “my gospel.” Because while, of course, as to the grand truths of the gospel there could be no difference between what Paul and the other apostles preached, there was a great advance in that which Paul preached beyond them. There was nothing contradictory; but Paul being called after the ascension of our Lord to heaven, he was the one to whom it was peculiarly appropriate to make any addition. Till Paul was called, there was something still needed to make up the sum of revealed truth. In 1 Col. 1 he says that he was a minister of Christ to complete the word of God, to fill up a certain space that was not filled up. Paul was the person employed by the Holy Ghost to do this. John brought out prophetic truth—prophecy entirely outside what we have been speaking of, for it brings in the dealings of God with the world, and not with the Church. Therefore the apostle can insist strongly upon the danger of attempting to swerve from what he had brought out, or of adding anything to it. This is very important. Others might not preach all the truth, but that is not what he speaks so strongly against. No person ought to be condemned because he does not bring out the higher truth of God. What we ought to set our faces against is the bringing in of something contrary to the gospel, or mingling the law with the gospel—putting new wine into old bottles. Some may refer to the epistle of James; but James never brings out the law so as to clash with the gospel, although what he says may put a guard upon souls making an improper use of the solemn warning of the Holy Ghost against mingling the law with the gospel in any shape or form. There will be many occasions for showing how the apostle Paul refers to it in this epistle.

The next point to which he alludes in his argument is his previous conversion and life. He says, speaking of his gospel, that he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. They might have raised a doubt about this: but he shows that all his previous life was opposed to the gospel. There was not another such antagonist of Christ as he had been. “Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it” (there may be a little word for them,

because they were beginning to persecute all who opposed their notions about the law, and were getting into a bitter spirit), “and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers.” There was no doubt, therefore, of the sincerity of the apostle's use of the law in his unconverted days. “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, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” There he at once brings in a mass of truth, which, if they had only understood its force, as no doubt some did, ruined their whole system from top to bottom. He shows that it was God who had called him away from the law: when he was in the very midst of what they were beginning to take up afresh, he was an enemy of Christ. He gives full allowance to his providential history. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and had profited in the Jews' religion above his equals. But though it pleased God to separate him from his mother's womb, yet to call him, he insists, was much more; this call was of grace. “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” There he both positively and negatively overthrows their legalism. He had been called to preach among the Gentiles, where there was no law known. There was no word of God at all as to their going up to Jerusalem. And yet this was the sort of thing to which they were desiring to return. So it is at the present day. The smallest sect under the sun have got a kind of Jerusalem, a center for the minister to be sent up to, in order to qualify him for what he has to do. But where it is sought for the purpose of bringing out the glory of Christ, it proves but death. Many a person has conferred with flesh and blood, has gone up to “this mountain” or that city, and his soul has got completely lowered and taken away from the cross of Christ; and he becomes now exceedingly zealous of this very law that he had been delivered from; but the simple walk is the path of dependence upon the living God. So that however valuable these training schools may be for the world—however admirable for giving men a certain place, it ends merely in what man can teach, and not what God gives.

Moses thought that when he had spent forty years in Egypt he was fitted to deliver the people of God; but he had to learn that, not until he had been taught of God in the wilderness, was he competent to lead the people out of Egypt. God has generally to put souls through a sieve, and break them down in their own conceit, if He is going to use them in a really honorable way. Here you have God Himself, when He calls a young man to a very special work, instead of summoning him to the apostles at Jerusalem, sending him away to the desert. There is such a thing as not only helping the saints, but those that preach in the truth; and the apostle Paul presses upon Timothy that the things he received, he was to commit to faithful men who should be able to teach others also. There is human instrumentality in helping on those who are younger in the work of the Lord. Thus we must leave room for the various ways of God, only steering clear of human innovation and presumption, which can never edify.

“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again into Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.” He mentions the number of days for the purpose of showing that it was not a course of instruction that he had been receiving. “Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not. Afterward, I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they

glorified God in me.” He mentions these facts for the purpose of evincing how little time he had spent in Jerusalem; yea, that he was unknown to the churches of Judea generally. But these churches, instead of blaming God, which was what the Galatian conduct amounted to—instead of finding fault with his testimony, had glorified God in Paul. The early churches of Judea that the Galatians were looking so wistfully at, were glorifying God in him; while they themselves were quarreling with the richest mercy God had been showing them. He had preached to them the gospel more fully than the other apostles had presented it, and yet they were already slipping from it by seeking to bring in the law. Paul felt it was so deadly in its own nature that, although the souls drawn aside by it might not be lost, yet was there deep dishonor against God and incalculable mischief to His saints. No doubt they thought theirs a much safer course; but the apostle affirms that he had brought them the truth of the gospel, and that to mingle the law therewith is to subvert it altogether.

How applicable is all to the need of souls in this day of ours! We ought not to fancy that there was a deeper evil in Galatia than there is at work now. On the contrary, those were but the germs of that which has developed far more since then. The Lord give us to set our faces as a flint against all that would damage conscience and. keep us from allowing anything that we know to be contrary to His will and glory.

Chapter 49

Remarks on Galatians 2

We have still the apostle appealing to certain facts in his own life and history, as giving conclusive evidence upon the great question that had been raised: whether the law, in any form, is that under which the Christian lies? He takes it up fully as to justification, but it is not limited to justification. We see in chaps. 1. and 2. the divine call to minister, so strikingly exemplified in the apostle himself, in opposition to the successional claim; and we shall find towards the latter part of the epistle, that he applies it in all its breadth, and proves that in Christ God has brought in another principle altogether, which works efficaciously, whereas the law can only curse the guilty. In short, God has established the grand basis of His own grace; and while His grace is perfectly consistent with the moral government of God, it utterly sets aside the law as powerless through the condition of man, and not as if the law itself were not holy, and just, and good. But in Christ, God has brought in such energy of life in resurrection, and a new justifying righteousness of His own, that He forever sets the Christian on the wholly different ground of grace. In this epistle, the apostle enters into it with so much the greater strength, because the devil was attempting to bring in a particularly evil misuse of the law.

This is, I conceive, the key to the difference of language in Romans and Galatians. In the former, there is a certain tenderness in dealing with such of the brethren there as knew the law before they knew Christ, and had been under it as Jews. Hence, in speaking of their days, and meats, and drinks, the apostle shows that the Spirit of God called for the utmost forbearance. “He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks.” The reason was, that the saints at Rome consisted largely of those who had been Jews, and, of course, also of many who had been Gentiles; and the important point there was, to exhort to mutual respect and forbearance one with another. The Gentile brother, that knew his liberty, was not to despise his Jewish brother, because he was still giving heed to certain distinctions, keeping days, &c. Nor was the Jew to judge his Gentile brother, because he did not abstain from meats and observe days. Remember, in speaking of these days, we are not to imagine that the apostle is alluding to the Lord's day, for it is an entirely new thing, having no connection either with creation or the law. The Sabbath was the rest of creation, and also the divinely-appointed and well-known sign between Jehovah and the Jewish people forever, given them as a perpetual covenant, and separating them from all other nations. But the Lord's day has an entirely new character, spoken of in Scripture as the first day of the week. It belongs to the Christian only. Adam, man, the Jew, had nothing to do with it. So that when the apostle says, “He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not,” let us beware of allowing the evil thought that the Lord's day is included, and the keeping of it an open question. As for days or meats, Levitically distinguished, they are left to be regarded or not, according to spiritual intelligence. Not so the Lord's day; it may not fall under the form of an express command, but it is none the less obligatory, because it comes to us stamped with the Lord's will and recognition in various solemn and touching forms. It is the day on which He rose from the dead, and on which He sanctioned by His special presence the coming together of the

disciples, as the Holy Ghost afterward led them thence regularly, to break bread. So that there should be no question that the Lord's day is of the gravest importance, and the understanding of it always goes with right thoughts as to the true grace of God in which we stand. The confusion of it with the Sabbath may have been adopted to strengthen its institution by deducing it from the law; but this is a complete fallacy, lowers and weakens its character, and is the fruit and the evidence of ignorance of the ground on which the believer now stands with God. In Galatians, instead of the exhortation to brotherly forbearance, which we find impressed on the saints at Rome, there is, on the contrary, amazing strength and vehemence, as is plain in chaps. iii. and iv. But of this more in its own place.

The apostle refers to his going up to Jerusalem. When he says (chap. 1:18), “After three years I went up to Jerusalem,” it refers, I suppose, to his conversion as a starting point; and the “fourteen years after,” in this chapter, date from the same period. The important thing for the Spirit of God was, to cut off all pretense for connecting Paul's mission or ministry with Jerusalem. The principle of apostolic succession is thus cut off by implication. The years which elapsed before these visits, and yet more their character when he did visit Jerusalem, absolutely excludes all idea of derivation. “Then fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation.” This last circumstance is not mentioned in the Acts. It is the same occasion which is referred to there (Acts 15), though in a different manner. In Acts we are told, “certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” But when they arrived at Jerusalem, they found there the same party. “There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses,” clearly showing that it was within the bosom of the Church. And then we have the conference of the apostles and elders in presence of the whole Church about this matter. In ii. the Holy Ghost brings out the fact, not distinctly mentioned in the Acts—that on this occasion Paul took with him Titus, and went up by revelation: he had positive communication from God about it. In Acts, we have the Christian motives that were brought to act upon him by others; but in Galatians he lets us know something deeper still—that he went up by revelation, besides his taking Titus. Whatever may have been the case with the others, this was also a fact of immense importance, because Titus was in no way a Jew. He was not even like Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess. Titus was a Greek. Timothy was something between the two; and therefore there seems to have been wisdom and grace in the apostle's very different line with regard to Timothy. He certainly stopped the mouths of those who might have raised questions about that young disciple founded on the law, though I do not say that strictly speaking he would have come under it. It must be allowed, that it was not according to the law for a Jewess to be married to a Gentile. Titus, however, was, beyond doubt, a Greek. The apostle, in face of the twelve apostles, and of every one, brings up to Jerusalem with him this Greek who had never been circumcised. He was acting, in the boldest manner, on the liberty that he knew he had in Christ. And he adds further, “I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which are of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” And then he merely drops by the way, in one of his pregnant parentheses, “But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be

circumcised.”

Let us pay attention to the manner in which the Holy Ghost refers to Paul's communicating his gospel to those in Jerusalem; for this was a death-blow to the insinuation that Paul had received it after an irregular fashion. He adds also, “lest by any means he ran, or had run, in vain.” There was sufficient advance in truth in what the apostle taught, but he would not run the risk of making a split among the saints in Jerusalem. Had he been indifferent to the state of the saints, he would have brought out all the heavenly truth in which he was so far beyond the others. But there are two things that have to be taken account of in communicating truth. Not merely should there be certainty that it is truth from God, but it must also be suited truth to those whom you address. They might have needed it all, but they were not in a condition to receive it; and the more precious the truth, the greater the injury, in a certain sense, if it is presented to those who are not in a state to profit by it. Supposing persons are under the law, what would be the good of bringing out to such the hope of Christ's coming, or of union with Christ? There would be no room for these truths in such a spiritual condition. When persons are still under law, not knowing their death to it in Christ's death and resurrection, they require to be established in the grace of God. This appears to be one reason why, in the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle never touches on those blessed truths. The wisdom of omitting them is apparent. Such truths would be unintelligible, or at least unsuitable, to souls in their state. To have developed them could have done them no good. There requires to be first the understanding of the complete putting aside of the law, and of our introduction in Christ into a new atmosphere altogether. The Lord had many things to tell the disciples when He was with them, but they were not able to bear them then. So the apostle tells the Hebrews that they had need of milk and not of strong meat: “for every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” But they needed to be taught the first elements over again; yet that epistle was written not long before the destruction of Jerusalem. Nothing hinders the progress of saints so much as legal principles. The Corinthians had not been long converted, so that their ignorance was not surprising. But the Hebrews had been many years converted, and yet they were only occupied with the A B C of Christianity. So that the real reason which hindered these Hebrew believers was that they did not enter into their death to the law, and union with Christ risen. They were not even steadfast on the full foundation of Christian truth—the complete, eternal putting away of sins in the blood of Christ. They were not above the condition of spiritual babes.

The apostle, then, having referred to these facts, to his having communicated his gospel to them, privately to those of reputation; and, withal, to his taking Titus with him, who was known to be a Greek, and yet not compelled to be circumcised—leaves all this to have its weight upon the minds of the Galatians, giving also the reason, “And that, because of false brethren, unawares brought in.” If you read the third verse parenthetically, it adds to the clearness of the passage. He had gone up to Jerusalem, and communicated his gospel in this manner to the apostles, because of these false brethren unawares brought in. He did not wish to go into controversy about truth which they were not able to hear, and yet he wished not to keep it back from those who could appreciate it. But he hints plainly what these false brethren aimed at, “Who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.” This clearly shows the connection between legalism and the untruthfulness of such as come in privily to spy out the

liberty they do not understand. “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth, of the gospel might continue with you.”

But now he goes farther, and refers, not to false brethren that were at work undermining the gospel by the law, but to those who took the most prominent place at Jerusalem. “But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person; for they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me; but contrariwise when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles); and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” All the insinuations of these Jewish teachers, that there was not a substantial agreement between Paul and the other apostles, were thus disappointed. It turned out that Paul was the communicator, not Peter; and that the three chiefs there had given the right hand of fellowship to Paul. They in no way controlled his ministry, but perceived the grace that was given to him. They felt, in fact, both as regards God and His power that wrought in Paul, that he and Barnabas were the most fitting persons to deal with the uncircumcision. The vast sphere of the heathen world was evidently for Paul and those with him, while they remained confined to their narrow circle. Paul is here destroying the effort of the enemy to put the Gentile believer under the law.

Next he takes yet another step. For while he shows the respect that Peter and James and John in Jerusalem had to himself and to his work, he does another thing still more disastrous to those who would impose the law on Gentiles. “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” So far was Paul from being withstood by Peter at Jerusalem, that Peter gave him the right hand of fellowship. But when Peter was come to Antioch, Paul withstood him to the face. And this clearly was a thing well-known. “For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles,” which was a mark of communion with them even now and everywhere the well-known sign of what is equivalent. I am not speaking here of eating the Lord's supper, which is the highest symbol of communion; but, in ordinary life, to take a common meal together is the token of friendly feeling, and with Christians it ought specially to be so, for they are called to walk in everything with godly sincerity. Hence the importance attached to the act with people among Christians, and more especially in the face of Jewish separation from Gentiles, which, under the law, was God's command. Peter had been in the habit of eating with the Gentiles, which no man, acting on Jewish principles, could have entertained. But when certain persons came from James, “he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.” How marvelous is the influence of prejudices, of legal prejudices especially! Swayed thereby, Peter gives up his liberty, and no longer eats with the Gentiles: and this was the very chief of the apostles! Trifling as the act might seem, it was a weighty one in the eyes of God and of His servant. Paul was given to see that in this seemingly little thing the truth of the gospel was abandoned. Let us consider how solemn a thing this is. In some simple matter of every day life there may be a virtual abandonment of Christ and the truth of the gospel, a lie against His grace. It is well to bear in mind that, in a commonplace act, in a thing that might seem to be of no comparative importance, God would have us to look at things in their sources as they touch the

truth and grace of God. We are apt to make light of what relates to God, and to make what affects ourselves of great account. But God in his goodness would have us feel deeply what concerns Christ and the Gospel, and pass by what affects ourselves. Why should Paul thus rebuke Peter publicly? Was there not a cause Was there not a crisis come in the history? Where Peter was acting as the apostle of the circumcision, there Paul speaks privately. But now, when the foundation of grace was concerned, the same man is as bold as a lion, and withstands Peter to the face because he was to be condemned. There was no compromise, no timidity, no mere human prudence about the matter, no consideration of his own character or Peter's, but there was the looking at Christ in the church; and it was in the very field where he was peculiarly responsible to his Master to maintain the truth, and there Peter had failed. Therefore the apostle stood on firm ground here, and acted fearlessly. He withstood Peter to the face, who did not show himself as Peter according to the Lord's new name, in this business. He was more like Simon-Barjonas than the rock-man which he should have been. He had fallen back into his own natural ways; for ardor of nature is constantly given to reaction. What gave such strength to the apostle's remonstrance was that this took place after that solemn conference at Jerusalem, where Peter took an active part to show the liberty that God had given to the Gentiles; where he shows that God had made choice among them, that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe it; and had wound up his declaration by that remarkable word so galling to Jewish pride, and strengthening the Gentiles who might have been uneasy: “We believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.” He had taught, even in the face of the Jews, not that the Gentiles should be saved even as they, but that the Jewish believers should be saved even as the Gentiles. So that nothing could be stronger. He had no thought of treating the Gentiles as if they were only now blessed on some irregular and disputable tenure of mercy; for in truth, God was bringing out salvation to the Gentiles more clearly, if there was any difference. “We believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.” The Gentile salvation was made the very pattern of those who should be saved among the Jews. And what a thing that after all this, Peter should, even on this head, go astray! And Barnabas himself; not the companion of Peter, but of Paul—who had first discerned his worth and devotedness, and had joined him in so many labors among the Gentiles—who had been specially named as one of those who should go up to Jerusalem to set at rest this grave question; he was drawn away by the dissimulation of Peter and the rest! The apostle Paul was not wanting to the occasion, and soon discerns that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel. But wherein had they shown this lack of uprightness? In ceasing to eat with the Gentiles. Thus, on a dinner depended the truth of the gospel. The simple act of eating or not eating with the Gentiles betrays one's heart as to the question of deliverance from the law.

So fatal a point was this, if allowed, that Paul says to Peter before them all, “If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” What had Peter been about? He had not, in any wise, maintained the law as a rule for the Jewish believers. Why, then, did he yield to an act which implied it among the Gentiles? If not even in Jerusalem, where God among of old bound it upon their conscience, what a turning away from the truth, that one who knew his deliverance should practically insist upon it at Antioch! This was the serious matter for which Paul rebuked Peter. And now he reasons upon it: “We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles” (the force of “we,” as compared with “you,” is necessary to be remarked in this epistle and elsewhere), “knowing that a man is not

justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Bear in mind, also, that when the apostle Paul dwells upon law, he does not confine his remarks to the Jewish law, but reasons abstractedly. He says and means not merely that you cannot be justified by the works of the law, but by no law at all. If there was a law that could justify, it must be the law of God divulged by Moses. But Paul goes farther, and insists that "by works of law" you cannot be justified. The law-principle is opposed to justification instead of being the means of it. He takes up the fact, that by these works of law, no flesh can be justified.

But he proceeds to argue the point, and asks, "If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinner s, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." That is, if professing faith in the Lord Jesus, you go back to the law, the effect is necessarily to bring you in a sinner. You have had the sin in your nature, and the consequence is, that if you have to do with the law at all, this is the very condition in which you are left as a sinner after all. The law never gives deliverance from sin: as the apostle says elsewhere, "The strength of sin is the law." So that, if while you seek to be justified by Christ, you are found a sinner, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? This is the issue to which the law necessarily leads. It lays hold of sin. And therefore if after you have got Christ, you are only found after all through the law to be a sinner, you, in effect, make Christ the minister of sin, Such is the necessary consequence of bringing in the law after Christ. The soul that has to do with the law never realizes its deliverance from sin; on the contrary, the law, merely detecting the evil, and not raising the soul above it, leaves the man powerless and miserable.

Some people talk of "a believing sinner," or speak of the worship offered to God by "poor sinners." Many hymns, indeed, never bring the soul beyond this condition. But what is meant by "a sinner" in the word of God is a soul altogether without Jesus, a soul which may perhaps feel its want of Christ, being quickened by the Spirit, but without the knowledge of redemption. It is not truthfulness to deny what we are in the sight of God. If we have failed in anything, will taking the ground of a poor sinner make the sin to be less, or give me to feel it more? No! If I am a saint, blessed with God in His beloved Son, made one with Christ, and the Holy Ghost given to dwell in me, then I say, What a shame, if I have failed, and broken down, and dishonored the Lord, and been indifferent to His glory! But if I feel my own coldness and indifference, it is to be treated as baseness, and to be hated as sin. Whereas, to take the ground of a poor sinner, is really, though not intended, to make excuses for evil. Which of the two ways would act most powerfully upon the conscience? which would humble man and exalt God most? Clearly the more that you realize what God has given you, and made you in Christ—if you are walking inconsistently with it—the more you feel the sin and dishonor of your course. Whereas, if you keep speaking about yourself merely as a sinner, it may seem humble to the superficial, but it only becomes a kind of palliative of your evil, which in this case never condemns so thoroughly as God looks for in the child of faith. Take an instance of forms of worship, which are constructed on that principle. The first thing is that they quote about a wicked man turning away from his wickedness. But if you can begin again every Sunday afresh as a Christian, and yet needing priestly absolution, it leaves room for the heart to act treacherously to the Lord. all the rest of the week, besides being a virtual denial of the efficacy of His work. This is a very serious thing. The week's preparation for the sacrament is the same

kind of thing. It is the wicked man turning away from his wickedness, renewing his vows and endeavoring to amend. Even in the third and fourth century, when they spoke about the Lord's Supper, they called it a “tremendous sacrifice,” die. All that completely ignores the very basis of Christianity, which is, that “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” And by “them that are sanctified,” I maintain that the Holy Ghost is speaking of all Christians—of that separation which is equally true of all believers, whether churchmen or dissenters, or of those who, renouncing sectional ground, understand better, as I believe, what God wills about His Church. This will tend to show how very serious is the question of the law. There is no deliverance, where and while it is maintained, from the condition of a sinner. Christian worship is an impossibility under such circumstances. If this be the case, Christ becomes the minister of sin; because I am supposed to be left by Him under the bondage of my sin, instead of being delivered from it: “for if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” That is, in going to Christ, I give up the law virtually; and if after all that, I go back to the law, then I make myself a transgressor. It is plain that if I am right now, I was entirely wrong before. Who was it made me give up the law? It was Christ. So that if I go back to the law, the gospel of Christ is the means of making people transgressors, and not of justifying them. The Galatians did not think so. But the Holy Ghost brings the light of His own truth to bear upon them, and shows what they were doing involved. The effect of enforcing the law was to make Christ the minister of sin, instead of the deliverer from it.

But not so. “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” There. he shows how it is that he was dead to the law. It was through the law. It was not merely a thing done outside his own soul. He had gone through the question within most thoroughly. He had been under the law: and when God had quickened him, and conscience awoke under divine light, he realized what he had never dreamed before—his own utter powerlessness. “I through the law am dead to the law.” He had felt truly his position as a sinner, and owns the killing, not quickening, power of the law. But then, this was of grace now, not judgment by and by. Hence, says the apostle, if I am dead by law, I am dead to law, and completely outside its reach. I am dead, and need die by it no more; I am dead to it that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Thus, in the soul of the apostle, we have law upheld in its utmost strength, and yet himself set free in Christ, and outside it in grace. So in Christ we have the same thing, at the end of Rom. 3 “Do we, then, make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law.” How is it maintained? Christ's death was the strongest and most divine sanction the law ever had. It was the law laying hold of the Surety, and carried out to the full, in the person of Christ; so that its authority, as faith knows, has been perfectly made good in Him. It is fully carried out, and far, far more, too, in the death of Christ. But if you apply that Scripture to prove that the law is to be established over Christians as their rule of life, it is as ignorant as it is false. The law is the rule of death, not of life: and that is what Paul's experience proves. “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” How did he live unto God? Not in that old life, to which only the law applies, for he says he was crucified with Christ, who suffered in his stead. But Christ is risen, as well as dead, and risen that Paul, that I, might live to God: no longer I, indeed, but Christ lives in me—a wholly new life. The law touches the old life, and has no authority beyond it. The moment that I believe I live, and the life is Christ, and it is founded upon the cross. And, moreover, says he, “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me.” I have, of course, my natural life here below, but that

wherein I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. The believer does live by looking, not at the law, but at Christ. Thus, there cannot be a more definitive setting aside of the law in every shape and form. The believer is ushered into a new state of being altogether—a life nourished by the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. It is Christ, not only characterizing the new creature, but as a living person before the soul. Therefore he can say, “I do not frustrate the grace of God.” But those did who maintained the law for righteousness in any shape. “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” The effect of the law, even upon the believer, is, that he never rises by his own confession above the feelings and experiences of a sinner. He is always in that condition—always saying, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Whereas, when he enters into the glorious place that he has in Christ, he is able to say, “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” He ought to say, O happy that I am! Christ has delivered me! There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Such is the true and sure place of the Christian. Christ has indeed not died for nothing in such a case.

John 10 - The blest ones of Christ must be content to share His rejection; and it is only in the measure we taste Christ's rejection that we enjoy the blessing we have in Him. I only the more deeply enjoy it, as I see Him cast out from the world; aye, from the religious world. You may find Christ possessed by one who is going on, alas! with the world—God known by a Lot who sits in the gate of Sodom. But how far does he enjoy the blessing he has got? A rejected Christ, the everlasting Son of the Father, is the One in whom alone is unfailing blessing that nothing can touch. It is not only no man, but none can pluck us out of His hand—no creature, no angel, no devil. The Father has given the Son, that we might have eternal life in Him; and there is none who can touch that life. “I and my Father are one.” They are both engaged in it, and the Holy Ghost too, who has brought us into the knowledge of it. Thus the whole Trinity are concerned in the fullness of our blessing, in giving the assured consciousness of it, and in its absolute safe keeping. But it is only to be known as it should be, in sharing rejection along with the rejected Son of God.

Chapter 50

Remarks on Galatians 3:1-14

This section of the chapter is devoted to the contrast of the principles of law and of faith, not exactly of promise but of faith. The part which follows takes up the subject of promise, and shows the mutual relations of law and promise; but the early verses are devoted to a wider domain. For we must bear in mind that faith has a variety of sphere and operation, besides the promise of God. There is no doubt that the promises belong to faith; but then it may embrace and profit by much more than what was (not revealed, but) promised. For when we talk of promises, it is not merely the general blessings God speaks of, such as His grace to guilty sinners, but certain definite privileges which were assigned beforehand to Abraham, and are now yea and amen “in all” their spiritual power in Christ-promises which will, in a future day, be filled to the letter as well as in spirit, when it pleases God to convert His ancient people. Then there will be the wonderful display of all blessing, heavenly and earthly, made good through the same glorious person, the source and center of it all, the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the part of the chapter before us, it is not so much a question of promise, but rather how the blessing is to be got at all.

The Galatians have been brought, not long since, under the immense privilege of the apostle's preaching, into the enjoyment of the power and blessing of Christianity; and now, sad to say, they were in danger of slipping away, and they had lost the sense of grace in their souls. By what means had they originally got blessing from God? This question was raised by the last verse of the chapter before. Because the apostle had there pressed home the great point the Holy Ghost is illustrating in this epistle-namely, that it is not the law, but the grace of God. in Christ, that freely gives all the blessing the Christian enjoys. He had brought us up to this already, that “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” He showed how this came to pass in his own case, who was a Jew, and was therefore necessarily under the law of God in a way in which no Gentile, as such, could be; how it was that he had been delivered from it and could now adopt such different language. He says, “I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” So that, in one point of view, he speaks of himself as dead, in another as alive; but that life in which he lived now, was Christ in him. The old “I” he treats as a dead thing. All that constituted his natural character, the old self which was amenable to the law, is treated as crucified. The reason is obvious. What is the spring of a man's energy and the end of everything in this world? What mingles with and corrupts all thoughts and desires? It is self. Whether you look at courage, or generosity, or care for one's family, and country, and religion-all these things had been found in Paul before conversion; but one thing lay deeper than any other, and that was self. Yet was it all slain in the cross of Christ, which judged his whole moral being as being founded upon that which was corrupt-i.e., himself. Paul's character was dealt with from its inmost depths, and he started from this principle-I have now another for my life, even Christ; and while he was found entering into His love, and carrying out His will, it was Christ, an object before him, who was the power of life, through the Holy Ghost, in him. Nor is this peculiar to some; Christ is the life of every Christian, but it may not be always manifested. You may find the old man showing itself—pride, vanity, love of case, the force of old habits. Where this is the case, it is, of course, the old nature

allowed to show itself afresh through lack of occupation with Christ and of self-judgment. There can be no such thing as Christ dead in us; but when, practically, we are not living on Christ, that soon works out, and betrays itself in our ways, which brought Christ to the cross. The apostle had come to this point: it was Christ living in him, not the law. “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” All that the law could do was to bring in its killing power upon them that were under it. There was no striving, as we so often see now, to keep the law in a spiritual way now that he was converted, but “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” That expression, “live unto God,” is very serious and beautiful. The law never produced life in a single soul; it kills. Whereas here you find Paul dead to the law, but alive unto God on a totally different principle. The question was, how did his life come? If all that the law did was to bring the sense of death in his soul (which refers to his going through the sense of condemnation before God), what is the spring of the new life? Not the law, but Christ. He has done with the law, in Christ, and he is left free, yea, and has life in him to live unto God. Hence he says, “Not I, but Christ liveth in me.” So that this shows us not only the source and character of the new life, but that it is all sustained by the selfsame thing which gave it existence. As it was the faith of Christ that produced the life, so it is the faith of Christ that is its power. A person may admire what is good and lovely, but that is another thing from being it. And what gives power? Looking to Christ: the soul feasting itself upon Christ. The objective means is Christ. “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God” —they did— “for if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” It was their principle that righteousness came by the law, and not alone in Christ dead and risen. Then says he, if it be so, “Christ is dead in vain.” Were it merely a question of the law, all the necessity would have been that Christ should live and strengthen us to keep the law. But He is dead. Your doctrine, he insists, makes Christ to be dead in vain; whereas it is in truth the essential thing, the very and only way in which the grace of God comes to my soul.

Having touched upon this great truth, he cannot refrain from an abrupt and startling rebuke, as he feels, by the contrast, how grievous the loss was. “O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you [that ye should not obey the truth]?” The expression, “that ye should not obey the truth,” is one brought in from chapter v. 7. “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” There it is most undeniably and properly inserted, but here it is left out in the best copies of the word of God. I am not founding anything upon it, but merely state the fact by the way, because it is right to do so on fitting occasions. One main source of this meddling with Scripture consisted in transplanting a text, or phrase, that is perfectly true in its right place, from some other part of Scripture. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” It is plain that he draws particular attention to the cross of Christ—not merely to His blood, or His death, but to His cross. And you will observe, if you examine the word of God, that the particular form in which Christ's death is set forth by the Holy Ghost, is invariably in connection with the use which has to be made of it practically. Throughout the Hebrews the point, with a little but weighty exception, is not the cross but the blood of Christ; while in the Romans it is mainly His death, the blood often, but death the grand staple of the argument. Why does the Holy Ghost here say, not merely that He shed His blood (which is the thing that a Christian, happy in the knowledge of forgiveness, would dwell upon), but “crucified among you.” There is nothing in vain in Scripture: there is no bringing anything into prominence without a divine reason for it. The crucifixion puts shame upon man and upon the flesh more than

any other thing. The effect simply of Christ's death, does not give me man made nothing of, and the utter worthlessness of human nature as before God. When the apostle wants to show the absolute separation of the Christian from the world, he says, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Now it is plain that this is a much graver and more forcible way of putting the case. There is nothing the world counted so foolish as the cross. Philosophers scorned the notion that a divine person should thus die: it was something that seemed so weak and objectless. They had no just sense of the horribleness of sin, of man's positive enmity to God, and of God's solemn eternal judgment. The cross is the means of bringing all out. But more than that; the cross not merely shows what the flesh is, and the world, but it also proves the hopelessness of looking to the law to bring in blessing, save in a negative way. There is such a thing as the power of the law to kill, but not to quicken; Christ alone does this. The apostle puts it to their own recollection and experience, how it was that the Spirit had been received, and miracles wrought, and they had got blessing. Was it by the law? The Galatians were heathens, worshipping stocks and stones, and it was out of this state that they were brought, not by the law, but by the knowledge of Christ. This puts it in a very pungent as well as effective form. Had it been God's way to have used the law as a means, would He not have employed the Apostle Paul to bind it upon them? But nothing of the kind. He had brought forth God before them in His holy saving love. In the sermon to the Athenians, on Mars' hill, he had demonstrated the folly of their idolatry; had shown that it was contrary even to their own boasted reason to worship what they made. There was that above them and around them, every day and everywhere, which indicated the finger of One who had created them. Even one of their own poets had said that they were His offspring, not making God our offspring, or, yet less, the work of men's hands; which is just what idolatry does. The apostle always goes to the conscience of men, and shows the evident way in which the devil has perplexed their minds and taken them away from the patent facts outside them, which ought to have shown a God above them, and have furnished proofs of His beneficent goodness; and then he brings out the solemn truth, that God is calling men everywhere to repent; to bow to Him in the acknowledgment of their sin (which is only another way of expressing repentance), on the ground that He had “appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness (not the law, but all 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.” It is Christ that is put before them, and not the law. This was the truth habitual with the apostle. So in the case of these Galatians. He is recalling the way in which they had received blessing: “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?” It is an important advance upon the chapter before, which only speaks of life; but chapter iii. introduces the Holy Ghost. Down to the end of verse 15, you will find that, as he begins with the Spirit as the proof of God's blessing men, so he ends with the Spirit. The argument is to prove that the connection of the Holy Ghost is with faith and not with law, which has only a curse for guilty man. Christ is our life, and He gives the Spirit.

It is important to distinguish life and the Spirit, because, when a soul receives the Gospel, though there be ordinarily the reception of life and of the Holy Ghost at the same moment, yet we must bear in mind that the two things are quite distinct. The new life that the Christian receives in Christ is not God, though of God; but the Holy Ghost is very God. The believer's life is a new creature or creation, while the Holy Ghost is the Creator. It is not because we have a new life that our bodies are made the temple of God, but because the Holy Ghost dwells therein. Hence, when Christians

do not properly distinguish this, it is very possible to use that life as a thing to comfort oneself with and set us at ease, leading us to say, I know that I shall be saved; and all spiritual exercises closing there. How often souls settle down to rest in the satisfaction that we have got life, or exercise that life only in the desire to bring souls to Christ But, blessed as this zeal is, it is a very inferior thing to loving Christ; as love to Christ is an inferior thing to the enjoyment of His love to us: and I believe this to be the true order in the souls of the saints of God. The great thing that God calls upon me for, is to admire and delight in and learn more and more of the love of Christ. What is the effect? Love to Christ is produced in the very same ratio that I know his love to me. What is it that judges self and keeps it down, and raises a person above all groveling ways and ends? Entrance into the blessedness of His love. Being filled with the sense of it, we love souls in a different way, because we see them in His light, and we view them out of His affections, and not merely as having some link with ourselves. This is the true secret of all spiritual power, at least, in its highest forms. Take any little suffering we undergo for Christ's sake, any work undertaken for Him—whatever God calls us to—in all these things, the true blessing of the Christian is not to abstract them from Christ, but to have Christ Himself as the spring and pattern and measure of all our service, so that all our service should flow from our enjoyment of Christ. In one way, worship is a nearer thing to God, and ought to be a dearer thing to the child of God than even service; whereas it is no uncommon thing to find zealous servants who know very little of true worship. I say this, not that we should serve Christ less, but that we should enjoy Him more, and serve Him in the spirit of enjoying what He is, apart from all circumstances. What is the basis of this measure of enjoyment? It is the absolute peace and rest of our heart in Him and His work. We see how completely every sin is met and every need of our soul supplied in Christ. We are put as children in the presence of a father, who knows that his father uses all his resources for the good of his Child. In the poor sinner there is the sense of need, and the soul must go through that first. In the experience of almost every regenerate soul there is a state where there is life, but in the midst, perhaps, of the greatest ignorance yet deep feeling of sin. This is not properly the Christian state; which, when rightly apprehended, supposes rest in Christ, with the consciousness that all is given me of God in Him. I have received the spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage. It is not merely that my soul is awakened to feel sin, but the Holy Ghost dwells in me; and the result of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is, that I know I have received this full blessing from God.

In chapter 2, as we have remarked, life is in question; but now, in the beginning of chapter 3, he speaks about the reception of the Spirit. This was not merely a matter of enjoyment, but also accompanied by miraculous power. When at that time the Holy Ghost was given, there were outward external ways in which He showed Himself, which were not continued in the Church. He puts the two together here. “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” or, “are ye being made perfect by the flesh?” It was a process that they were hoping to be perfected by because flesh can easily be satisfied with itself. “Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.” He will not give them up; he will not suppose that the enemy is gaining such a victory over them but that they may be recovered from this state. “He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

This refers to Paul himself. It was God that gave the Spirit, but He worked by means: by those who had been preaching the Gospel had they received the Holy Ghost. It is the hearing of faith that is followed by the gift of the Spirit, after we have received Christ; but there is always a distinction between the two things. You will find in Scripture, that the reception of the Spirit was, at least sometimes, after believing in Christ. Take the instance of the Samaritans. Was not the Spirit communicated to them some time after conversion? And so, not to speak of Cornelius, was it with the Ephesian disciples, Acts 19. Thus we see many a soul that hears the Gospel, filled with joy, but it passes away; and perhaps they will have to go through a very painful process afterward, because they had not really understood the application of Christ's work to their souls. They have simply embraced the reality of a blessed divine person who is full of love, even the Lord Jesus; but then, when they have received that, the sense of failure comes up, and they fall under the power of the law, and they go through much heart-breaking and plowing up. I could not say of such persons, that they have received the Spirit of God as One to dwell in them, the seal of the blessing they have found in Christ. But when they are brought to rest in Him, with all the sense of their sin and of what they are, and yet, in spite of it all, to, rest in the redemption that is in Christ, so that, in the face of everything, knowing what God is, what Satan is, what they themselves are, what the law of God is—still, being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; such persons have received the Holy Ghost; they have not only life, but the Spirit of God. In early times this distinction was brought out very clearly; but the same principle is, of course, true now. There are no souls that have looked to Christ but what God will give them the Spirit of adoption, and they will thus be brought into full blessing. But often this may be upon a deathbed, which ought not to be the case with a Christian.

There is such a scanty measure of truth preached even among real Christians in the present day, that souls have not the consciousness of their relationship nor of the completeness of redemption. Hence it is that they may be kept from their proper comfort and enjoyment for many a day. It was not so with these Galatians, and the apostle refers to their full blessing. At once they were brought into the possession of the Holy Ghost. They had received Him by the hearing of faith: and I take it, that this means His reception in every way; not only with a view to miracles and powers, but the Holy Ghost yet more as One dwelling within them. Where souls were not born of God, but had merely outwardly professed Christ, they might receive the Spirit for gifts of power, but not in the way of communion. Thus in Heb. 6, you have persons who were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and who yet had fallen away. It is nowhere said that they were quickened, or that they had life; but they were enlightened and had tasted of the heavenly gift; they had been baptized and had the powers of the world to come; all these things were true of them, yet they fell away—they deserted Christ; they went back from Him to Judaism in order to make their conscience good with God. Where this was the case, the apostle says, “it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” They are apostates, and that is the point of the question. For on a large scale, similar will be the means of bringing in the worst doom, which must inevitably follow the denial of Christianity. And necessarily so, for God has nothing better to bring in; nothing whereby he can act upon man when He rejects Christian revelation and the grace of Christ. These Galatians were convicted by this very thing. They knew that they had not heard about the law, and yet they had received the Spirit personally. Let them think what the reception of the Holy Ghost involves—that it is not only the manifestation of power, but the deeper blessing that

abides now. And how good of God that it should be so, that He has not taken away the spring of enjoying Christ. We might have thought that, so deep had been the failure, if anything had been likely to be taken away, it would be that enjoyment of Christ.

At Pentecost the saints were all, or most, at any rate, babes. It is a moral misunderstanding of that day, as well as of the previous state of the disciples, to suppose that the wonderful display of power there was then, showed that there was a deeper enjoyment of Christ then and there than elsewhere afterward. And so one sees now that there is a danger of persons fancying that the richest harvest-time of peace and joy possible is at the hour of conversion; but, at best, it is the enjoyment of a babe. There is a mighty sense of deliverance; but sense of deliverance is not necessarily Christ, nor the sweetest way of tasting Him. It is connected with our sense of the love of Christ, and this we assuredly are privileged to enjoy; but there is a knowledge and delight in Christ Himself which is a deeper thing still, and it is based upon a growing acquaintance with His personal glory and love, as well as His work.

These Galatians were getting under the law, and the apostle brings the folly of it all before them. They were seeking to be made perfect by the flesh. This is mere nature, working upon what has to do with self, and not with the unfolding of Christ. There were certain things they thought which were quite necessary for them to do. Well, he argues, that is the flesh. “Have ye suffered so many things in vain?” Then he shows that it had all been by the hearing of faith, and he goes up to Abraham himself. “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” There is a great force in his reference to Abraham; for every Jew would appeal to him as the root of circumcision; and the mode in which the law was brought in among the Galatians was by attaching great importance to the right of circumcision. No doubt the argument of these Judaizing men was, You cannot have the inner blessing of circumcision without going through the outward form of it. The apostle summons Abraham to prove the contrary. In his case, it was a question of faith, and not of law, or of circumcision. When was it that Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness? Before circumcision came in; for the rite, as was evident from the history, came in, we are particularly informed, after Abraham had believed God, and God had accounted it to him for righteousness. “Know ye, therefore,” he continues, “that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” This is the deduction he draws from it. If Abraham was brought into his place of blessing by faith, all his seed are blessed similarly. He begins with the natural seed, the Jew; but brings in the Gentiles also. “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” We shall find afterward that he does not refer to the promise to Abraham himself only, but to his seed; but he purposely leaves out the seed here. He refers to the first promise to Abraham, because, when that was made, there was no thought of circumcision. He says, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” It showed that they would be blessed as Gentiles—not by becoming Jews virtually; for the blessing would flow out to them as Gentiles. “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” There he closes that part of the subject, proving that the blessing depends upon faith, and not upon the works of the law or circumcision. Abraham was blessed by faith, and God had promised him, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” —not in circumcision, but in Abraham: so that we find in

Abraham's case the principle of a promise comes in. Abraham was an idolater at the time when God revealed Himself to him, as we learn from Josh. 24: and true blessing is always the effect of God's revealing Himself to the soul. The effect of this revelation to Abraham is, that he leaves his country and his father's house, and goes forth at the word of God, not knowing whither he went. He counted upon God's goodness towards his soul. He receives from God the promise of blessing—and of blessing, for others, too; as it was said, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” And here is the manner of it: “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” As blessing depended upon faith, so, he argues, does yours. Then, in a most solemn and sweeping sentence, which bears the very stamp of God upon it, he adds, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Would that those who desire to be teachers of the law only understood such a word as this! Not as many as have broken the law, but as many persons as take their stand upon legal ground are under the curse; whoever attempts to please God on this principle is fallen under it. And why? Because there is such a thing as sin. And if man with sin upon him, or in him, essays to make good his cause by the law, as far as the principle goes, he is under the law's curse. We need not await the proof as a matter of fact: he who does so is condemned. If God were to deal with men as they deal with God, they must be adjudged to death; and there could be no help nor deliverance for them. Regeneration does not deliver, and cannot be urged as a plea. If they are governed by the law as their rule, it necessarily condemns those who break it. Nothing can be more conclusive: “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,” &c. So that, if I stand upon that ground, there is not the slightest provision made for failure, unless I also plead sacrifices and offerings for sin. If I do not continue in all things as they are written in the book of the law—if I do not succeed in observing it all faultlessly, I am accursed. Could such a standing ever do for a Christian? Impossible; and therefore all is inconsistent with those who so speak; for they do really rest after all on Christ. But what says Paul? “That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident;” because, as another Scripture announces, “The just shall live by faith.” It is a total mistake to suppose that it is by law, as its source, its power, or its measure. “And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.”

In verse 13 he closes this part of the subject, and shows that our position as Christians is entirely different. He begins with the Jew. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” It is exceedingly blessed to find that, as in 2 Cor. 5, it is said that Christ was made sin, so here it is said, that “He is made a curse for us.” In Corinthians he is merely putting himself with the believers—he is not drawing a contrast between us and the Jew; consequently the “we” in Corinthians includes all. But here the “us” means the Jewish part of the believers; for he refers particularly and distinctly to the Gentiles afterward— “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” And then he puts them all together— “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” The “us” there is emphatic; whereas in verse 14 the word “we” is not so at all, but is used in a general way of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. So that the point is very plain. First, if Jews were concerned, he would say, We equally needed Christ; because we had not continued in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them; and Christ came and redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Then, as to you Gentiles you who never had

anything to do with the law, are you seeking to be blessed on the very ground where we can only expect cursing? The apostle quotes from Deut. 27, where we have a very striking disclosure. Half of the tribes were to stand upon one mountain to bless, and the other half upon another mountain to curse. But when, immediately after, the provision comes out, only the curses are mentioned, and there is no blessing at all! Why? “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” God had spoken of the tribes being divided for blessing and cursing; but when you come to the fact, only the curses follow, and not the blessings. What a very solemn confirmation of the truth we have been looking at God did not positively provide for any to get the blessing. As sure as they took legal ground, they could only get a curse; and accordingly the curses alone are heard.

The apostle therefore triumphantly closes this part of the subject. After coming to the full acknowledgment of the law's curse because of sin, then through the grace of God can the believer say, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” It is not merely that He has been made accursed for us, but “a curse.” What could more forcibly convey how fully He identified Himself with that condition as a whole? The consequence is, that those He represented in grace are completely delivered from it; yea, and the blessing, once flowing, bursts far beyond the old channel. So he says, “As it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” First of all, God must remove the curse out of the way; and when that was holily done with for these believing Jews, the same cross of Christ overflows with mercy to the Gentiles. Christ had accomplished the work of redemption; and though its primary application was to the Jew, yet surely the efficacy and glory of it could not be hid. The blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ— “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

This concludes the argument based on the promise of the Spirit; and the points decided are these:—the law never brought a blessing upon those who were under it, even though they were Abraham's seed—and this, because they were sinners: nor was it ever the means of their receiving the Holy Ghost as the power of enjoying Christ. On the other hand, the hearing of faith, as of old for Abraham himself, is the one simple means that the Holy Ghost uses for all real peace and blessing; and this avails through redemption, not only for the proud but accursed Jew, but even for the poor Gentile, now expressly contemplated in the blessing, and the richest part of it, the promise of the Spirit.

Chapter 51

Remarks on Galatians 3:15-29

In the former part of the chapter, we saw the contrast between the portion of faith and that of law. We found that the law necessarily brings in a curse; not that the law is bad, but because men-because Israel were sinners. The law, therefore, just because it is holy, just, and good, must condemn those that were not good but evil. The conclusion of the law, for such, accordingly, was a curse. It was the law of God; but all that His law could or ought to procure for sinners was condemnation and a curse. On the other hand, God loves to bless. How can these things be? How is it possible that God could bring in a blessing for poor lost man? The answer is, that “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Abraham got not a curse, but a blessing, and this because of faith and not law. The apostle thence proves that since the law, no matter how good in itself, can only bring a curse upon every soul who takes this ground in its dealings with God, “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” Nothing could be more universal or more conclusive. The law involves nothing but a curse upon every child of Adam who attempts to take his stand on it as a means of relationship with God. Am I seeking and vowing to obey God in order to get a blessing from Him? I only earn a curse. I ought to obey; but, I being a sinner, the effect of the law is to bring out my sin and curse me. On the other hand, faith brings me into a blessing, yea, all blessing through God's grace.

Now we come to the question of promise, which is a very different thing. Faith involves, at any rate, the condition of soul in the person who believes the promise looks at the dealings of God; and although we have seen that those who have faith are the only receivers of the blessing, and not those essaying to do the law. Now we have to consider God promising, as well as law given. “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made"-not the law given. Abraham knew nothing about the law, neither did his seed or son: yet they could not deny that Abraham got the blessing. So that here he stands on a new ground. It is not only that souls which have faith will get the blessing, but why not have faith in the law too? The latter part of the chapter takes up this question, and shows that God has given promises; and the question is, how to reconcile God's law with His promises. What did He give these two things for? Were they meant to produce the same end? Were they on the same principle The Holy Ghost settles these questions. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.”

Now it is plain, that the allusion is to two distinct and signal occasions in Abraham's history. These two occasions were, first, to Abraham alone (Gen. 12); and secondly, to Isaac, or rather in Isaac alone. (Gen. 22). In the last chapter, both the numerous seed and the single seed are referred to. With the numerous seed he connects the possessing the gate of their enemies—that is, Jewish supremacy. But this is not what one acquires as a Christian. I do not want my enemies to be overthrown, but rather to be brought to Christ. But the Jews, as such, will have not only blessing through Christ by-and-by, but their enemies put down. Israel will be exalted in the earth, which God never promised to the Gentiles. In Gen. 22 the two things are quite distinct. Where the seed is

spoken of without allusion to number, the blessing of the Gentiles comes in; but where they are said to be multiplied as the stars and the sand, then the character is unequivocally Jewish blessing. Such is, I believe, the argument of the apostle. Where Christ, typified by Isaac, is meant, it is “thy seed” simply, without a word of seed innumerable as the stars or the sand. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promise made;” namely, of the blessing of the Gentiles, and not merely of the putting down of the Gentiles. The promises were made first to Abraham, and then were confirmed in his seed. “He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and of thy seed, which is Christ,” He takes Christ as the one intended by Isaac.

Let me recall the circumstances under which God made the promise in Isaac as a type of Christ. In Gen. 22, Isaac is ready to be offered as a sacrifice, and Abraham did not know till the last moment but that his son was to die. For three days Isaac was, as it were, under the sentence of death. Abraham had confidence in God, who had promised that in Isaac he should possess the land; and he was, therefore, certain that in this very Isaac the promise must be accomplished. It was not a question of Sarah having another son, but of this son, his only son. He was perfectly assured, therefore, that God would raise him up and give him back again, to be the head of the Jewish family. A beautiful type this, of God's sparing not His own Son. Abraham had as good as offered up his son, and God not only gave Isaac back again, but then and there gave the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Thus it is in Christ risen from the dead that our blessing comes. Christ dead and risen again is perfectly free to bless the Gentiles. As long as He was merely living on the earth, He said, “I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;” but, when risen, all is changed. Accordingly, He commissions His disciples, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations.” And so He predicted the gospel must be published among all nations. The apostle draws attention to the fact, that this early oracle does not connect the numerous seed when God spoke of blessing the Gentiles, but the one seed, Isaac, as the type of Christ, and of Christ after He had been under death and had passed into resurrection. The importance of this is immense; because, while Christ was upon the earth, He was under law Himself. Risen from the dead what had He to do with law? The law does not touch a man when he is dead. The apostle argues that the Christian belongs to Christ in resurrection. When one is baptized into Christ, this is what He confesses: I belong to Christ dead and risen, taken out of my old place of Jew or Gentile. The Jews had to do with a Messiah who was to reign over them on the earth: but we, Christians, begin with Christ's death and resurrection. All our blessing is in Christ raised from the dead.

“And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ” (or, as it should be rendered, “to Christ”), “the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” God took care that, between the promise given to Abraham and Isaac and the law, there should elapse a period of more than four centuries. Had He given the law a short time after, they might have said it was all one and the same thing. But how could this be thought, seeing that four hundred and thirty years elapsed between? The promise has its own special object, and the law its design also and we are not to mingle the two things together. Not that we are to set aside either. On the contrary, I maintain that no man has a right value for the promises of God who could despise His law. I own the immense value of the law; but what is its object This we have here, and are not left to our own conjectures. The covenant of the law, that came in four hundred and thirty years after giving of the promise to Abraham, cannot

disannul what God had said before. If a man in holding out a reward annexes a condition, it is all fair. But supposing you said to another, I intend to leave you my house and garden, without adding any condition; if, after a year or two, you should say to the man, you must pay me a thousand pounds for the house and garden, he might answer, What do you mean? Do you repent of your promise? You gave the property to me unconditionally, and now you call upon me for payment! There was God's absolute promise to Abraham • this must ever remain untouched. But four hundred and thirty years after conditions come in. “If ye will obey my voice indeed, then ye shall be,” &c. Then it was God made the blessing to depend upon obedience. Is it, then, that God sets one principle against another In no wise. He permitted the lapse of time, among other things, to show that the two things are perfectly distinct, as their object also. Therefore, as the apostle reasons here, the principle of condition that came in with the law cannot disannul that of grace, which came in with the promise. When God said to Abraham, “I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession,” He did not add, If you will do so and so. The Lord was to give him certain blessings there, which depended entirely upon the goodness and undeserved favor of God. This was the way of God in the promises. But in the law all hinged on its observance by him who was put under it. The voice of the law is for the righteous a blessing, and for the guilty a curse, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them.” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them.”

The apostle next proves that, if the inheritance “be of the law, it is no more of promise.” If a man possesses a thing through something he has given or done for it, it is no more of promise, but what he deserves. It is like a person doing so much work for so much wages. Of course, if a master makes his servant a present, the man is thankful for it; but where it is only an equivalent for positive work done, it is clearly a matter of debt, and not of gift. The law is the principle of what is due, if there could be such a thing found among men; but all that was deserved was a curse, because man was a sinner. “But God gave it to Abraham by promise,” not by the law. Then comes the question, What is the good of the law If God meant to give the inheritance by promise, why bring in the law? As this is a most important question, I will call attention particularly to it. If you examine the dealings of God with His people in early days, God promises them a blessing, and they take it from God without looking at themselves to see whether they deserve it or not. This unquestioning confidence is all very blessed; but it is not for a man's good not to know what he is. It is of great moment that I should learn what my state really is. Now the object of the law was to bring out the sinner's true condition of soul; not at all to bring him into blessing, but to bring out the fearful ruin into which man had got by sin. The law was not meant to be the rule of life; indeed, it is rather the rule of death. If a man had no such thing as sin, it might be the rule of life; but he being a sinner, it is an absurd misnomer to call it the rule of life.

“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.” It is not said, Because of sins. God never would do anything to make a man a sinner—but “it is added because of transgressions.” What is the difference? Sin is in every child of Adam; sin was in man before the law, as much as after. When the whole world was corrupt—when all flesh became so violent that God was obliged to judge it by the flood, it is too clear that they were all sinners. After God gave the law to Israel, they were no longer merely sinners, but became transgressors. Rebels against God's authority, they became the actual violators of His law. The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. And whoever was made righteous by the law? Is he an

honest man who merely refrains from taking your watch for fear of being transported? The only really honest person is he who has the fear of God before his eyes. The law has the effect of punishing those that break it; but it is not what makes a man honest, even in a human sense, still less in the divine. Through the faith of Christ one becomes a new man, the possessor of a new nature which is dependent and obedient, loving to do the will of God, because He wishes it, and not merely through dread of going to hell. It is quite right to have the consciousness that we deserve hell; but were this the source of the motive for obeying, is such an one really converted?

Here, then, we have the law's object: it is to prove that men were sinners by bringing out the fact that those under the law broke it and earned its curse, “The law entered that the offense might abound,” —not exactly that sin might abound. God could never do this; but men being already sinners, the law by its very holiness provoked the sin so as to make it manifest to themselves and to all. The children of Israel were sinners like all others; but they would not acknowledge their sin, and therefore God brought in the law by Moses. Before the ten words, they might have said, We do not see the evil of worshipping images, or of not keeping the Sabbath day. The law was enough to leave an Israelite without excuse. And therefore, as the Apostle insists, “it is not made for a righteous man,” though this is what people apply it to in our days; that is, for a rule of life. But then, besides justifying the believer, Christ is the means of making him righteous and keeping him so, or restoring the soul—there is no other efficacious way. Just as Christ is the life and the truth, so is He the way. There is no path nor power of righteousness and holiness but Christ revealed by the Holy Ghost. If you take the law as well as Christ, you become at least half a Jew. We are called to look at Christ, and Christ only (2 Corinthians 3) as the one who creates, and fashions, and constitutes every particle of righteousness that the Christian possesses. So the apostle prays that they might be more and more “filled with the fruits of righteousness,” &c. The natural man would allow the need of the works of righteousness which are demanded by the law; but he knows nothing of those “fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” The law was the rule of death for a sinner; Christ is the rule of life for a saint. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” Everyone ought to admit both the end and the limits here set forth, The law “was added because of transgressions, till the seed (i.e., Christ) should come to whom the promise was made.” God was pleased to use this platform negatively at any rate for a time; but now the seed is come, and the platform is gone for the Christian. It is all-important for convicting the sinner, the standard of what a sinful man ought to do for God. But it is neither the reflection of God nor the pattern for the saints: Christ is both, and Christ only.

Besides, “it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” This is to show the contrast with the promise, which was direct and immediate between God and man, without the intervention of angels or any mere human daysman. In the case of the law, creature mediation is prominent. Hence the immense superiority of the promises as compared with the law. All showed distance between God and the people. But in the promises God comes, speaks, works personally and in love. He has as directly to do with every converted soul as He had with Abraham: nay, now that redemption has been effected and Christ is risen, we have to do with God in a still nearer way.

“Now,” he adds, “a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.” Under the law you have God and man as the two contracting parties, and you have also a mediator between the two. Moses stood thus between God and men, and what is the result? God's part was safe and sound, but man broke down. And so it was, is, and must be; and this not from any fault in the law, but from

man's guilt and evil. The law is like a bridge that may be ever so strong, but resting upon a rotten foundation. There can be but one issue. So with man's trial under the law. The law does not depend upon God alone, save as exacting; but, thanks be to God, the promise does. Under law, man is, in one sense, the chief actor. He is rendering to God, not God to him. Whereas, when God promised the land to Abraham, He did not say, It must depend upon what you do. It was His own free, absolute gift. In the law there are two parties, and the whole thing comes to pieces, because man is the one on whom practically all turns; and what is he to be accounted of? In promise there is but one party, and there can be no break-down, because God cannot fail or lie: His promise must be accomplished. This then is the Apostle's conclusive reasoning, “a mediator is not a mediator of one;” that is, where legal mediation is required, there must necessarily be two concerned, one of whom is the sinner, and so all is lost. “But God is one.” Such is the character and the strength of promise. God stands alone, brings about all He said, and the believer has only to give thanks, enjoy the blessing, and seek to walk worthily and consistently with it.

“Is the law, then, against the promises of God! God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin.” There the children of Israel were, and the law locked them all up together under sin. And this, “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Not to the Jews, as such, but “to them that believe.” “But before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ.” “To bring us” has no business here. The meaning is that the law was a schoolmaster dealing with these Jews, until Christ came; as it is said before, “It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” It is not a question of bringing people now to Christ: the effect of the law is rather to minister death and condemnation, as we are so clearly told elsewhere. God may let people thus come under sentence of death, and afterward by Christ bring them out of it; but no man can say that a killing power is in itself the means of bringing people to Christ. “The law was our schoolmaster.” It did the office of the slave who had the charge of children under age. It dealt severely with those under it till Christ came. The Galatians were Gentiles who had never been under the law, but he is describing to them the manner of God's dealings with the Jews that were. Speaking of such he says, “The law was our schoolmaster unto Christ.” When Christ came there was a new object manifested, and the negative process of legal discipline closed, “that we might be justified by faith.” The law made souls feel their state; but God opened their eyes when in that state to see that the only hope of righteousness was in Christ. “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” Not even Jews who believed were any longer under the law! The moment they had Christ revealed, they passed from the dominion of the law and owed their new subjection to Christ. Christ is the Master and Lord of the Christian. The Jew had had the law for his tutor. When he received Christ, the law's office terminated, and he entered a new domain altogether.

Observe the remarkable change from ver. 26. It is no longer “we,” but “ye.” “For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.” Now he is addressing the Galatians, who had of course been sinners of the Gentiles, and yet they enjoyed the nearness of sons of God. You, he implies, are brought into this high relationship by faith in Christ Jesus, without the intervention of the law, which, after all, deals with bondmen, or at least treats its subjects as if they were slaves. Paul did not preach the law first and Christ afterward, but rather “Jesus and the resurrection.” This was the

sum and substance of his preaching, and these Galatians had at first received it accordingly. They were all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus—Gentiles as well as Jews.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” The great point of the whole argument was, that the seed was risen, the seed, Isaac, after he had been appointed to die, and actually under the knife, but now risen from the dead in figure, to show that this is the condition into which we Gentiles are admitted as having to do with Christ. Was Christ under the law when He rose from the dead? Nothing of the kind. So, says the apostle, it is with us Christians now. You have nothing to do with the Jewish schoolmaster. Faith has come in alike for us and for you Gentiles; you have become sons of God without passing under the law at all. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Do you not know what your baptism meant? What does a man confess when he is baptized? That he belongs to a Savior who died and rose again. “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ (says our apostle elsewhere) were baptized into his death.” And the death of Christ is that which forever dissolves even a Jew's connection with the law. Up to death, the law had a righteous claim upon the Jew, but the moment he confessed Jesus dead and risen, even he at once passed out of it into a wholly new condition. With a Savior who is risen from the dead as his life and Lord, his business is to walk as a man that is united to Him: the connection is broken with the old husband, and he belongs to another. Were he to attempt to have Christ and law together afterward, it would be like a woman having two husbands; that is, spiritual adultery. The effect of it, too, is most palpable. Who has not seen a Christian one day joyous, the next day very much cast down in spirit, not sure whether he have eternal life or not; trembling at the thought of the Lord's coming; and yet that same man admiring, loving, adoring Christ? How comes this? He knows not death to the law. No wonder, then, he is in a miserable plight. The law presses him to death, and Christ is only known enough to keep his head above water, but with constant tendency to fall under it. How good for his soul to learn that God has broken all such ties by the death of Christ. My very baptism is the confession that, even had I been a Jew, I am dead to the law— “being dead to that wherein we were held.” “Wherefore ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.”

Of course, if dead to the law, it would be a most unhappy state not to be married to another. How great would be the danger of thinking oneself at liberty to do what one liked 1 But if belonging to Christ, then come the new feelings of one who is thus near to Him. Now, I belong to Him, and I am to do what He likes; our husband gives us liberty to do His will, not to do our own— “to bring forth fruit unto God.” This is what baptism sets forth in a Christian; it is the confession of the death and resurrection of Christ. The believer should know, then, that he has done with the law, and is called to live unto God. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” —not the law, but Christ.

The object of the whole is to show that, important as the law was for bringing people's transgressions plainly before them, yet now that a Christian had Christ, he had already confessed his sins, and had to do with another state of things altogether. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female. He takes up the grand distinctions of men naturally, and shows that these things did not characterize them as Christians. The thing that stamps me as such, is that I have Christ, and have put on Christ. “For ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

That is to say, they had not to pass under circumcision, or any other rite of the law, in order to get the promises. The Holy Ghost brings into these promises by having Christ. If you are striving to gain them by the law, you lose them; if you receive Christ, they are assuredly yours. He is the true seed of Abraham, and, having Christ, I have all the promises of God. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.” Thus, you see, he is giving the final ii touch to the great argument of the Holy Ghost throughout the whole passage: that the Gentile believer has nothing whatever to do with the law as a means of blessing from God; that he may use the law as a weapon against the ungodly, but that in Christ he has done with the question of law—has emerged definitely out of it all, and now he is in Christ. And if I am there, I have all that Christ can give. The point is, to give all the glory to Christ. The force of the passage must strike any thoughtful mind in looking round upon the present time. The evil against which Paul was warning them has now become overwhelming. In one shape or another the law is mingled with Christ: and therein you have poor Christians endeavoring to keep the two husbands at the same time. It is not something that we merely describe about others, but most of us know it from experience. We have proved both its misery and the blessing of deliverance from it. And may God be pleased to vouchsafe the same deliverance to every child of His who has tasted as yet only the misery and not the deliverance.

Chapter 52

Remarks on Galatians 4:1-12

We have already reviewed the admirable contrast the Holy Ghost has given in the latter part of the previous chapter between the promises and the law, showing their entire distinctness, not only in date and circumstances, but also principle, character, and purpose. In this, of course, they agree: both came from God. But, then, the object for which God gave them was as dissimilar as possible. His promises were the fruit of His own love; His purpose to bless, His joy in blessing, and this not Jews only, but Gentiles. And we have seen that particular stress was laid upon those promises which were made to Abraham first, and then to Isaac, in which the Gentiles were expressly to be blest of God. The remarkable fact the Holy Ghost takes up is, that where there is particular promise of blessing to the Gentiles, there is no reference to the numerous seed of Abraham, so frequently mentioned in Scripture; but where the seed, as many as the stars or the sand, is spoken of, the Jews are meant. And when we examine it still more closely, we shall find that the time when the “one seed” meets us, was after the type of death and resurrection had been gone through in the person of Isaac (Gen. 22): emblem of Christ who, risen, lets in the Gentiles to the full blessing of God apart from the law. And I am persuaded that this is so little understood that it will not be in vain just to give this slight passing notice now, in addition to what has already come before us. There is no one part of foundation truth on which Christians generally are feebler than in their laying hold of the place into which the resurrection of Christ brings the believer. It is the death of Christ that terminates all our questions. If it were our own death it would, as judgment, be ruinous; but the death of Christ has precisely as much, yea, infinitely greater, efficacy in the way of grace. And Christ rising into a new condition, where there is no possible condemnation, the believer passes before God into the same sphere. The power of God in the death of Christ puts away evil; the power of His resurrection brings us into the good of which He is the center and the head. In this fourth chapter the apostle takes up another subject. If the law and promises were opposite in their nature—not contradictory, but totally different in scope and object—what was the state of the believer under the Old Testament? It is answered in the beginning of chapter iv., and this particularly with a view to the condition in which any of the Jewish believers had been, and what their present relationship to God is in virtue of redemption.

“Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord of all.” This is a principle true of believers under what we may call the old covenant. They were heirs, no doubt, and blessing is to be their portion; but the heir is no more than the bondman or slave, as long as he is an infant, which is the force of the word “child” —the word that was used among the ancients, as our legal term is still, for a person who is under a legal age, and incapable of entering into contracts and engagements or of acting for himself. That was precisely the position of an elder under the law. He was not arrived at full age; he was really an heir destined to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—there was no difference as to this. Conversion and regeneration are the same in all times and dispensations. There may be greater fullness, simplicity, and joy now: but as to the substance of the thing even from the fall, before the flood and after it, either with law or without it, the heir was in truth lord of all. He really is to have a part in the kingdom of Christ,

to reign with Christ; but if we inquire into his condition while he is in this world, we have it here described as servant ship. God's purpose is, that when glory comes, he shall have a bright, blessed place; but while in this world he was an infant, “under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father:” the first word, I suppose, referring to the person, the other to his possession. He is under these till the time appointed of the Father. “Even so we, when we were children” —he applies it particularly to what they had been as Jewish believers— “were in bondage (servitude) under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

Nothing can be clearer than this. All is adjusted with divine perspicuity and force. The blessing of the Old Testament saint is in view, or of one who knew Christ in the days of His flesh, because there was no substantial difference between them: Peter, James, and John all were then infants. It was true Christ was present in person, and there was an immense accession of blessing; their eyes saw, their ears heard, what prophets and kings had desired to see. Nevertheless, they were still infants; they were not delivered from the law; they were as yet kept bound down by its injunctions and ordinances, and the terror arising from it always kept them in a measure of uncertainty and darkness; and it ought to have been so. A man under the law was not entitled to be thoroughly happy. If I have to do with the law at all, I ought to feel the law: if I am conscious of having failed under it, I ought to have the pressure of its condemnation on my spirit. It was so with the saints under the old covenant. They were under bondage, because they were under tutors and governors. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” It was quite necessary that Christ should be a man and a Jew. If He had not been a mall, there could have been no basis for meeting any child of Adam, under all circumstances; and if He had not been a Jew, where had been the law or the promises either? But being both, now comes in an infinitely greater thing—redemption. He came as a man and under the law, but the object was, that He might redeem them that were under the law. God had chosen to put the Jews in a special place for particular purposes; and the issue of that experiment was that the Jews brought greater dishonor on the name of God than even the “sinners of the Gentiles.” We know that, if ever there was a people bent on destroying themselves and forsaking their own mercies, it was Israel. If there was an idol among the Gentiles they took the pattern of it; and King Ahaz even went so far as to command that all the offerings were to be offered upon the altar that he had devised after the pattern of the heathen one that he had seen at Damascus, thus insulting the altar of God. The great crime for which Israel were carried away at the last was, that they set up the golden calves. In Jerusalem, in the temple, they had re-asserted the old sin, for which God had smitten them in the wilderness. They were unfaithful to God, and they stuck to idolatry as a heritage too precious to give up. The Jews who had been called out to be the special witness of God against image-worship, were not satisfied with following idols of their own, but must adopt those of their heathen neighbors around them—and God swept them away. Hence it is that we read in Kings and Chronicles of the sin of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin. That was the one thing which God had in remembrance. All sorts of new dynasties were continually arising in Israel; but no matter what, if it was only a man reigning for a month, it was always the same uniform sin, the sin of Jeroboam, that God bore in mind, and that most insulting of all idolatries, the golden calf. It was set usurpation before His face: “These be thy gods, O Israel,

which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." So far we see what Israel was; and if we look at the prophecy of Jeremiah, we shall find that God reproaches Judah that backsliding Israel had justified herself in the presence of Judah, because. Judah was far more guilty. But we must not confine this to Israel; we must read the Bible as a lesson of the heart, the lesson of what man is to God. And when we hear of Israel and Judah, let us apply it to ourselves. This is what God shows me that I am—this is the kind of stuff that my heart is composed of—this is what human nature does when God puts it to the proof. Idolatry, then, governed; and as we know, calamity after calamity came upon Israel. They were carried away captive into Babylon, and the remnant are afterward brought out of captivity to receive the Son of God. When He came from heaven, it was in the fullest grace. Sin had entered in by the woman, and here we have the Savior. And the law having brought in what was crushing to the hopes of the sinner, Christ comes, made of a woman, made under the law; but it was to redeem them that were under the law. The mere keeping of the law could not have redeemed any one: it was essential to the vindication of God that the Lord should show He was perfect man under the law, perfect Son of man, perfect Israelite, perfect Son of God above law—in all things perfect. But whatever might be His glory, and whatever He might come down into, the end of all was redemption here to redeem them that were under the law. God was waiting that He might bring them into the place that He intended His people to have. It was no pleasure to Clod to see children trembling. He was waiting for the blessed moment when Christ's death would give the righteous title to deliver His people from that condition, to bring them into a new state of things, when the bond of the law would be forever broken by the death of Jesus the Son of God. And so it was. He therefore redeemed them that were under the law.

And here comes out another thing. No negative deliverance will ever satisfy God. It was "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But even that does not satisfy Him; for there might still have been the thought that this adoption of sons was only for the believers in Israel—that this was what they were brought into now. But the apostle turns round to the Gentiles, and says, "And because ye are sons" —changing the person, and addressing the Galatians in a very pointed manner, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Here we learn most clearly that the Jew by the law only got into a position of bondage: that was all the law could do for him. It was impossible that it could be otherwise. It could condemn what was wrong, and no more. But now Christ came, and in Christ there is power to deliver, and this is what ruined. man wants. There is delivering power, and God introduces it in Christ. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." It was God Himself introducing this blessed work; indeed, what God delights in. When the law was introduced, though God gave it, yet He simply says, "it was ordained by angels." He merely puts servants to the work, comparatively distant servants, that never had the link of life and the Spirit, the link of Christ Himself, which we have. Angels may be holy, but an angel never rises out of the condition of servant; they are even servants of the saints, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But now, when he comes to speak of redemption, he makes God most evidently and thoroughly the source of it. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons (ye Gentiles)." Of course, believing Gentles alone are meant; but without any question of our being put under the law, without the least thought of putting us under the disciplinary process which the Jews had known.

The Jewish believer had been in the condition of an infant, a bondman under the law; the Gentile never was. It is true he was a bondman, but of a totally different character. His bondage was to idolatry—the Jew's bondage was to the law. The one, therefore, was under that which, in itself, was intrinsically good but destructive to him; the other was under bondage to that which was of Satan, and had nothing which linked him to God. The more religious the Gentile was, the more thoroughly was he the slave of Satan. We shall find the force of that shortly. In the case of the Jew they had been under this system of guardians and stewards; they had known what it was, though really believers, to be only at a distance, far from God, unable to draw near to God and pour out their hearts before Him as children. They were able to cry to Him, to groan to Him: that is what you have in the Psalms, which are full of this blessed confidence in God; but it is the confidence of servants who count upon God to interfere for them, who hope in God, but who are not able to praise Him yet—they are not brought near to Him. Even in some of the brightest of the Psalms, they pray that God's anger may not burn against them forever. They do not know that it is entirely put away for them. On the other hand, they enter into the judicial feelings of God against His enemies: they look forward, as if it were a privilege to put down the enemies of God, and ask Him to make them as stubble before the wind—to use them and their dogs that they might drink the blood of enemies—to us a thought full of the most painful associations which all Christians would turn from. Many are even in danger of condemning the word of God because such desires are in it. There you have language suited to souls under the law; but now we are under grace, and no longer under law, and we pray for persons that despitefully use us and persecute us; whereas the whole tone of the Psalms, where they speak of the happiness of dashing the children of Babylon against the stone, is anything but returning good for evil:—it is evil meeting with its just doom. I maintain that every word in the Psalms is of God—that all these imprecations are divine. Each curse, threat, and warning—all this sympathy with divine retribution, is as much from God as the Christian's now interceding for his enemies; but they are not suited to the same time nor the same persons, nor is God accomplishing the same end. As long as God carries on the day of grace, all these things are entirely inapplicable, and not what God is bringing out now. They remain true forever, each always in itself a right thing. But the fact is, that God has now brought in Christ, full, sovereign grace; and therefore God puts those who belong to Christ in a position to show forth, not earthly righteousness, but heavenly grace. The other is in reserve, and yet to be accomplished to the letter; and God will use His people Israel to be the special instruments of executing these divine judgments.

-Let us take the Revelation. There you have it after the Church is taken to heaven—after the twenty-four elders are enthroned and crowned before the throne, representing the heavenly redeemed that God is now calling out of Jews and Gentiles. God then begins to work upon His ancient people Israel, who understand and cry to God and ask Him, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dolt thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Is not this the counterpart to the tone of the Psalms? Yet are they saints of God. But mark the consequence of confounding these dispensations now. The Bible requires to be rightly divided. If you take up parts of Scripture and misapply them, one way or the other, you will be a workman that needs to be ashamed. Alas! how men pervert the Sermon on the Mount. They see certain words laid down by our Lord for His disciples; they find Him insisting that they were not to resist evil, not to return a blow for a blow, nor to use any earthly means for asserting their claims or vindicating them against personal violence, spoliation of their property, &c.; the very things men resent as an infringement

of their rights. Were a Christian to make out of this a code for all men now, what could be more contrary to the mind of God? It would be to attempt governing the world on principles of grace. If you experimented on men as they are, it would become a far more dreadful bear-garden than even in the times of the great Rebellion, when they tried to act out the retribution of the Psalmist. There, Christians were put under the spirit and principle of the law; but the attempt to put the world under that which was intended for the guidance of God's children, would be still worse confusion. The knave and rogue would be pardoned and caressed; the thief allowed to help himself to as much more as he liked. Evidently such principles never would do for the world, neither were they intended for it. The uninstructed may cry out that this is to take away the Bible, or much of it, but it is totally false. It is only an effort to lead them to understand the Bible; to teach them the real meaning of its various parts.

The practical point is, that Gentiles, such as ourselves, have been taken clean out of all the condition of sin in which we were. We were not under law, but we were under sin—in total in subjection to God—under every kind of evil. It might not be necessarily open moral evil, but we lived to self, and lived without God, and that is a very gentle way of describing the condition in which all of us have been. These Galatians were under the grossest forms of ignorance and idolatry, but such is the spirit of grace, that they were taken quite out of it all, and, by faith of Christ, made sons of God, without passing through any intermediate steps. They repented, they received the Gospel, they were children of God. “And because ye are sons, God path sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;” —the very word which He, the blessed One, in full communion with His Father, uttered. Think into what a place we are brought! That he who was but the day before a wretched, defiled, idolatrous Gentile, is empowered of the Holy Ghost to utter that same sweet expression of relationship—Father! What a place has God given His children now! And it comes out, not in speaking about the Jews, who were expressly said to be redeemed from under the law, and brought into sonship; but the Holy Ghost expands when He speaks about the Gentiles. There might have been the notion that the Gentile, as he had known nothing about the law, could not be brought into so blessed a place all at once, as the believing Jew. But not so: the Jew had to be brought out, not merely of sin, but from the law. The Gentile had nothing but his sin to be brought out of, and therefore in him the work was done, if I may so say, far more simply. The Jew had to unlearn, the Gentile merely to learn. All that the Gentile had was mere corrupt nature, till he was converted, when he was brought at once under the shining of God's grace; whereas the Jew had to be brought out of the law, and was hampered—perhaps fettered—by what still clung to him of the legal system.

Remember that he who understands grace never weakens the law, which is a very great sin. The doctrine of faith establishes the law. If you think the Christian is under the law, and yet can be saved and happy, you really destroy the authority of the law. Jewish believers under the law never had the full peace and joy which the gospel now brings; and where you have souls now under the law in spirit, they may be saved, but they never have the full rest to which the work of Christ entitles them. The reason is most simple. Though they received Christ, they do not apply His work. If they did, they would see that one of the effects of redemption is to deliver a person—not from subjection to Christ, but to make him more than ever subject to the will of God, and yet not under law. Therefore the apostle shows that what they were brought into is the place of sons. Now the position of the son is intelligent subjection to his Father; the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of His Son,

teaches to cry, “Abba, Father;” but not to say longer, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” That is the cry forced out of the heart of one under the law, crying out in anguish of spirit, always having the sense that there is something to be delivered from; comforted a little sometimes, and then down under the pressure of the law. Whereas, where this fullness of blessing that God has brought us in Christ is known, the heart is prompted by the Holy Ghost to cry, Abba, Father. The flesh is done with in the sight of God, and we are entitled to say that we have done with it ourselves. God cannot trust me, nor can I trust myself; but I know that I can trust God in His beloved Son, who has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so that this is perfect rest for the heart. The cry of the Spirit is Abba, Father: thus is the child of God led out into the proper language of his relationship with God. Other people may admire His creation, may dwell upon the wonders of the heavens and earth, but the cry of the Spirit is Abba, Father; and you can feel it far more than you can express it. What is the gladness of dwelling upon the attributes of God, or the outward effects of His power, compared with the joy of the heart that feels its relationship? Thus we have the Galatian saint here reminded of his relationship; it was the cry which the Holy Ghost produced, and suited to the relationship into the consciousness of which he was brought out of his idolatry. For all depends upon this: the simplicity with which my soul receives the great truth that, as to all that I am, I saw it judged on the cross; and now there is a new man before God, and a new man before me—Christ risen from the dead; and I am entitled to say, that is the One in whom I stand before God. Can we cry anything else than, Abba, Father.

But then there is a warning as well as a conclusion. The conclusion is, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Just as in chapter vi., where he says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” The Holy Ghost then puts it to each individual's soul—considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. So, if God gives a warning that is individual, He gives a comfort, and this before it. “Wherefore,” he says, as the result of all the reasoning, “thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Observe, it is not what they shall be; not that we are always infants in this world, and shall get our blessing in heaven, but “thou art no more a servant, but a son.” If you were a Jew, you would be the servant of the law. But now, no matter what you were, if you had been an idolater, having received Christ, you have passed into the fullness of the blessing that is due from God to His beloved Son: God has no blessing too great for the heart that bows to Him— “if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” He enlarges the sphere; it is not merely heir of this or that, but heir of God. What God possesses, what God will have in the blessed day that is coming, He will share with His children. And that is the meaning of the last clause in Eph. 1:18; also Rom. 8. Such, and no less, is the place for which God destines us; He does not mean to keep anything back. As grace has been, so the glory will be, God's answer to the devil's insinuation in Eden.

Now for the warning. “Howbeit, then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods! But now, after that ye have known God, or rather, are known of God,” &c. It is plain he means the Gentiles; he does not say, when we knew not God, because the Jews had a certain knowledge of God under the law; but “when ye knew not God,” clearly is about the heathen. “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” Weigh that expression well. There cannot be a more solemn statement as regards the present state of Christendom. What does he mean by saying that these Galatian saints were

returning again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which they desired again to be in bondage? They must have been perfectly shocked. Turning again to idolatry! How can that be? They might say, We are only taking up the principle of the law: do you call that the weak and beggarly elements? Why, says the apostle, when you were unconverted, you worshipped false gods—idols; but if you Christians go and take up Jewish principles, even these feast days or other principles of the law, you are in principle idolaters, turning back again to that idolatry out of which God delivered you. How can this be? The reason is plain. It was not that the law in itself could be idolatrous, and God forbearingly bore with the prejudice of those that were Jews. But here were the Gentile believers going to these legal elements. Who told them? These things had lost all their meaning, and a Gentile had nothing to do with them; they had their value as a shadow of Christ, before Christ came; but to turn back from Christ risen from the dead to these mere shadows was in God's sight going back to idolatry. Whenever professing Christendom takes up the law, and external ceremonies and shadows (quite right as all this was under the law), and adopts it as Christian worship, it has unconsciously but really fallen into idolatry.

Supposing a person were to say, I find myself very cold in worshipping God, and I want something to arouse my soul; what more proper than to have a picture of my Savior, that as I look upon Him and the crown of thorns, I may feel more deeply His love and have my heart's affections more drawn out to Him? That is idolatry, and would have been so at any time. But there were certain of these things allowed under the legal system, because of the hardness of their heart: they were allowed sacrifices and an earthly priesthood; but for a Gentile to turn to these things is going back to idolatry in the sight of God. The Holy Ghost presses this upon these Galatian believers, for the evil was only in the germ. If this be true, what a sin to take part in, to countenance or sanction in any way, that which is idolatry in God's judgment? The evil is increasing most rapidly. It is not confined now to popery, but the stride which has been made of late years towards Catholic principles is the same thing. If it has any religious element at all, it is an idolatrous one, making use of certain feelings of awe in our fallen nature to make people feel more reverent in worship. That is precisely the thing that is opposed to faith. The essence of our blessing lies in the soul's enjoying Christ by the word of God—the Holy Ghost giving this enjoyment of Christ apart from everything that acts upon the natural eye or mind. For it is precisely this very abuse that the apostle here so strongly denounces, and which he calls the weak and beggarly element. What God prizes in worship would now be generally considered meager and poor; for it supposes the absence of outward decoration, in order that it may be the real power of the Holy Ghost acting among the saints.

“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.” Not to do this now is the wonder. Alas! the Galatian evil is thought a proof of religion. He marks that as an error; and not merely so, but as a proof of idolatry. In heathenism these festivals were of great account; and God permitted it in Judaism because they had a means of religion suited to their state and the worldly sanctuary. But now all is completely changed, and the observance of these special feasts and seasons as a means of pleasing God is put down with a high hand by the Holy Spirit. “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Is it not most solemn, that, whatever might have been the evil of the Corinthians, he never says of them, “I am afraid of you.” Had we known an assembly with so much flagrant moral evil in its midst—some, too, seeking to overthrow the resurrection—should we not have said there never was so pitiable a thing as their state? But the

apostle writes to them in confidence, that they would be brought out of their evil. Not but that he deeply felt it, and puts before them their critical condition; but he writes to them, assured that God would touch their hearts. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son.” And then he begins to bring out their conduct when he has touched that great chord in their hearts. But when he writes to the Galatians, there is no such expression. Afterward the Holy Ghost gives Him comfort about them, but it is far short of what he feels in writing to the Corinthians. Legalism is an insidious thing, because it looks fair. When this is the case, men fancy that they become practically more holy; but the contrary is the fact. What produces true holiness is, that it is not merely the name of a day, or of an hour, or of a season or place, but God working in the soul, both to will and do of His good pleasure; and this, because “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.” God brings that person into the presence of God, and puts him there as a child.

Persons may be really breathing the very life-breath of popery who think that they have the most wholesome dread of it. Let us search and see for our own souls. We can always look up to God and count upon victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Satan rage as he will, yet God will always be God, always be true to His own word and Spirit.

Chapter 53

Remarks on Galatians 4:12-31

The apostle now turns to his own relations with the Galatian saints; and the very reproach which the legal teachers had been inciting them to against himself, he takes as additional ground for the truth. They, by their representations, had stirred up the Galatians to feel aggrieved with the apostle, because he had, as it were, ceased to be a Jew, avowing that he had completely done with the law. This is now met. It is important to understand how the law is thus done with. It was not that the apostle did not use it; but then the point is, as he tells Timothy, that a man should use it lawfully, for dealing with the ungodly, the unrighteous, &c. But they found fault with him, because he did not stand up for his Jewish privileges. He could and did use the law of God for moral principles and for dealing with men; but neither as a title nor a rule for himself. It would have been lowering his ground and character of blessing had he condescended to speak about anything that belonged to him after the flesh. Grace had brought him into a far better place. In man the law and the flesh always go together. The cross of Christ was the end of both in the sight of God. The flesh was judged and condemned there, it was treated as a dead thing before God-dead and buried: and the law which deals with the flesh we are dead to. We have passed out of both, are not in the flesh, and are no longer under law. The flesh being that in us with which the law grapples, and the flesh being now by faith accounted a dead thing, there is no more for the law to lay hold of. We pass out of its province into another country and atmosphere.

The apostle accordingly seizes this very reproach and turns it into an argument unexpected for the gospel. “Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am:” that is, be free from the law, as being dead to it in Christ; take your place boldly and with firmness, with the certainty that the will of God is that you have no direct relationship to it. “Be as I am.” I am free from its tenure and obligations. They say that I do not assert my legal rights as a Jew: I know and proclaim it. You were Gentiles after the flesh; you were never in a Jewish position at all: do not seek it, now that you have, by and in grace, a better. “Be as I am; for I am as ye are.” You are Gentiles, and have never been, and are not, under the law at all, and “I am as ye are.” If you only understood your place of liberty from the law, how could you wish to pass under its yoke? This is put in a concise and highly elliptical form; but I believe it is to be understood by taking it in connection with what goes before and after. “Ye have not injured me at all.” They were apparently afraid that in letting the apostle know that he was foregoing his own proper place, they were doing something to pain his feelings. Not at all, he says: “Ye have not injured me at all.” I fully acknowledge that, whatever I was as a man in the flesh, I have entirely abandoned that ground. As a lineal descendant of Abraham, without a singe evil thing, the law kept perfectly, I should not be so blessed as I am in Christ. Then, remembering what he said in chap. iii. 10 (“as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse”), we see that all which could be got by taking legal ground is a curse. Well, therefore, could the apostle triumphantly urge, “Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are.” You were only Gentiles and had nothing to say to the law; and now I am brought outside it as much as you—not, of course, by becoming a Gentile, but by being delivered from it in and through Christ. There is the blessedness of the Christian position. It is not merely absence of law, but the being brought into

union with Christ, which raises us above the law, while it secures obedience and draws out love to God and man as the law never could. So that what the law aimed at is accomplished (Rom. viii. 3, 4), and far more fully than it ever could otherwise have been, through the love of Christ constraining the soul. And this is done, not through the mere negative process of telling a man that he has not the law as his rule; but by putting him under Christ, i.e., under grace. That is what faith does.

“Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel to you at the first: and my temptation that was in my flesh ye despised not nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.” So far from coming in anything that savored of fleshly confidence and authority, he came as a suffering man. This is just alluded to here, but it is more particularly brought forward in 2 Cor. 12. And very sweet it is to consider how it was, and when it was, that the apostle had this humiliating mark in his flesh. We are not told what it was. It might have been some peculiarity in his speech, look, &c. We know it was something connected with his bodily state: it was “in his flesh.” But it is quite clear, as it is affecting to know, that the more the apostle was led on of God and blessed, only the deeper marks did he wear of suffering, weakness, and shame in his person. The thorn in the flesh followed his being taken up into the third heaven. This messenger of Satan buffeted him, and God turned it to blessed account, that the apostle might be kept low in his own eyes, and even in those of others. It was thus made manifest, that what wrought such wonders in Paul was the power of the Holy Ghost, in spite of the sentence of death being passed upon all the energy of nature. The day is coming when God will restore the Jews, and will put them in the position of “the head,” and the Gentiles of “the tail;” and then all will be established in due order according to the mind of God. But now, he, as it were, says—it is not so at all. Being a Jew is nothing. It is all gone. I have come here as one suffering and despised, and in nothing asserting what I am as a child of Abraham. I am dead to it all; and as a proof; he refers to the well-known circumstances of his first preaching to them. Did they not remember that when he came to them, it was not with might or show, but deeply tried? Instead of outward attraction attached to his person, there was that which could not but be a grievous trial to himself and to them. But what did they think of then? They were so full of the gospel, so happy in finding the grace and the blessedness of the truth preached, that they regarded Paid as they would an angel. “Ye despised not; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.”

“Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.” Their affections had been completely alienated, which is always the effect of false teachers working on the mind. The enmity grows, and every circumstance tends to swell it. The apostle presses this home urgently on their conscience. “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well. Yea, they would exclude you,” or us—for it was really shutting out the apostle from the saints—making a barrier between him and them. “They would exclude us, that ye might affect them:” that is, that it might be all a matter of flattering one another; for the law is invariably perverted to the puffing up of the flesh, when it is not used according to the purpose of God. “But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.” The experience of Paul with the Galatians was the exact opposite to what was found at Philippi. You may remember a well-known passage in Phil. 2 where the apostle speaks of them as having always “obeyed,” not as in his presence only, but much more in his absence. They

were remarkable for their obedient spirit when he was present, and it is always the Spirit of grace which produces this, as the law begets servility and fear. When we are happy in God's presence, we are united in one common object, and that object is Christ. There is thus a motive that governs every affection and action; and happiness, peace, and submissiveness are the proper and natural effects of grace working among the children of God. At Philippi, then, they had always obeyed, not only when Paul was there, but much more in his absence. They were working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, conscious of the mighty conflict in which they were engaged. They did not allow the fond dream that, because they were Christians, all the difficulty was over; but, on the contrary, having been brought to Christ, they nevertheless found themselves in the presence of a powerful enemy, and hence they were thrown upon God. The apostle was gone, but instead of being cast down thereby, it made them look up to God more and more; not in any pride of heart, but in the felt need of dependence on Him. The same feeling of owning God would have made them use and value the apostle when he was there; when he was not there, it threw them directly and immediately upon God. Whereas the pride of heart that would have despised the apostle, exposes one to self idolatry, to such as flatter self, and so to every cheat of Satan. The great point for the Philippians was, that God wrought in them. Why be downcast, as if they had not the confidence that He who loved them best was working in them, and would care for them so much the more because they were engaged in such deadly strife?

With the Galatians it was not so. Taking advantage of the apostle's absence, they had been falling into a fleshly use of the law, and with teachers who humored it; they were fast losing all real affection for him, and the blessedness they had once enjoyed. Although it would have been better that they should have looked up to God, and found strength to stand for Him when left alone, yet considering the state in which they were, he could have wished to have been with them. Their faith had been shaken, and they were slipping from Christ, to make things more secure by ordinances; and as the apostle had gone through an immense deal about them in their first corning to the knowledge of Christ—had known, as he expresses it himself, deep painful throes about it—so he went through all, in spirit, again now. “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” Legalism had so disfigured the truth in their souls, that they needed to be rooted and grounded in the first elements of grace over again. They had lost their hold of the cross, and the apostle stood in doubt of them. Outwardly they might be very zealous: but as far as testimony for Christ, and their souls' enjoyment of Him was concerned, all was gone. The apostle desired that the work should be renewed from the very beginning in their souls. “I desire to be present with you and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.” The meaning is, to deal with them according to what he found their condition called for. There might be an effect produced, and he would speak softly to them; or they might be light, proud, and hard, and then he must deal sternly: he would change his voice, as he says to the Corinthians: “What will ye? shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness'?” Here the apostle was perplexed as to them.

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” He uses the word “law” in two different senses in this verse. Ye that desire to be under the principle of law, do ye not hear what the books of the law say? That is, the early writings of the Bible. “Law” is sometimes said about the word of God in general as then revealed, as in Psa. 19, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” But when spoken of as that which the Christian is not under, it is the principle of the conscience being put under certain obligations, in order to acquire a standing with God. This is the

fallacy which Paul is laying bare. Therefore, says he, “Ye that desire to be under law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a handmaid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise.” There you see the connection between flesh and law, promise and grace. The Spirit has to do with the promise, the law with the flesh. This he illustrates from Genesis.

The Holy Ghost has taken particular pains to lay hold of facts in the Old Testament which we should never have thought applicable, in order to bring out blessed truths in the New Testament. Who Would have discerned the difference between law and promise in Hagar and Ishmael striving with Sarah and Isaac? The Spirit of God not only saw but intended it, and recorded the circumstances as the beautiful foreshadowing of the two covenants; that of law, which has only a child of the flesh; and that of promise, which, on the contrary, brings forth in due time the child of the Spirit. The apostle does not leave us to our own imaginations. He shows that Hagar answers to Jerusalem that now is—the city of scribes and Pharisees, poor, proud, miserable Jerusalem, that had no liberty towards God, groaning under the Roman bondage, and the still more bitter slavery of sin. The apostle applies this to what was then going on among the Galatians. Let them beware of becoming virtually the children of Hagar. Did they not take the place of being zealous for the law? Yet after all they did not understand its voice: “desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” The law was thoroughly against them. It clearly sheaved that God attached the promise not to the mere offspring of the letter, but to the children of the Spirit. Every religious system which takes its stand upon the law, invariably assumes a Jewish character. We need not look round far to understand this, nor to apply it. Why is it that men have magnificent buildings, or the splendor of ritual in the service of God? On what model is it founded? Certainly it is not like those who gathered together of old in the upper-room. The temple is clearly the type, and along with this goes the having a peculiar sacred class of persons, the principle of the clergy being founded upon the notion of the Jewish priesthood. The service, where that is the case, must depend upon what would attract the senses—show of ornament, music, imposing ceremonies, everything that would strike man's mind, or that would draw a multitude together, not by the truth, but by something to be seen or heard that pleases nature. It is the order of what the word of God calls the “worldly sanctuary.” Not that the tabernacle or temple had not a very important meaning before Christ came; but afterward their shadowy character became apparent, and their temporary value was at an end, and the full truth and grace of God were manifested in the person of Him who came from heaven. When Christ was rejected from the earth and went back to heaven, all was changed, and the heart-allegiance of God's children is transferred to heaven. The true sanctuary for us is the name of Christ. What the Old Testament connected for an earthly people with the temple, the New Testament does with Jesus. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” If there were ever so few true to that, they would reap the blessing. It is of great importance to trace things to their principle. When the apostle wrote to the Galatians, only the germs were showing themselves; they had not got to the length of consecrated buildings and castes of men, with all the pomp and circumstance of religious worship suited to the world, which we see around us now, the result of the gradual inroads of error upon the Christian professing body. But still there was the beginning of the mischief, the attempt to bring in the principles of the law upon Christians. And what is the effect? You only fall into the position of Ishmael, out of Isaac's. To be thus identified

with the law, is to be an Ishmael; to forfeit the promises, to become a mere child of the bond-woman. This is the argument that the apostle uses to deal with the Galatians, who were flattering themselves that they had made immense progress; but it was only a slip out of liberty into bondage.

“But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.” The word “all” has been added to this verse. The true text ends with “us,” and obviously the sense is fuller and better without it. “All” was added, probably, by those who thought to strengthen the connection of all the children of God; whereas the inspired writer particularly refers to those that had been Jews. He says, We are no longer children of Jerusalem which is below, but we belong to Jerusalem which is above. As to the earthly Jerusalem, we owe her no allegiance now; we belong to Christ, and consequently to the heavenly Jerusalem. For it is written—and now he refers to a passage in the prophets “Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.” The meaning may be a little obscure at first, but adds much, when understood, to the force of what the apostle insists on. It is connected not so much with Hagar and Sarah, as with the reference to Jerusalem. See Isa. 54, where Jerusalem in a future day is looking back upon her past trials, and God makes a remarkable reckoning of grace. He is speaking of the time when she was so long desolate, her present season of trial, when she is reft of all her outward privileges; but of that very time it says, she has more children than even when the Lord was her husband. In Hosea, Israel is spoken of as one most guilty, and the Lord about to put her away. Then she is the desolate one: the Lord has forsaken her because of her sin; but in due time, before there is any outward deliverance from under Gentile captivity or oppression, grace begins to work, and all those who are brought in under Christ now are counted in a certain respect her children. But all is connected with Jerusalem that is to be—Jerusalem that will have ceased to be Hagar and have taken the ground of grace. So that when she looks upon the Christians who will then be in their own heavenly place, the Lord will count them as children of the desolate wife. He will say, “Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.” It is a comparison of herself during her time of desolation with herself when she had a husband. The latter was the time when she was owned in her earthly standing, and she had few children then; but now, in her desolation, there is a mighty outpouring of God's grace, and a wide ingathering of souls, who are counted as her children.

The Epistle to the Galatians never takes up the standing of the Church properly, not going beyond the inheritance of promise. There are certain privileges that we share in common with every saint. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. We, too, believe and are justified. Substantially, faith has so far the same blessings at all times. We are children of promise, entering into the portion of faith as past saints have done before us; and this is what we find in Galatians, though with a certain advance of blessing for us. But if you look at Ephesians, the great point there is that God is bringing out wholly new and heavenly privileges. This is in no respect what Galatians takes up. There we are on the common ground of promises. “If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” But in Ephesians there are certain distinct and superadded privileges that Abraham never thought nor heard of: I mean the formation of the Church of God, Christ's body, the truth that Jews and Gentiles were to be taken out of their place, and made one with Christ in heaven. This was the mystery concerning Christ and the

Church, hidden from ages and generations, but now revealed through the Holy Ghost. So that in order to have a right view of the full blessing of the Christian, we must take the Ephesian blessing along with the Galatian. The special time is while Christ is on the right hand of God. Even as to the millennial saints, do you think they will enjoy all that we have now? Far from it. They will possess much that we do not, such as the manifested glory of Christ, exemption from sorrow and suffering, &c. But our calling is totally different and contrasted. It is to love Him whom we have not seen; to rejoice in the midst of tribulation and shame. If a man were to form his thoughts of Christianity from Galatians only, he might confound the saints now with those of the Old Testament, always remembering the difference that we find here, that the heir as long as under age differs nothing from a servant; whereas we are brought into the full possession of our privileges. But there are other and higher things, called in Ephesians, or at least flowing from the eternal purpose of God. So that it is well to distinguish this double truth—the community of blessing through all dispensations, and the specialty of privilege that attaches to those who are being called now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But, as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.” There he shows the practical fruit of it; nevertheless he says, “What saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.” What a death-blow to all who maintain that the child of God has anything to do with the law, as that which determines his own relationship to God! The law is a powerful weapon for probing the ungodly; but in our own standing we have done with it. “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.” Such is the conclusion of the apostle's argument. And what could be more conclusive? Out of the law itself he contradicts all they were using the law for; and before the law was given at Sinai, we have set forth in this remarkable type the true position of the Christian in contrast with the legalist. The Jew answers to the child of the bond-woman, and was then in bondage too. The apostle shews that such is the inevitable portion of the Gentile also who desires to take that place, and who must suffer the consequences of his own folly in doing so. He is leaving freedom in order to be a slave. “But what saith the scriptures? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.” So that we have, in the clearest manner possible, God against all this attempt to foist in the law among the children of the free-woman. On the contrary, to the child of the free the promises are firmly bound by God Himself in Christ risen.

Thus, then, it is of the greatest importance that we should seize clearly our position, and understand what it is that God has given us. He has called us, even had we been Jews, into another condition than subjection to the law. He has made us to be children of the free-woman and brought us into liberty.

Chapter 54

Remarks on Galatians 5:1-12

It is well to remark the different way in which the Holy Ghost brings out the liberty which the believer now enjoys. In John 8:36 it is attributed to the Son, and the Son of God acting by the truth; and both points of view in contradistinction to the law. The whole chapter, indeed, is most striking in this respect. For we have the case of a woman taken in adultery, in the very act; and man scrupling not to use this for selfish purposes: and, observe, religious man! He puts himself as he might suppose, on God's side, to judge the gravest, plainest, most positive guilt, and this without mercy and without self-judgment. Nay, further: he would turn the case of man's sin and shame, and God's law, not only to exalt himself and claim a righteousness which he has not, but to dishonor God's Son. Now this is the thesis of the chapter, and it has brought out triumphantly the glory of Christ. For He never came to sully the law. But then there was a glory that surpassed, and it was come: a glory before which the dignity of the law grew pale; and Christ showed it most clearly. Not that He uttered one word to lower the law, which indeed could not have been of God. But, nevertheless, He proved the utter powerlessness of the law to meet the sinner's case, save only in the way of a destruction which goes much farther than those who cite it expect. Law destroys the guilty hand that wields it, as well as him against whom it is aimed. It is two-edged in its character when Christ speaks; and those were forced to feel its keenness most who appealed to it against the abashed adulteress. Not she, but they, retired in utter confusion from the presence of Christ. But mark this-of Christ using the law? nay, not this; but Christ as divine light, dealing with conscience. Nevertheless, He did most completely expose the folly and sin of their recourse to the law. He showed that one without sin could alone righteously throw the first stone. The law never had raised such a question: but Christ brings in a power and comprehensiveness and searching character which never had shone before; and only now can be seen in and through Him. The law simply said, Thou shalt not do this; but this is not, “He that is without sin.” And who was there! He alone who had not come to condemn. The law might denounce, but there was none to execute it. For had its sentence been carried out, they were all dead men-all left equally under the penalty, though from different causes. They retire in hopeless confusion: and the woman was left in the presence of the Son, who shines with the word of God as light upon the soul.

In the whole chapter they who stood upon the law are manifested as the slaves of sin. They might boast about being children of Abraham, but they did not his works. And certainly Abraham, who did not even know that law of which they boasted, did know Christ's day. He had seen the light of God, and rejoiced to see that day. So here, when proud, guilty man is banished from His presence, He meets one who was outwardly more guilty still with nothing but mercy. This flows from His divine rights as Son of God, using the word of God and not the law. The law, on the contrary, always condemns and kills, and can only put bondage on the soul. But it is Christ's prerogative, and Christ's only, to give liberty. It is the Son who makes free. The liberty we get flows from His word. Hence it is through faith; because “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” These things always go together-the Son of God working by the word, and that received by faith into the soul.

But there is another point of view, which it is especially the Apostle Paul's to bring out, that Christ has wrought a work by virtue of which even those who were under the law are completely brought outside its domain; and those not previously under it, the Gentiles, are proved to sin against their own mercies, if in any way they pass under its yoke. To this the Apostle Paul has come in our epistle: “Stand fast,” he says, “in the liberty wherewith Christ path made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Bear in mind this, too, that, among the Galatians, the character of the bondage was not so much what is called the moral law as the ceremonial. I am aware that many would think the latter much more serious than the former. But, on the contrary, the Christian's subjection to the moral law argues a far deeper departure from the truth than if it were the ceremonial; because the ceremonial law, every Christian must feel, derives its whole meaning and value from being a type of Christ. Not so the ten words which are not a type of Christ, but the direct demand upon the strength and righteousness of man, if he have any. And therefore one can understand a Christian's getting entangled with types and shadows. A reasoning mind might say, Is it possible to believe that circumcision, on which God insisted so much with Israel, is to be given up now If there were no value in it now, why was it enjoined on Abraham's seed? And if it were so significant and obligatory then, why not now? Besides, does not Christ teach that it was not of Moses, but of the fathers? All this might furnish a plausible platform for human feeling and argument; but the apostle was led of the Holy Ghost to deal with the question of introducing the thinnest wedge of the law. Take circumcision, the type of having our nature mortified: every believer has this verified in the death of Christ. But believers might have said, There ought to be the outward acknowledgment of it too: why not retain the rite which connects us with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? We are feeble and forgetful: why should we not keep up that which “the elders” prized so deeply while we enjoy the blessing that is new? But the apostle deals it a death-blow in this epistle. Whatever the use to which God applied circumcision before Christ, it had no value now. “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” That is, if you should be circumcised after this; it was not a question of those who had already been. But if they, as Christians, sought it, “Christ shall profit you nothing.” He does not mean that, supposing anyone had made the gross mistake of being circumcised, this could not be forgiven; but that, if they now passed through that ordinance, as necessary to their complete justification, His efficacy was for them made void. Thus, not only is Christ a complete Savior, but He is an exclusive one. The attempt to add to Christ is in fact to destroy salvation by Christ. This is very important; because you will find it is constantly the resource of ignorance to say, Well, we all hold the same thing to a certain degree; the only difference is, that I believe something more than you do. Yes, but that something more is to extinguish faith, and annul the worth of Christ. The apostle says, Bring in anything, no matter what, necessary to be done by you-necessary as a means of being justified in the sight of God, and I say unto you, Christ shall profit you nothing. Nay, look at circumcision, which God once instituted with peculiar solemnity, threatening with death him who did not submit to it: and now see how that same God, having given Christ, puts a stop to it all. It had done its office; and now to bring it in again would be to obscure, dishonor, and even destroy the work of Christ. God had shown by it, in a figure, that the old man was to be treated as a vile and dead thing. But Christ is come; and there is not now a mere disciplinary process on the old man, but a “new man;” and the idea of mixing up something done to the old man, along with the new, as a means of justification, is most offensive to the Spirit of God.

“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.” You may distinguish between the ceremonial part that had such a blessed meaning, and the moral part, by which, you allow, man cannot be justified; but you know not what you do. You cannot separate circumcision from the law. God has embodied that rite so formally in the whole structure of the law, that though it had existed before, it became an integral part since, and henceforth amalgamates so fundamentally that you cannot separate the rite from the entire system. If you acknowledge any portion of the ritual as that under which you are, you are responsible for the universal legal system: you are debtor to do the whole law. And I would call your attention solemnly to this-” a debtor to do the whole law.”

Is not then every Christian thus a debtor? God forbid: it is false doctrine. If he were, he would be a lost man. I am aware there are those who do not understand this; who think that Christ, besides bringing pardon, is simply a means to strengthen them to keep the law. But this is sad and fundamental ignorance of Christianity. Is a Christian then at liberty to break the law? Still more loudly do I cry, God forbid! It is one thing to be a debtor to do the whole law, and another that God can make light of any breach of the law. Is there then nothing possible between these two conditions-debt to the law and freedom to break it? Neither consists with a Christian. He who is free to do his own will is a lawless, wicked man. He who is under the law to do it, describes the proper condition of the Jew and nobody else. The Christian stands on an entirely different ground. He is saved by grace and is called to walk in grace: and the character of righteousness that God looks for in him is of another sort altogether; as it is said to the Philippians, “being filled with the fruits of righteousness"-not which are by the law, but “by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God"-by Christ under grace and not under law. And this is not a question solely of justification. I am speaking now about the walk, about the responsibility of the Christian to do the will of God: and I say that Christ, not the law, is the measure of the Christian's walk, which makes all the difference possible.

It may be said, Was not Christ under the law? Yes, assuredly, but He was above it too. The Christian, the Gentile, never was under it; and being set in Christ, now that he believes, he stands on other ground, to which the law does not apply. For this reason every Christian (no matter who or what) is regarded by God as alive from the dead, to bring forth fruit unto God. The law only deals with a man as long as he lives; never after he is dead. “But ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And that, it is remarkable, is not at all what is said of us, after a “second blessing,” extreme unction, or any other step of true or imaginary perfection. We begin with it: our baptism declares it. What this sets forth is Christ's death and resurrection. And if it has any meaning for me, it says that I am identified with Christ dead and risen. It is no longer the law dealing with me to try if it can get any good out of me. I have relinquished all by receiving Christ, and I take my stand upon Christ dead and risen again, and am baptized into His name, as one alive from the dead, to yield myself to God. Nor is this some abstruse doctrine that ought to require deep acquaintance with the word of God. It is not hid away in some trope or figure of a hard book, but plainly set forth in the Epistle to the Romans, and this is the invariable doctrine. So, wherever you look, this is the foundation-truth of Christianity-that God has done with mere dealing with the flesh. He has another man, even a new man, Christ risen from the dead: and the Christian has received Him. This is practically what God has to make good in the heart of the Christian. “Walk ye

in him.” A young Christian may be cast down after receiving Christ, through the sense of evil he finds in himself. He wonders how this can be. He knows how Christ deserves to be served, and is conscious how little he serves Him as he ought: he is filled with sorrow about himself, and perhaps begins to doubt whether he be a Christian at all. He has not yet learned his lesson. He has not mastered even what his baptism set forth, the value of having a Savior who is dead and risen. He is occupied still with something of the old man; he looks at it and expects to get better, hoping that his heart will not have so many bad thoughts, &c., as he used to have; whereas, the only strength of the Christian is being filled with Christ, and with all that is lovely before God. The saint, in proportion as he enjoys Christ, lives above himself. There is the exercise of that by virtue of which the Christian is said to be dead and risen-the new life which the Holy Ghost communicates to all who believe. Only the believer feels what is unlike Christ; but he rests in what Christ is to God, and that makes him happy. When he becomes engrossed with what takes place within him, he is cast down. It is not that he should not judge himself for what is contrary to Christ, but that he should treat it as vile and bad, as that which flows from man and not from Christ; and then having confessed it to God, he should turn away resolutely from it to the Savior. The believer has acquired the title in Christ not to be cast down because of what he finds within him; not to be disheartened because there dwells no good thing in his flesh: that is what the revealed word of God tells him so constantly. And yet how many go on months and years, expecting some good thing to come out! I do not of course mean that they are not born of God; but they are so under the effect of old thoughts and notions, acquired from catechisms, books of divinity, sermons, that they do not enter into the full liberty wherewith Christ makes free.

Nothing can be plainer than the Holy Ghost's decision in the matter. He shows that the very smallest insisting on the law, in any shape, brings you in a debtor to do the whole of it: and if so, where are you before God? You are lost and hopeless, if you have a conscience. The question of the law generally comes up now as connected with sanctification. In the case of the Galatians, it came out strongly in the matter of justification. But the Christian has no more to do with it in one form than another. Here it is connected with justification. In the latter part of the chapter its link is with sanctification, which is the connection, and the only connection, in Rom. 6, where justification is not touched upon, but only the believer's walk. As to this, he is not under law but under grace. What a blessed thing it is to enter into this grace of God! If I look at my salvation, it is all His grace; and if I think what is to give strength to my walk and service, it is just the same. Grace is the spring all through. God does not alter, now that He has revealed the fullness of grace in Christ. Launched into that ocean, he will not go back into what had to do with exposing and scourging the old man, needful as the task was. He is rejoiced to have done with that which never wrought anything else, as far as man was concerned, but the mere crushing of those that had a conscience, and an opportunity to make out a self-righteousness for those that had none; those that were conscientious, groaning and miserable; and those that were not, full of themselves and of their fancied goodness. How sad, then, the departure warned of here! “Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” By these last words, he does not mean that they had slipped into immorality, or were openly gone from Christ. But they had joined the law along with Christ as a means of justification; and the moment you have done this, you have let slip the only principle on which God can possibly count you righteous. For God justifies sinners. What a glory of God! “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.” How is it, then, that any ungodly are not

justified? Because they do not believe that God is as good as He is; because the gift of Christ is too great for them; because their confidence is in themselves, or at least they have no confidence in God. And the reason why they have none is, from not believing what Christ is for the sinner. When I know His glory and His cross-that He has turned it all now into the scale of the poor soul who goes to Him because of his sins, then I see that it is impossible that God could not save him who stands in the same scale with Christ; and this is what the soul does that believes in Christ. Ile may be as light as a feather, but it is not his own weight that he depends upon, but what Christ is and Christ has done. God has confidence in the work of His Son, and he has; that is faith. A man is a believer who no longer trusts in his own works, nor in his own feelings, but in God's estimate of the cross of His Son, God being not only gracious but righteous in that very thing. I want to know that I have got through Christ that whereby God is glorified in thus blessing me. And therefore He is what He is—righteous in justifying my soul. If I have Christ, God is equally righteous in justifying me, as He would be in condemning me if I had Him not. The righteousness of God that would condemn the sinner, is the very thing that in Christ justifies the sinner: but, then, it also makes him godly. It is not merely a robe over him, but there is a new life as well; and I receive that new life in receiving Christ: in a word, we have justification of life in Him. And of what character is this life? Not the same as Adam's. That would not do, because Adam fell after he had life. But Christ laid down His life, that He might take it again in resurrection; and hence we never lose the life that He has given us-a life stamped with His victory over the grave: in fact, our life is Christ risen from the dead. No wonder, then, that it is everlasting, and that we can never perish. It is the life of One risen, over whom death hath no more dominion. And such, consequently is the position of the believer. Of course there may be the physical act of passing through death; but we are speaking about life before God communicated to the soul; and that life is the everlasting life of Christ, after He had put away our sins on the cross.

Accordingly, the apostle concludes the whole matter with, “We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” It is not that we, through the Spirit, are waiting to be justified, but “we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” And what is this hope? It is the glory of Christ. We have the righteousness, but not yet the hope of it. We have Christ Himself, but the hope of righteousness is the hope that righteousness in Christ entitles me to. We have become the righteousness of God in Christ. But what is the hope of righteousness It is the hope of the glory of God: as it is said in Rom. 5, “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.” In the first verse is the righteousness in the second, the hope— “the hope of righteousness.” And what is that? That I shall be with Christ in the very same glory that He is in. For this the believer is waiting. And meanwhile he has the Spirit of God, not merely to work in his soul, but that we through Him should wait for the hope of righteousness. We have not that hope seen and possessed yet; and therefore it is entirely a question of faith. But the Spirit of God who dwells in us gives us to know that, possessing the righteousness, being already justified, we shall have a hope suited to that righteousness. As we have the righteousness of God, we shall have the glory of God. So that nothing can be more blessed than the position in which the believer is set here by the apostle. The Galatians were hoping to be justified; but he says, You are justified already; and if you think to make things more sure by circumcision you lose everything, and become debtors to do that which ensures only a curse: whereas “we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” We are waiting for glory—the hope of righteousness. “For in

Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” Now he shows, just passingly, that there is a very great reality in the believer's moral condition. It is not only that he has justification, and a hope in character with it by and by;. but the selfsame faith which makes him know that he is justified, and gives him also to be looking onward to the glory he is destined to, meanwhile works by love, not by law. To this he is going to bring us, the question of practical sanctification; and he shows that the believer has no need of going under the law; because, if his faith works by love, it accomplishes that Which the law sought, but never effected or received. He does not at all mean to say that, though the believer is thus justified and waiting for glory, there is nothing meanwhile operating in his soul. It is a mighty and influential thing; but, then, it works by love. Its origin and its rest are in God's love; it knows salvation springing from that love. The love of God shown in Christ fills the believer's heart. He has a hope that maketh not ashamed. And why not? Because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. And I take that love of God in its largest possible meaning: first of all, as God's love to us; and next, as ours to Him.

It is the fullness of the sense of God's love in us; and the effect is, that it enables us to love God and everyone else. If persons are thoroughly happy themselves, they cannot help loving others.

This, then, is the principle upon which the believer stands—he is already justified; he is waiting for the glory: and meanwhile there is faith that worketh by love. Therefore it is no question of circumcision. We are Christians; and the whole basis of the law, therefore, and of these questions, is gone. How comes this to pass? For a very blessed reason. “For,” says he, “in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” The first availed a good deal to the flesh, and there was an important lesson taught by it. But he says, “We are in Christ Jesus.” That is the position of a Christian. He is not in the flesh: he once was. And “when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death” —an expression that shows as strongly as possible that we are not in the flesh now. Anyone can understand that. If you tell a person that you were in the country once, it implies that you are not there now. So, when the apostle says, “when we were in the flesh,” he means that he was in the flesh before he knew Christ, but now he is in the flesh no more, though he has the flesh in him. God views us in another condition. We have the old nature, but we have got another nature, by virtue of which God says, “You are not in the flesh.” When we were in the flesh, we were not delivered: we had not laid hold of Christ. But now that we are His, we are no longer in the flesh. We ought firmly to hold fast this truth, and to rejoice in it. If a person fails, that is the more reason why he should not yield to the further suggestions of the enemy. We ought always to hold fast to the truth that we are not in the flesh; the more especially as it is not for our own praise. On the contrary, it is the very thing that brings out our own sin, and that makes us the more ashamed of ourselves. If you are in the flesh, no wonder that you act after the flesh. But if you are not in the flesh, then be ashamed when you act as if you were. God presses upon us this blessedness, for the express purpose of making us feel more deeply our failure, if we do fail. We are not in the flesh, and therefore we ought never to give way to the flesh, But when we do, we should feel it, and confess it with humiliation before God, but not let go Christ, nor His truth. This is true of every Christian; though I am aware that there are many Christians who would say they could not receive a word of it that it is all mysticism, &c.: but it is a comfort to think God says every word of it about them. They may not be able to take the comfort of it for themselves; but what a

blessed thing it is that Christians have to do with God, and not with themselves! This is the reason why they are not consumed. We prove ourselves to be just as weak and foolish as Jacob was, giving way to the flesh so often, and allowing our own spirit to work too; but we are, in a still higher sense, Israel. We have prevailed, because of Him in whom we are before God.

“Ye did run well. Who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.” He reproaches them with having listened to these false teachers, who had pressed circumcision. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Is it not solemn to find that the very word “leaven” which is used in 1 Corinthians to describe frightful moral corruption, in Galatians characterizes the introduction of the legal system among the children of God? God treats it as a most offensive thing. And the tone of the Holy Ghost in writing to the Galatians is even more severe than in addressing the Corinthians. Because, although the Corinthians were guilty of what was far more blamable in the sight of men, the Galatians had fallen into an error that struck more deeply at the foundations of God's grace: and a spiritual man invariably judges sin, not by that which man thinks of it, but by what it is in the sight of God. Having brought out the character of it, he says, “I have confidence in you through the Lord that ye will be none otherwise minded.” He could not say that about all of them: he says it in a general way; and adds “But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.” He wants to separate them, and to give a sense of horror about those who had misled them. “Faith which worketh by love” does not hesitate to use strong language about the corrupters of the Church of God—denounces them most earnestly, and as a duty to God and man. “I would they were even cut off which trouble you.” “He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.” There were several engaged in that bad work. “And I, brethren, if I preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?” They had made the Apostle Paul to be a sort of evidence in their favor. They may have taken advantage of his circumcising Timothy, in order to make a show of inconsistency between his acts and his preaching. But Paul was not acting contrary to these principles when he circumcised Timothy. It was the elasticity of a man who could stop the mouths of objectors; and Paul, to silence Jewish slander, ended that question most unjewishly—by having Timothy circumcised. But he would not suffer it in the case of Titus (who was a Greek), whom he took up to Jerusalem with himself. This might appear capricious, but grace knows the time to be firm as well as to bend. There seems here to be an allusion to this, in his argument with the defenders of the law. It requires the wisdom of the Spirit of God giving one to know where one may use our liberty, or where it is a duty to stand as firm as a rock; and Paul did both. If Timothy had been circumcised, it was grace stopping mere fleshy questions, and not law, for his father was a Greek. But as to preaching it, such a thing was far from his mind: Had he ever pressed circumcision, he would have had their favor and countenance in every place that he visited. On the contrary, he was persecuted because he would not allow the flesh nor the title of circumcision.

The latter portion of the chapter takes up the other subject, namely the law as ruling the walk. What we have followed is the denial of circumcision and of law in every shape as entering into justification. Admit the principle of it in a single particular, and you are a debtor to do the whole law.

Chapter 55

Remarks on Galatians 5:12-31

At this natural division, the Spirit of God recurs to the thought of liberty with which He had opened the chapter. It is put forward in a twofold point of view. Liberty as a question of justification we had in the early part; liberty now we have as that which leads into, and ought always to be connected with, practical holiness. For we must remember that this is the subject-matter of the remainder of the chapter. Now there are many persons who more or less understand that Christ has brought us liberty in the matter of righteousness, or the standing of justified men in the sight of God; but they do not know liberty in the daily walk with God. And when I say “many,” I mean many Christians or real saints. Practical holiness, in such cases, invariably suffers. Where there is, along with this, much conscience, it necessarily takes the legal form of ordinances, restraints, and the like. Or where souls have not the same internal exercises, it takes the shape of laxity to a greater or less extent: that is, they see that they are delivered by the grace of God, and they consider themselves free to use the world, and to allow, to no little a degree, the inclinations of nature; because, as they say, there is evil in the nature, and, as they suppose, God, in His tender mercy, makes allowance for it. Now both these things are totally wrong. One cause of all this mistake lies in the misapprehension of a very important truth—the effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Now, in the Acts and Epistles, all the exhortations, the walk that is set forth, the worship that the New Testament inculcates, the whole experience, in a word, of Christians that is there portrayed and insisted upon-everything is built upon the presence of the Holy Ghost. Where this is not entered into, the consequence is, that children of God must either suppose that there is a certain latitude allowed them by God which is only another word for indifference, or they must fall back upon the righteous curb that God has put upon our nature, and that is only another expression for His law of God. Now, the gospel supposes that, good, and holy, and perfect as the law of God is, it is entirely powerless either to justify or to sanctify. It cannot in any way make the old nature better; neither is it the rule of the new nature. The old man is not subject to it, and the new man does not need it. The new creature has another object before it, and another power that acts upon it, in order to produce what is lovely and acceptable to God-Christ the object, realized by the power of the Holy Ghost. And although of course the Spirit can use every bit of the Word (God forbid that I should say that God's righteous law was not brought within the range of the Spirit to turn to account!) I maintain that the law does not give the form, nor the measure, nor the character, any more than the power, of Christian holiness. It is a misunderstanding of God's design in giving it, and of its right present uses, to suppose that therein is the mold in which God now is fashioning the souls of the saints.

This is the subject that the apostle takes up and handles in the latter part of our epistle. We have seen the question of justification entirely settled; now we have the walk or practical holiness. Again he insists upon liberty. We might suppose that he had said enough about it, after having charged them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. But no. In the domain of holiness, this liberty is needed just as much as for justification; and therefore says he “Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.” That

is, this characterizes our calling. Only, says he, it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, or you are not to use license: do not tarn this liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. There he showed that there is a faith that works by love (as said a few verses before); so now he shows that the object of that love should be the helping one of another. It is not for the purpose of putting you under the law, but that you may serve one another; “for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Had they not been trying the law? And what had been the result? He says, You have been biting and devouring one another: that is not fulfilling law, but lusts. When persons talk about it, or desire to be its teachers, do they ever fulfill it? It begins with confident words, and ends without deed or truth. Whereas, on the contrary, when Christ is the object of the soul, though the law does not occupy the mind, yet is it fulfilled. Christ is the power of God-the law is the strength of sin. I have exactly the same word of God to tell me of Christ and the law: and both are in the same epistle. (1 Corinthians) But it does not matter where the subject is entered into; the great point that the Holy Ghost insists on is, not that the law was not a good thing, but that our nature being horridly bad, there never can be any good got from bringing the law to bear on our evil nature, save condemning it. The question is, what will strengthen my soul for what is good? The answer is, not the law, but Christ. The law, I admit, is excellent; but you who have been talking about the law as a means of walking well, what sort of holiness have you been producing? Biting and devouring one another! This is not love. But it is the effect of your use of the law you boast of. “But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Such is the result. The law is a killing, destroying power: not because of its being bad, but because our nature is. And remember that the law bears upon our nature. The law was given not to the new man but to the old.

There was the wisdom of God. Law was for the purpose of provoking the latent sin. But what is to give the new life strength, and draw out its affections? What is to nourish the new creature, and call it into lively exercise? Not the law. But he tells us more. He had shown that love is the sum and substance of the law. If, then, love prevails, the law is fulfilled; but among you, on the contrary, there is contention, strife, and every evil work. What a blow to their legally engendered self-conceit! Now, going farther, he gives them a positive word. “This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” The action of the Holy Ghost is not merely as a convincer of sin, nor as the energy of regeneration; all Christians hold this; far as they are parted on other topics, they cannot but hold the same fundamental truth, that all the power of having this new nature communicated to us is by the Holy Ghost. Some may hold the truth more intelligently and carefully as to form; but all necessarily own the Holy Ghost as that which convinces them of their evil and gives them this new life, which is of God.

But this is not the question discussed here. The Galatians had new life, but what was to be the power for producing Christian holiness? They were bringing in the rule of the law as a means of holiness; and the apostle entirely puts this aside. “Walk,” he says, “in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” There we have the divine guard; nay, more than that, it is not merely admonition against this or that evil, but what will give us power for what is good. “Walk in the Spirit.” The Holy Ghost has been sent down to dwell in the believer. It is not the truth of our being budded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, as in Ephesians, where we have also the body of Christ brought out, the corporate relations of the children of God. The Epistle to the Galatians never gives us what is corporate, but always what is individual. And the walk being an

individual thing, or what concerns each soul, if there were not another in the world, this is what you want, he says, “Walk in the Spirit.” He does not say, Walk in the law. On the contrary, he had dealt a blow at the men who were so zealous for that rule. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” You want power against the lusts of the flesh; the Spirit is that power, and there is no other. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, in order that ye may not do the things that ye would.” This, I believe, is what the Holy Ghost wrote and meant. What we have in our version is, as many of us have long known, positively wrong. I wish not to pass it over, nor to bring it in by an underhand way; but wherever there is anything plainly mischievous in this version, which is but a human one, it is a Christian duty to call attention to it; and the more so, as I am always ready to maintain the excellence of it, and to defend the common Bible we have got against adversaries who would do it dishonor. But it is not a friend's part to justify a real mistake that may have slipped in through human infirmity, or worse.

Here, then, is one of the most serious mistakes, practically. When I insist upon this, it is not a matter that I admit to be open to a question, or that there should be any doubt about. No person acquainted at all intimately with the language in which the Holy Ghost wrote could hesitate, save through the effect of strong prejudice. I would also observe, that the best men-the ablest scholars who perhaps differ from my own views as to much I deem important—nay, persons who are dignitaries in the very church which had the principal hand in the production of this version-admit candidly, and with one consent, that the version I am about to state is the true one. There is no doubt on the minds of persons of the most opposite ways of thinking on other matters, as to what is the true meaning of this verse. The Holy Ghost, then, says: “In order that ye may not do the things that ye would.” The very point of the verse is this. He was showing them why he called upon them to walk in the Spirit; and that was the true preservative against the lusts of the flesh. For the two are totally opposed; they are contrary to one another in every way. It is not said, You have got the law that you may not fulfill the lusts of the flesh; but, having a nature that will always be prone to do its own will, you have not merely the law to restrain it, but the Holy Ghost is given; not like the law, a thing outside one; but the Holy Ghost is an inward power that indentifies Himself with the affections of the soul, and gives strength to desires after what is good, and against natural lusts or any way in which the flesh may show itself.

He quite admits that there was the flesh-pride, vanity, everything that is evil at work. But, as Christians, you have the Holy Ghost, and walking in the Spirit, “you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” Though the lusts of the flesh are there, you have the Spirit, too, in order that you may not fulfill those lusts. If what we have in our version, “so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” were correct, it would be like blowing hot in the one verse and cold in the other. He would be telling them in one verse that they must walk in the Spirit; and in the next, you cannot do it after all. Such a rendering carries its own refutation on its face. I press this the more strongly, because it is a practical point to Christian people. On mere critical questions, I should never think of disturbing people's minds. There is so much of the deepest moment for our souls with God every day, that the less we have to do with mere curious questions the better. But when it comes to be a matter of correcting what every Christian scholar knows to be an error, it is evident that I should be guilty of keeping up a serious mistake if such a point as the present were slurred over. One thing that has led, I apprehend, to the confusion on the subject, is that many have assumed the doctrine to be

the same as in Rom. 7. But in Rom. 7, after the first six verses, the Holy Ghost is giving us the experience of a person troubled under law. Accordingly we have not there the Spirit of God introduced at all. This is a remarkable fact, which accounts for the difference between that chapter and what we have here. There, it is a renewed man-a person really born of God, but one who, while he hates sin as no unconverted man does, loves righteousness because it is of God, has a horror of evil; yet, spite of all, the evil that he would not he does; and the good he desires he never does. He has learned the evil of sin, and sees the good of righteousness, but he is utterly powerless. What is the cause? The Holy Ghost shows the reason is this—he has only the law before him. It is a man converted, but struggling under law; and the effect is that it entirely unnerves the man, So far from giving him courage, and drawing out what is of God, it is merely detecting him here and there, putting in a probe in one part and stabbing him in another; so that he is bewildered to find in himself such an amount of evil as he never thought could be in the heart of a converted person. We all know something of this. We have not been long following Christ if we have not known some bitter struggles. The consequence is that all the poor soul is able to say is, “O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” We might have thought that a Christian would have said, I have been delivered long ago. But observe this—he is not resting with his eye upon the Deliverer. He is converted, but he does not know liberty. He has faith in the Savior, but he does not understand the application of His death and resurrection to his condition. He does not know that he is no longer viewed in the flesh but in the Spirit—that he is entitled to have done with his old nature altogether, and to see himself in Christ before God. The moment he comes to this discovery, that it is a mistake to apply the law to his soul, he gives thanks. Before this he cries out, in the intensity of his agony, “O wretched man that I am!” And yet, just then comes this new thought from God, “Who shall deliver me?” I have got it now. I see that it is not my own struggling with the law to overcome the evil: I see there is another, a Deliverer. Therefore he can turn with thankfulness to God the very next moment, and say: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” After this he is happy, perfectly happy, spite of the consciousness that there is the old nature still within him. What makes him happy? He sees that there are two distinct things—the old nature, which, if it is allowed to work, always serves the law of sin, and the new nature, which always seeks the will of God, whatever it may be. Now, then, he is enabled to enter into the great truths of chap. viii.— “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;” and intelligently, too: “for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” He does not leave it in the vague way, “made all free,” but it “hath made me free.” It is not a general creed, but the truth is applied in the most positive manner to the personal need of the once struggling soul. There is no longer any bondage, now that he sees Christ is risen. What is He risen for? As the head of a family, risen to give me a new name and standing altogether. He has gone down under the sea of my sins, and He is risen above them. What was of mine led Him below; and if He is risen above, it is to raise me with Him too. The resurrection of Christ was not to give Him a standing, but to give us, to give me, a standing. The death of Christ was for us, to put away our sin; the resurrection of Christ was to bring in a blessing that nothing could touch. The effect of the first coming of Christ is, that our souls enter into this: the effect of His second coming will be, that our bodies, free from every trace of sin, will enter into it perfectly, as our souls should now. If we rest upon Him, we ought not to have a single doubt. It is not at all a question whether I find any flesh in me; it would be rather a proof that I was not a Christian if I did not. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in

us.” “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” This is a darker case. There is a plain, positive declaration of Scripture against it. What marks a Christian is this—not that he has not sin within, but that he has a new nature, which none has except he that believes in Jesus by the Holy Ghost. In virtue of Christ, God regards him as one who has entirely done with sin as a matter of divine judgment on us. God has quite closed with it thus; not as a dealing with us day by day. There is where confession of failure comes in. There, it is a good and right thing for a Christian to judge and confess his evil. A man's being entirely forgiven all trespasses does not put aside the need and duty and privilege of confessing the truth about ourselves to God, day by day. It is a very blessed thing that we may do it with the confidence that God is interested in us—that God loves we should go to Him about it. We should have sufficient reliance on His own love, to bring all our failure and tell it out before Him. The law said, Stand back. If even a poor brute touched the mountain, it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart. What it said to one, it said to all. It did not say, Any of you that are believers can come near. The law does not draw distinctions between believers and unbelievers. It does not make allowance for human infirmity. Are people sinners? If so, then they are cursed. There is the end of the law. It never made a man righteous, any more than a human law produces honesty. There never was a man made honest by an act of parliament since the world began. What makes people obey is Christ entirely above the law.

So, in earthly things, there must be a principle above the fear of being sent to the house of correction. If it be only that dread which keeps a man from stealing, he is a rogue. So it is precisely with the believer. What makes a man a Christian, keeps a man walking as a Christian? It is the power of the Spirit of God revealing Christ. It would have been much better that you had been filled with Christ, walking in the Spirit. For what does the Spirit do? He is glorifying Christ. This is always the true test. The power of a thing is not the test of it. If a man talked a great deal about the Spirit, and at the same time was serving sin, and not Christ, who could have confidence in the case? He might be self-deceived. A man may make the most exorbitant pretensions to have the power of the Holy Ghost acting in the body; but how am I to know that the claim is a real one? Let us look at the Epistles of John, who tells us to try the spirits; and the great test is just this—the Holy Ghost invariably exalts Christ. The object is not to exalt the Church or a minister. All these things flow from man's misuse of the things of God. I am not denying that the Church has a most important place; but it is as being the subject vessel of the Spirit of God. The scene where the Holy Ghost sets forth Christ. If human pretensions are allowed, or the world made much of, it is not the Church of God led of the Spirit. It may be man's church or the world-church, but it is not the Church of God. What makes the Church is the owned, recognized, carried-out truth of the Spirit's presence.

There may be failure, as there is in an individual Christian man, who may spew temper, pride, or vanity;

still he will feel it when he is brought to his senses, though the Lord may have to break a person's bones sometimes, like Job, to make them know what they are. The true action of the Holy Ghost, whether in the individual or in the body, is in the exaltation of Christ. And if you have the individual failing, or the Church, it will come to the same thing. God will never allow an assembly that He owns to go on in evil. He knows how to chastise a Christian assembly as well as a Christian man. He will deal with them if they are honest. We ought to be careful for nothing, but in everything by

prayer and supplication make our requests known unto God. We need not be restless and tried about people. We often fail in thinking what we may do in talking to people; whereas if we spoke a good deal more to God, and less to man, others would not be losers, and we should be gainers, and God would be far more glorified. However that may be, what we find here is that the Spirit is the power of holiness—that the Spirit of God it is which enables a Christian man to walk aright, not the law. That is the point He brings them to: and so He concludes the matter, “If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” It is plain that if to be under the law were the means of Christian holiness, it would have been said, “If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are under the law,” and not, ye are not under the law. Though they constantly take up the commandments, repeat them and teach them, yet they say they are not under the law! How could persons be more under the law than when they adopt the language of the Ten Commandments, as the expression of their own relationship before God? It is done as literally and definitely by Christian people at the present day as it ever was even by the children of Israel themselves. For persons to say that while acting and speaking thus in their public worship, they are at the same time not under the law, is evidently cheating their souls in a very fearful manner. What is meant by being under the law? That I acknowledge myself under that rule as what God has given me, the rule by which I have to live. If a person were to use the law for the purpose of convincing a poor, ungodly man of his sins, that is not to be under the law. But if I take up the ten words, and ask God to enable me to keep each, this is to confess myself under the law.

Then may I break the law? God forbid. Such an alternative could only emanate from one who understands nothing about Christ. All admit that the law is good and righteous. The question is, whether the God that gave the law to Israel has given the same to Christian people, as that by which they are to live? I deny it. He gave it to Israel. What He has given to the Church is Christ. Christ is unfolded in the whole word of God; and what the Christian has to walk by is the entire word of God; and so taught as to manifest Christ. If it is taken up in mere letter, what does the Spirit say? It kills; but the Spirit gives life. I may take up Ex. 20 and draw from part of that chapter a statement of the grace of God.

When God gives the law, He tells them that He was the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. I might show how we are delivered out of our bondage. This is quite grace as far as it goes. But the moment you put Christians under the law as that which they have to walk by as an Israelite of old, you are doing the very evil that the Epistle to the Galatians was intended to correct, and what the Holy Ghost says those led by the Spirit do not. “If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” So men are doing at the present time—taking up the language of the commandments that were intended for Israel, and this not merely to convict of sin; but they undertake them as the directory of their own obedience to God every day. Yet they are obliged to explain away a great deal of the law; for instance, the sabbath day. They keep, and very properly, the Lord's day, and I keep it too. But I deny it to be the sabbath day, and maintain that the first day and the seventh day are not the same thing. Scripture always contrasts the first day with the seventh. The one is the first and the other is the last day of the week. The first day is a new thing, altogether apart from the law. People think that the keeping of a seventh day is the important thing; but that is not what God says, but the seventh day; and we are not at liberty to alter Scripture. This is not hearing the law, but destroying it. Who gave any man liberty to change the for a? specially as the change makes an all important difference. Let us only beware of

tradition and seek to understand the word of God. The denial that the law is the Christian's rule of holiness is very far from impairing holiness. The Holy Ghost brings in a much deeper character of holiness than was even asked in the Ten Commandments. When our Lord said, “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” He did not mean righteousness imputed to us, but practically true. The Christian has a righteousness that is real. It is true that we become the righteousness of God in Christ, but that this is the only righteousness of the believer, I dispute. The Holy Ghost produces a real work in his soul, founded upon the work of Christ—separation from the world, devotedness to God, obedience, love; and all these things not merely according to the Ten Commandments, but according to the will of God as it was fully displayed in Christ. If any man holds that because the Lord kept the law, He did nothing else, I pity him. The keeping of the law was a small part of His obedience; and we are called to be like Christ in His devotedness to God at all cost. A first principle of practical Christianity runs thus: “If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” This is a thing quite unknown to the legal system. In the Ten Commandments we find if a man obeyed his parents, he should live long on the earth. That this is not the principle on which God now deals is most evident; for we have all known most obedient children taken away in early days. Am I denying that there is an important spiritual truth for me to gather from that very word? Quite the contrary. Paul himself refers to this promise, not at all, as it seems to me, as the motive why a Christian child should obey its parents, but as the general indication of God's mind. It was the first commandment with promise. The spiritual instincts of Christians are beyond their system; and although they are doctrinally under the law, they desire to walk in the Spirit. I have not a single unkind feeling against those who maintain that state of things. But the Spirit of God does speak of it as a very great error and peril. What we have to do, then, is to understand the mind of God, to give utterance to it and obey. “If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” The Jews were. Whenever we see the people of God in Scripture under the law, it always means Israel. If a man now puts himself in a Jewish position, he takes upon himself that responsibility. In his faith he may be a Christian; but in outward forms and ordinances he is at least half a Jew. We ought to seek that they may be Christians, and nothing else—to have done with that which covers and obscures the character of Christ, and for which they have to pay the sad penalty either of carelessness of life, or of having their hearts cast down and doubting, instead of enjoying the liberty with which Christ has made us free.

After this the apostle draws out the contrast of the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest” —there was no difficulty to discern them— “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.” Thus you have human corruption and human violence. You have idolatry and witchcraft brought in, and on the other hand, seditious and heresies, which refer to the party-spirit that might be at work even under a Christian profession. A child of God might slip into any of these evil things for a time; but there is a solemn sentence pronounced upon them— “Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” He warns them now, as he had while he was with them, “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Whatever the difficulty may be, let us never doubt, but most firmly receive it as from God, that Christ is the power of God to every one that believes. He is the power

of God not merely to justification, but to salvation; and salvation, while it includes justification, goes far beyond it, because it takes in all the course of a Christian man till he is actually in the resurrection-state along with Christ. This is the meaning of the verse, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” —not your own forgiveness, but your own salvation. It is said to those who were already forgiven. Thus, salvation, in the sense spoken of there, implies the whole conflict with the power of evil we are passing through. We know that we have to do with one common enemy: but God is at work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We know the deep concern and regard which God feels for us, as committed to this conflict. We are fighting under His orders—doing His will in that thing as well as in others. So far is God from leaving us in any way, that He assures our soul He is pledged to see us through to the end; but He will have a solemn sense of the war with Satan in which we are engaged.

Then we have on the other side, “the fruit of the Spirit is love.” He begins with love—that which is of God, and flows directly from God, and which is the knowledge of God's character more than any other thing. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.” Such is the effect produced by God's love— “meekness.” There he gets down to what would more particularly deal with one another. And then he speaks of temperance, because that supposes the bridle put upon the evil nature—the self-control which the Holy Ghost works in the soul for the Lord's sake, as evidently being set in this world to be an epistle of Christ, so that we should not give a false character to Him whose name we bear. But all these are the fruits of the Spirit; and he adds, “against such there is no law.” The law never produced these. So the law will never condemn those who walk in these things; as he says to the Roman saints, chap. xiii., speaking of governors and rulers, “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good.” So here, “against such there is no law.” If you are producing these fruits of the Spirit, there is no condemnation against them. On the contrary, “They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” He shows that all that are Christ's have gone through the great question of what was not His: they have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. They have submitted to the sentence of death on all their nature—they have “crucified the flesh.” We know, of course, that is only really and fully done in Christ—that it is in the cross of Christ that this crucifixion of the flesh, with all its lusts, takes place. Hence, too, it is true of every believer. The flesh, with the affections and lusts, is a thing already done with. If we are Christians at all, we have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. If it were only a person just born of God, I should say he has “crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.” But it may be asked, Have not I got to crucify it? I answer, it is done already: you have got to believe it, and to walk in the strength that faith gives you. What a comfort to know that the flesh is a judged thing—that sentence of death has been put upon it! What will strengthen more than this? That you are not alive in the flesh now, but living in the Spirit. And “if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Let that be the standard by which you desire to be directed—that you have the Holy Ghost as the One to strengthen you. Let your aim be to walk in that line of things.

The Lord grant us to have wisdom from above, to know what we are, and what not: that we may believe, whatever may be the evil, whatever its strength or tendencies, there is the power of the Holy Ghost to strengthen us against and above every evil thing. But the Holy Ghost will not put forth His power, except as Christ is before us. If we seek to please self in anything, we shall only find that the means of self-pleasing God will turn to our chastening. And therefore what a happy

privilege that, in submission to God, we should give ourselves to the glory of Christ in everything.

Chapter 56

Remarks on Galatians 6:1-10

The close of the last chapter had shown us the works of the flesh on the one hand, and the fruits of the Spirit on the other, with the very solemn injunction to the children of God, that if they lived in the Spirit (which they necessarily did if they were children of God), they were also to walk in the Spirit. It was in vain to speak about privilege, if there was indifference to practical ways. We cannot have life in the Holy. Ghost, without also being bound by the most solemn sanctions that the Holy Ghost should also be the grand directing force of the walk. The act is but the outward expression of the inner principle. The life can only be absolutely known to God; the walk is that which is manifested before men. But now, besides exhorting them to beware of vain-glory, whatever form it might take, whether of provoking, or of envying one another, we have fresh ground taken at the beginning of chap. 6. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself; lest thou also be tempted.” Supposing a person goes altogether wrong, and is positively surprised into what is plainly evil, what then? Still the Holy Ghost presses that the spiritual should “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” A very weighty word indeed. For, first, in case of a fall through want of watchfulness and dependence upon God, we learn who are most adapted to meet the need. It is the obligation of all in a general way; but who are those that the Holy Ghost urges to deal well with such a case? “Ye which are spiritual.” Now it does not follow that he who is born: of God is spiritual. To live in the Spirit is a very different thing from being spiritual. A spiritual person not only lives, but walks in the Spirit. Of course he has the infirmities of other men, and may even show nature; but in an obvious way, taken as a whole, through the grace of God he has learned to judge, not to spare self, to detect, especially in himself, departure from the Lord, and to own it frankly and humbly before God. In consequence of this habitual self-judgment, there will be far greater tenderness in dealing with sin in others. They may have a keen discernment; but where it comes to that which is real and most serious—which perhaps many would give up as making the case hopeless, and think that the person could not be a Christian at all—they, knowing more of the subtlety of the flesh, as well as of the grace of God, are able to count upon His goodness, and are the very persons to deal with the evil and to restore that soul. So that you will always find in cases that call for gracious handling, it is for the spiritual, not those that are the most used themselves to trip, not those that are apt to indulge the flesh and depart from the Lord. These men we might think the most likely to deal most pitifully with those who stumble; but, on the contrary, those are called for who walk circumspectly and in self-judgment, as a general rule, and who are thus kept from slipping through habitual leaning on a faithful Lord; because the very power that preserves them from going astray is what gives them to understand the grace of God, and to use that grace for others. Accordingly these are told to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. He adds further, “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” This would justly be before the mind's eye of a spiritual man. He has the deepest sense of his own weakness; and hence would he most readily esteem others better than himself. How is that? Not, of course, that he who has made progress in the ways of God is to count a babe's knowledge greater than his own. Not that there are not, on the one hand, in the Church, those who are least esteemed, and, on the other, men of tried and spiritual judgment. Not that we

are to suppose all alike wise, strong, and honorable. This would not be faith but fanaticism, and contrary to every right thought. In what sense, then, are we to esteem “others better than ourselves?” When a soul that is in any measure spiritual thinks of himself; what he feels is his immense falling short of Christ. He has habitually before him how greatly he fails, even of that which he desires in his ways before God. But when he looks at his brother Christian, let him be the feeblest possible, and sees him as a beloved one of Christ, in full acceptance in, and the object of, the Father's tender affections, this draws out both love and self-loathing! Thus, if grace be at work, what is Christ-like in another saint rises at once before the heart; and what is unlike Christ in himself. So that it is not a question of striving to cultivate high feelings about one's neighbors, and to think them what they are not, but really believing what is true about them, and feeling rightly about ourselves too. If I think of what a saint is in Christ and to Christ, and what he will be through Christ, then one's heart takes in the wonder of His love, and how much the Lord makes of him: but when the eye is turned to oneself,-all the unworthy ways and feelings and shortcomings come up in humiliating remembrance. So in considering “thyself, lest thou also be tempted,” with this difference, that it is not so much looking at what we have been, as at what we have to fear and watch against.

But, further, in the next verse, he presses upon them the bearing of one another's burdens. There are difficulties, trials, sorrows; there are things in the shape of infirmity; there are circumstances of the most variedly painful nature that press upon the children of God. Now, if we wish to show our value for the saints, opportunity need not be lacking. “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Stoop down, and take up that which your brother groans under. The ten commandments may not demand it, but so you will fulfill the law of Christ. This is the law for us Christians. It is not a question of the law of Moses; because, although that was the law of God, and always must be the measure with which God deals with the natural man, He is dealing here with those who were living in the Spirit; and the law at Sinai was never given to the spiritual man, but to a fleshly people, even to Israel. The law deals with the natural man, and, therefore, with what is evil in him. Who can tell the new man, “Thou shalt not kill;” “thou shalt not steal?” Does the new man ever lust, or commit adultery? The very notion carries upon its face the evidence that the whole theory is false. The law of the ten commandments never was addressed to the new man at all. The new man can make use of it; but this is a very different thing from taking it up as the language of its own responsibility before God. If we are saints, we are not doing to live, but living to do our Lord's will without such a thought as death or the curse. What, then, is this law of Christ? Christ was always occupied about others. He never did, in one act of His life, His own will. This is precisely to be holy in love, which Christ was: obedient and truthful in love was what characterized all His existence here below. Supposing we were to do any and every duty merely because we thought it right, it would be always wrong. As a Christian, I should have failed in what is nearest to God, and for this simple reason—that merely doing duty because it is duty, does not put the soul in the attitude of obedience, but may be only proud self-pleasing, and homage to the innermost idol of the heart. To do what I judge right may therefore be no better than a subtle rebellion against God. I have no right to choose my own path. I am under obedience, if I take the place of being a creature; and still more if I am and own myself a child. The question, then, is, What is my Father's will How beautifully our Lord showed this, even before He entered upon the public part of His ministry! He had always, and in the highest sense, the consciousness of His own relationship. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” And so it was in every case. Take Him

afterward in His ministry. Even in a matter that had so strong an appeal to his affections as a man, when Lazarus was a-dying, why does He stay in that place two days after hearing that he was sick? He acts, not only not on the ground of mere right, but not on the ground of mere love to the person He loved; He must have the Father's command.

This is what we need to bear in mind. If you take the law given at Sinai, you have God requiring that which condemns a sinner. God was not manifesting Himself there as Father. Take, again, the sovereign of this country: she sends out her army to attack some foreign enemy, or a word of authority to deal with some rebellious province. Who would suppose that she was acting as a mother in these cases? Who would suppose that thus we view her in relation to her children It is as a sovereign, and with rebellious subjects that she so acts, At Sinai there was a nation, God's rebellious subjects; and He was laying down in thunder and lightning, and with a voice more terrible than either, what He could not but require from guilty Israel. But now, when God, who spoke thus terribly, speaks now, how is it? By His Son. It is the same God, but His voice how different! God always maintains His right and title, not only to make good that which He uttered in connection with Israel of old; but to bring in that which is new. What means a new covenant, if it does not antiquate that which went before?

So here, we have the law of Christ, in pointed contrast with the law of Moses, which dealt with rebellious flesh. The law of Christ directs those who live in the Spirit, and ought to be walking in the Spirit, but who have got, nevertheless, an evil nature still. And how are they to be strengthened in the new nature, and to overcome the old? He points them at once to Christ, and says, “Bear ye,” &c. Such is the loving, unselfish way to fulfill the law of. Christ. Interest your soul about saints in need and distress; and even if there is that which is positively evil, it will cast you upon God to bring out something from Christ suited to lift up the soul that has slipped into the mire. He first introduces the flagrant case of a person falling into sin, and then he enlarges it. If you want to know what is the path of Christ now, and the will of God, this was what Christ was doing. He came into a world full of evil and opposition to God—full of pride and vanity, and what was He doing? “He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil,” &c. Though we may not be able to work miracles, yet in all that is in spirit like Christ, the moral principle of the life of Christ here below is precisely that which every believer has. If you have Christ at all, you have Christ not only for atonement, but as your life. He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life; and the everlasting life is Christ, just as truly as by being born into the world from Adam I have got an old natural life that loves evil, and which, as it grows in strength, grows in capacity for self-will. Even so if I believe in Christ, there is this new life produced which is developed in proportion as Christ is fed upon, and looked to, and Christ's words and ways are pondered over by the soul. There is an assimilating power communicated thus to the believer by the Holy Ghost. The words of our Lord are spirit and life. It is not only that they produce life in the first instance, but they sustain the life, and are the means of its vigor. And this is what the Apostle Peter shows us. (1 Peter 1) He speaks of the incorruptible seed, the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. But then he shows that the same word of God which is the means of first imparting the life through the revelation of Christ, is also the provision for strengthening and refreshing it. Therefore he exhorts them that, as new-born babes, they should desire the sincere milk of the word. The word of God that first is used to introduce the life into the soul, through the making known of Christ, is that which now keeps up the life, draws it out, brings it into healthful exercise: and here is one way— “Bear ye one another's

burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This is what Christ was doing when He was here below. He did not please Himself. He never chose the path of ease; but, on the contrary, every case of wretchedness and sin and sorrow was what occupied the Lord Jesus, provided it were the will of God. When He took His place as man on earth, there was this continual exercise of communion between the Lord Jesus and His Father, the spirit of dependence upon the living God that never acted without His Father's direction. And so it should be with our souls. If we are thus laying ourselves out to bear one another's burdens, we need to wait upon God about. it to know what the will of the Lord is. It is not the law, nor ordinances, but "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

"For if a man think himself to be something," &c. This is the invariable effect of law acting upon the spirit. It supposes a man to have power—at any rate, to be still alive as a man in the world. But this is the very thing which, even in our baptism, we declare is no longer our confession. For what does the baptism of a Christian man set forth? It is the acknowledgment of the Christ who is dead and risen, and that in Christ's death I am dead to sin and the world, and God's judgment too. I have passed out of the scene of living men upon the earth, and am introduced into a new condition before God; I have entered upon a new life; I am dead to what I formerly lived to, and alive to that which I was formerly dead to. Into all this Christ brings him that believes.

Manifestly, then, "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." The law never crushes the pride of man; and man will bear with anything that supposes he can do something. The law works upon the mere nature of man, and puffs him up, unless it be used of the Holy Ghost to slay him in his conscience. Nature perverts it to the notion that it can do something; and people love this, and are the more pleased with themselves. This is what the gospel destroys by the very roots. And hence persons who are uncommonly self-satisfied when put upon the ground of doing great things for God, would be deeply mortified and offended if told plainly that they are not capable of serving Him. How few would bear to hear that they had never worshipped God all their life, and cannot till born of God! They are offended at such a doctrine as this, because it makes self nothing and God everything; it brings before them what an awful peril they are exposed to—lost indeed. If they believed it, they would cry out to God about it, and look to God to give them new life. But as long as men are dealt with on legal principles, the distinction between what is of the first man and the Second is, more or less, merged. Man is addressed as such, and not thoroughly as a sinner, or as a saint; but the two things are confused together: so that souls do not know clearly whether they are saved or lost, whether they have passed from death unto life, or are still under the wrath of God. This is the reason why we find so many, even who are true believers, frequently suffering from clouds and eclipses. The root of the matter is the abuse of the law. It was what worked among the Galatians; and what has tied and bound with the chain of their sins so many thousands of God's children ever since. Thus it was acting upon their flesh and it made them think themselves to be something, when in truth they were nothing; and if a man does, evidently, as the apostle adds, "he deceiveth himself." Nothing can be more cutting than the words here. But for all that, if they were desiring not to be something, but that God should work, then, he adds, "let every man prove his own work." God begins upon the ground that we are nothing; that the wise man must become a fool, in order that he may learn to be wise. Man does not like it, and kicks against it; and the consequence is, that he always remains, in his own blind imbecility. Whereas you will never get a man in the truth of his own ruin without finding God there

in the truth of His love, giving him eternal life in His Son. And what then? Let him “prove his own work; and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” Supposing one really to examine everything, thus thoroughly to prove his work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another. There the apostle is giving a home-thrust: let him put it to the proof. No doubt the Lord will own true service; but wherever a man honestly examines and proves his work, it is never a subject of self-gratulation, but most humiliating in every possible way. But, at least, when the true time comes, there will be the reaping, if we faint not.

The apostle winds up this part of his subject by another word, and one that might appear to be paradoxical, if compared with the second verse: “For every man shall bear his own burden.” In fact, we have here the two great practical principles of Christianity: the one is active energetic love, which bears the burdens of others; and the other is personal responsibility. “Every man shall bear his own burden,” Observe, this is not speaking about salvation. If a man had to bear his own burden in the matter of justification before God, it would be to destroy every hope: “Enter not,” says the Psalmist, “into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” If in this question God enters into: judgment with me, I am lost. He says, “Enter not into judgment” (not with a sinful man, but) “with thy servant.” It is a converted or regenerate man. Therefore it is that our Lord brings out, in the question whether a man shall be left to perish in his own death, or be delivered by the power of the life of Christ, a totally different principle. He says, “Verily I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” You will observe that in this passage I have altered the word “condemnation” to “judgment;” I have done it advisedly, because it is the only true meaning of the word. “Condemnation” is a positive mistake. That which is rightly translated “condemnation” elsewhere, is totally different from this. Thus, “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” is not the same word at all. But sometimes where our Lord and others say “judgment,” the translators have ventured to depart from the word of God, and have introduced “condemnation.”

Nor is this confined to one passage only. In the remarkable revelation about the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11, a very similar mistake occurs. The translators have introduced a word and idea of their own, unequivocally erroneous; and have ventured to say, that “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.” It is not true. God says, “He eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.” There is no competent judge, no Christian man acquainted with the language of the Holy Ghost, that could deny it, if he fairly examined the evidence. Human tradition accounts for the proneness of persons to put aside plain principles of the truth. For it is not so much a question to be decided on critical grounds; but such an alteration contradicts the whole object of the Holy Ghost in the passage. What is the apostle telling these Corinthians? You have been treating the supper of the Lord unworthily, by making it a common thing. Some of you have gone so far as to forget yourselves in open, gross sin. There is a peculiar solemnity about the Lord's supper as about the Lord's day. He who pretends that the Lord's day is the Sabbath, and that the Lord's supper resembles a Jewish ordinance, does not know what two of the most important Christian institutions mean. The Lord's day differs from every other day, the day of grace and resurrection (the Sabbath being the token of creation and law): so with the Lord's supper: in it the Lord sets before the believer his perfect deliverance, the blood and the broken body of Christ, and being the witness to his soul that he is free from all condemnation, how says the apostle, you

who have eaten and drank as at a common meal, have been participating unworthily. For a converted person might eat and drink unworthily. These Corinthian saints took it lightly, and the devil got advantage over them, and some had even become drunken. This, says the apostle, was to eat and drink judgment to themselves, not the Lord's Supper. The consequence was that some of them were sick, and others were dying. He lets them know that the Lord was judging them, and laying His hand upon them. But this most unquestionably was judgment, not damnation. And what was the end of the Lord in all this “That ye should not be condemned with the world.” If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. It is that we should not have damnation; whereas the common version makes it out that they were exposed to this very doom. Read the word as “judgment,” and you will find that an entirely new light is thrown on the passage. Introduce a wrong word, and you disturb the balance, beyond all recovery; but the moment you return to the true sense, suggested in the margin, all is made plain. What before was dark, and troubled your soul, now you see to be simple, and solemn, holy, and withal comforting. If you have been treating the memento of the Lord's sufferings lightly, you are in danger of oft coming under His hand. Some, had even been taken away; but it is, “that ye should not be condemned with the world.” The intimation is, that they were such naughty children that they could not be left in this world any longer. Therefore He put sickness upon them, and took them away by death. The meaning of the word in 1 Cor. 11 is closely akin to that in John 5 What our Lord is teaching in the gospel is that men must have one or the other thing from Christ—either life or judgment. The main difference is, that in John 5, the judgment is the final and eternal act of judging; whereas 1 Cor. 11 speaks of a disciplinary process in this world. But the right word is “judgment,” not “condemnation.” Our Lord shows Himself to be the Giver of life in communion with the Father, and the exclusive executor of judgment. He is giving life now: whoever believes in Him, has life; whoever refuses Him must come into judgment. For no person can be the object of both life and judgment. The reason why people shall come into judgment, is because they reject the Son of God and eternal life in Him. “He that hath the Son hath life.” This is the point of our Lord's words. They might ask, How is this life everlasting to be had? Is it by obedience? or by an ordinance? Neither the one nor the other. “Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” He that so hears and believes, knows that God is interested about souls—that He wishes to have them happy and without sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. But further, “he shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” It is the very same thing in Heb. 9:27. “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” It is the same word. This is man's portion, from which he cannot escape. Man as such must die, and must be judged. But mark, it is he who lives and dies as a mere natural man. It is not said that it is so appointed for the Christian. On the contrary, there are many Christians that will never die; and no saint will ever be judged eternally.

I must prove what I am saying by other passages. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and 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.” That is, the living saints are caught up with the dead that are risen already. But take another scripture. “We shall not all sleep.” Men must all die; but “we shall not all sleep.” We

shall not all necessarily die; but we shall all be changed. Whether they are dead Christians, or living ones, all must be changed, conformed to the image of the Firstborn, glorified in their bodies. But all saints will not have departed this life, nor need resurrection; for those Christians who will be found alive when Christ comes, will be taken up to be with Christ, and changed into His glorious image, without passing through death at all, like so many Enochs, at once transformed into the likeness of Christ's glory. This is what all of us as Christians ought to be waiting for; without knowing when it may be. Therefore it is said, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” But what will become of those who have refused Christ? They must all be judged. “It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment.” But more than this: “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 without sin unto salvation.' There you have the two portions—man's, death and judgment; the Christian's, Christ, the one offering for sins and about to return in glory for their full salvation, not judgment. The question of sin had been so completely settled at the first coming of Christ, that Christ does not raise a single question about it; when He comes again “He will appear the second time without sin [i.e., apart from sin, having nothing to do with it], unto salvation.” He had suffered for it Himself,—put it away Himself; and the consequence is, every believer, no matter where he is, no matter what his ignorance may be, is entitled to wait for the Lord, who will come for him, and come for all that have slept in Christ before him; he is entitled to know that Christ will never call him into judgment, because, having been judged for him and having forever put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He shall appear to such the second time without sin unto salvation. But those who refuse Christ, so far from not coming into judgment, will be raised for it from the dead afterward. This is the resurrection of judgment. Its effect doubtless will be damnation, but its scriptural designation is a judgment. It is the same word as before. The object of raising the evil will be judgment. And what is the character of the believer's resurrection? Life—that the same life which is now given to our souls should have its full course and display over our bodies—that we should be perfectly filled with the life of Christ, body and soul.

Such is the Christian's expectation. Thus, in this fifth verse (“Every man shall bear his own burden”), it is not the least a question of bearing each our burden in judgment. If this were so, not a soul could be, not one deserves to be, saved. For who has not been guilty of sins, dark and deadly sins?—sins that God could not possibly forgive, unless He had a perfect way of His own—and He has. But that way cost Him His Son, and the cross of His Son; and the cross is the triumph of God. In it Christ has put away sin forever for every soul that believes in Him. Therefore when He says, “Every man shall bear his own burden,” it is simply in view of the difficulties and trials in practical life. Mind, he says, that you bear one another's burdens;—but after all every man must bear his own burden. Every one of us must have to do with God for himself. We cannot get any one else to answer for us. Some make Heb. 13:17 (“they watch for your souls as they that must give account”) to teach that ministers answer for the souls of others, but it is nonsense, or worse. The principle is false. There is no such thing as a person giving an account of another's soul. Each must give an account of himself to God. The sinner must be judged; but every saint as well as sinner must give account of everything unto God. The believer, says our Lord, shall not come into judgment, which means that a man is put upon his trial to see whether he shall be saved or not. This can never be the case with a Christian man. Everything will be opened out before the Lord—not only the sins we may have done since we were believers, but what we committed when we were unconverted. We

might suppose this would be inexpressibly terribly. But let us remember that the condition in which the believer will give account of himself to God is when he will be like Christ—when he has not one feeling which is not of Christ—no desire but what will be for the glory of Christ—all sense of shame will be gone, and only that will abide which is according to Christ. The thought that Christ will set us all perfectly, like Himself, in glory, is at once an answer to every anxiety of the soul. But while this is true, it is important to bear in mind that now there is a very active judgment going on. The Father is watching our ways and dealing with us; and we ought to be examining our ways day by day. Every one, saint or sinner, must render to God an account of himself: His power will accomplish it in both: in the one to his utter condemnation—in the other that he may learn how absolutely he is indebted to the grace of God. But this is a different thing from judgment. We cannot too strongly press, that to appear before the judgment seat of Christ is not necessarily judgment. No word of Scripture can ever set aside the truth that “he that believeth shall not come into judgment.” God never contradicts Himself. Every man bearing his own burden has to do with our responsibility. What a wonderful thing is this!—that we have done with our responsibility as men, and having got Christ a new responsibility is begun. We have now to behave ourselves as those who have eternal life, who belong not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. Now commences our responsibility to live to Christ—to devote to Him the new life that God has given us, conscious that along with this the Lord sifts day by day our ways.

Then comes another thing, and it would appear that these saints had forgotten it. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.” I think there is a little danger of ourselves forgetting this kind of relationship to all those whom the Lord has raised up for the good of the Church. There are certain landmarks never to be obliterated. One is this very thing—the privilege and obligation of the taught to remember Christian teachers in love. It is not said, To him that teacheth them; but, “To him that teacheth.” What blessed largeness of feeling this! Supposing you are free from such a need in the particular place where you live, are you to be so short-sighted as to overlook the claims of the Lord elsewhere? This would be selfish indeed. Nothing could be more degrading for Christians than, when they have abandoned evils here or there, and do no longer what was merely compulsory, that they should take advantage of the name of the Lord to have what one might call a cheap Church; forgetting that they belong to the Church of God as a whole. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” Let none suppose that this was given only for early days; or that any circumstances can alter the responsibility of the saints in this respect. It is well for us to remind one another of it, that we are members of the body of Christ. Take the case of persons laboring abroad: has not that a voice for us? What a claim upon our love and sympathy! The Lord looks for far greater self-denial and service of love now than when it was a question of law. Let us not content ourselves with ceasing to do evil; but also learn to do good.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Evidently there it is a question of self-indulgence in one way or another. If there is a heart for the Lord, a way will soon be found wherein to serve Him; but that way often demands much self-denial. No circumstances set this aside. “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” This is very strong, yet most true. A person might say to me, I

understood you to teach, that those that believe had life everlasting already; but here it is said, He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Both statements are of the utmost value; but the point of view is totally different. If God is exhorting His people to a holy walk, He shows that life everlasting is the crown of that walk, and the end of it. Whatever may be the salvation that grace brings in, it never sets aside the value of holy devotedness to God. And, therefore, those having true faith manifest also real holiness; and only those. The two things coalesce. The believer in Christ receives everlasting life. What is the consequence? He sows to the Spirit, and reaps life everlasting. The life everlasting here is evidently what we are to have in glory. The everlasting life spoken of by John, is what the saint possesses on earth. Both are true. In glory, he will find everlasting life there without alloy receive it as a believer from Christ, and I find it in heaven, pursuing the path of the holy will of God. The life-resurrection of believers consists of those who have done good here below. “Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.” There is often a great danger of relaxing in the course. A man starts well and graciously; but after a while he finds that he has been taken advantage of by so many people, that he becomes reserved and suspicious. This is to be weary in well-doing, or its effect. He is determined to be duped no more. The truth is, there is a great deal of flesh in that kind of talk and feeling. Where souls are occupied with the grace of God, they are not so easily worn out. Because another has been selfish, is that a reason why a saint should become selfish too! The becoming state for a Christian is to have an open, generous heart, and to be active in looking out for suitable ways of doing good. The Lord does not say, Give what they ask; but the principle remains true, that the Christian is to keep the blessed vantage-ground of being the giver. If I am on the standing of law, I shall merely be a bargainer; but if on the ground of grace and faith in Christ, I shall have the more blessed place; and it is more blessed to give than to receive. This reaping, plainly, is in glory. We are not to expect it here. We may meet with that which is sweet and grateful, but we are not to be surprised if we do not, and if there is much from men that is painful. Let us remember, it is to the Lord we are lending; is there anything disappointing there) He that gives to the Lord is never disappointed. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men. This is the business of the Christian—doing good, and “especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” There is a special connection with saints; but we are not to stop there. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Chapter 57

Remarks on Galatians 6:11-18

IT is important to bear in mind, in reading every part of the word of God, that there is nothing brought in without the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost. There is one particular passage in 1 Cor. 7 where the apostle asserts expressly, that it was not the Lord but himself who gives a certain judgment about the natural relations of believers. But even the apostle did not write thus without the Holy Ghost. He was inspired to say it was not the Lord but himself. Hence there is not the slightest contrariety, even in so exceptional a manner of speaking. Again, take the book of Job, where you have Satan speaking, as well as elsewhere. But then, while no intelligent person would assert that what Satan said was inspired, yet the writer of the book was inspired to give it to us perfectly; the writer was thoroughly led of God to present just so much of what those concerned said, good or evil, man, Satan, or the Lord Himself, as would accomplish the divine object in that writing. Thus there is no exception whatever in the Bible to the grand truth that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.” This is not a mere deduction of man, but the positive doctrine of God Himself. Everything coming under the designation of “Scripture” (π■σα γραφ■) is inspired of God. Such is the express statement of the Apostle Paul in his last epistle (2 Timothy), not limiting, I apprehend it, to what was already extant, but leaving room also for what was to be written; such as the Apocalypse. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” &c. Whether what had been given, or the little that remained in order to close the canon of the Bible, all was equally from God; not all is equally lofty in its character, not all taking the form of doctrine, not even all revelation-for revelation and inspiration are two different things. In giving the account of our Lord's life, the writers occasionally, of course, reported what they themselves saw and heard. It was inspired, but a revelation is that which man never knew. When the Apostle Paul says, It is by the word of the Lord I declare unto you, that the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, that is not merely an inspired portion, but a revelation. So, of course, all prophecy is necessarily a revelation; and it was only in case of a positive revelation that there was any license to hinder a person who might be speaking; no matter how important what he was communicating, if something was revealed to another who was sitting by, he was entitled to stop the speaker. This is necessarily, it seems to me, at an end now. Revelation being complete, any attempt to act upon it would be not only irregular and indecent, but a virtual pretension to a new revelation, which is positively false, and a dishonor to the old. When there was still a part of the mind of God yet to be imparted, God maintained the sovereign right of His Spirit to introduce a revelation. But when all the mind of God was thoroughly revealed in His word, such a line of conduct would naturally terminate. Accordingly, although a person might have what was most truly from God, it would be his duty to wait till the due time came; flesh, Satan, might hinder, but God is above all difficulties. I make these general remarks in reference to the first verse, which comes before us.

It might seem somewhat surprising in an epistle so full of statements of doctrine, and appeals to the conscience and heart. In the midst of all this, the apostle says, “Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with mine own hand.” Or if you take it, as it may very well be taken, “Ye see with what large letters,” &c., it makes it still more striking. It was something unusual, even for the

Apostle Paul. To write an important document was not common, save through a secretary; it was a trade or occupation to itself. Therefore it was the habit of those occupied actively and arduously otherwise, to employ some one to write for them. In this instance, however, the apostle wrote it himself, and, from not being used to writing, he drew attention to the large characters in the epistle. It was comparatively a short letter, but it was all written by him; and, from not being used to write his own compositions, the letters seem to have been in this large handwriting, executed probably with considerable difficulty to himself. For we must remember that there was a great difference in the facility afforded for writing then, and at the present time. But there is something connected with the manner and bearing of the whole epistle in this simple fact. It is not a mere isolated circumstance, but the apostle lays stress on it, because of the state and dangers of the Galatians whom he was addressing. The Holy Ghost led him out in the strongest and most ardent desire for their deliverance. He therefore put aside any thought of employing a medium between them and himself; no matter what the difficulty, he will write to them himself. On other occasions, he might employ Tertius; but the case in hand was so urgent, the question at stake so all-engrossing and momentous, that every other task must give way. It was an hour so full of grave peril, that he takes no account of time, trouble, or anything else. It was a testimony of his intense interest in these Galatian saints, and so much the more striking, because of the marked absence of his customary greetings of personal, brotherly kindness. There we have a beautiful confirmation of the remarkable way in which the Holy Ghost mentions facts that bear the impress of God's own mind, His care and love for His people, His deep concern in them. The apostle himself draws attention to the circumstances of this epistle. He had written by others, and to others far more freely; for, as I said before, there is not a single salutation in the epistle. Not that he was straitened in desire before God; but he could not let out his Christian affections towards them. There was that in their conduct which, though it might be mingled with good, was so disastrous and contrary to Christ's glory, that he stood in doubt about them; he hoped about them, and that was all. He had confidence in the Lord touching them; but if he looked at themselves-at what they were doing and saying-he had none.

The two facts, then,-the absence of personal salutation, and his writing the letter himself,-both bear a remarkable testimony to the manner of God's love working through man's heart. All the mere interchange of the fraternal amenities is at an end. People would have said, How unkind of Paul! But brotherly kindness is not love, though people often confound them. Had the apostle, as things were, sent friendly messages to one or another, it would have been merely human, and not of God. He could do that in writing to the Romans, and even to the Corinthians, but not to the Galatians. What an idea this gives of their state! And yet there were to be greater abominations than these: things incomparably worse must creep in, but these were reserved for John. And though of all others, he was (may I say it?) the conspicuous champion of love, yet so far was John from direct personal references in his first epistle, that it is not addressed to an assembly at all, but introduced without heading in the most general form; and therefore it is commonly called a catholic or general epistle. It was perhaps so written that it might be pre-eminently a sort of circular letter to the whole Church. I gather from this, that where there is that which touches the work of Christ, as in Galatians, or the person of Christ, as in John, all personal considerations must give way. As the Lord, in His final mission to Israel (the seventy, Luke 10), forbade the disciples to salute any man by the way, so here the Spirit carries out something analogous, because Christ's glory was at stake, and the foundation of all blessing was menaced. Another thing to be observed is, that the

children of God generally do not understand how the mingling of the law with Christ lies at the root of a thousand difficulties. It is a rare thing to find a Christian who is not in principle where the Galatians were. In the present state of Christendom, we have been all trained to it from childhood. We shall not find it only in particular spots, here and there, but in one form or another it is the universally prevalent, the settled, chronic, fatal complaint in Christendom, insinuating itself into men's thoughts and ways, and everything.

Having so spoken, with that remarkable abruptness which marks his character-for we must all have noticed the exceeding rapidity of transition from one subject to another which so frequently characterizes the writings of the apostle-he turns to the subject that agitated his spirit, and sums up in these last verses both the danger and the blessing. “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” He does not mind what people may say. They might call it imputing motives-but no matter. It is in vain to deny that legalism fraternizes with the world, and loves its own ease, loves present reward, boast as it may of piety: it is after all only a desire to make a fair show in the flesh. This is very important; because, I ask, What is it now that men look for, and that men would be gratified with? If you had all the world attending churches and chapels-persons walking soberly and in a decent, orderly way otherwise, what universal rejoicing over the improved state and prospects of Christendom! And what would all this be in the sight of God? I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that if there were no more, it would only be “a fair show in the flesh.” What we, as Christians, are entitled to look for, and what we ought never to be satisfied without, is, that souls pass from death unto life-that souls should be delivered from the power of Satan and be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Until they have passed the boundary, from the regions of men into the presence of God, what has been done that could be a positive ground of Christian joy and thankfulness? It is not a question now merely of society or the world. We know that the world is under condemnation-that ever since the cross of Christ, judgment has been impending, as decidedly as after a criminal has been tried and found guilty; as he is waiting in his condemned cell for the sentence to be executed, such is man's condition. Do Christians realize it? Most imperfectly. If they did, could they be upon common ground with the world? Could a person go into the convict’s cell and talk to him as if nothing were the matter? We must think such a speaker destitute of all right feeling. So it is in a far more awful way than the execution of a single criminal. We know well that in the day which is coming, there will be no escape then and for eternity. “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” God looks that all His children should bear their testimony in the world that they know from Himself that all hangs on the uncertainty of a thread; that judgment is suspended over it; that Christ is ready to judge the quick and the dead. He awaits the will of His Father. All simply turns upon that. But we are told and know that He is coming, and coming shortly; and we wait for this. Yet in the midst of this scene of a condemned world, with the Lord coming to execute judgment upon it, there is such a thing as a number of souls who have passed through the faith of Christ into life everlasting, and who know it-at least who ought to know it. They belong to Him who is going to judge, not to the scene that is going to

be judged.

What is the effect of all this? They have in spirit abandoned the circumstances in which men are striving to keep up a vain show; they have repented towards God; they have bowed down to the Savior, the Lord Jesus, and have found eternal life and peace in Him. All is settled between their souls and God. With Christ the light, the truth, the life, the fair show has vanished. And while this great transaction is going on, a large part of the world seek to be as religious as they can; i.e., to reconcile religion with the world. And as the effect of this strategy of the enemy, and of their own unwatchfulness, very many of God's children descend to it, because great names are there, appearances are there, and even the word of God may be quoted to show that it is right to walk there. This is commonly done by taking what God says to Israel (who were God's people after the flesh, governed by the law), and applying it to those who are God's people now, called to walk under grace and Christ alone, who have the Holy Ghost that they may walk in the Spirit, and not yield to anything of the flesh. The mingling of the two things beguiles Christians into what is after all only the religion of the flesh. They think that an earthly system of religious forms must be right now, because it had His sanction in the Old Testament. They see that God acknowledged “a worldly sanctuary” once, and they reason thence for all times and places. Thus they get drawn into the “fair show in the flesh;” the more easily, as it habitually entails an absence of persecution, nay, credit with the world. People are sensible that you cannot raise the world to walk with you above its own level of sight and reason. But the moment you come down to meet the world, you are off Christian ground. A new nature is required. Faith is indispensable. The world has not this, You must descend to the world's path, if you will take common action with the world. It is not that the world becomes Christian thereby, but that Christians thus become worldly. Such is the only issue of the attempt to join Christians with those that are not Christians in the service and worship of God.

Hear the solemn sentence:-"As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” They want you to submit to these religious forms. The reason is that they dread suffering for Christ. The cross is the term of the old world, where the flesh was acknowledged; and the introduction of the new state of things where nothing but what is of the Holy Ghost is of value in the sight of God. He shows that selfishness, after all, is at the bottom. When persons are walking with the world, there is never an easy conscience. Nothing so much pleases the world as to get real Christians to walk with them. How humbling is the success of Satan in this; for what God called out Christians for is to manifest a people happy in Christ, and yet having nothing but tribulation in the world. I am not speaking now of our common, every-day trials. If saints do foolish things and suffer from them like others, they have their share of the results of their own folly. But there are the trials that come upon a Christian because he is a Christian—to be despised and rejected, evil spoken of and calumniated, because he walks with God and has taken the side of God against the world; because he is a sharer of Christ's cross and waits for His glory, refusing therefore not only the world's bad but its best things. This it is that the world is so angry at. They may talk about the faults of Christians; but were the same faults committed by the world, how soon and easily they would be got over! But where it is a Christian, there is that which makes them feel that, though the person may be weak and foolish, yet there is a something above the world; and it is really this which makes them uneasy. If the Christians in question here would only have submitted to be circumcised! But any one could be

circumcised, even if unconverted. Only take a pledge with a worldly man, and he will be pleased, because you come down to a level that he can occupy with you. I am not meddling with the world's trying to reform the world; but I have much to say about the sin and the shame of Christians joining with the world in their efforts to stay the plague by means of man's promises and vows. It is altogether false ground and contrary to the gospel, which starts upon the utter badness of man's nature. Whereas the moment you do a work to improve that nature, which the worldly man can equally do (and he can sign the pledge as well as you), it is plain that you have reached ground where the Christian gives up Christ as his one divinely-tempered weapon for dealing with man in the flesh, and is gone back to the bow and arrows, if I may so say, of moral restraint. Indeed, I cannot but view it as a lower thing even than circumcision, which was the type of a most blessed truth-the entire putting away of the flesh. But when Christ died, all that had been merely types, and had entirely failed as adequate remedies, were buried in His grave; and now he is risen and there is a new life in resurrection, which has nothing to say to the old, save to mortify it. The reality of life has come out, and this what the Christian has to do with now. Christ has become his life and his object too. It is the great object of the devil to get Christians to write some other name along with Christ on God's children: so that no matter what it is, whether you take circumcision as a type of spiritual blessing, or the mere natural moral restraints of the present day, it is altogether a mistake as to the object for which God has called us in this world. The Christian is outside that sphere; he is called into the place of grace. The magistrate's place is not one of grace, but of government, which, of course, calls for the punishment of evil. That is not grace. Grace is not this, but “If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also.” There would be an end of all justice if magistrates were to attempt to act thus. But while the Christian has no business out of the place of grace, he is bound to respect the government, and never to speak loweringly of dignities in the world. The better he knows his own privileges, the more he can afford to maintain the honor of the magistrate. He owns it so much the more, because he does not covet it himself. He has a much better place himself; but if he know the secret of his own joy and liberty in this world, let him at the same time acknowledge the higher powers which God has ordained in earthly rule. When persons are in the same sphere, there may be more or less rivalry: people prefer to rule other people rather than to be ruled themselves. But when a soul is entirely delivered from the world, he can the more heartily own what is of God here below, and see the wisdom of His order there. It is on this ground that the Holy Ghost always presses the Christian's obedience of the law, and honor to the king or other governor he may be under.

But to return to our subject. The apostle further shows that, after all, these zealots for circumcision did not keep the law. They only observed it in part, with no little inconsistency, however hot their feeling against the advocates of Christian liberty. This is always the case. Those who insist on the perpetuity of the sabbath, how do they keep it? It is not only that they never heed the true day; but supposing the Lord's day were really the same as the sabbath, do they observe it according to the law? Not at all. They will tell you that Christianity, besides changing the day, has modified the mode of its observance, that the gospel mitigates the severity of God's law, &c. If this be not to make void the law through unbelief, it is hard to say what is. I deny their facts, doctrines, and conclusions. Christianity, so far from attenuating the law, or reducing its sanctions, is that which alone gives the law its full value-"By faith we establish the law.” (Rom. 3:31.) The doctrine of faith, instead of weakening the obligation, illustrates and maintains it to the utmost. But the establishment of the law, of which the apostle speaks in Rom. 3, has no reference whatever to the

question of a rule by which the Christian has to walk. The chapter treats of man's ruin and God's righteousness, not of practice, and shows that faith upholds the authority of the law in the cross of Christ, which owns man's just and total condemnation, and is the basis of divine justifying righteousness, which is revealed to and becomes the portion of the believer. The law's curse fell upon Christ, which has thus been magnified to the uttermost, its full sentence having been exhausted upon the head of the Son of God. Hence, whether you look at God or man, or the Savior, faith establishes the law, as nothing else could. But as to the Lord's day, far from being the same as the sabbath, it is the first day of the week, not the seventh, and rests on quite different foundations. When you come to test the would-be teachers of the law, their zeal is soon seen to break down in practice; and they are easily convicted of introducing changes and modifications in order to suit the tithe, country, climate, and people; i.e., to suit themselves in the things of God. This theory of mitigation, and of a flexible law, can never stand a fair scrutiny. On the other hand, those who hold that the Lord's day is a new thing, in no way connected either with creation or with the law, are under no difficulty; because they see that the same God who sanctified the sabbath originally, and gave the law to Israel, was pleased to put special honor on the first day of the week, in commemoration of redemption accomplished—of the death and resurrection of Christ; but they see it as having its own proper character, and not as confounded with the sabbath. The Lord's day calls for no mere rest which you may share with your ox or your ass; and so far from its due honor consisting chiefly in bodily quiet, I believe that if a Christian were on that day enabled to walk twenty sabbath-day's journeys on special services for the Lord, he would not only be at liberty to do that work, but that it would be most acceptable to the Lord. Each day is separated from other days by divine authority; but in other respects they differ as decidedly as law from grace, or the old creation from the new. “For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.” That is most true in the present time. The truth is not the test in the religious world, nor Christ Himself, nor His service. Refuse their party or their idols, and be prepared for reproach, calumny, scorn, and hatred. Yield to their Judaizing, and you may hold blasphemous doctrine with impunity as far as they are concerned. Touch their abuse of the law, and their cry is, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” The law is their Lord yet more than Christ. I am now alluding to a literal fact in the most popular organ of the so-called Evangelical, but in truth a legal, party of the day.

And now the apostle, having spoken of the evil, turns to the blessed side: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” They were glorying in what would exalt human nature; because in that way they could get the world and its multitudes to unite with them. In chap. 3 the cross of Christ is viewed as deliverance from the law, because Christ was thereon made a curse for us. A man who believed in Christ, who owns Him as the Son of God—would you deny that he had everlasting life? But unless such an one receives the doctrine of the cross intelligently, and applies it to his position, he is still more or less under the law, and does not understand that he is completely brought out of the old condition of things into a new ground.

In chap. v. the apostle applies the doctrine of the cross to the flesh, and shows that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Here I find that my flesh is a thing I am entitled to regard as done with before God, no less than the law. Now, in chap. vi., comes in the third thing, the world. You have a regular gradation—freed from the law, which would affect the

conscience of a godly person; then, when a man is free from that anxiety, comes in the question of the flesh, with its affections and lusts. But fins, he is told, was all judged in the cross of Christ. Therefore, as a part of the comfort God gives me, I am entitled, as a matter of faith and not of mere feeling, to know, “They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.” It does not say, “They are crucifying it,” as if it were something going on; but it is done in receiving a crucified Christ. In God's sight, and now to faith also, their nature was nailed to the tree, and is done with before God; and now they have got a new nature: as Paul says, “Not I, but Christ liveth in me.” The old nature that we have still exists, of course; but to faith God has already done with it in the cross of Christ; so that the business of the Christian man is to occupy himself, not with mere restraints, but with Christ; which fills the soul, by the energy of the Spirit, with all that is good, draws it out into what is lovely, and, in short, is the true power of Christian holiness. If a man is occupied with what is good, he will hate his flesh; but it is only occupation with Christ that gives the soul power thus to put the sentence of God upon the flesh. Now comes the third and last thing in Christian experience; for you will find men who know somewhat of deadness to the law and to the flesh, but who still think that it is the duty of the Christian man in this world to serve God in his generation. But how would God have Himself to be served now? Never by anything that contradicts the cross of Christ. The service of the Christian is to be founded on the cross: and what does the cross declare about the world? That it is now at open war with God. Ever since the cross of Christ, God has no alliance with the world. Before that the world was allowed: and therefore it was not wrong for Joseph to be governor in Egypt, nor for Daniel to sit in the gate of the king of Babylon. But it is utterly ignorant to reason from what was tolerated then to what pleases God now that the cross of His Son is a fact.

God does not ignore the cross, if Christians do. The very same cross of Christ that is my salvation, my deliverance from the law and the flesh, shows me that I have no part with this world, save as a blessed stranger passing through it. We may have occupations that are all quite right; but that is not at all what you can call a thing of the world. The Lord lived here, died here, rose here, ate and drank in this world; but He never was of the world: and so it is and should be with the Christian. Our Lord did not form such a part and parcel of this world as that His appearance in it or departure from it ruffled the stream for a moment. He would not have been missed in the world; and the moment that a Christian becomes an integral part of the motive power which carries on the wheels of the world, all is out of course, as far as his allegiance to Christ goes. A Christian ought to be the means of constant blessing in this world. But how and of what character? Bearing the testimony of Christ, of his Savior; but as He never sought His own things—was always doing good, yet doing it as the will of His Father—always acting upon motives that were not of the world, but from above—never uniting with men's plans for the purpose of bettering man, but realizing that the world was God's enemy, and yet that God's love was sending Him into it to do them good; such was Christ, and so should it be with the Christian. A Christian's business is to be the epistle of Christ. So that the one clue and test for what comes before a person is this: will my doing this or that, be acting as an epistle of Christ? But in order to know what is consistent with an epistle of Christ, I must search His ways in the words of the Holy Ghost. There is always light in Scripture to show what is His mind for the present moment, and what it is that has passed away with the olden time, which belonged to the law and the world and to Israel, who were God's ancient witness in the world. But the Christian is the present witness of Christ, and is not of the world, although in it. This is the great means of trying our ways, and thus finding out how far we glory in the cross. That is,

you have them on totally opposite principles. The cross of Christ is that which first of all crucifies the Christian to the world, puts him entirely outside it as one saved out of it; but also the world is crucified to him. There you see the world with all its unremoved guilt, ignorant of the Father spite of the coming of the Son. So there cannot be the least common ground between a Christian and the world; any more than there could be for this country if it were at open war with any of its neighbors. If this be true, does it not show how little God's children realize their Christian position, as thus defined by the cross of Christ!

Peace made by the blood of the cross is more or less preached: but as to the moral power of the cross and its bearing upon the law, the flesh, or the world, there is hardly an atom save in the way of motive. The consequence is, that such Christians can, with a good conscience, talk about the cross, and, at the same time, still maintain what God has already judged and put away forever. Hence the importance of full Christian deliverance is unknown—the ground-truths which ought to be understood by the babe. For the Epistle to the Galatians does not take up the highest branch of Christian truth, but rather the indispensable foundations of Christianity.

The apostle now begins in another point. To speak merely of being crucified to the world would not have been enough. There is more than that in Christ. “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” People may boast about their forms or their no forms, but whatever it may be, it is all wrong, unless you have got positive, substantial blessing from God; unless you have the cross of Christ and the new creation. As a Christian, I belong to a system already set up in Christ, in the presence of God. I know what my new nature is when I think of Christ. I see Him risen from the dead and in glory; the perfect delight of God and of all who surround God. And there all Christians are going to be, and this in substance they have got now, the Holy Ghost Himself being the earnest of glory. For it is not merely what they are going to shine in, but we have the blessing before the blessing is manifested. The Christian possesses the new creature in perfection in Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life.” It is called here the “new creation,” because it is not merely looked at as life found, but contrasted with the old, which had to do with the world. This implies not only the person, but the work of Christ. The grand work of redemption was accomplished; God's law had its free course, and righteousness established; the voice of condemnation never to be heard again by virtue of the cross of the Just One, who had suffered for our sake. But then He was risen from the dead, and had entered upon a new and blessed existence as a risen man before God. And this is the nature which He communicates to us. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” The consequence is that, having died, but being risen, He communicates that very life which was in Him. “I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.” The more abundant life is this “new creature,” or life in resurrection.

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” In the first expression, “as many as walk according to this rule,” he specially looks, I think, at the Gentile believers, such as the Galatians were. “This rule” is the rule of the new creation—Christ Himself. He adds, “peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” The only part of Israel acknowledged consists of the real believing Jews. “Israel of God” seems to be not used here as a general phrase for every saint, but for the believing ones in Israel—those who had repudiated their own works and found shelter only in Christ Jesus... Two parties are spoken of, and not one only. “As many as walk according to this rule,” are rather the Gentile

believers; and the “Israel of God” are the Jewish saints, not the mere literal Israel, but “the Israel of God;” the Israelites indeed, whom grace made willing to receive the Savior.

He then adds, “From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Their fleshly wisdom had brought in confusion and every evil work, law instead of love, questions about his ministry, &c. “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” He had been scourged and put in prison. What mark of indignity had not been put upon him? These (not circumcision) are “the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Just as a slave in olden time used to bear the name of his master burnt into his flesh, so, he means, he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Let others bear or seek what they may, these are the marks that I value. They were the sufferings that he had endured for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Nothing more sweet and touching, but at the same time what a sweeping condemnation of those self-exalting men who took their ease in the presence of one whose life was suffering for Christ! “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” It is indeed most gracious and dignified. He asks not that they might feel the thunders of that law under which they desired to put themselves; but that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ should be with their spirit,” showing how thoroughly he felt the vantage-ground which grace gave him—how he could meet all these attacks upon himself—how he could point to the scars of his honorable warfare, if they talked of their circumcision, though he would boast of nothing but Christ's cross. Our wisdom is Christ, as our folly is ourselves. The Lord grant then that we may learn better to know our true wisdom and to walk in it; and, while holding fast the truth, that we may desire earnestly the blessing of those who oppose it, and seek the deliverance of every soul around us. The Epistle to the Galatians is the death-blow to the religions world, root and branch, as it is to the revival or continuance of the same system, which the Apostle Paul was there so strongly denouncing, and which he shows to be the enemy, not of the saints only, but of the cross of Christ.

Chapter 58

A Brief Word on the Galatians

I believe that we might shortly describe this epistle as thus the “scripture” by the ministry of Paul now, as once by the voice of Sarah, casting the bondwoman and her son out of the house of Abraham.

The apostle, in order to this, first proves his warrant. And this he does to perfection in chap. i., ii.-showing that he received his gospel purely and immediately, from God Himself, in a way that admitted of no human admixture whatever, and that, under the full conscious authority of a gospel so received, he had already met the bondwoman and her ways in the person of the Apostle Peter at Antioch, and withstood her—thus making proof of his present ministry on a small scale, so to speak; or, like Samson, slaying the lion on his way to this Philistine den in Galatia, when he was to meet a host of them.

And besides this, he makes the experience of their own souls, and the voices of Scripture touching Abraham and the law, his further witnesses. He makes them, as it were, seal his authority to do this great work in the name of the Lord. (Chap. 3) And further, he shows that the time was now fully come, when the Lord had ripened all His dispensational actings up to this very point of casting out the bondwoman and her son. (Chap. 4:1-7)

Nothing could be more perfect than a warrant thus delivered, thus verified, thus sealed, and thus countenanced, if I may so speak, by God's own acts. The apostle, therefore, with full ease, and conscious authority, find himself in company with Sarah in Gen. 21 As she then knew her right, without leave from her husband or apology to anyone, summarily to demand the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from the house, so does Paul here. He shows what the modern or mystic Hagar is—that it is the religiousness of mere nature, or a system of observances and ordinances, either imposed or revived by man in the churches of the saints—that formality of days, and months, and times, and years, which genders the spirit of bondage, and hinders the formation of Christ in the soul, and that spirit of liberty which He ever brings with Him. And the expulsion of this Hagar, this bondwoman, from the house of Abraham, or the churches of the saints, he demands with as full, unsparing decision as ever Sarah demanded the casting out of Hagar the Egyptian and her mocking child. (Chap. 4:8; 5:12)

But, if I may so speak, the energy of the apostle even exceeds that of Sarah. And this is but right: It is right that, as we advance in the unfolded ways and thoughts of God, and get from the time of Gen. 21 to the time of Gal. 5, we should find the energies and demands of the spirit still more wide and more intense also. We often see this. It was written of old, “Thou shalt not forswear thyself;” but it is written at a later period, “Swear not at all." So here, the demands of Paul are somewhat larger and more intense than those of Sarah had been. She was satisfied with the dismissal of Hagar and the child, but Paul calls together with that for the removal out of the house of all that belonged to them. He will do what he can to get every vestige of their former residence there effaced. He would fain obliterate every remembrance of them—the very customs they once observed there, their habits and modes of living, and the spirit and tempers which they were

nourishing and practicing, all these he would have to be gone, as well as themselves. He would even purify the place of the very air their breath and presence had diffused. Not merely the religiousness of the flesh would he peremptorily expel the house, the miserable and beggarly elements which kept the soul in bondage; but the works of the flesh also, its moral ways, its boastings and energies. Yea, and its conceits and high-mindedness too—its despite of a poor overtaken soul, through the vain thought of its own security. Against all this, and more than this, he lifts up his more-than-Sarah voice, knowing no stint to the demand, that the bondwoman, with all that belongs to her, as well as her child, shall be turned out of the churches of the saints, or the modern mystic house of Abraham. And even in addition to this, he would have that house learn and practice the very opposite and contradictory habits—the ways of the Spirit and not of the flesh, the things that become the new creature in Christ, and not what was found inseparable from the flesh. (Chap. 5:13; 6:10)

He then gives us another witness of the importance he attached to all this truth, writing this epistle with his own hand. (See Rom. 16:22) For the defense of it demands more vigor than its publication. (Ver. 11)

He, in the next place, exposes the moral or the interested purposes of those who were leading them back to circumcision or religiousness, and is bold to present himself as one that knew the power of the opposite principle (see chap. 1: 4; 6:14), with all authority, too, as from God, speaking peace to all who clung to that principle. (Ver. 12-17)

And he closes by a suited valediction. For it is their spirit he commends to the grace of the Lord. (Ver. 18)

Such I judge to be the principal details of this epistle. And generally, I may say, there is a tone of peculiar decision and fervency in it. The apostle felt as though the citadel itself were in danger. A standard-bearer at Antioch had already well-nigh fainted. He had come, as it were, fresh from that sight, and he must grasp the banner of the gospel with fresh vigor because of it, and to step into the breach like a man.

It was a moment of deep interest, and he cannot but be alive to it. And though we are not in commission exactly as he was, entrusted with the truth of the dispensation in a special way (1 Cor. 9:17), yet we are, as in the train of this great ambassador, to be of one mind with him, and give place by subjection, no, not for an hour, if the mine have been laid again that threatens the citadel.

Chapter 59

The Closing Commissions in the Gospels

There are four different addresses or commissions in the four different gospels, each of them distinct and consequent on the character of the Gospel. In Matt. 28 it is the exaltation of Messiah to all power in heaven and earth, from which flows the mission to disciple all the Gentiles. This was a specific commission, contrasted with that to the lost sheep of the house of Israel— “the children.” Now His exaltation, on His rejection by them, took a wider scope. They were to disciple all the nations. Such was the consequence of His rejection by Israel. The baptizing of the Gentiles was not to be unto John's or Messiah's baptism, but into that of which the full revelation was by His death and resurrection—into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This was the position and unfolded fellowship with God into which they were brought; and all that was brought out, on God's part, both for the display of Himself and the economy of grace. It was not Jehovah and Messiah, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—something paramount and superior to the relationship of Messiah on the earth having followers, or Jehovah in heaven, however blessed. They were brought into distinct known relationship with or in the unfolded fullness of the Godhead. They were children of the Father, in fellowship with the glorified Son, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in them; and they knew all three. It is the most formal statement of the Christian revelation as replacing Judaism; the sphere is enlarged to embrace all nations, and the observance of what Christ commanded is substituted for the law of Moses. Those who went forth to disciple the Gentiles were messengers of the King, whose presence would be with them till the end of the age, when He Himself should appear in the glory of His kingdom.

Mark, being more especially the witness of the ministry of Christ, gives (not the outstretching principle of dispensation now opened by His death and resurrection, and founded on the place of power where He was, but) the principle, the new principle of the ministry itself and its consequences. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” We may compare Rom. 1 and Col. 1:23. It is a question here not of the kingdom but of salvation; and hence baptism as a fact and personal confession of Christ is insisted on, not its form in contradistinction to Judaism. The unbeliever shall be condemned.

In Luke, suitably to that Gospel, we have not the economical change which went forth to reduce all the Gentiles to a recognition of Christ, or the character and universal extent of the gospel, but its moral subject and scope, involving withal Jew and Gentile alike as sinners; for he specially looks at man. Hence it runs there: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in. his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” It is beautiful to see that while the need and ruin of man are fully met, testimony to “the Jew first” is not forgotten, even if Jerusalem were first in guilt as well as privilege.

In John, as the Sonship of Christ is the great subject (who He—the Son of God—was in person), the authority and power of His person in mission was the thing brought forward. “As my Father hath sent me; even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said unto

them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." We have here the authority of the Sender from His person, title and work. This was authority delegated in grace by the rejected but risen of God, giving peace to His own and sending them forth, with peace for others, in a world which knows neither Him nor it.

As to these commissions, while the spirit and principle of all remains, and so far as we have spiritual power, we can realize them; yet all, I believe, have been perverted and have fallen, like all else in man's hand. As the Jewish economy received a deadly wound by the golden calf for example, so did this full soon; and though the energy of God's grace and Spirit prerogatively might work and produce effects in sustaining and prolonging power and mercy in righteousness as such, the thing was gone; but it is the same power which originally constituted it which always lives and acts, though not in justifying the iniquity, for it is the power of the Spirit of God. And in measure as we act on this, the results are produced pro tanto. Here is spiritual wisdom, to see, and own, and bow under the sense of the apostasy (i.e., under God's judgment of man's unrighteousness—God is always abidingly righteous in all His ways), and yet still hold fast to the living power which is the energy of the Spirit of God which works prerogatively in blessing. Of this the extraordinary example and scriptural illustration is Paul—the ■κτρωμα of other hopes. And God is glorified in this; for the failure of man always brings out further and better things, though it may be in trial, than that which has decayed and passed away in his hands. The death of Stephen, in fact, was the turning-point, and formed the occasion of the bringing in the character of the dispensation as now exercised. In the calling of the centurion by Peter, God showed that He never departed from His purpose of associating the Gentiles as brought in with the Jews; and that, as regards administration, they bore not the root, but the root them. And so says Paul, bowing to this in his ministry, "It was necessary that the Word of God should be first preached unto you; but seeing ye count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles" (a sentence used on the Lord's rejection by Israel, "Then have I labored in vain and spent my strength for naught and in vain;" whereas Peter was the minister of the circumcision, and could not take this ground, blessed in office as he was), "and that thou shouldest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." Thus they take the spiritual interpretation of a passage significative of the dispensation, as a command which guided their conduct, though something else was first necessary. It was just following the Lord's own way, taking up His primacy and bowing to it; "it was necessary," &c., and then His glorious mission according to the energy of the Holy Ghost. Yet were Israel and Zion still well-beloved; and so Paul showed ever.

Chapter 60

Government of God

When the question of redemption is a perfectly settled thing, then government begins. The government of God, as regards His saints, only begins when they are saved, and then the saint goes through all the process of conflict between good and evil. Having got the good as his possession, he goes through all the question between good and evil, to ascertain the faithful love which maintains him and keeps him from evil. There are two ways of knowing good and evil. We know that we have got the knowledge of it first by sin; but the question of good and evil must also be brought to a complete issue in ourselves. We cannot be innocent again. As Christians we acquire the knowledge of good and evil by the possession of the good and being above the evil. I cannot learn it by merely finding the power of evil that I cannot get the better of—that is, as under the law. This is what we find in Rom. 7. It is there a man discovering that when he ought to be this, he is the other thing— “sold under sin.” I hate and detest evil and yet I do it; I love good and yet, alas! I do it not. But when I get hold of redemption, I have now perfect good; I am made perfect righteousness in Christ; I have eternal life. Then, this flesh being in us, the conflict comes. This does not cease, but it is carried on with the conscious possession of good, and of being perfect in Christ. It is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.

Chapter 61

The Heavenly Dwelling-Place and Earthly Pilgrimage

(Psa. 84)

In this Psalm we have two different states-the enjoyed and, for us, heavenly privileges of a saint, and the experience of mercies by the way, and thus the lessons of God's faithfulness in them. These may be united, but very often are found separated. For a soul may know the experiences, without deep rest and the consciousness of heavenly joy-the heart's peace in the presence of God and in God Himself. It is evident that this is what our souls would desire, above all things, if we are now practically with God; that is, to be with Him according to the height of His own thoughts and goodness, and the display He has given, not only of His grace, but also of the place in which He has put us apart from all circumstances and experiences, that we may be able to enjoy Him to the uttermost. Now I am persuaded that this kind of enjoyment of God is comparatively rare, even among the beloved ones of His family; and that the continual tendency of our hearts is to be content with just that measure of knowledge of God which hinders our souls from getting into trouble, anxiety, questions of one kind and another. And this comes of the wretched selfishness of our hearts, and the disposition there is in us to enjoy present things, so far at least as our consciences can in any wise permit without damaging our confidence in God. Need I say that a soul born of God resents such a principle as this, and that no soul that is entangled by it thoroughly weighs and judges it—understands it in its real import? For there are many specious pretexts which the enemy uses to hinder souls and keep them back. He does not, of course, permit, as far as he can, that one should understand what he is seeking; but his object with the saint is, that in one way and measure or another he may hinder the triumph of our souls and the present glory of God in association with His people.

Let us, then, just look briefly at the twofold picture herein afforded. In an Israelite, the two things could not be together; but the Christian's peculiarity is, what was necessarily separated in others, we are entitled to enjoy-knowing what they had to learn in detail here and there. There are two blessings, or two classes of men said to be blest here. The first are those that abide in Jehovah's house: “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.” Then the effect is immediate and inseparable, and most glorifying to God: “They will be still praising thee.” It is the spirit of worship. You have hearts near enough to God to be above the depression or the elation created by present changes. Around that house there might be bitterness, sorrow, deep dishonor; for the struggle of the enemy is always most keen in the neighborhood of God's glory. But they are in His presence: and what matters it then if Satan rage, and rage ever so near them? They know that they are near Him to whom Satan, and all that Satan can do, is but a little thing—that they are in the presence of Him who loves them, and controls all things. True moral elevation is theirs and spiritual power; for God is their measure of judgment and their rest; and this is only the more appreciated because of the boisterous waves and tempests that Satan may be permitted to excite. And they have the consciousness of this, those that are thus near to Him. They are those dwelling in His house, and they are still praising Him. It could not be otherwise. If I am so near to God that His glory fills my eye and my heart, I may know all other things outside, but this is the object that attracts my soul

and keeps me in peace and gives me power to praise. “They will be still praising thee.” “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.” It is no question now of Israel and of their tabernacles. The soul that has entered into the presence of God regards it less as the tabernacles of the people than of God, even Jehovah Himself. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.” But the courts are not enough, though they might be near, for he adds, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” He wanted more than His courts— “the living God, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.” So far from being content with the outer circle, when once the desire to be near God is in the soul, the desire rises to “the living God.” How near can I get to Him? Thine altars—taking in both golden and brazen altars—intercession and acceptance. My heart, he says, is longing to be there, “even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.” In the parenthetical word, which comes in so beautifully, the thought is this. The sparrow may be despised. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?” But let them be ever so common and contemned of man, yet are they cared for by our heavenly Father. Yes, the sparrow has found an house; and the swallow, restlessly as she may be upon the wing, yet the restless bird has found a nest where she may lay her young. And where is our house and our nest? O how blessed is the answer In nearness to Himself, where His glory dwells— “Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.” This is true of every saint of God. It is their full, eternal portion before Him. But I am not speaking of it now in the point of view of a fact that grace has given to every Christian, but in a practical way. What I aim at is that our souls enter into it and responding to such grace, and find our deep joy in the place which God has given us, in His beloved Son, near to Himself. There are, however, practical trials for each; and hence we find the second part of this Psalm, where the way is looked at rather than rest and enjoyment in God's presence. People often make their deepest blessings the resource of their souls in sorrow, rather than their present home. Is it not so with many of us? Do we not put aside the thoughts of being so near to God? Do we not wait for it as that which we trust will be our place by and by in heaven? But how is it now? Is it our present pavilion? Is it that to which we turn as the needle to the pole habitually? It may be quivering under the pressure of outward circumstances, but there it surely turns. And is it to Christ Jesus that our souls turn habitually? Is it in the consciousness that we are brought into God's presence and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, put there as our present home, that we walk through this world? Is this the experience of our hearts? But few of God's children could answer with simplicity and assurance of heart, that it is so with them. That there their souls habitually dwell. They may be able to say, It is my desire; but what is the actual state of the heart I Though there may be at times some bright gleams, yet is not praise rather the exception than the habit? It may be that we only know what praise is when we meet together on the Lord's day, or when we manifestly bow in worship. But is the tone of thanksgiving, the spirit of adoration, that which characterizes our souls throughout each day or is not the power of praise, alas! the rare thing, and the trial of circumstances upon us, and the consciousness of failure, that which prevails? We have, as it were, to put on the garment of praise, instead of standing ever clothed with it. I do desire this for myself as for all the children of God, knowing how blessed it is, though how little entered into. Assuredly it is the sweetest place and the secret of real power do not allude now to the power which manifested itself in testifying to others (this is, no doubt, important in its place), but there is no power so blessed as the happy, peaceful, calm enjoyment of the presence of God. There is nothing that so wears through all the storms and difficulties and trials of persons and things here.

The Lord grant that we may know it well. For if we are happy in our own souls, we make happy—we excite a spirit of praise in others. If our hearts, on the contrary, are always dull, and we are occupied with enemies and evils, disappointment, then thence follows a querulous weakness in ourselves, and we become rather the means of enfeebling souls, and filling Christ's members with that which is the reflection of our own weakness instead of evidencing the strength which is in Christ, The later verses, then, give us the Israelite on his way—he cannot be parted from the land. There are all sorts of difficulties in the way; but if God has called a soul to go there, He does not fail. There is the rain, too, that fills the pools—refreshment ever anon which God graciously vouchsafes. Therefore “they go from strength to strength,” God mercifully sustaining and guiding. “Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” But the characteristic feature that appears now is prayer, not praise. It is blessed really to pray. It is a true sign of new life, as we see in the case of Saul of Tarsus, “Behold he prayeth.” The renewed soul cannot but bring its weakness and difficulties before God. But though we must not pray less, we should praise more. Not that we should not feel our weakness and the valley of Baca; but we are called to far, far more, every one of us; and it would be a poor thing to have a title to some blessing if it were not an enjoyed and appropriated title; if it was like a mere parchment deed, shut up in a strong box, instead of a flowing and tasted spring of delights. And how deep is then the joy? What we find in the early verses is rather the result of this. It is not the conflict, but the soul's rest in the presence of God, which we must not defer till we get to heaven. May our hearts turn there to the enjoyment of God Himself, even while we are here in this world. We shall feel the difficulties, but it will be as those that are above them. It will not be an easy path to the flesh. But felt as all may be, there is something better than being occupied with the sorrows and hindrances of the way, and this is joying in God Himself. Hence, while the trials are experienced, yet we may and should have such repose in God about them all, that while we feel everything, we should seem as if we felt nothing. That is what was realized by the Apostle Paul— “many tears,” yet “none of these things move me.” Did he know the truth of Rom. 5:3 experimentally as an apostle? Nay, but as a spiritual man. Other apostles may not have known it as he did. The triumph of faith is not connected with any particular place or office, but flows from the soul's appreciation of God's own grace in Christ Jesus. We know that even an apostle will be in hell; and to many who have wrought miracles and cast out devils in His name the Lord will say “I never knew you.” Let us not suppose that the practical power which can give us to know our place with God depends on any state of the Church, or any special circumstances or position. These things have nothing to do with it, belonging, as it does, to the power of the Holy Ghost, who gives us to enjoy Christ. The soul that enjoys Him thoroughly will be most in God's presence, and most praising Him; and there, too, I am persuaded, will be most power of practical holiness. God makes us happy in Christ: what is the effect? Holiness. The soul is attracted to walk with God above the world; and without this there is no enjoyment, no praising Him. All is vexation of spirit—all is dark, weak, and wretched.

These two things, then, should coalesce in the Christian. We are wrong if we take the passage through the valley of Baca now to be so exclusively our place, as to exclude the rest and joy in God which are ours in His own presence. Blessed surely is the man that trusts God in both these conditions. But where the confidence now is simple, intelligent, and full, it will not be merely touching the circumstances of trial, but the heart near God, dwelling in God, and God in us, and still praising Him.

The Lord grant that if we know the one, we may enter into the still greater blessing of the other, more fully than ever, through Christ Jesus!

Chapter 62

Fragment: The Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost suggests thoughts, supplies courage, and gives wisdom as to what is to be done; and this is power the Holy Ghost suggests thoughts, supplies courage, and gives wisdom as to what is to be done; and this is power.

Chapter 63

Fragment: Idolatry

The divine attributes have been made the basis of idolatry. Men embodied the attributes and left God out. So scripture history was perverted, as the ark of Noah and his three sons; or earlier still, the serpent, woman, and tree; in nature, the sun, moon, and stars—in short, the creature, generally, served more than the Creator.

Chapter 64

On Inspiration

When men speak of the “infallible” Word of God, they mean that it may be relied on as having all the infallible certainty of what God says; and they are quite right. But no person, speaking carefully, would say that the apostles were infallible. We have one of them rebuking another to his face; so that he did not think so. Thousands of devoted Christians have canvassed Paul's vows and purifyings at Jerusalem: no true and sound-minded one has questioned the divine authority and truth of the Scripture that speaks of it. What I look for in a revelation is a perfect representation of the divine mind as to all the ways in which God is pleased to make Himself known in dealing with man. In order to have this, I must have a full display or exposure of man as he really is; and this, being historically and dogmatically given, affords the ground of human conscience and divine light. Now this is the greatest boon, save the power to use it, that God can give to man (not speaking of the salvation itself, which it is the means of making known to him): he gets the knowledge of Himself and of what God is toward Himself, such as he really is; and he is brought into the perfect light, and that in grace.

But for this purpose, how many things very different from God's will and thoughts, contrary to what God would have inspired, and mixed when He has acted on the affections, shall we find! If God shows us the truth, we must have things as they really are. We must have an apostle's failures as well as all else—man's path under the highest power of the Holy Ghost bestowed on him. For this he must often express himself. Only with this we need the positive revelation of God's own mind in an unquestionable way to be able to judge, supposing we are spiritual, of all this; and that the Scriptures afford us. This human character is, in the New Testament, especially drawn out and unfolded. In the Old, we have the history of man divinely given, and certain oracles imparted with “thus saith the Lord,” with comparatively little, save in the Psalms, of the effect of the working of the Holy Ghost in man, so as to produce affections and thoughts in which the divine spring is seen, but the forms of human thoughts, because it was the Holy Ghost working in man. In this latter case there may be various degrees of spiritual clearness of thought according to the state of the person in whom the Holy Ghost works. It may be such as spiritual men have now, only of course the thoughts conformed to the state of the dispensation. Thus it was in the case of Deborah's song; and if I am to know man and God's dealings, and man under them, I must have this. A person may be filled with the Holy Ghost, and so express his mind, that, though it be his feelings and so given, yet what nature would have produced is absent; and it is only what the Holy Ghost has produced, though in his heart. Thus his heart is a proper vessel of the Holy Ghost; and his utterance may he recorded as being really of God and proper inspiration, though in a human heart. So Elizabeth's song in Luke 1, Zachariah's in the same chapter, and Simeon's in chapter ii. In these cases, such outgoings of heart being directly from the Spirit will be prophecies, properly speaking. Such we have in the Psalms, though they be expressions often of feelings in the writer's heart at the time, and I doubt not, prepared for the remnant of Israel in the latter day, as giving them divine comfort in their tried feelings and exercised hearts then. Of David's psalms we are expressly informed by himself, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, “the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my

tongue."

This kind of working of the Holy Ghost even in our hearts, and that in cases where our minds are not sufficiently taught of God to know what to look for, is spoken of in Rom. 8, where he says, "He who searcheth the heart knoweth the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." It is merely saying that the Holy Ghost can work in the affections where the intelligence may not be sufficiently formed to express itself on particular subjects, or point out the positive answer to those affections. If, beforehand, God communicated the answer to a heart so exercised, it becomes real prophecy or inspired truth, as well as divinely-given feelings. If even the Spirit gives, such expression to the sorrow of the heart that it should be according to God, this may be more than personal, though it be such, and rise to the full revelation of that personal or sympathetic sorrow which was, in the heart of Jesus, from the same cause more fully developed, and without counteracting or modifying evil. And this might be without the knowledge, in him who uttered it, of what it applied to. Such a principle is clearly recognized in the New Testament; for Peter speaks of the prophets who, by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow; and they searched what and what manner of time it referred to, and found that it was not for themselves but for us. The Jews had the same notion, and as an opinion, it was well-founded, though they joined unsound notions as to inspiration with it. They taught that there was the grades Mosaicus, or Moses' degree, the grades propheticus, and the Bath Idol, or daughter of a voice: the two first founded on Num. 12:6-8, and the third characterizing the chetubim or hagiographa. This did not touch the authority but the character of the writings. But it is often of deep interest to know the manner of God's speaking to us; though, in whatever way He speak, His word has always the same authority. Not one jot or tittle can pass from the law; and all that is written in Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Christ, must be fulfilled. Yet when the apostle says, "God, who, in sundry times and in divers mariners spake in times past, hath in these last days spoken to us by the Son" [in the Son, in the person of the Son, ■ν ιγιφ], is it not of the deepest possible interest to see the testimony of God brought to us in the person of the Son Himself?—God Himself speaking there; "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit [to him] in measure." Everything there was the expression of God Himself. It was not, "Thus saith the Lord," for some precious sentences, and then a man's relapsing into his ordinary though perhaps sanctified existence. All that came forth breathed God—God in human kindness or philanthropy—as the apostle speaks, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." If He took up a child, if He spoke to a sinner, if He sat at the well wearied, with a yet more weary and desolate heart beside Him, a woman who came at that strange time to draw water, one justly in a sense ill seen by men, and yet, however dark, with secret wants beyond them, a sign to His eye that the fields were white for harvest; if He touched an outcast leper with a gracious and sovereign "I will:" all told that God was there, amongst men, with men, because of men; and gracious words proceeded out of His mouth. Surely they made men wonder; for how long had they been away from God? And if a prophet's words were just as sure, because the Spirit of Christ really space them, yet surely I need not speak of the bright and blessed interest which accompanied the existence of such a testimony as His who spike as never man spoke. A Savior's voice came, if indeed heard, with divine grace itself to the ear! It was the mercy that it spoke of. "If thou knewest the gift [free-giving, δωρε■ν] of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink [who has come so low as to be dependent on you for a drink of water],

you would have asked of him [entire confidence of heart in God—such a God!—would have been produced, nor would it have been disappointed in grace or power to answer], and he would have given thee living water."

This was indeed revealing God. Here we have not a long and dreary, because true, picture of man, cultivated in vain by the great husbandman, and the testimonies and warnings of God sent to him, or prophecies of brighter days to come through grace. We have perfect, gracious Man, walking before God, for our eyes to rest on and learn: and God walking before men in all the near grace they needed, come to them just where they were, that they might learn what He was, and by it be drawn out of what they were. It was presented to them in all their distance from God, and in all their misery, where grace could be best felt, that they might be drawn out of that misery, and know with joy the God who had done so.

But the inspiration of the New Testament is interesting in another way. The Holy Ghost Himself is come to dwell in the saints, and to take the things of Christ and show them to us; and He dwells in us as a seal that we are children of God, heirs of all and joint-heirs with Christ. He at the same time brings all the love of God into the sorrows of the way; enables us to apprehend according to God the present state of things, while it marks out a road suited to those who are one with Christ in heaven, for His members by the way. Hence the New Testament is not, in the general tenor of its revelations, a mere testimony of "thus saith the Lord." It has the prophetic character sometimes; but, in general, it is the expression of the mind and sympathies of God in all that concerns the saints on earth. It is the Holy Ghost in a man who is a member of the body, communicating all the privileges of the body to it, and entering into all its sorrows, while it reveals the love and wisdom of the Father and the Son leading into all truth, and casting the light of God on all that went before, and showing things to come; in this last having more the character assumed before in prophecy, as we read, "The Spirit speaketh expressly." "Let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," &c. Hence there is (while often rising to the most glorious testimonies of blessing in the revelation of God, and of His designs for the glory of Christ, and the Church with Him) a familiarity, an entering into detail into all that concerns the body, and what becomes its heavenly path down here, an expression of the feelings of the instrument who addresses it, which gives the most touching picture of the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and brings down the love of God into the details and circumstances of man's Christian life. It is not indeed Christ Himself; but it is His Spirit lifting up His members to Him by the revelation of Him, and coming down to them in all their trials and conflicts, in all through which they pass, to be the spring of feeling there, through His assured sympathy. Such God would show Himself; and surely all that He says there has the tenderest claim and the perfect authority of Him who speaks thus in love. It is the word of God; the Holy Ghost on earth in the apostle or prophet, or, speaking generally, in the Church—not an inferior separate Spirit, but as He hears so He speaks, in union with the Father and the Son, the Wisdom of God amongst men.

The Scriptures of the New Testament are the perfect expression of the divine mind as communicated to, or working in, the Church of God; suited to the relationship in which God has thus placed them with Himself. But no one dreams of the apostles being infallible. A truth communicated cannot be infallible: it can only be absolute truth: and truth is truth. A person only can be infallible. The apostles may have been divinely kept while communicating truth, and thus not suffered to fail while thus used of God. In this secondary sense alone can they be, in any

proper use of the word, infallible at that moment; but this is not the real meaning of the word. I do not doubt that God took care that all they have left us in the Scripture should perfectly present His mind; but this did not make the apostles infallible. God alone is infallible, that is, incapable of failing.

Neither omniscience nor dictation is necessary to inspiration. Omniscience contradicts it in terms; for inspiration is the communication of truth or facts, and “omniscience” means that all is known already. Nor is dictation necessary either. Suppose, as to historical Scripture, if God acted on my mind or memory so as to call up facts He chose to have related in the way, the connection, the order in which He chose them to be in my mind, and associated with the feelings which He thought proper to be produced in my soul by it, and the utterances of my memory and the expressions of my feelings to which they naturally give rise when thus produced, to the exclusion of all distracting or modifying thoughts of any kind, to deteriorate what the Holy Ghost produced in my mind and soul; and suppose that I write this down, as thus formed and producing itself in my mind, being full of the Holy Ghost, so that no other idea whatever intruded itself but such as the Holy Ghost had produced, and that He approved the necessary expression of it, acting on the mind, not on the lips, should I not have and give the perfect mind of God, only through the mind of man!

Again, if Christ had spoken, and the Holy Ghost recalled to my memory His words, or a particular part of His words, and I write down these words (so of facts), this would not be dictation. Supposing He formed in my soul the substance of what passed, and I wrote it down, from the perfect spiritual apprehension of it, as He put it in my mind, to the exclusion of all else, I should have the perfect mind of God; yet the Holy Ghost, acting on my mind, would use it as an instrument, and the communication would have the form of the mind it passed through. Why, if God has expressly formed the instrument, can He not then use it for the purpose for which He has formed it, according to what He has made it? Now, that is style. It is merely supposing that the Holy Ghost cannot use man's mind, such as it is, and govern his words, without annihilating him and making use of his lips, as of the dumb ass to rebuke the prophet.

The apostle does not speak of the mere use of the organ without the intelligence, as the highest kind of inspiration, but as the lowest; and that it was of a higher order when the man was mentally made partaker of what He communicated, and thus did with his own thoughts and feeling engaged (which produces style), though the Holy Ghost produced these thoughts and feelings. The spout, which gives a form to the current that flows from it, may transmit the water as pure as it flows in. I do not say the Holy Ghost did not give the words, but that it was not necessarily mere dictation of them. Nay, if He did dictate them, He could do it in the form of mind and thought of the person He deigned to use, so that it should be his style. The Holy Ghost gave the thoughts, and they were not left to the uncertainty of man's account of them He caused them to be communicated in words He taught; but why should He not work in a mind according to the form He had designedly given it? See 1 Cor. 2:12-14. This passage attributes these things to the Spirit—the original reception of the truth by the instrument employed, the manner of its communication, and its reception by the hearer. I should translate πνευματικο■ς πνευματικ■ συγκ■νοντες, “using a spiritual medium of communicating for spiritual things,” or “communicating spiritual things by spiritual means.” This shows how much the mind is connected with the expressions used in communicating truth. The whole question is—Can the Holy Ghost employ the mind, and through it language, to the exclusion of all other influence? or is He forced to leave the mind out and dictate the words? The apostle

speaks of both, and prefers having the mind in use in inspiration.

Chapter 65

An Introduction to Isaiah: Part 1

In reading Matt. 1; 2, we learn, among other things, how the word of prophecy ought to be used; but we see also, how the carnal intellect treats it; and thus it furnishes a sound and healthful word to us, when we set ourselves down for a meditation on the prophetic Scriptures; for we are both guided and warned by what we find in those chapters.

The evangelist himself, under the Holy Ghost, shows us one of the right uses of prophecy. He calls the words of the prophets again and again to mind, in the course of those two chapters, as the realization of those words again and again passes before him. In chap. 1 he remembers Isa. 7, when the manner of the birth of the child was announced to Joseph by the angel. In chap. 2 he calls Hos. 11 to mind, when he tells us that Joseph had to take the child down to Egypt. He does the same with Jer. 31, when Herod had sent forth and slain the young ones of Bethlehem. And again, when the child had been brought back from Egypt, and was taken to dwell at Nazareth, he remembers, as I may say, the sum of all the prophets, or a common testimony which they would all give in touching such a fact; and, as in their name, expresses it in these words: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

This illustrates, again let me say, one of the godly uses of the prophetic Scriptures. Of course, I know that all this was done in and by the evangelist through the Spirit of God. But it evidences how the word ought to be treasured up in the heart of the saints, that it may come forth with ease, and, as with divine authority, seal one occasion after another, as it arises. It is a beautiful exercise of the renewed mind. It is of ourselves judging what is right. It is discerning the time as we would the face of the sky. (Luke 12:56, 57). This identifying, with holy intelligence, of the ancient oracle of the Spirit of God with the present acting of the hand of God, is one form of the obedience and service of faith and worship.

But again. In these same chapters we see the men of the east illustrating, for our further instruction, another use of prophecy. They had, as we may say, kept it in mind, though delivered centuries before. They had waited for it though it tarried, knowing that it would come and would not tarry. They had lived upon it, as I may again say, from the day of Balaam to the day of Christ. And they had counted all but second to it; for as soon as the old oracle was fulfilled, and the star which had been promised appears, they become obedient to the heavenly vision; and, according to it, begin a long untried journey in faith and hope.

This, surely, was another godly use of the word of prophecy, a very fine and noble-hearted use of it, the best and the highest. Beautiful, as we have already marked it, to see the evangelist himself, with a mind fraught, through the Spirit, with Scripture-recollections, able, in holy intelligence, to use and apply them; but it is something finer still, thus at personal cost, to act upon Scripture or prophetic communications. This was Abraham's or Daniel's use of the Word of God. When the approaching judgment of Sodom was announced to Abraham, he at once acts on what he heard, and intercedes for that wicked city because of the righteous that might be found there. When Daniel knows by the prophetic books that the seventy year's captivity was just running out, he set

himself, by prayer and fasting, to seek mercies for his land and people. And after this manner these men of the east here use the Word of God which had been left among them by the prophet of old. And so ought we, beloved, still to use it. The word is not to be as a dead letter in the intellect. Nor is the head to be more busy with it and about it than the heart and the conscience, though this word may surely rebuke some of us; but we are to put it forth to use, and let it prove its value.

All this may well instruct us. But these chapters afford us holy and serious warning also.

The scribes in Herod's court have the prophetic word in the clear, full, and accurate possession of their minds. They can teach it to others. It is bright and correct in their intellect and memory. But though this be so, though they can teach it to others, they make no use of it themselves. Solemn sight indeed! They sent the men of the east on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in the bright light of the prophet Micah, but they take not one step along that road themselves. They are rather, morally, in company with that very man Balaam, who had sent these same men of the east on their journey from their own distant land to Jerusalem. Balaam, like these scribes, and these scribes like Balaam, were instructed in the way of God, but remained wholly uninfluenced by it. Balaam loved the world though announcing its doom. These scribes remained in kings' courts, though the star was shining in Bethlehem according to the word of God which they professed and preached.

Surely I may therefore say as to these chapters, that they carry to our souls a serious warning, as well as encouraging instructions and examples. We have to dread mere activity of mind over the Scriptures, and should rather see to it that heart and conscience wait, in their due place, on the light of the oracles of God.

But I would proceed.

Prophets in Israel came forth upon the corruption of the priesthood. (See 1 Sam. 1-3) They were an extraordinary provision of grace upon the failure of the provisions of the established system.

Prophets were either speaking or writing ministers of the Spirit. Samuel begins the regular line of them, as we learn from Acts 3:24, though their ministry had been occasional before. Isaiah, however, takes the lead among the writing prophets.

They were to the people of Israel what evangelists now are to the world. Their ministry challenged or demanded a change or conversion. They called for repentance. But among the characteristics which distinguish them is this very eminent one-the Spirit spoke through them. They were nothing else, nothing less or more, only that which the Holy Ghost made them.

This was a high and honorable distinction. It was not thus with the priesthood. Aaron and his sons, priests after the law of a carnal commandment, ministered in their office by title of their own flesh. They were nothing less or more, but only that which the flesh made them. They were the seed of Abraham, and of the family of Aaron. They served in the flesh, not in the presence and energy of the Spirit. In the Prophets the Spirit is speaking to Israel, though by the priests the Spirit was not ministering in Israel.

This was distinction indeed. This was, also, advance in the progress of the divine way. This was a high and eminent land-mark or ensign, in the path which the wisdom of God was traveling for the

unfolding of its purposes and treasures.

But further. By the word of prophecy, the Lord treats His elect as friends. This is a very blessed truth. When I listen to the gospel of the grace of God, I know myself to be addressed as a sinner. The salvation of God is published, and I, sinner as I am, am called to know it and to take it. When I read the practical, hortatory Scriptures, Scriptures which give me counsel as to walk and conversation, instruct me in duties and services, and undertake to regulate my heart, I see myself trained, and kept, and educated as a saint. But when reading prophetic Scriptures, I have to take knowledge of myself as a friend. The Lord is disclosing His secrets to me. He treats me as one who is entitled to the privileges of personal intimacy. And when we think of this, the prophetic writings, surely, are presented to us in a very wondrous and excellent character.

Are we children and brethren, I may ask, in divine counsels of grace? Yes, servants, worshippers, and heirs also. But in the midst of these relationships we find ourselves friends also. Bethany is the picture of much of this. There Martha was serving; there Mary was worshipping; and there Lazarus was occupying the place of a friend, sitting at one table with his Lord, as in personal intimacy with Him.

Abraham was the friend of God. He is so called. And God communicated to him what He was about to do, though it did not personally concern Abraham himself. Moses spoke to the Lord face to face, as a man would speak with his friend. Jeremiah talked to the Lord about His judgments, expressing his wonder and the difficulty he felt as to some of them. David sat before the Lord as Lazarus did. Moses and Elias, though in glory, were in like intimacy, talking with Jesus on the Holy Mount, thus illustrating in the brightest, surest form, that the intimacy and friendship begun on earth is continued in heaven.

For indeed, beloved, we may say to one another, there is no great moral distance between the earth and the heaven, or the present and the future of God's people. The perfection of that which now we have in spirit or in principle is there. But still, we have entered, morally, on the life of eternity. If, on the journey of Elijah in 2 Kings 2, Bethel came after Gilgal, and Jericho after Bethel, and the Jordan after Jericho, heaven, in like case and naturalness, comes after the Jordan. The journey had these stages. He went from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to the Jordan, and across it, and then from the Jordan, on its eastern banks, to heaven. Mysterious ways in that grace that aboundeth, telling of this same personal intimacy! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof waited on Elijah. Elisha had been the companion of his journey before; and now the horsemen of Israel from heaven. In earlier days the Lord was on His way to Sodom; but He must needs turn aside to the plain of Mamre, to tell Abraham what was taking Him there. And just thus is it in prophecy. The Lord is on His way to the judgment of the world and the glories of the kingdom which are to follow. But He stops by the way, to let His elect learn what is before Him. It may in no measure personally concern them; as what the Lord was about to do at Sodom or with Sodom, as I have observed, in no wise concerned Abraham. Still the Lord told him of it, and even turned aside, or tarried by the way, to do so. It was the privilege of the relationship in which Abraham stood; it was the secret of One who had made him His friend. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7.)

But again, I would notice another thing. At times the personality of the prophet appear. We are let into the exercises of his own heart, as he pursues his subject under the hand of God. This is very

grateful to us. Our own hearts take pleasure in thus being given to understand the experiences of these favored men. In the book of Jeremiah, this personality of which I speak is perceived and prevails everywhere.

I need scarcely add, that it is very well, in going through any of the Prophets, to acquaint ourselves with the history or circumstances of the times in which they ministered-and this, of course, we are to do through the kindred inspired historic books of Scripture.

We are also, I would add, though scarcely needed, carefully to mark the quotations made from the prophetic book which we may be reading in the New Testament, and to consider the interest with which the same Spirit who once gave out these communications there uses them, the connection in which He puts them, and the application He makes of them.

These things I would shortly say as to all the prophetic writings found in the New Testament, as from Isaiah to Malachi. But I would now, for a little further moment, speak more specifically of Isaiah, who stands first in the line of the writing Prophets-not first, as we know, in the course of time, but in the order of the books.

When we seat ourselves in company with Isaiah—that is, when we take on us, in the grace of God, to meditate on that volume of divine communications which the Spirit has given us through him, the first thing we have to do, as I may speak, is to discern the measure of each burthen or strain; to discover, I mean, to satisfy ourselves, where it begins and where it ends. As a common guide in doing this, I would observe that the glory or the kingdom, under some form, some notice of it, or another, will be found at the close, challenges of corruption or threatenings of judgment, or the like, at the opening. Of course there are exceptions to this rule; but this may be received as a hint.

As to his general materials, the subjects he treats, the things he is looking at, I believe that we shall find these five distinct matters; or these five successive eras in the progress of the earth's history are contemplated by Isaiah, generally in all his strains, but under great variety of form and connection.

Evil times, days of corruption in Israel, whether in the prophet's own time or otherwise.

Judgment of this corruption, whether by the Assyrian, the Chaldean, or others.

The present age, “the times of the Gentiles,” the interval during which Israel is disclaimed.

The crisis, as it is sometimes called, “the times of the end,” the last of the seventy weeks of Daniel, when God deals with Israel again, and enters on the closing judgment of the earth and the nations.

5. The glory of the kingdom which follows this crisis or judgment, commonly known by the name of the millennium.

These appear to me to be, generally, his subjects, the successive seasons that he is looking at. In dealing with them, most surely and most necessarily, Messiah Himself is introduced, and the remnant or the elect of Israel preserved in days of judgment. But the Church is not seen. That was a mystery hid in God, and not the subject of prophecy. Prophets, as I have already observed, had been called forth upon the corruption and unfaithfulness of the priesthood (see 1 Sam. 1-7; Acts

3:24); and to them and by them divine counsels concerning Israel and the earth and its nations are revealed and communicated. But the mystery hid in God, and which is a divine counsel that does not concern Israel or the earth and its nations, as such, was not made known to them as it is now made known to apostles and prophets of the New Testament by the Spirit. (Eph. 3:1-9.)

But let me further observe that, in reading Isaiah, we must be prepared at times for his altogether passing over the present long interval, or, as the Lord speaks, “the times of the Gentiles.” For he links his own day, or the day of Old Testament corruption in Israel, with the crisis, or “the day of the Lord;” that is, the first of the five eras or seasons which I have numbered, with the fourth of them. He would seem to be writing one unbroken story; and yet the parts of it may be separated by many centuries, and strange and wondrous revolutions in the earth. But in the great moral sense this is beautifully consistent. For Israel is taken up by the Lord in the day of the crisis, just as the same corrupt thing which she had been from the beginning. Chronologically, Israel is many generations, morally, but one.

And, again, Isaiah, like the other prophets, gives us to see the work of the Spirit of God with the souls of the people, as well as the dealing of the hand of God with their circumstances. Indeed, these things, I may say, of necessity, pervade all these writings. But there will be found large and beautiful variety in the way of treating and presenting these things: and yet, withal, no confusion. Isaiah is commonly read, I can suppose, as if his volume were a mass of materials hard to be distinguished, or reduced to anything like order—though many a brilliant light is perceived to shine there, and many a wondrous forecasting of the future is discovered to be revealed there. And all this has cheered and guided the elect of God in all ages, and strengthened them in faith and hope. But all this is not doing justice to this precious workmanship of the Spirit of God. It is by no manner of means an adequate and worthy apprehension of this book. For the light of God which shines there is a steady light; the voice of God which is heard there gives no uncertain and no discordant sound. The reader must cease to regard this book as a mere mass of materials, or he will neither do it or himself full justice, in his labor of meditation over it.

I purpose simply to separate this book into what has appeared to me to be its different parts or sections which I have already denominated strains or burdens. They are distinct breathings or effusions of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Ghost. And having done this, having thus separated the sections one from another, I will give each of them a title, such as the section or strain itself may easily or naturally suggest.

And I will add, for I feel the truth of it, that it is specially seasonable, and good for edification, to meditate on prophetic truth at this present time; for the present is, surely, a significant time. The course of the world is rapidly striding towards that consummation of pride and iniquity which all the prophets have anticipated, and which has to be judged in the day of the Lord, ere the glory or the kingdom can be revealed and established. But still the glory will be revealed, and the kingdom will be established; for the whole earth, corrupted as it will be throughout, will pass through the crisis into the glory. God will judge; but His judgment shall be purifying, not destructive. The earth outlives it. The rainbow pledges this, the rainbow of Gen. 9 and of Rev. 4 and x.—distant parts of the divine volume brought together to tell the same tale of mercy and salvation towards this earth, which God at the beginning gave to the children of men, and which He still loves so well Himself. For, as we read, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the field be joyful, and all

that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together before the Lord." (Psa. 96; 98) Then shall it be said to the Lord, the Creator, and also of Him, in the words of another Psalm, "Thou sendeth forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure forever, the Lord shall rejoice in his works." (Psa. 104)

(To be continued.)

Chapter 66

I would now subjoin what I have already mentioned, a kind of index, or “a table of contents,” descriptive of the parts into which, as I have judged, this great and precious writing of the Spirit of God may be divided

There will be found to be eighteen distinct subjects. And it is interesting to add this, that citations from each of them will be found in the New Testament; the Spirit thus, if they needed it, sealing afresh His own revelations which were made centuries before.

Subjects.

No. Chapters

1. The Preface, 1

2. The Day of the Lord, 2-4.

3. The Vineyard, 5

4. The Throne of Judicial Glory, 6

5. The Confederacy; or, Emmanuel and the Children, 7.-9:7

6. The Assyrian, 9:8 - 12

7. The Threshing of the Nations, 13- 27.

8. The Five Woes, 28- 35.

9. The Historic Interlude, 36 - 39.

10. Israel in Babylon, 40 - 48.

11. Jesus and Jerusalem, 49.

12. The Risen Jesus and the Remnant, 50 -52:12

13. The Cross and its Virtue;.... 52:13-55

14. The Remnant Manifested, 56, 57.

15. Israel Trained for the Kingdom, 58 - 60.

16. The Two Advents, 61- 63:6.

17. Israel's Prayer and Messiah's Answer, 63:7 - 65.

18. The Conclusion, 66.

I now propose to add a note on each of these distinct strains; but merely with the hope of helping the reader to discover, if need be, the leading thought there.

NOTES.

Chap. 1. contains all the leading materials of the book—corruption, judgment, glory, or the kingdom, together with notice of the remnant, and of the present age or Gentile parenthesis. Because of this, and because it stands by itself, I call it “the preface.”

Chap. 2-4. Here the kingdom, under the figure of “a mountain,” is anticipated at the beginning, and presented in some of its glories, at the end. But corruption and judgment are the great materials of this burthen in the midst of this opening and closing with glory. But the remnant are seen for a moment. (Chap. 3:10.) Infatuation, which commonly, in God's way, precedes destruction, is anticipated in chap. 3:1-9. The judgment of God is called by its common title in Scripture, “the day of the Lord;” which I give, therefore, as the title of this burthen.

Chap. 5. This figure of a vineyard is used to the same intent in Matt. 21 by the Lord Jesus. We get corruption and judgment here—judgment as in the present “times of the Gentiles.” But there is no notice or anticipation of the kingdom. And this is quite unusual. Just as it was very unusual with the Lord to speak of His death, without speaking also of His resurrection. The title of “the vineyard” necessarily suggested itself here.

Chap. 6. This throne is one of judgment or of judicial glory. This appears from the chapter itself, as also from references to it in the New Testament. (See Matt. 13; John 12; Acts 28) The prophet may be said, in a sense, to represent the remnant. He passes through the same process as John in Rev. 1. Infatuation here also precedes destruction, as in chap. iii. This strain is naturally called, “the throne of glory.”

Chap. 7 - 9:7 Here we see unbelief in Israel followed by present judgment. But confederacies of their foes are finally to be all broken up (of which there is a present pledge given), a remnant is to be reserved and educated, and glory in the kingdom to he reached. Emmanuel and His mystic children are signs of this. Signs or pledges of like kind are given in Genesis. (See also Hos. 1)

It is natural to call this burthen, “the Confederacy, or Emmanuel and the children.”

Chap. 9:8 - 12. Here we learn, that after several slighter chastisements, Israel (not Judah) is finally chastened of God through the Assyrian. (2 Kings 18) But the Assyrian himself is doomed—his pride and fall anticipated. The fall of the Assyrian, however, leads to the kingdom; and this shows that the Assyrian is not only the captor of Israel as in early days, but the enemy of Israel in the last days—as in Mic. 5:5. (Comp. chap. x. 22, and Rom. 9:27 - xi. 10, and Rom. 15:12.) This strain is, accordingly, naturally called “the Assyrian.” The kingdom or glory in chap. xii. is celebrated, as in Ex. 15—in chap. iv. it had rather been described.

Chap. 13 - 27. This is the judgment or the threshing (to use prophetic language) of all the nations which had meddled with God's people; and this act of judgment makes way for Israel's deliverance and kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar's conquests in early days are to be read as the typical pledges of those national judgments in the last days which thus usher in the kingdom. Chap. xxv. - xxvii. rehearse certain exercises of soul, and principles of truth, in the remnant, suited to such an era and action as this. Christendom, having had to do with Israel's Lord, as these nations once had to

do with Israel themselves, is to find its place and share in these judgments. (See the Apocalypse.) This burthen easily suggests the title, “the threshing of the nations.”

Chap. 28 - 35. Unlike the preceding burthen, this addresses itself not to the nations, but to God's people. The woes are successively pronounced on Samaria—on Jerusalem—on the rebellious children who sought counsel from Egypt—on those who went down for help to Egypt—and then, but not till then, in the fifth and last place, on Israel's spoiler, the great enemy of the last days. But gradually, as we advance through these woes, the promised deliverance and joy is heard more fully—till, at last, all is glory, the fruit of promise. It is simply called, “the five woes.”

Chap. 36 - 39. This is “the historic interlude.” We have it in the historic books—not, of course, as an interlude there, but as part and parcel of the subject matter. (See 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.) We know that Scripture has historic as well as fictitious parables. They are called “allegories” in Gal. 4 And I believe the fragments of history in these chapters are allegories. But I say no more—save that I would add this. Hezekiah's writing is like the song on the Red Sea, Deborah's song, Hannah's song, Jeremiah's Lamentations, and Mary's song in Luke 1. That is, it has a secondary sense. So, his sickness has a secondary sense—like Jonah's shipwreck, Jeremiah's yoke, Hosea's marriage, or Paul's girdle.

Chap. 40 - 48 In this strain of Isaiah, Israel, the people of God, are contemplated as in Babylon; and this being so, God, the Lord of Israel, is presented by the prophet as doing three things.

He pleads His own cause with Babylon and her idols; convicting and confounding them.

He pleads His own cause with his people there in Babylon; rebuking and instructing them.

3. He pleads His people's cause with Babylon; delivering them out of that iron prison.

These things show a perfect action. This was likewise the divine procedure when His people were aforetime in Egypt, as we see in Ex. 1 - xv. And these are illustrations of the way of God in and with this world where His elect are. This is simply “Israel in Babylon.”

Chap. 49. In this beautiful strain of the prophet, Messiah is heard rehearsing His own history, from the very womb of the Virgin to the throne of the kingdom. But Zion, as though she had been listening to this rehearsal, complains as one forgotten, not finding herself in her place in this history. Messiah answers this fear and this complaint, with good words and comfortable words. This I may therefore call “Jesus and Jerusalem.”

Chap. 50 – 52:12. Here the Lord, as in resurrection, rehearses His own story as from the time the close of Matt. 23, when He put away Israel (turning His back on Jerusalem), to the day of His resurrection, when God justified Him. And then, upon this story, on the ground of it, He counsels and teaches the remnant, His Israel, in the midst of the nations. And under this teaching, the remnant are laid on in grace and truth. Much of the doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans is faintly perceived here. The day of their deliverance is anticipated. This may be fitly called, “the risen Jesus and the remnant.”

Chap. 52:13 – 55. Here the cross, or the crucified Jesus, is looked at alternately by Jehovah and by the true Israel—Israel in the day of their faith and revival. And on the authority of the cross, Jerusalem is addressed in a strain of the richest promises, and sinners in the largest way of grace;

this telling us, as we know, what wonders of grace and glory the cross is able to sustain. This burthen is not of the general character, dealing with corruption, judgment, and glory. It has rather its own object, and may justly be called, “the cross and its virtues.”

Chap. 56, 57. This strain of our prophet may be separated into three parts.

1. The nation is challenged to render to God fruit under their own covenant; and strangers and eunuchs are promised blessings if they will join themselves to the God of Israel. (lvi. 1-8.)

Upon the convicted iniquity of the nation, the beasts (the Gentile empires) are summoned to avenge God's quarrel upon it. (lvi. 9 - lvii. 13.)

In the midst of the reprobate nation, the remnant is manifested in characters of very great moral beauty. (57:13-21.)

We learn, incidentally, that some of the remnant will be martyred, as in Psa. 79, and the Apocalypse.

The general materials of Isaiah appear here, but we call it, “the remnant manifested.”

Chap. 58 - 60. This strain may be separated into five parts.

The nation, by command of God, is challenged. (58.)

The remnant accredit this challenge. They identify themselves with the nation's guilt; as Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, and others, in their day. (59:1-15.)

In answer, the Lord prepares to rescue His Israel, as all Scripture, I may say, teaches us. (lix. 15-20.)

The Lord then addresses Messiah as in the terms of the new covenant. (lix. 21.)

5. The glory or the kingdom is then detailed. (lx.) This burthen, or effusion of the Spirit through the prophet, may be called, “Israel trained for the kingdom.”

Chap. 61 – 63:6. I believe that a day of vengeance was purposed by the Lord's first advent. (Luke 1:71.) It would then have been on Israel's Gentile oppressors; but Messiah having been refused, that vengeance was not executed, nor was Israel delivered. And now, when the vengeance comes, as it will at the second advent, Israel will have to bear their part in it. Thus they have made trouble for themselves, as we all do at times, and as they did before when they went through the wilderness. Consequently, their path into the kingdom, in chap. 62, 63, differs from what it would have been, as in chap. 61. His associates are watchmen, as we see in the Psalms and in Luke 18 See other watchmen in chap. 52:8. This burthen may be called, “the two advents.”

Chap. 63:7 - 65. These chapters give a sample of the exercises of the remnant, which we find so largely delineated in the Psalms. They form an appeal and an answer, as between the remnant and Jehovah-Messiah. The Spirit has recorded these experiences of the people of God, as Christian books so commonly do in our own times. For the remnant are the saints in their day; only they are called “remnant,” because they will be left for the kingdom out of the judgment of the nation. This strain is a dialog, and we call it “Israel's prayer and Messiah's answer.”

Chap. 66. This last, like the first chapter, contains all the materials which generally characterize the strains or burthens of Isaiah: corruption of the nation, judgment, reservation of an elect remnant, glory or the kingdom, and “the times of the Gentiles.” “Mercy” and “judgment” are here alternately the subject. (Psa. 101:1.) But it suggests the gospel of the glory in verse 19, as other Scriptures gives us the gospel of Canaan (Heb. 4), the gospel of the heavenly calling, as now to us (Heb. 4), the gospel of the kingdom. (Matt. 24 and Rev. 14) Zech. 14 may be read in company, with much of this chapter; and Acts 17, Paul's sermon at Athens, in company with the first verse of it. We simply call this strain, standing by itself, as it does, like the first chapter, “the conclusion,” as we called that “the preface.”

These notes are very short. I desired to make them as much so as I could, but yet serving to convey at the least, as I have said, some one leading thought on each of these strains or burthens. I affect nothing more than giving an index to the contents of the book of Isaiah; and then a slight intimation of what I judge to be their general bearing and signification.

CONCLUSION.

Thus have I desired and attempted to clear the way a little to the further use of this chief man among the writing prophets, as I may call Isaiah.

It is but a small service in that way which this paper has been rendering; but it is a very grateful task, to be bringing forth the glories and perfections of Scripture just at this time. For the insolence of some men at this time exceedeth, and their heartlessness is equal to their insolence. What little care they must have for the poor, unlettered man who walks in the fear of God, in the light of faith, and the consolations of the Spirit, to assail all the foundations of his peace, and send his soul adrift! And what Amalek insolence is it, to come forth and dare the glory to its face after this manner! For what, I ask, is the sacred volume but, in another form, a cloudy pillar (the residence of the glory), which is accompanying the wayfaring camp of the elect through this desert-world? Does not glory dwell there? Is not the Scripture a depository, a tabernacle of countless moral glories? And is it not its happy business to light up the path of the present Israel of God? Is it not all this? And if so, is it not Amalek-insolence to come forth, and dare it to its face, withstanding the camp of God who are trusting in it, and walking in the light of it. (Ex. 17)

What a solemn controversy must the Lord have with these men, when we read at the close of that chapter such a writing as this: “The Lord hath sworn, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

And this is all practicing the iniquity which is to mark the closing days of man's world. It is the heart of the children of man exercising itself in that spirit which is to ripen into the infidel daring of “the beast” and his confederates; for they will confront the Rider and His army, though they come from heaven, as once Amalek confronted Israel, though the pillar of glory was at that moment shining over them. (Rev. 19) But we still sing, and will sing,

“A glory fills the sacred page,

Majestic as the sun

It lends a light to every age,

It lends, but borrows none.”

(Concluded from page 232.)

Chapter 67

Thoughts on John 20

It is remarkable the instruments God uses to display His grace towards man, and the different exercises of heart persons go through, which prepares them for the service on which they are to be sent. There is a loneliness which may even be occasioned by a man's own folly, in which he finds himself, without a single thing to get comfort in, that he may prove that to be in the Lord which he would not know in any other way.

God cannot associate Himself with evil. There must be death upon nature altogether. The corn of wheat would have remained alone without death. Christ was alone as to Himself—comforters He had none. “I looked for some to take pity, but none.” “They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” These are expressions of this loneliness. He was walking in undeviating devotedness with His Father all the way through; but there were none to enter into it, though speaking of His disciples He graciously says, “These are they that have continued with me in my temptations.” Could He have said more if they had been faithful in sympathy all the time? Our poor hearts have to learn the way the Lord meets the soul that waits on Him. We see in the case of Mary Magdalene here, and in the other Mary too, who broke the box of ointment on Him, there was something that made them lonely. What made Lazarus' sister Mary lonely? She had found something that took her clean out of the world. Martha was careful about the supper; but with her it was not the supper but Himself. His object was not to come for earthly refreshment, but to pour into His people's hearts the revelation of the Father. Martha was not wrong in preparing the supper, but in trying to get Mary away from the Lord. If she had been right, she would have been glad to do it all herself. There was not the joy and delight in her heart that there ought to have been. Mary had found one thing that isolated her heart in the most blessed way. Her affections were alive to all the evil that was coming (not as a prophetess, but her spirit was in the thing), and at the right moment she went and spent the ointment on Him. He says of her, “She hath done it for my burial.” In this Mary (the Magdalene) we get another thing. Seven devils had been cast out of her; that is to say, the expression of complete diabolical possession, indicating the extreme of wickedness. That isolates a person, who is separated from nature, as it were, by the extent of wretchedness. When the spirit is touched, she is separated from the evil. The effect of finding Christ in such circumstances is that He becomes everything to her. (There is not the same intelligence in her as in the other Mary we do not find her, as the Magdalene, at the tomb.) She could not leave in the same way. When she lost Christ after the flesh, she had nothing. She was terribly broken to pieces by evil, and Christ was gone. There was something human connected with her affection; there was also culpable ignorance in what she did; but the Lord had compassion on her; and more, He manifested Himself first to her. The disciples saw and believed. They perceived He was gone, but understood not the Scriptures. She had no home, and when she found not the body of Christ, what had she? The disciples were not isolated in the same way: they go away to their own homes. She in her ignorance, but withal in her love, says, “I will come and take him away.” This last is very precious. It is a great thing, when Christ has such a place with us as to be everything. In one sense, this is the door by which all must pass through—at death if not

before, nature must decay and vanish. What is more nothing than death? All here is gone. We may learn this spiritually, or by circumstances, or at the moment of death itself; but learn it we must. We must find everything but Christ nothing.

Christ calls her by name. When He comes and calls His sheep by name, it is all right. She had now got Him back after death. Nature had, as it were, passed through death, as Isaac. Nature had mixed itself up with her affections; but now she has got beyond that: all is given up to God. The promises made to Abraham were all surrendered up by him when Isaac was to be taken. Mary Magdalene thought she had Christ back when she had not. She thought of Him corporeally, but she must have Him in another way. It will be so with the remnant of Israel by and by. They will have Him corporeally then, but now He says, “Touch me not,” &c. I am going to another place. I am taking your hopes or your promises in another way and not in flesh. If He was to take it, it would be when the just shine in the kingdom of the Father. He says, “Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God.” I am giving you something entirely new—not my presence yet—not power yet; but where He was going Himself, He would take us.

He does isolate us; He does pass us through different circumstances, but, whether gradually or suddenly, His object is to break down everything of nature, and this in grace to us. Here for the first time He says, “my brethren.” He never called them “brethren” definitely until now. He had been heard from the horns of the unicorns. (Psa. 22) During His life He had declared the Father's name. Now He declares the love wherewith He is loved is that with which we are loved. He could not say that during His life. During His ministry He was making known the Father, walking with the Father, speaking to the Father. Now He takes them into the same relationship. Why? Because the redemption was accomplished. Christ never addresses His Father as God—never less than as Father. During His life, as given in the gospels, all His life through, it was always “Father.” When on the cross it was, “My God, my God,” until all was finished, when He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” In making the atonement what was not against Him? There was one thing that could not be against any, and that was love, but there could be none as to the feeling and manifestation of it then. He was forsaken; and the more the love was known, the more terrible it was. He was dealt with according to the majesty of God, the righteousness of God, the truth of God, the holiness of God. All that God was was made good against Him. God was thus putting away sin, and Christ was glorifying God about the sin. But now being dead and risen, He comes up to put His disciples into the place of full blessing. The work is done and there is no sin left. Everything that God is is now brought out in blessing, and all the sin is put out of the way. He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. He goes up to God and takes us too. I am going to my God, and He is your God too. He is going into all that is blessed. I am not going to be present with you corporeally, so that you can “touch” me, but I am going to my God and your God, my Father and your Father. That is the word to this poor, desolate woman. She was a fit messenger, by her very nothingness, to witness of Christ and His work and fullness.

“I go” —and faith goes too, entering into that within the veil. It enters into all that which God is. Where we live is within the veil. Sense may come in and hide God's presence, but the atonement has brought us into it and into the very same relationship which Christ has as risen. We sometimes enjoy peace, we enjoy Scripture, a hymn, or prayer without realizing the presence of God; and then there is not the same power or the same exercise of heart in it. I can own the blessing and

rejoice in the blessing, without having my heart searched out; but if in these I have the sense of Him, my state is very different. It is very important, not only to have a right thought, but to have it with Him. If you search your own heart, you will find that you may sing without realizing Jesus Himself. Then the heart is never probed, the evil is not detected, and the power of grace is not the same. By the atonement sin is put out and God is brought in. God exercises our hearts about good and evil by first giving us the good. There must be the possession of perfect good, and then there is holiness, and not merely the exercise of dread and fear: Our hearts must follow Him where He is gone. We cannot “touch” Him. May the Lord give us to live a life in which He is everything!

Chapter 68

On Keeping the Commandments and the Words of Jesus

(John 14:21-23.)

We have in this portion two things, the proof of love first, in having and keeping our Lord's commandments; and next, in keeping His words. At first sight it might seem somewhat startling: “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;” but the more we weigh the words, the more evident and all-important is their truth. It is clear our Lord was not speaking here simply of what is moral, or the ten commandments. A man might be found most rigorous in that, like Saul of Tarsus, and yet not have a particle of love to Christ. He could say of himself “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.” But here, in this passage, what the Lord is calling attention to is not the law—not that any one would seek to lighten its weight; it had been given of God. But the Lord says, Here is a test, “he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” This touches upon what is more closely personal. We know that in ordinary life if there is any one we care for and love in a special way, a word from such a one will have immense weight on the spirit. Where there is love, there is amazing quickness in knowing what the will is, what the desire is—and bearing it in mind. But on the other hand if there is frivolity of spirit, there will be carelessness and forgetfulness of what is desired; and this is true of us with the Lord. Love to Christ will make us delight in His commandments. Confidence in His love will make us not afraid of examining them; but on the contrary search into them as a light to our path. But that is not enough. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.” In this keeping of His commandments, there will be further manifestations of the Lord to the soul. It is only as we walk in obedience that there is communion with the Lord. To walk in His ways, and to keep His commands, there must be confidence in His love. Then you get fullness of love in return. “I will manifest myself unto him;” not only my will, but myself.

This word brings out a question of Jude, which shows how little the disciples understood the secret manifestation of which He spoke. They thought only of an open, public manifestation; and that, as when David was set upon the throne, those who had been with him during his rejection were given places of special honor around him, so it would be now. “How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?” But the Lord explains that it is during His absence He expects these proofs of their love. He would send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, who would be always with them, to bring everything to their remembrance that He had said to them, even these very words. And now we are in this very state of things. In constant danger of being forgetful and disobedient, we have still the Comforter to bring these things to our remembrance, and the love of our Lord, who has given us commandments (and they are not grievous) to keep. “Jesus answered him and said, If a man love me, he will keep my words.” Here is a further thing. In the former verse, a man has His commandments, knows them, has his heart engaged in them to keep them; not measuring other people by them, but keeping them himself. But when Jude puts the question about manifestation unknown to the world, the Lord says, “If a man love me, he will keep my words.” Here is a great advance, one which we do well to weigh. The desires of our Lord are not here put

in the form of a “commandment.” It is true, that the more we know of Christ, the more we love Him—the more we must desire to remember His authority over our souls, and own and rejoice in it. But this does not meet all that is in His heart. He wants to give us further manifestations of His own love, further revelation of the Father. Thus, what a field it is that we are brought into He is testing our hearts. Not as to whether we love Him at all—but it is good to test our souls from time to time, how far our love carries us. Are we keeping “His words?” “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” He looks for love. Warm expressions are not enough—they may not always be trusted—may be rather a proof of want of reverence. But He looks for our love. And suppose the soul does love, how will it show itself? Will there not be the desire to ponder every word, in whatever way the Lord Jesus shows His will? Will there not be delight to be near Him, His love filling our hearts?

The more we enter into His grace, the more we ought to search ourselves by this close word of our Master's. It was needed by His disciples, and surely not less needed by us.

Chapter 69

Scripture Query: The Kingdom of Heaven

Q.-1. You say that “the kingdom of heaven cannot be dated earlier than the ascension.” I had come to the conclusion that it should be dated from John the Baptist (but without including him) from these passages: “The law and the prophets were until John, since which time the kingdom of God is preached.” (Luke 16:16.) “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matt. 11:12.) “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God [which He did without doubt], then the kingdom of heaven is come unto you.” (Matt. 12:28.) “After that John was put into prison Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” (Mark 1:15.)

Are not Matt. 11:12 and 12:28 (quoted above) very emphatic on the point, if they are rightly translated?—while I cannot find any passages that seem to give the ascension as the time of the introduction of the kingdom. There is also Mark 9:1: “Till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” Please explain.

2. Seeing that some of the same parables are spoken with reference to the kingdom of heaven, and to the kingdom of God, why is the term “kingdom of heaven” used in Matthew, and “kingdom of God” everywhere else?

3. Is it more correct to say that unconverted professors are in the kingdom, or that they appear only as part of the kingdom? Is the “meal” only really the kingdom, the leaven being a foreign admixture? or is the whole when mixed the kingdom? Does God ever acknowledge an evil thing or an unconverted person as a part of the kingdom of God? He says the kingdom of heaven is “likened to” —has the outward appearance of—so-and-so; but would He acknowledge the “fowls of the air” as a part of the kingdom, or did they merely take shelter in it? These questions are suggested by such texts as “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” How, then, do unconverted persons get into the kingdom? While, again, we read of Christ purging out of his kingdom all things that offend, would not this include unconverted persons? Or does God sometimes speak of the kingdom from His point of view, as if Satan had never sown any tares (as in John 3)—and sometimes as it has become spoiled, by Satan?

4. Does drinking the wine new, &c., refer to the millennium? and why is it called (Matt. 26:29) “my Father's kingdom,” and in Luke (22:18) “the kingdom of God.”

5. In Matt. 8:12, does not “the children of the kingdom” refer to Jews cast out?—and in 13:38 the same phrase refer to believers? It seems to be the same in the Greek.

A.- 1. Neither Matt. 11:12 nor Luke 16:16 teaches more than the preaching or presenting the kingdom of heaven to faith, not that it was then actually in being or established. Hence, in the main development of its course in Matt. 13, the first parable, which refers to the Lord's own direct work, is not a likeness of that kingdom, though it was clearly work done with a view to it, as indeed John Baptist himself preached that it was at hand; and hence he is named in contradistinction to the law and the prophets. But the citation of Matt. 12:28, by its very incorrectness, confirms this and its

difference from the analogous phrase. For the text speaks of the kingdom of God, not of heaven. The former was there, and evidenced to be there when Christ was there in the mighty power which expelled the demons; the kingdom of heaven could not be till Christ went on high. Hence, from the Second or wheat-field parable of chap. xiii., which shows Christ's work done by His servants after His ascension, and the enemy's counterwork, all are likenesses of the kingdom of heaven. Mark 9:1 is merely a picture or sample of the kingdom, as seen on the holy mount.

2. The true difference is, that while “kingdom of God” could be used wherever “kingdom of heaven” occurs, the converse could not be always. Hence, while Mark and Luke never use any other phrase than “the kingdom of God,” Matthew sometimes uses the kingdom of God where the kingdom of heaven could not be employed. So in Paul's epistles we have repeatedly kingdom of “God” where “heaven” could not be substituted; especially some cases of a moral force, such as Rom. 14:17, 1 Cor. 4:20. To Matthew the phrase “kingdom of heaven” is peculiar, as being both drawn from Dan. 2 and vii., and, duly understood, the most decided corrective of the earthly thoughts of the Jews. It has a dispensational character, which “kingdom of God” does not necessarily carry.

3. John 3:3 presents “the kingdom of God” only in its full reality—Matt. 13; 18:23, &c., 20:1, &c., 25:1, &c., clearly show us profession in “the kingdom of heaven.” The scandals and the doers of lawlessness have to be purged out of the kingdom where they have been.

4. The new wine drank in the “Father's kingdom” (Matt. 26:29), sets forth the united joy of the Lord and of His own by and by, and in the highest part of the kingdom too, I apprehend (comp. chap. 13:43). “The kingdom of God” is the generic name for every part.

5. In Matt. 8 the new form of the kingdom of heaven, which would follow the rejection of the Messiah, was not yet disclosed, but what the Old Testament spoke of. Hence “the children of the kingdom” suits the Jews as such in chap. viii., and the children of God or Christians in chap. xiii., where the further truth is developed.

Chapter 70

Fragment: Let Brotherly Love Continue

The wear and tear of circumstances makes this often a matter of difficulty. The very closeness of relationship among the saints causes it to be so. There is only continuance in what is of God.

Chapter 71

Fragment: Let Us Not Seek

Let us not seek to weaken the force of a single scripture, if it press us ever so hard. The foundations of our faith are so sure that we may boldly, unhesitatingly deny the suggestions of the enemy: and God will show us, in due time, its meaning, if for His glory. The security of the soul depends much on this, whether it condemn oneself, or seem to destroy one's doctrine, or show one to have fallen into a pitfall; still to hold to it as the truth. If the word of God be avoided, all that gives, and secures the soul in, the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is life eternal, is gone forever; while, on the other hand, holding to this, however tried, God will reveal mercy to oneself, correct or purge one's doctrine, or so fill up the measure of it as to clear one's mind from the dread of that which Satan would use to distract or disturb the soul.

Chapter 72

The Light of the Body Is the Eye

Luke 11:34-6

Light manifests the heart of man; but man in his natural darkness avoids and flies from it. On the other hand, in Christ is life, and the life is the light of men. This is grace; and where God acts according to the efficacy of grace, one becomes light in the Lord, receiving the true light in Him.

In Luke Jesus develops in a moral point of view the state of souls, the phases of the combat between light and darkness. He has sown the good seed, God's word; it is perfectly adapted to the wants of man's heart. If the heart is hard, the seed does net enter, and Satan takes it away. If the natural affections receive the word with joy, without anything and because of nothing, produced in the conscience, the seed springs up immediately; but then the first difficulties cause it to wither away. Even where appearances are better, the thorny cares of this life choke its growth and hinder fruit.

It is not, the quality nor perfection of the light which is in question here, as in John; but the manner in which the heart receives it. None could deny that Jesus cast out demons, but some imputed the power to Beelzebub; others sought a sign from heaven. Thus, the effect was that the heart manifested what was within, and betrayed its real state. All comes out because the, light of God is there; and wherever it shines, it brings out all sorts of difficulties, because it forces every one to show before God what he is. When the heart is stirred, it is like a sink. The more perfect the light, the more the effect is produced. It compels each to take his side for or against the light. Things find their level in the presence of God. We should desire God to act with all the power of His Spirit, that those who love the light may come to the full perfection of it. If it makes our sins evident, it is that they may be put away; for He who is light, makes also expiation for sin.

The power of Satan (ver. 21-23) seeks to keep souls in darkness. Are you then for Christ or against Him? A middle course is impossible where He presents Himself; the heart must decide one way or the other; and this settles the question of Satan's power, for “greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.” It is not the light which fails, but faith.

In our gospel, however, the light of the body is not that of the sun, but, the eye: because the subject matter is the state of him who receives light from God, and not its manifestation in Christ. It is the eye, the organ of our moral vision; it is the aim and object of the heart. All depends on what is really before the soul when it is a question of seeing clearly. It is certain that all is right in Christ, and that there is enough grace in Him to cause the light to jet out. But morally the light is the eye; and it is important that the light which is in us be not darkness. It is not a question either of ourselves or of a sign from heaven. Faith is not founded on miracles: if its only basis is signs, evidences, &c., it is worth nothing; if it is not a conviction in the conscience, it is not the life of God. Christ had confidence in nothing of the kind (John 2:24, 25). “My sheep hear my voice,” instead of seeing miracles, and so believing.

So with Elijah. The Lord was not in the whirlwind, nor in the thunder, but in the still small voice. As to this, one can hardly distinguish between the written word and the living Word: nothing is hidden from it. It discerns even the “thoughts and intents of the heart.” It manifests God to the heart and the heart to God. It is the soft voice that we need. There is in the heart such want as causes that the light, while condemning us, does not affright so much as it attracts.

Why was that an “evil generation?” Because they sought a sign. In presence of the light, they asked for a demonstration of the truth. The only sign given is that of Jonah the prophet—too late for that generation to be spared. It was the sign of death and resurrection, and these realities, not signs, were, in the case of Jesus, because He was rejected. His rejection brings on the judgment. Jonah was a preacher without miracles to Nineveh that repented and was saved. Solomon, too, did no signs; yet the queen of the south came from far, to hear his wisdom.

Does not all condemn that generation? A greater than Solomon or Jonah was there. What was the preaching of the one or the wisdom of the other compared with the light of God in Christ? In truth, it was an evil generation.

Thank God! “the light of the body is the eye,” because we thereby judge and desire to be freed from the evil that the light discovers in us. This is the aim of God; even as a man lights a candle and sets it on a candlestick, that people may see the light. There has never been a time nor circumstances so painful as those of Jesus. The priests were the most distant from God; the righteousness of the Pharisees was but hypocrisy. But those who waited for redemption in Jesus, owned it in the babe of Bethlehem; and Anna spoke of it to all such: God had given even then enough light for a witness to the godly.

Now it is a question of conscience. “The light of the body is the eye.” It is a matter of eyesight when seeing is the point. “Therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.” If a light do not manifest what you are, it is worthless. The great matter is not whether you can discern between the true and the false outside you; but the light must enter you, and there reveal everything, unveiling your own state to yourselves. Then there is blessing. “Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” If there is anything for your aim but God's glory, the light is darkness. If the eye is not single, it is evil. There is encouragement here: withdraw not from the light, however painful its action on the conscience. We have not to judge the Word of God; the Word judges the saved soul, penetrates and holds it fast. When a man holds me so that I cannot escape, I know he is strong. “Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did.” The word seizes us; the result is that we are judged and purified. God lays bare all our sin for us to get free from it; for grace and truth are come by Jesus Christ. The truth judges, but it is grace withal. The same Jesus who sounds to the bottom of the heart all the sin that is there, has washed me from my sins in His own blood. If He stirs up all the evil that is in us, it is to take it away. The light in Him is for us always grace. The man who dreams of his reputation, in avoiding the light, avoids grace along with it. God does not leave but love us. He has imposed on Himself the task of blessing us, and of doing us all the good He can. We know that there is in us a quantity of things that the light manifests. Man, in presence of God's purity, is so unclean that his very clothes are ashamed of him. (Job 9; 42) Why did God so press Job? He let Satan act to manifest the evil Himself saw already. How many things there are in us which are not of Christ, but of ourselves! God introduces the light to bring out the

hindrances to our enjoyment of communion with Himself. How much becomes a source of sorrow because it connects itself with ourselves! If self-seeking enters the heart of a Christian, there is misery. These things must be got rid of, in order that there may be nothing between God and us: God acts to this end; and this is the history of the Christian life. God cannot bless us in evil, whatever His blessing spite of it. But he does act in grace; and if His action is purity, holiness, light, it is also grace. Confide in Him with entire reliance. He purifies you that you may walk so as to enjoy the brightness of His face.

Chapter 73

Living to Self or to Christ?

(2 Cor. 5:14-16.)

The thought uppermost in my mind in reading these verses is just as simple as it is of all importance, and that is, beloved brethren, what we are living for; a weighty question, I need not say, and it is of moment to our souls that we should not shrink from answering it, and that we should answer it in the fear of God. Verse 15 was peculiarly before me, “He died for all, that they which live,” that is, the believers, &c. All were dead, believers and unbelievers alike, all were ruined men before God; and the death of Christ is the proof of the condition of every soul naturally; that is, all are lost all lifeless toward God; that even the Son of God, who is everlasting life, should need to suffer—should find no portion but death in this world, is the proof that there was no life in it. Everything lay so irretrievably in death, that for Him to die is the only door of deliverance out of it. And “He died for all.” It is not said that all should live, though undoubtedly there was life in Him adequate for every soul, life everlasting in Christ; but then, in fact, no soul did, none would, receive Him, not one. Grace therefore has wrought, and given some, not all, to receive Him. And therefore it is added, “He died for all, that they which live,” that is, they who do believe in Him and have life therefore— “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” Now, there is never a question day by day that arises, but what brings out one of these two things, that is, whether we are living to ourselves or to “Him who died for us and rose again.” And have I not to own the sad truth how constantly we have to rebuke our souls? How often, not to say in general, the first impulse of the heart is to take that view of everything which would minister to our pleasure, or gratification, or importance? What is this but living to ourselves? When any question comes before us, when anything, either in the way of an evil to be avoided, a loss to be shunned, or something to be gained, some object that comes before us, is it not our tendency to look how it will bear upon us and to give it that turn which will be for our profit or advantage in some way or another? I do not say always personally: it may be for our family, for our children, looking onward to the future or at the present. Now, we are always wrong when we do it. God would not have us to neglect the real good of those dear to us and dependent on us; but the question is, whether we trust ourselves or Christ. Are we adequate judges of what is best for our children? Are we the least biased and the wisest to decide on that which would be for, not the passing profit, but the good which endures forever? It comes to a very simple issue. We have two natures one which is always grasping for something that will please and exalt itself, and another which, by the grace of God, is willing to suffer for Christ, and clings to what is of Christ. But as the apostle says elsewhere, not that which is spiritual was first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. So it is precisely in our practical experience. The thought that is apt promptly to arise when there is trial and difficulty, is the simply natural one, how to get out of it—not, how am I to glorify God in it, and turn it to the praise of Christ. Then, again, if there is any prospect of improving circumstances, this is the first thought—that which is natural. Ought we not to be upon our watch-tower with respect to this? Should we not have it as a settled thing for our hearts, this is my danger? We may not all be tried in the same way; for that which would be a

gratification to one might not be so to another. But there is one sad thing in which we all agree: we have a nature that likes self; and seeks to gratify it, and we have hence a tendency to indulge that nature as the first thought of the heart. But let Christ only come before our souls—let us bethink ourselves of Him, when either trouble or pleasure comes before us, and what then? That which is natural fades away: we judge it. We say, That is a thing which brings no glory to Christ—and what are we here for? Let us remember that God has done everything to fit us for His presence: He has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. There is no doubt of that: it remains untouched. But the practical question for our souls is, whether our hearts, knowing the perfect goodness of our God and Father towards us, enter into this great thought—that He now sets Christ, dead and risen, before us, in order that, in the presence of the angels as well as of men, yea, in His own presence, there may be the wonderful spectacle of beings who once lived for nothing but self, here, by the very image of Christ before their souls, lifted above self altogether.

May we bring this to bear upon whatever may be the circumstances through which we pass day by day! It is the main thing for the walk of every saint. There are other great things for the Church; but they are so much the greater as they are built upon Christ, the object of each individual that composes the assembly. Let us not deceive ourselves as to that. No position can ever make amends for failure in the habitual thought of the heart. May we search and see whether we are living to ourselves, or to Him who died for us and rose again!

Chapter 74

The Love of God

(1 John 4:9)

We find that God is dealing with men according to everything that He is in Himself—dealing with their hearts and consciences by presenting to them all that He is—and we know that He is holy, righteous, and love; so that we may look at these things as being brought ourselves truly to God. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” This shows the necessity of separation from evil. “In him is no darkness at all.” Again, there must not only be separation from evil, but righteousness as regards guilt. For there has not only been opposition to God, but we have failed in duty and are the subjects of defilement and guilt. He did not merely say when they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, judgment must follow. And this proves the perfect love of God. It is not said, He is holiness; indeed mere holiness would but repel the sinner: He is holy, He is just, and therefore there must be judgment; but He is love, and love draws me. This is the spring of all His dealings until He is forced to action—not naturally forced—forced by reason of evil; for He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and therefore is forced to turn away the eye; in that sense forced to have done with evil. He may be active, calling to repentance, and He is—but no remedy. He does not execute judgment now, but the day will come when He will set aside the power of evil, and not only prove that He is the God of judgment, but that He makes those He blesses eternally happy in holiness, for He is holy love. He is light, and if I am there in the light, it shows me all that is not light, and all is judged. We delight in holiness therefore, because He is holy, but love is His nature; that is what He is. Judgment would condemn; but “now is the accepted time,” in the which He exercises grace in receiving sinners to the full blessedness of fellowship with Himself. Whatever your state may be, God is perfect in His love, and He would make us enjoy and walk in it now. It is not in heaven we shall learn it. We shall be there everlastingly in His presence; but to enjoy it, I must learn it here, or I could not have the enjoyment of it there. Our nature, selfishness, and unbelief hinder down here: still they, after all, only magnify the grace that exercises love in spite of all. He will bring us to the knowledge of perfect love. “Perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment,” &c. It may be very reasonable that it should be so, but still it is torment.

Do any of you fear when thinking of God? You have torment, for “fear hath torment,” when it is connected with the conscience, however man may seek to bury his conscience, and he does succeed in hardening it. Now Satan may even use truth to alarm and make one despair and think there is no love and forgiveness. But where God awakens the conscience, it is always to teach something about His goodness. As in the prodigal son, &c., whatever may be the character of the alarm, the reason for it is in God Himself; and God would have us to know it. If I could get my pardon from any other source than God, I do not learn His love. If I seek peace, for instance, in ordinances, it is not love but fear. The effect of true ministry is to put the soul in direct contact with God. False ministry is the bringing in of something between the soul and God. There having been a revelation of God to the soul, it can never get rest until received from God, and till then there is no rest. And you will discern what is of God from what is not of God by this test, that it turns to God. He blesses by the revelation of His love. This delivers from the corruption of the

truth—secures the soul from error, until there is perfect peace. If I have that, I know Him. What else do I want I The soul, however quickened and secured, must have the blessed consciousness of perfect peace with God. I must, of course, seek to do His will and seek fellowship with Him, and prayer, &c.; but neither as satisfying God, nor quieting myself, or it ceases to be prayer. What God does for your souls is, He is bringing you into the joy of His perfect love in His presence; and oh! what a spring of joy does this bring into the soul. “Who shall separate us?” “More than conquerors.”

Now in this epistle and in this chapter, remarkably, it is what the divine nature is—God is love. Whatever might occur in the history of the Church of God, He is unchangeable, and if only one soul were to remain true and all the rest were gone astray, and the whole nominal church to go another way (if they say God is not love, that is not truth), Christ is the image of the invisible God. He has been here—light and love, and that is what God was, manifest in the flesh, and you will find these in the children. It is the family character of the children of God, light and love; God's nature, both in Christ and in all the children. All through this epistle it is the essential nature of Christ that is dwelt on—what is essentially divine. That makes it more remarkable now when He has brought the soul to peace. He makes it to rest not in anything in self, but in Christ's work. We must have the divine nature, but how do I get this nature? I find a perfect manifestation of His love. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” I must have the new nature first to know this, and the soul is brought into the perfect light and joy of it without a cloud, daily and hourly finding the joy in which we can go on in the grace He has towards us. Where is this found? In Jesus Christ Himself. “No man has seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son.” He found us “dead in trespasses and sins.” What was God to us when thus “we were by nature?” The effect and consequence of our condition was “wrath,” “but God who is rich in mercy,” &c. Here is no mention of anything required of us, but the simple fact of what we were— “dead in trespasses and sins,” and it at once turns to what God is: “but God who is rich in mercy for the great love,” &c., bringing out the contrast of what we were and what God is. We were dead in sin. God brought out the means of our approaching to Himself, though a God of judgment, through Christ's sacrifice. From Abel downwards God was shewing mercy; so Abel's faith testified how man was to approach to God. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent,” &c. (John 3) That changed all God's dealings. God was to be approached before, but when Christ comes, it is another thing. Man is clearly proved to be a child of wrath. If man is dealt with as man, he refuses to come to God— “none righteous.” When Christ comes, it is altogether another thing. God now approaches man, which is grace; not man the means for man to come to God; but God coming to man. He visited men in their sins, “that they might live through him.” All was darkness, degradation, and idolatry. God takes them out of that condition that they might live through Christ. “God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,” and thus we are brought into His presence. The life I have as a saint is the fruit of the love of God—life communicated by grace; not creation putting me in a position and sustaining me, but when I have failed, His grace has abounded over it, and given me this life in Christ, when I was dead and enmity against Him; and the very truth that I have life is the proof of His love. We live through His only-begotten Son. He is bringing us into His presence, and putting before us His beloved Son, in whom all His delight was from eternity. And is this the God for whom I wrought? And the soul adores the wondrousness of His love, for it is no longer the thought of how I must get to God. God has come to me in His grace. If I take the righteousness of God without this, there would be the appearance that God is harsh. Now if I get this life—love known and holiness

known—my conscience becomes not only as a natural conscience, judging sin, but I learn to judge it according to God, because I am brought into the light. “If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.”

“Herein is love, not that we loved God.” The first thing, legal commandment disappears; though we ought to love God, it is true, as the commandment demands. “Not that we loved God.” It is the fruit but never the ground of my fellowship with Him, because I learn God has loved me in my sins; and I learn, though excellent, it is a thing not required of a sinner. If it is required I am lost! I now am showing another thing—that the sinner is loved when he does not love God. It is the sinner's need that draws out His love. We may say, “I do not find I live through Him.” In one sense, it is right it should be felt; but when it is only that, the effect is to turn our eyes in on ourselves, and so to dishearten. Grace is working and can be seen by others, though not visible to the one who feels it. But I say, I do not find I love. You mistake the whole matter. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” Well, I admit it, but I do not see I have a share in it, for I do not feel its effects. But we see, He sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and that is the proof of His love. It is the eternal enjoyment of it to know eternal life in the Son; but down here we often question it, because we do not see this love in us. He is “a propitiation for our sins.” Ah! now I can see, when I believe that. In Him, in His death, is the ground of my rest. Therein I learn what love is towards such a sinner as I am. I turn to look at it, not in myself, but in Him; and I rest in God. What my soul rests in is what He is, and what He has done. “He has sent His Son as a propitiation.” God has loved me not only when I wanted it, but according to His sense of my want. He has not mistaken my case; the propitiation is made for my sins—Christ on the cross—and we can say, “Herein is love,” &c. I have found God. My soul rests there. The cloud is taken away forever. God has given His Son. If you say, but there is such and such a sin, &c. I answer, that it is for the sins you had or have that Christ died; for He died for your sins. You ought to hate them. He has the man and his sins before Him. He does not put away the man but his sins. Indeed He cannot bear sin, mid therefore He must. put the sinner in his sins away, because He cannot bear the sins, if they are not put away. The love of God has wrought a work to bring the sinner without his sins into His presence. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness flint whosoever,” &c.

First, there is Christ meeting the need of all who come unto God; and then we learn why it is—for “God so loved the world.” It is important we should know not only our need of Christ in approaching God, but that God in His love gave His Son that we might approach Him. “And we have known and believed the love.” Faith is always certain, and so I set to my seal that God is true. Thus believing and looking to God, my soul is certain. “He that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love.” My soul rests in His love. And now I have communion—seeing the work He has done to cleanse my sin, as I learn it in Christ, and am perfectly happy. Why should such an one murmur or be cross? “We have known and believed the love.” “God is love, and he that dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him.” He connects it with Christ. God does not expect fruit from man, but His grace produces fruit. Mau had no life from which God could expect anything, and so He gives a new nature in Christ, that He may produce it. When the divine nature is communicated, we look for it then in ourselves, and that always works in a soul quickened of God. Do I find many sins He is the propitiation for our sins. I believe this, and I enter into communion. Why do you find fear and torment when you find sin in yourself? Cannot you trust that love? Have you not believed the love God hath towards you? Have you not had the Father on your neck in your rags? You must know

the love God has to you, and then you know God. “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” It is Christ all through who is spoken of as He and Him, without reference to His name, the apostle's mind being so full of Christ as not to deem it needful to mention it. God's love was manifested to us in His sending His Son, that we might have life and atonement; now it is perfected that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. I am in Him who is judging. He is my righteousness: why should I not be bold? “As he is, so are we in this world.” The effect of grace is that we should feel sin, and know it blotted out, as well as live through Him. “The glory thou hast given me I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” “There is no fear in love.” It is a matter of communion. “Perfect love casteth out fear.” We are called to learn God's love by the communication of what Christ is for us; and then we are in Him before God as Christ is. If so, I find rest to the heart: it rests in God—knows God is perfect—knows He has met all its need and all its sin put away, and that He is perfect love. Thus we “joy in God.” “We love him because he first loved us;” and we pass through this sorrowful wilderness, leaning on Him who is bringing us through it. Do your souls rest in the love of God I Granted that He ought to be loved; but you are not honoring God, if you do not trust what His love has been in the work of Christ on the cross. The whole is perfected. He Himself has done it, that you might trust Him, giving His Son to die as well as life in Him, which also the believer has.

And you who would come to Him must come just as you are, and then you will know God, and He will enable you to trust in the perfectness of the work which put away sin,—the blood of Jesus Christ His Son.

Chapter 75

Fragment: Love of Truth

The rationalist system is doubt and inquiry. Love of truth, they call it; but it is never the truth loved and known. The Lord keep us from pretended love of the truth, which destroys the truth we love; which has nothing to keep, and hence has nothing to lose, and can be always seeking.

Chapter 76

Remarks on Matthew 11

The chapter at which we are arrived is full of interest and importance; and specially, inasmuch as it is a kind of transition. And that which gives occasion for the Spirit of God to bring out and to illustrate the transition from the testimony to Israel to the new order of things that our Lord was about to introduce, is the fact that John the Baptist, in prison because of his own rejection, is now found in the exercise of his personal faith, responsibility, and patience. When he was simply fulfilling his prophetic office, none could be more unwavering than he in his testimony to Christ. But it is one thing for a man to preach the truth, another thing for him to enjoy it. And even if he feel the preciousness of what he teaches, there may be moments when faith is put thoroughly to the proof; and when the strongest may know what it is to be “cast down, though not destroyed.” Certainly this was the case with John the Baptist. It was not merely his disciples that were stumbled by his being in prison. Infidels ask now, If Scripture be truth, how is it that people do not receive it? Why is it not more widely spread? I do not deny that the bare geographical area which the profession of the truth covers is larger now than it once was. But we know that at first there were many tens of thousands that followed the name of the Lord Jesus in one city alone; and the moral weight and power was infinitely greater, for they walked in superiority to the world. Still the great difficulty comes up again, and we find that what works in the mind of a skeptic may be found more or less disquieting the believer, because the believer has got that which is of nature in him still. Doubtless he has life everlasting in Christ, but he has also in him what Scripture calls the flesh; and the flesh is always an unbelieving thing. The natural mind of man never has confidence in God. Hence it came to pass that, blessed as John the Baptist was, yet does he send his disciples with the query, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Here we find the great difference between the boldness of language that a man might hold in his office as a prophet, and what he now uses when everything is dark around him. I do not mean that he doubted thoroughly, but there seems to have been a question that passed through his mind, and a confirmation of faith was wanted: a most impressive instance of the solemn truth that there is no good thing in man. No doubt the most blessed things have been wrought by man, but they have been wrought because the power of Christ has rested upon him. But here we have this favored and otherwise faithful man putting such a question, the very last that we might have expected. We may try and make excuses for it, but it remains true and plain that John the Baptist, instead of answering with the confidence of faith, if it were the question of his disciples, has to send some of them to Jesus, saying, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another'?” The Lord replies, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see, &c. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Our Lord's answer shows that it was not the disciples merely, but John himself that was shaken. These are the two parts of Christ's ministry—His words and His works, “those things which ye do hear and see,” the word always having the higher place of the two; the works being what would appeal rather to the senses, whereas the word of Christ is that which deals with the heart all conscience by the Spirit of God. Still they were to go and tell John what they heard and saw. And therein we have what the Old Testament had predicted as signs and effects of the Messiah's power. We have not, I believe, one case of curing the blind before Christ came. It was a

miracle which, according to Jewish tradition, was reserved for the Son of David. He it was who, according to Isa. 35, was to open the eyes of the blind. The Lord puts the blind receiving their sight as the first outward miracle, to indicate that He was really the Christ that was to come. And what the Lord puts last of all, but not the least weighty, is, that “the poor have the gospel preached to them.” What is it but a testimony of the exceeding tender mercy of God, that while the gospel is intended for all, if there be any difference, it is more especially for those that know misery, trial, contempt, in a selfish world? The Lord adds, “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” A remarkable word. It was easy to be stumbled then. What a word of warning! A man sent from God for a witness, that all might believe in Christ. And here, when this very man is put thoroughly to the test, the Lord has to bear witness to him, instead of his bearing witness to the Lord! How constantly do we see man breaking down when he is thus weighed; but what a blessed thing that we have such a God to deal with man, if He be only counted on! Unbelief is the only key to so extraordinary a state of things; and this it is which was at work in the question put to our Lord by John. But when these messengers departed, the Lord shows His tender compassion and regard for him, and begins to vindicate the same John who had shown such feebleness under snaring and protracted hope. He asks them, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see?” A hard judgment might have concluded it was but “a reed shaken with the wind,” when John sent disciples with the question just put. But no; the Lord will not allow it. He maintains the honor of John. He has given a little rebuke to John privately by his disciples; but before the multitudes He clothes kin with honor. “But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?” It is in courts that you look for the grandeur of the world. “Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;” because John had a peculiar place that no prophet had assigned to him—to be the immediate forerunner of the Lord, a contemporary herald of the Messiah Himself. John not only was a prophet, but the prophets prophesied of John; and the Lord says of him, “Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” But mark this word, for it is one of the most striking in this transitional chapter. “Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” What is the meaning? Our Lord first says that among those born of women, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist, of course, Himself excepted. Here, then, He is speaking of John, not as compared with Himself, but with others. He was the greatest born of woman; “notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” It means clearly that there was a new order of things commencing, in which the privileges that God's sovereign grace would confer (for it is not a question of man's forming his own scheme about these things) would be so great, that the least in the dispensation about to open would be greater than the greatest in all the past. Of course this is not as to their faith or as to anything in themselves; neither does it mean that a weak believer now is greater than a man of mighty faith in times past; nor that some poor soul, anxious and troubled about his acceptance, is in a healthier state than those who could rejoice, like Simeon, in God their Savior. Yet the Lord does say that the greatest of those gone by is less than the least now. “He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he,” i.e., than John the Baptist.

“The kingdom of heaven” never means heaven: they are different ideas as well as expressions. “The kingdom of heaven” always means that which, while it has' its source in heaven, has its sphere over the earth. It may be applied, as it often is, to what is going on now; or, as sometimes, to what will go on when the Lord comes in glory, and brings His rule in a manifested form to bear

upon the earth. But the kingdom of heaven always supposes the earth as the scene upon which the privileges of heaven are made known. The Lord Jesus sees Himself rejected; but God, in His grace, turns the fact of the rejection of Jesus to the discovery and introduction of far greater blessing than if Jesus had been received. Supposing the Lord had been accepted by man when He came, He would have blessed man, and kept him alive upon the earth: He would have bound the devil, and brought in countless mercies for the creature in general. Still, what would have been all that without the vindication of God in the matter of sin? Neither moral glory nor supreme love would have been shown as they now are. For what could it be more than divine energy barring out the power of Satan? A mere though all-powerful medicine, or remedial measure, staying the power of evil and death in the world? But the death of Christ is, at once, the height of man's wickedness and the depth of God's goodness; for in the cross the one proved his utter hatred and iniquity, the other His perfect, holy love. It was man's unrighteousness that put Him there—it was God's grace that brought Him there; and Christ risen from the dead takes His place as the beginning, the Head of a new creation, and displays it in His own person now, as a matter of faith to them that believe; puts them, while they are still in this world, struggling with the devil, into this place of blessing; sheds the joy of redemption into their hearts, and fills them with the certainty that they are born of God—their sins being all forgiven—and that they are only waiting for Him to come and crown the work of His love, when they shall be raised from the dead and changed into His glory. It is true to faith now, and will be true to sight by and by; but it is true always from the time it was introduced. It began with Christ's ascension into heaven, and it will terminate by Christ's descent from heaven, when He will bring in this power of the kingdom over the earth. What, then, has the least believer got now? Look at saints of old. John the Baptist was resting upon promises. Even he, blessed as he was, could not say, My sins are blotted out, my iniquities are all gone. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, saints could only, but with joy, look forward to this certainty, and say, It will be blessed indeed! They might be sure that it was God's intention, but it hung upon a promise; it was not an accomplished thing. And, after all, if you were in prison, you would know the difference between a promise to get out and the fact of your liberty when you were fairly out. That is just the difference. John the Baptist could not say, nor could the most advanced saint say, before the death of Christ, My sins are all gone; though he would and ought to say, I am quite sure, that, when Messiah comes, everlasting righteousness will be brought in, and an end of sins will be made. But here comes in the wonderful thing, that Messiah is come, and has done the work. The atoning work is done; and the consequence is, that all who believe are entitled to say, I have not got one single particle of sin upon me in the presence of God.

This is not true of some Christians in particular. I say it about every Christian, and I want every Christian to say it about himself; that is, that every Christian should take the place that God gives him in Christ. And what would be the effect of this? Christians could not walk with the world in the way they do; nor could they use the language, either, that we so constantly hear taken up.

What I find, then, in the word of God is this: there was a new dispensation about to open, in which the very least is invested with privileges that the greatest could not and ought not to possess before. And this, because God sets infinite value upon the death of His Son. It is not only that there is the promise of it, blessed as that was; but God puts the greatest possible honor upon the death of Christ. And, therefore, as with an earthly sovereign it is the custom to put particular honor upon an epoch of special joy to himself; if man can do that about the birth of a child, still more how

simple and according to what one may expect from God is it that He should attach peculiar glory to that work of Christ by which redemption has been accomplished—to the death of His beloved Son? Now, everything is given; and God can invite souls not to forget their sins, or turn away their eyes from them; but looking at them fairly and fully, before the cross of Christ, He can call upon them to say, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.” That is the foundation of Christianity. Knowing this, we must see how entirely evil is the place of a priest now; that is, of one particular person being put in a position to draw near to God for others. Every Christian is a priest-man, woman, or child, it does not matter. All Christians are not ministers. That is another thing. Ministry and priesthood, though so often confounded, have not one idea in common between them. God gives this peculiar privilege now, that every believer is a priest of God; that is, he is entitled to draw near into the holiest of all, with all sin gone, all his iniquities purged away, so that he may be thoroughly happy in the presence of God while he is upon earth. I have given but a small part of the privileges of the least in the kingdom of heaven now. And remember this all the grand prerogatives of Christianity are common privileges. One man may preach, and another may not; but that is not speaking about the privileges of the kingdom. There was something that belonged specially to Paul, as the servant of' God, which others did not possess; but any gifted one might preach, and there might not even be life in the soul. Caiaphas might testify, and Balaam too, and utter true things; and Paul is willing to take such a place, and shows that he might preach to others, and yet, if regardless of holiness, be himself a castaway. Nothing can be more simple. But this has nothing to do with the blessings I have been speaking of as the portion of believers now.

The privileges of the kingdom are now the universal heritage of the family of faith; the least of them is greater even than John the Baptist. Great efforts have been made to shake the meaning of this verse. It has been taught that the least in the kingdom of heaven is Jesus Himself! Jesus, of course, in His humiliation, in His going to the cross. But what an utter ignorance of the mind of God is there manifested by such a remark! For the kingdom of heaven was not yet come. It was preached, but it was not yet actually set up. And Jesus, far from being “the least” in that kingdom, was Himself the king; so that it would be derogatory to His person to call Him even the greatest, not to speak of “the least,” in the kingdom. It would be want of reverence, as well as of intelligence, to say that He was in the kingdom at all: and perhaps it would be more true to say that the kingdom was in Him; for it was morally, and as far as divine power went, in the person of our Lord. “If I,” He says to the Jews, “cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” It was arrived in His person. He being the King, and having the power thereof, it was there in Him. But if you look at “the kingdom of heaven” as a state of things introduced into this world, Christ had to go up to heaven first: a rejected king, no doubt, but still, as such, to sit on the right hand of God and thereon the kingdom of heaven commenced. The kingdom was not actually established till Jesus went up to heaven. Then it began, first spiritually, as by and by it will shine in power and glory. Hence it is clear that in this chapter we stand upon the confines of the past dispensation, and the one that was about to open. John the Baptist is on the scene, as the last and greatest witness of that which was closing. Elijah was coming. But Elijah had come now in the person of John the Baptist. John was doing the moral work that was associated with Elijah's mission; preparing the day of the Lord, and making the way for Himself. I do not say that Elijah may not come another day, but that John was the then witness of Elijah's service. He was come “in the spirit and power of Elias:” and, as our Lord says a little after, “If ye will receive it, this is

Elias, which was for to come." Such he was to faith. Like the kingdom of heaven now, it is a testimony to the future kingdom when displayed in power and glory. John was to faith, then, what Elias will be by and by. The kingdom of heaven is to faith now what the kingdom of heaven will be to sight by and by. The Lord intimates that there is a dispensation of faith coming in, when the promises were not to be accomplished in the letter.

But just as John the Baptist was cast into prison—a tremendous trial for a Jew who was looking for a great prophet to usher in the Messiah in visible majesty so he says here, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It has to be received by the hearing ear of faith. How extraordinary it must have appeared to Israel that the forerunner of the Messiah should be in prison, and the Messiah himself afterward nailed upon the cross! But before the outward glory comes, there must be the suffering—yea, and redemption effected. Hence, the least now who has this blessing of faith, who enjoys these astonishing privileges which the Holy Ghost now brings out as the gift of God's sovereign grace, is greater than John the Baptist. For it is God's doing and giving and ordering. Judgment is His strange work; but grace the delight of God's heart. It is His joy by Christ to bless the man that has not the smallest claim upon Him. And such is His work now. But what would be the effect of this among the Jews? Our Lord compares them to capricious people, who would neither do one thing nor another. If gladness is going on, they have no sympathy with it; neither have they with sorrow. John the Baptist called them to mourn. They had no heart for it. Then came Jesus, bidding them, as it were, rejoice at the glad tidings of great joy; but they heeded Him not. They liked neither. John was too strict, and the Lord too gracious, for them. They could not bear either. The truth is, man dislikes God. And there is no greater proof of his ignorance of himself than that he does not believe this. Whatever they might plead in the way of abuse of John the Baptist, or of Himself, "Wisdom is justified of her children."

Accordingly He shows how wisdom was justified, positively and negatively. He began "to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin. Woe unto thee, Bethsaida. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works," &c. What more solemn! They refuse the voice of heavenly wisdom, and the result must be, a judgment more unsparing than that which had of old made Sodom the monument of God's vengeance. Was there one place, one city, in the land more favored than another? It was Capernaum, where most of His miracles were wrought: and yet this very city should be brought down to hell. Even Sodom, the most notorious and depraved of all places, had not come under so fearful a sentence. The Lord never visits in judgment till He has exhausted all means to see whether things are as bad as they look. But when He does judge, who shall be able to stand? Thus should wisdom be justified, if I may venture so to say, by those that are not her children.

But now comes the positive part. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." From "Woe, woe," Jesus could turn round and say, "I thank thee, O Father." Not that the events recorded here took place together. The whole scene about John the Baptist occurred long before the Lord alluded to the wise and prudent rejecting Him and the babes receiving Him. The Gospel of Luke occasionally gives precise marks of time, and shows that the Lord's reception of John's messengers was at an early period of His ministry, very shortly after the healing of the centurion's servant; whereas, His thanking the Father was after the return of the seventy disciples who were sent out on the final testimony, which is not mentioned in Matthew at

all. The Holy Ghost in our gospel puts aside, in general, mere successions of time, and welds together events separated by months or years, provided they illustrate the great truth that it was His object here to bring out, viz., the true Messiah presented with adequate proofs, to Israel, but rejected; and this turned of God's grace to be the occasion of better blessings than if the Lord had been received. And while the solemn sight is before us of man's growing rejection, Jesus says, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (it is not now any hopes limited to the earth, but He is looked to as Lord of heaven and earth—the sovereign disposer of all things), “because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” I may be refused the throne of Israel; the Jews may reject, leaders despise Me; all this may be, but what is the result? Not merely what was promised to David or Solomon, but “all things are delivered unto me of my Father.” Where, when were such thoughts as these divulged before? Take the most wonderful prediction in the Psalms and prophets, and where do you get anything like them? It is clearly the rejected Messiah who, when man refuses Him, submits to it. They strip Him of His robe of Messianic glory, and what comes out? He is the Son of the Father, the Son of God from all eternity, the blessed divine Person who could look up and say, “Father.” Refuse Him in His earthly dignity—He only comes out in His heavenly one; despise Him as a man, and He is manifestly God.

“And no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” He is revealing the Father now. It is not merely that He is come to accomplish the promises of God, but He is revealing the Father—bringing souls into a deeper knowledge of God than was possible before. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Perfect grace—no restriction—no setting the Jew in the foremost seat of honor. But, “Come unto me all ye that labor.” Jew or Gentile, it matters not; do you labor? Are you miserable? Can you find no comfort? “Come unto me, all ye that labor,.... and I will give you rest.” It is without condition or qualification, if the needy but go to Him. “Come unto me.” That is the proof of the Father's drawing—that I go to Jesus. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” It is the Son of the Father in John; and Matthew here draws near, and we have the like freedom of grace. For grace is always found most full and free where the Son is brought out in all His glory. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Grace does not leave men to do as they list, but makes its object desire to do the will of God. So, immediately after saying, “I will give you rest,” He, our Lord, adds, “Take my yoke upon you.” Not the yoke of their fathers, but that of Jesus. God now reveals Christ, and the Son is revealing the Father. Therefore He says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Mark the difference. In verse 28, it is, “Come unto me,... and I will give you rest.” There it is pure, absolute grace; but, “take my yoke upon you.... and ye shall find rest to your souls.” He is saying, as it were, Now you have got to obey Me, to be subject to Me, and the effect will be finding rest to your souls. When the sinner goes in his wretchedness to Jesus, the Savior gives him rest; yea, “without money and without price.” But if that soul does not follow on in the ways of Christ, he becomes miserable, and loses the comfort he had at first. Why? He has not taken Christ's yoke upon him. The terms on which the Lord gives rest to the sinner are, “Come unto me,” just as you are, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden.” The terms on which the believer finds rest are, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” The Lord thus secures His dignity,

and keeps up His moral government over His people. They are more disturbed than any, if not subject to Christ; they can neither enjoy Him nor the world. If I have got such a blessing as Christ, and yet am not bearing His yoke, God does not intend that I should be happy. All else is a false happiness. The only true enjoyment for our souls, now that we have got Christ, depends on taking His yoke upon us, and learning of Him, bound to Him as One that we have evermore to serve and to learn of.

Remarks on Matthew 12

Chapter 12 completes the picture of the transition begun in chap. 11, and shows that, before God, the crisis was come. The Lord might continue to become the object of still deeper rejection, but the spirit that crucified Him had already manifested itself clearly. In the center of this chapter we have the warning of the unpardonable sin, not merely against the Messiah, but against the Holy Ghost that bears His testimony to the Messiah; and further, the fact that Israel, as a nation, would be guilty of that sin, and hence be given up to the power of Satan, beyond example in all their sad history. So that the evil for which God had allowed them to be carried captive to Babylon, was a little thing in comparison of the iniquity of which they were now, in spirit, guilty, and into which they were about to sink. This thoroughly closes the announcement of the crisis; and chap. 13 introduces a new thing—the kingdom of heaven about to be set up in its present mysterious form, because of the rejection of the Messiah.

I must now proceed to show how far all the incidents in this chapter strengthen this general idea, how far all is in harmony with the leading thought, the grand break between Christ and Israel. Therefore it is that the Holy Ghost here does not confine Himself to the mere order of time in which the events took place. “At that time Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn, and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.” We are not to suppose that “at that time” means “at that exact moment.” It is a general term, embracing events somewhat connected, though there might be months between them. It is not like “immediately,” or “forthwith,” or “the week after,” &c. What did intervene we must gather from other Gospels. If we compare that of Mark, we find that the scene of the corn-fields took place early in our Lord's ministry. Thus, in chap. 2, on the sabbath-day following the call of Levi and discourse about fasting, we are told that “He went through the corn-fields.” Here we have this incident taken completely out of its historical connection. Mark adheres rigorously to the order of events: Matthew departs from it in order to give the great change consequent on the Messiah's rejection by Israel. Our Lord's word of woe upon Chorazin and Bethsaida, and of their blessedness who received Him, was spoken by no means early. Here they are put together, because the object of the Holy Ghost in the first Gospel is to show this change. Hence, what would prove the change is selected and reserved for this place. In short, the Holy Ghost is giving us an historical picture apart from the mere date in which the events took place; and the events and discourses that illustrate the great transition are all grouped together. The disciples passed through the corn, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat, according to the liberty allowed them in the law. “When the Pharisees heard it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath-day.” Our Lord then cites two incidents, one of them a constantly-recurring fact among the priests, the other recorded of their most conspicuous king, David: both proving the sin and utter ruin of Israel. What was the state of things when David was obliged to use the show-bread? Was it not because the true king was a despised, persecuted man—because the king of their own heart's choice was there? It was the same thing now. The sin of Israel profaned the holy bread. God would not accept aught as holy from people that were living in sin. No ceremonial is worth a straw,

if the heart does not honor Christ. Why were the disciples reduced to pluck and eat the ears of corn] Why were the followers of the true king an hungered? Besides, He adds, “Have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?” The priests did a very important work upon that day. They offered sacrifices then, because there was sin; and the people's sin demands what, according to the letter of the law, would seem to a Pharisee to be a breach of it. It does not matter what the law may ordinarily claim, if you have sin on the part of God's people, sacrifice cannot be deferred. Thus, whether you take the particular instance of the Lord's anointed in Saul's day, or the constant, priestly service on the sabbath-day, one thing accounted for all disorder, whether real or apparent—Israel were sinners. They had allowed the chosen of the Lord to be hunted upon the mountains when he was there, and a greater than David was here. And so as to the priests and their work. There was one infinitely greater than the temple there, Messiah Himself: and what was not their indifference, nay, their enmity, towards Him?

But not only this: there was another sabbath-day necessary to complete the sketch. And now Jesus does work Himself, and these two things are brought together here: “When he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue; and behold there was man there which had his hand withered; and they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.” The Lord accepted the challenge. “He said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep; and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?” Of course, they would deliver the poor sheep out of the pit, because it was their own sheep. They had no conscience about doing what was to their own advantage because it was the sabbath-day. And the Lord does not blame them; but He presses this most pungent conclusion upon them. “How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-day.” In a word, He shows us by this second case that not only was Israel a guilty people respecting the true Beloved; but besides that, they were a people who, if they knew their own condition, would own themselves to be like the man with the withered hand, and thus be willing to receive and submit to Him. He was there in grace to accomplish all necessary healing. The Lord pressed upon them their dismal condition. The whole nation before God was morally as withered as that man's hand physically: not willing, alas! to be healed like him; but as far as utter deadness before God was concerned, such was their state. “Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole as the other.” Why is this recorded here as having occurred on the sabbath-day? Why especially in connection with the incident of the corn-field? On the first, the Lord proves Israel's guilt in contrast with the sanctity of the sabbath; and on the second, He declares Himself there to work restoration even on the sabbath. An account of all importance; because the Lord is, as it were, tearing in pieces the outward letter of the bond between Him and Israel, of which the sabbath-day was a special sign.

I may here observe, the Lord's day differs essentially from the sabbath-day; and in the early church there was scrupulous care taken not to confound the two things. The sabbath and the Lord's day are signs of wholly distinct truths. The first owed its origin to God's hallowing His rest when creation was done; and it was the token that, when God would finish His works, there would be a holy rest for man. Then sin came in, and all was ruined. We do not hear a word about it, at least directly, till a people is called out from among all others to serve the true God, as His chosen nation. We have seen, in the Old Testament as well as New, how utterly they failed; and now the

only hope of having a true sabbath is when Christ Himself shall bring it in. When Adam sinned, death passed upon all, and the rest of creation was broken. Then (after the type of Christ in the manna, with the sabbath following) came in the law, which took up the sabbath, incorporated it in the ten words and the statutes of Israel, and made it not only a hallowed day, but a day of command, which was enjoined upon them like the other nine; a day in which every Israelite was bound, not only to abstain from work himself, but to give rest to everything that was his. It was not a question of a spiritual people. All Israel were bound by it, and they shared its rest along with their cattle. The Lord's day, on the other hand, never was heard of till Christ rose from the dead. Thence issued an entirely new order of things. Christ, the beginning, the head of a new creation, rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Thus, while the old world goes on, sin still at work, Satan not yet bound, God has wrought salvation, which He is giving to every soul that believes. These recognize that Christ risen is their Savior, and that they consequently have new life in Him. This, and much more than this, they come together to acknowledge on the Lord's day. They “show the Lord's death till he come.” Nothing can be plainer in Scripture, if our desire is to know and follow the word of God. It was no question whether people were Jews or Gentiles. Were they Christians? Had they Christ as their life and Lord? If they thankfully confessed Him, the Lord's day was the day for them. Such of the Christians who had been Jews continued to frequent the synagogue on the sabbath. But this only shows the more plainly that it was not a mere change of day. To the Roman saints, the apostle insists that the man who regarded the day, to the Lord he regarded it; and that the man who regarded it not, to the Lord he did not regard it. Was this the Lord's day? No, but Jewish days and fasts. The apostle would never treat the Lord's day as optionally to be regarded or not. Some of these believers saw that they were delivered from the law, and did not observe the Jewish feasts or fasts. The Gentiles, of course, were not under the law at all. But some, at any rate, of the Jewish believers still had a conscience about the ancient holydays, and of them the apostle speaks. But the Lord's day never was and never will be a Jewish day. It has its own proper character stamped upon it; and Christians, though not under the law as Jesus with the sabbath, are yet by grace called on far more solemnly to use it for the Lord, as that which summons them to meet together in the name of Jesus, in separation from this world, conscious of redemption and justification through His death and resurrection. It is the type of the blessing that the Christian has got, yet to be manifested in glory. The world always confounds it, as do many Christians, with the sabbath. One hears sometimes real believers, but uninstructed, talk of “the Christian sabbath:” that is, of course, because they do not see their deliverance from the law, and the consequences which flow from their belonging to Him who is risen from the dead.

The apostle developer these blessed truths. Our Lord is merely dealing with the Jews here. He shows the crisis then in progress. His disciples were not hindered from plucking the ears of corn on one sabbath; and on another He openly wrought a miracle in the presence of all: thus giving occasion for the Pharisees who sought one against Him. It is true that the works were works of mercy and goodness; but there was no manner of necessity for either, had there not been a purpose. He could have spoken without doing a single thing. So with the blind man in the Gospel of John. All the clay in the world could not have cured him but for the power of our Lord. His word would have been enough, but He does something Himself, and makes the man do something else upon the sabbath. We are told expressly, “It was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.” The Lord was breaking the seal of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel. The sabbath sealed that bond, and was in Israel now worse than useless in God's sight; because

the people who pretended to keep the sabbath so carefully, were the bitterest enemies of His Son. It was utterly false to make Him subject to the sabbath. He was “Lord even of the sabbath-day.” He takes that ground boldly, as we are here told (ver. 8), and the following sabbath performs this miracle. The Pharisees felt that it was a death-blow to their whole system, and they, gathering together, “held a council against him how they might destroy him.” This was the first conclave for the purpose of putting Him to death. Jesus, knowing it, withdraws Himself from. thence, “and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all:” a picture of what He would do when Israel put Him to death. Thenceforth the great work was to be among the Gentiles. The prophet Isaiah is quoted in connection with this occurrence, to show what our Lord's character was “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom I am well-pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles: he shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets: bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”

The Lord was departing from Israel; but this is not all. There is a final testimony before He pronounces sentence upon Israel: “Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.” This was the condition in which Israel was about to be, without an eye or a voice for Jesus: the apt figure of the nation's condition, the Messiah unseen and His praise unuttered in their midst. And here is the solemn thing. The poor, the ignorant, all the people, might cry, “Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand?” He condescends to reason with them: “And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” But they were dumb; they were blind. The man that submitted to Jesus was healed; but the Pharisees were consulting to slay the Son of David. The Lord answers them yet more. He tells them that now it was come to a point. “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” All depended upon being and acting with Him: wherefore our Lord adds, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” The reason of it was this: not only the Son of man was working these miracles, but the power of the Holy Ghost was there too: and though Jesus might submit to humiliation, He could not but assert the glory of God. The Holy Spirit, who was putting forth these mighty deeds, was going to be poured out when Jesus should go away. The unbelief that refused the testimony of the Spirit when Jesus was there would be even stronger against it on His departure. The children of Israel would prove themselves to be like their fathers. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” And what the consequence? They would be guilty of the unpardonable sin of rejecting, not only Jesus Himself, as a man presented here, but the power of the Holy Ghost, whether working in Him then, or now by Him and for Him. It is the final rejection of the Spirit's testimony to Christ. It was true when the Lord was here, but is still more complete now that He is in heaven. They refused Christ on earth, and after He went up to heaven; when, through the power of the Holy Ghost, His name alone caused the dead to rise, and thus proved even more His glory than what He had done personally when here below. Those who resisted such testimony as this were

evidently hopelessly lost in unbelief and scorn of God in the person of His Son. Therefore our Lord pronounces this blasphemy to be such as nothing can meet. It is not ignorance which thus rejects Christ. A man may, in that case, only want the light; and when it comes, he may through grace be enabled to receive Him. But he who refuses all divine testimony, and makes the displayed power of the Holy Ghost the occasion of showing his spite against Jesus, is evidently lost forever: he bears the unmistakable stamp of perdition upon his brow. This was exactly the sin into which Israel were fast falling. The Holy Ghost might be sent down, and work even greater acts of power than the Lord Himself had done; it made no change in their heart. The unbelieving race of Israel shall be forgiven, neither in this “age,” nor in that which is to come. I am not particular about the word “dispensation.” It means a certain course of time, ruled by particular principles; but the point is, that neither in this αιωυ, nor in that which is to come, could this sin be forgiven. The age to come is that wherein the children of Israel are to be under the Messiah's rule; as now, and since the Babylonish captivity, they have been under the rule of the Gentiles. This sin should be forgiven neither now nor then. As to all other iniquity, there was still a hope that what was not forgiven now might be when the Messiah came, Granted that there is unlimited forgiveness for every soul that receives Him. But they refused Him. They attributed the Spirit's power working in His person to Beelzebub; and that blasphemy would never be forgiven. Such was the growing danger of Israel. Rejecting the Messiah thus, they are doomed. It was rejecting the Holy Ghost's testimony; and everything. is made to turn upon this. To that the Lord proceeds, as showing the awful condition of Israel, and the necessity for the coming change. A new work of God must be brought in. Hence the Lord pronounces them a generation of vipers. “The tree;” He says, “is known by his fruit.” It was a bad tree, and He did not expect anything but bad fruit from it. “O generation of vipers,” He adds, “how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word (that is, I suppose, everything betraying contempt for God) that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” What proves the idleness of the word? It is without reverence for God and His Son. What God insists upon is, testimony to Jesus. These idle words show the heart's rejection of Jesus, and slight the Holy Ghost's testimony to Him. “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” It is with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation; and the words that leave out Jesus prove that the heart prefers its sin to Him. The words of the mouth evidence the state of the heart. They are the outward expression of the feelings, and they show a man in one way as much as his conduct does in another. If the heart is evil, the words are evil, the conduct is evil: all therefore comes into judgment.

After this, the Pharisees ask a sign, and the Lord gives them a most significant one: but before that He pronounces His moral sentence on the nation. “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” What was the special feature of Jonas as a prophet? To whom did he prophesy? He was sent away from Israel to the Gentiles; and more than that: before Jonah performed his message aright, he must pass through the figure of death and resurrection. So obstinate was he in not going where he was bidden, that the Lord took care Jonah should be pitched out of the ship; and then He dealt with him as a dead man, and wrought His great work in his soul. Jonah, having passed through this most remarkable type of death and resurrection, was now ready for the message that the Lord gives

him. This is the sign which the Lord puts before the Pharisees. Such was the state of the Jewish nation, that He must leave them and go to the Gentiles; and that, too, after death and resurrection in reality, and when all the hopes of Israel were buried. The Lord has blessing in store for His people by and by: but for the present all is lost for Israel. They had rejected their Lord. God was going now to occupy Himself with the Gentiles. Hence it is that the instances used to confirm this are, first, the case of the men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas was here. Then the Queen of Sheba, also a Gentile, who did not merely repent because of sin, but showed an energy of faith, I may say, worthy of all note, without even a message sent to her. Such was the ardor of her heart, and her desire after wisdom, that, hearing of Solomon, she hastened there to hear it from his own lips. What a rebuke for Israel! A greater than Solomon was here; and wisdom as much beyond Solomon's as the person of Jesus was above that of Solomon. But they were an evil and adulterous generation. They knew not that their Maker was their husband: they despised Him; and, adds our Lord, “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it.” But now He shows what will be their final condition. The relation of Israel to Himself was broken; and for this blasphemous contempt of the Spirit's testimony to Jesus as the Son of man, they should be judged.

But that nation was also destined to be filled with the power of Satan. This is what the Lord now shows. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none.” Every student of Scripture will acknowledge that the unclean spirit means idolatry. Are we to suppose that our Lord suddenly breaks off from what He had been saying of the nation, to treat of mere individuals? Clearly it is about Israel. And what is the thought? Israel never, as a nation, fell into idolatry, after the return from Babylon, as before. Not that they were better men; but the unclean spirit of idolatry was no longer their special temptation. There were new ways in which the devil tempted them to sin, if not after the old sort. But the unclean spirit is to go back to his house, and finds it swept and garnished. Such it was when our Lord was here below. Israel had laid aside their idolatrous habits; they went to the synagogue every Sabbath day; and they were zealous enough to compass sea and land to make a proselyte. There was the condition of the house, empty, swept and garnished. All was apparently clean, and nothing outwardly to shock the eye, if you looked at it. “Then goeth he and taketh with him 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. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” The unclean spirit is to return, and not as before, but with the full power of Satan, with “seven spirits more wicked than himself.” More wicked than idolatry! What can that be? “And they enter in and dwell there.” It is only the figure of a man used to illustrate the state of Israel. The words that follow leave this without a doubt. “Even so shall it be also to this wicked generation.” The Lord takes the instance of a man, but He applies it to the nation's condition. The unclean spirit of idolatry was gone, and they had outwardly purged themselves; but the solemn warning is given that the unclean spirit must return, and bring with him seven spirits more wicked than himself; and their last state be worse than their first. And when is that to be? It is the last state: and I believe that it has not arrived, but is reserved for the Jews yet. The empty, swept, and garnished state existing then, may be still going on. Humanly speaking, they may be moral. They may not abandon the books of Moses, but take their stand as worshipping none but the true God. That will go on for a certain time, but not forever; for we know from the Scripture that God has kept that nation for special purposes, first in judgment and then in mercy. By and by He will convert them, and bring them in and make them a holy, as well as lineal,

seed of Abraham. But they are to fill up the cup of their iniquity first; and that is the principle that runs through all the ways of God. Not first what is spiritual, but what is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual; first Adam, and then Christ. So in the case before us, Israel must show the last results of Satan's power over their souls, before God can convert a remnant, and make it a strong nation. The last state spoken of here regards the wicked generation; the Lord will create a future generation, “and so all Israel shall be saved.”

But meanwhile, what was He going to do? Was He merely pronouncing judgment on Israel? Far from it. While He yet was speaking to the people, one came and told Him, “Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.” The Lord immediately takes this opportunity to show that He no longer acknowledged mere relationships according to the flesh. He had special relationship with Israel, “of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came.” He owns it no longer. They would not have Him. He had shown the end of all flesh. They become the tenement for the devil in all his power; their last state is worse than their first. But, says the Lord, I am going to have a new thing now, a people according to my own heart. And so He stretches forth His hand toward His disciples, and says, “Behold my mother and my brethren.” His only true relations were those who received the word of God and did it. “Whosoever shall do the will of my Fattier which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” In a word, He renounced all earthly connection for the present time—all relationship with nature. The only tie He acknowledges now is, relationship to a heavenly Father, formed through the word of God received into the soul.

Thus we have in this chapter the Lord closing with Israel, as far as testimony is concerned. In the next chapter we shall find what comes, dispensationally, of these new relations that the Lord was about to unfold.

Chapter 78

Remarks on Matthew 13:1-30

At the close of the chapter before, our Lord disowned all the natural ties which bound Him to Israel. I speak now simply of His bringing it out as a matter of teaching; for we know that, historically, the moment for really and finally breaking with them was the cross. But, ministerially, if we may so say, the break occurred and was indicated now. He took advantage of an allusion to his mother and brethren to show who His real kindred were. No longer those who were connected with Him after the flesh. The only family He could own now were such as did the will of His Father in heaven. He recognizes nothing but the tie formed by the word of God received into the heart and obeyed accordingly. The Holy Ghost pursues this subject by recording, in a connected form, a number of parables which were intended to show the source, the character, the conduct, and the issues of this new family, or at least, of those who professed to belong to it. This is the subject of Matt. 13. A striking instance it is, how manifestly the Holy Ghost has formed the materials into the particular shape in which we actually have them: for we know that our Lord spoke more parables than are here given. Comparing it with the Gospel of Mark, we find a parable that differs materially from any which appear in Matthew. In Mark, a person who sows the ground and sleeps and rises night and day, waiting for the germination and the full growth and the ripening of the corn, and then gathers it in himself. This differs very considerably from all the parables of the earlier Gospel: yet we know from Mark that the parable in question was uttered on the same day. “With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them. . . .And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.”

Just as the Holy Ghost selects certain parables in Mark which are inserted, while others are left out, and the same in Luke: so also was it the case in Matthew. The Holy Ghost is conveying fully God's mind about the new testimony, commonly called Christianity and even Christendom. Accordingly, the very beginning of this chapter prepares us for the new scene. “The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.” Up to this time the house of God was connected with Israel. There God dwelt as far as this could be said of the earth; He counted it as his habitation. But Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the sea side. We all know that the sea, in the symbolic language of the Old and New Testaments, is used to represent masses of men, roving hither and thither outside, and not under the settled government of God. “And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship and sat.” From thence he teaches them: “And the whole multitude stood on the shore.” The very action of our Lord indicated that there was to be a very wide-spread testimony. The parables themselves are not confined to the sphere of our Lord's previous dealings, but take in a much more extensive range than anything which He had spoken in past times. “He spake many things to them in parables.” It is not intimated that we have all the parables our Lord spoke; but the Holy Ghost here gives us seven connected parables, all brought together and compacted into a consistent system, as I shall endeavor to show. The Holy Ghost is clearly exercising a certain authority as to the parables selected here, for we all know that seven is the Scripture number for that which is complete: whether it speak of

good or evil spirits—whether in one form or another—seven is regularly the number used. When the symbol of twelve is used, it expresses completeness, not spiritual, but as to what has to do with man. Where human administration is brought into prominence for carrying out the purposes of God, there the number twelve appears. Hence we have the twelve apostles, who had a peculiar relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; but when the Church is to be presented, we hear again the number seven— “the seven churches.” However that may be, we have seven parables here, a thing ordered of God for the purpose of giving a complete account of the new order of things about to begin—Christendom and Christianity, the true as well as the spurious.

The first question, then, that occurs is, How comes it that we have this series of parables here and nowhere else? Certain of them are in Mark, and certain in Luke; but nowhere, except in Matthew, have we seven, the complete list. The answer is this: Nothing can be more beautiful, or more proper than that they should be given in a gospel presenting Jesus as the Messiah to Israel; then on His rejection, showing what God would next bring out. To the disciples, when their hopes were melting away, what could be of deeper interest than to know the nature and end of this new testimony? If the Lord should send out this word among the Gentiles, what would be the result? Accordingly, Matthew's gospel is the only one that gives us a complete sketch of the kingdom of heaven; as it also gives us the intimation that the Lord was going to found the church. It is only in Matthew that we have it brought out. That, however, I reserve for another day; but I must observe that the kingdom of heaven is not the same thing as the Church, but rather the scene where the authority of Christ is owned, at least, outwardly. It may be real or not, but every professing Christian not a Turk, or a Jew, or a Pagan, of course) is in the kingdom of heaven. Every person who has, even in an external rite, confessed Christ, is not a mere Jew or Gentile, but in the kingdom. It is a very different thing from a man's being born again and being baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ. Whoso bears the name of Christ belongs to the kingdom of heaven. It may be that he is only a tare there, but still there he is. This is a very solemn thing. Wherever Christ is outwardly confessed, there is a responsibility beyond that which attaches to the rest of the world.

The first parable clearly was true when our Lord was on earth. It is very general, and would apply to the Lord in person or in spirit. Hence it may be said to be always going on; for we find in the second parable the Lord presented again, still sowing good seed: only here it is the “kingdom of heaven” that is said to be like to a man which sowed good seed in his field. The first is, Christ's work in publishing the word among men, while He was here below. The second rather applies to our Lord sowing by means of His servants; that is, the Holy Ghost working in them according to the will of the Lord while He is above, the kingdom of heaven being then set up. This at once furnishes an important key to the whole subject. But inasmuch as the matter of the first parable is very general, there is a great deal in all the moral teaching of it which applies as truly now as when our Lord was upon earth. “A sower went forth to sow” —a weighty truth, indeed. It was not thus that the Jews looked for their Messiah.

The prophets bore witness of a glorious ruler, who would establish His kingdom in their midst. No doubt there were plain predictions of His suffering as well as of His exaltation. Our parable describes neither suffering nor outward glory; but a work carried on by the Lord, of a distinct character from anything the Jew would naturally draw from the bulk of the prophecies. Nevertheless, our Lord, I conceive, was alluding to Isaiah. It is not exactly the gospel of grace and

salvation to the poor, wretched, and guilty, but it is One who, instead of coming to claim the fruits of the vineyard set up in Israel, has to begin an entirely new work. A sower going forth to sow, marks evidently the commencement of that which did not exist before. The Lord is beginning a work not previously known in this world. “And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up.” That was clearly the most desperate case of all. It was null and void, not because of any fault of the seed, but from the destructive agency of the fowls which devoured what was sown. Next we have, “Some [that] fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.” There was a more hopeful appearance in this case. The word was received, but the ground was stony; there was no depth of earth. Appearances were very quick— “forthwith they sprung up.” It is a serious thing to think of souls who seem awakened. Nature always brings to maturity in a very short time whatever it can do in the things of God. There is little or no sense of sin. All is taken in but too readily. The plan of salvation may be thought to be excellent, the enlightenment of the mind undeniable; but such an one has never measured his awful condition in God's sight. The good word of God is tasted, but the ground is stony. Conscience has nothing to do with it. Whereas in a real work of heart, conscience is the soil in which the word of God takes effect. There never can be a real work of God without a sense of sin. This is a thing which souls, drawn and attracted by the Gospel, ought to weigh earnestly: whether, in deed and in truth, they have really faced the blessed God who is speaking to them about their ruin. Where warm feelings are excited but sin is slurred over, it is the case spoken of here—the word received at once, but the ground stony. There is no root because there is no depth of earth; consequently, “when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away.”

But, further, “Some fell among thorns, and the thorns spiting up and choked them.” This is another case; not exactly that wherein the heart received the word at once. And, let me repeat, that I have as little confidence in the heart as in the head. The flesh differs in different individuals. Some may have more mind, and some more feeling. But neither can savingly receive the word of God, unless the Holy Ghost acts on the conscience and produces the sense of being utterly lost. Where this is the case, it is a real work of God, which sorrows and difficulties will only deepen. Those that received the seed among thorns, are a class devoured by the anxieties of this age, and led away by the deceitfulness of riches, which choke the word, so that no fruit comes to perfection.

But now comes the good ground. “Other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The sower here is the Lord Himself, yet, out of four casts of the seed, three are unsuccessful. It is only the last case where the seed bears ripe fruit; and even there the issue is checkered and hindered— “some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.” What a tale of man's heart and the world! that even where the heart does not refuse, but receives, the truth, it abandons just as quickly. The same will that makes a man gladly receive the Gospel, makes him drop it in the face of difficulties. But, in some cases, the word does produce blessed effects. It fell upon good ground, and brought forth fruit in different degrees. “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” A solemn admonition to souls to look well to it, whether or not they produce according to the truth they have received.

The Lord explains these things. But, first of all, the disciples come and say unto Him, “Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” The same parable

would be just like the cloud of Israel in a former day—full of light to those within; full of obscurity to those without. Thus it is with the sayings of our Lord. So solemn was the crisis now, that it was not His intention to give clearer light. Conscience was gone. They had the Lord in their midst, bringing in full light, and He was refused, specially by the religious leaders of the nation; and He had broken with them. Here was the clue to His conduct: “To you it is given to know,” &c. It was kept from the multitude, and this because they had already rejected the clearest possible proofs that Jesus was the Messiah of God. But, as He says here, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” Such was the case with the disciples. They had already received His person, and now the Lord would supply them with truth to lead them on. “But whosoever hath not,” the Christ-rejecting Israel, “from him shall be taken away that he hath.” The Lord's bodily presence, already there, and the evidence of miracle, would soon pass away. “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand.” That judicial sentence of darkness which Isaiah had pronounced upon them hundreds of years before, was now to be sealed, though the Holy Ghost still gives them a fresh testimony. And this very passage is, afterward quoted to show that it is a finished thing with Israel. They loved darkness rather than light. What is the good of a light to one that shuts his eyes? Therefore would the light be taken away, too. “But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Ver. 16, 17.)

Then follows the explanation of the parable. We have the meaning of “the fowls of the air” given us. It is not left to any conjecture of our own. “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom” (this was being preached then; it is not exactly “the word of the gospel,” but “of the kingdom”) “and understandeth it not,” &c. In Luke it is not called “the word of the kingdom,” nor is it said, “understandeth it not.” It is interesting to observe the difference, because it shows the way in which the Holy Ghost has acted in this gospel. Compare Luke 13 We find some of these parables first given us in chap. viii. 11. “Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God” —not the word of the kingdom, but “of God.” There is, of course, a great deal in common between the two; but the Spirit had a wise reason for using the different expressions. It would have been rather giving an opportunity to an enemy, unless there had been some good grounds for it. I repeat that it is “the word of the kingdom,” in Matthew, and “of God,” in Luke. In the latter, we have, “that they should believe,” and in the former, “that they should understand.” What is taught by the difference? It is manifest that, in Matthew, the Holy Ghost has the Jewish people particularly in His mind, although the word is going out to the Gentiles in due time; whereas, in Luke, the Lord had particularly the Gentiles before Him. They understood that there was a great kingdom which God was about to establish, and destined to swallow up all their kingdoms. The Jews being already familiar with the word of God, their great point was understanding what God taught. They had His word already, though superstition and self-righteousness never understood it. You might be controverted, had you said to a Jew, You do not believe what Isaiah says; but a serious question came, Do you understand it? But if you looked at the Gentiles—they had not the lively oracles, so that among them the question was believing what God said; and this is what we have in Luke. The point for a Gentile was that, instead of setting up his own wisdom, he should bow to what God said. Hence, you will observe, that, looking at people who had not the word of God, and who were to be tested by the Gospel going out to them in due time, the question was believing something that had not

been brought out to them before. In Matthew, speaking to a people who had the word already, the great thing was to understand it. This they did not. The Lord shows that, if they heard with their ears, they did not understand with their hearts. So that this difference, when connected with the different ideas and objects of the two gospels, is alike manifest, interesting, and instructive.

“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.” Another solemn truth we learn from this:—the great thing that hinders spiritual understanding is religious prejudice. The Jews were charged with not understanding. They were not idolaters, or open infidels, but had a system of religion in their minds in which they had been trained from infancy, which darkened their intelligence of what the Lord was bringing out. So it is now. But if among the heathen, though you would find an evil state morally, yet at least there would be that kind of barren waste where the word of God might be freely sown, and, by grace, be believed. That is not the case where people have been nurtured in ordinances and superstition: there the difficulty is to understand the word. “Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.” The answer to the fowls, in the first parable, as we saw, is the wicked one taking away the word of the kingdom as soon as it is sown. “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.” There you have the heart, moved in its affections, but without exercise of conscience. Anon with joy the word is received. There is great gladness about it, but there all ends. It is only the Holy Ghost acting upon conscience, that gives what things are in God's sight. “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.” Then we have the thorny ground: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” There is a case that might have seemed promising for a time; but anxiety about this world, or the flattering case of prosperity here below, rendered him unfruitful, and all is over. “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it” (all through it is spiritual understanding) “which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Now we come to the first of the similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. The parable of the sower was the preparatory work of our Lord upon earth. “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way “exactly what is become of the profession of Christ. There are two things necessary for the inroad of evil among Christians. The first is, the unwatchfulness of the Christians themselves. They get into a careless state, they sleep; and the enemy comes and sows tares. This began at a very early epoch in Christendom. We find the germs even in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more in the Epistles. 1 Thessalonians is the first inspired epistle that the apostle Paul wrote; and the second was written shortly after. And yet he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work; that there were other things to follow, such as the apostasy and the man of sin; and that when the lawlessness should be fully manifest (instead of working secretly), then the Lord would appear, and put an end to the lawless one and all concerned. The mystery of iniquity seems akin to the sowing of the tares spoken of here. Some time after, “when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit” —when Christianity began to make rapid strides in the earth, “then appeared the tares also.” But it is evident that the tares were sown almost immediately after the good seed. No matter what the work

of God is, Satan is always close upon its heels. When man was made, he listened to the serpent, and fell. When God gave the law, it was broken even before it was committed into the hands of Israel. Such is always the history of human nature.

So the mischief is done in the field, and never repaired. The tares are not for the present taken out of the field: there is no judgment of them. Does this mean that we are to have tares in the church? If the kingdom of heaven meant the church, there ought to be no discipline at all: you ought to allow uncleanness of flesh or spirit there, swearers, drunkards, adulterers, schismatics, heretics, antichrists, as much as the rest. Here is the importance of seeing the distinction between the church and the kingdom. The Lord forbids the tares to be taken out of the kingdom of heaven: “Let them both grow together until the harvest,” that is, till the Lord come in judgment. Were the kingdom of heaven the same as the church, it would, I repeat, amount to no less than this: that no evil, let it be ever so flagrant or plain. is to be put out of the church till the day of judgment. We see, then, the importance of making these distinctions, which too many despise. They are all-important for truth and holiness: nor is there a single word of God that we can do without.

What, then, is the meaning of this parable? It has nothing to do with the question of church communion. It is “the kingdom of heaven” that is spoken of—the scene of the confession of Christ, whether true or false. Thus Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Roman Catholics, as well as Protestants, are in the kingdom of heaven; not believers only, but also bad people professing the name of Christ. A man, who is not a Jew, nor a Pagan, and who outwardly professed Christ's name, is in the kingdom of heaven. He may be ever so immoral or heretical, but he is not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven. But would it be right to receive him at the table of the Lord? God forbid! The church, i.e., the assembly of God, and the kingdom of heaven are two different things. If a person falling into open sin were in the church, he ought to be put out of it; but you ought not to put him out of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, this could only be done by taking away his life; for that is meant by the rooting up of the tares. And this is what worldly Christianity did fall into, in no very long space of time after the apostles were departed from the earth. Temporal punishments were brought in for discipline; laws were made for the purpose of handing over the refractory to the subservient civil power. If they did not honor the so-called church, they were not to be suffered to live. In this way, the very evil our Lord had been guarding the disciples against, came to pass: and the emperor, Constantine, used the sword to repress ecclesiastical offenders. He and his successors introduced temporal punishments to deal with the tares, to try and root them up. Take the church of Rome, where you have so thoroughly the confusion of the church with the kingdom of heaven: they claim, if a man is a heretic, to hand him over to the courts of the world to be burnt; and they never confess or correct the wrong, because they pretend to be infallible. Supposing that their victims even were tares, this is to put them out of the kingdom. if you root a tare from the field, you kill it. There may be men outside profaning the name of God; but we must leave them for God to deal with.

This does not destroy Christian responsibility towards those who surround the Lord's table. You will find instructions as to all this in what is written about the Church. “The field is the world;” the church. only embraces those believed to be members of Christ's body. Take 1 Corinthians, where we have the Holy Ghost showing the true nature of ecclesiastical discipline. Supposing there are professing Christians guilty of any sin you please; such persons are not to be owned, while they are going on in that sin, as members of Christ's body. A real saint might fall into open sin, but the

church, knowing it, is bound to intervene for the purpose of expressing God's judgment about the sin. Were they deliberately to allow such an one to come to the Lord's table, they would in effect make the Lord a party to that sin. The question is not whether the person be converted or not. If unconverted, men have no business in the church; if converted, sin is not to be winked at. The guilty are not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven, they are to be put out of the church. So that the teaching of the word of God is most plain as to both these truths. It is wrong to use worldly punishments to deal with a hypocrite, even when he is detected. I may seek the good of his soul, but that is no reason for punishing him thus. But if a Christian is guilty of sin, the church, though called to be patient in judgment, is never to suffer it; but we are to leave guilty people, who are unconverted, to be judged by the Lord at His appearing. This is the teaching of the parable of the tares; and it gives a very solemn view of Christianity. As sure as the Son of man sowed good seed, His enemy would sow bad, which would spring up along with the rest: and this evil cannot for the present be got rid of. There is a remedy for evil which enters the church, but not yet for evil in the world.

This is the only gospel containing the parable of the tares. Luke gives the leaven. Matthew has the tares also. It particularly teaches patience for the present, in contrast with Jewish judicial dealings, as well as with their just expectation of a cleared field when the millennium arrives under the reign of Messiah. The Jews would say, Why should we allow enemies, ungodly heretics? Even when our Lord was here below-, and some Samaritans received Him not, James and John wished to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them, Theirs was the natural thought of dealing with the tares at once, but the Lord rebuked them for it. They did not know what manner of spirit they were of; “for,” He added, “the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” This illustrates our Lord's will about the tares. To kill them is contrary to Christianity, all whose real power is of the Holy Ghost, and not mere force.

But we have further instruction. “Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” Thus the heavenly saints are to be gathered into the Lord's barn, to be taken out of the earth to heaven. But “the time of the harvest” implies a certain period occupied with the various processes of ingathering. In that scene of “the harvest,” the Lord “will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.” It is not said that the wheat is to be bound in bundles in order to be taken to heaven. There is no intimation that there is to be any special preparatory work about the saints before they are taken up. But there is such a dealing of God with the tares. The angels are to arrange them in special ways, before the Lord clears them out of the field. I do not pretend to say how that will be, or whether the systems of associations in the present day may not pave the way for the final action of the Lord as regards the tares. But the principle of worldly association is growing apace. When the time approaches for the judgment of the quick, there will be the preliminary work, entrusted to the angels, of binding the wicked in bundles to burn them. How it will be done I do not pretend to affirm, merely keeping to what is said in the chapter before me.

Chapter 79

Remarks on Matthew 13:31-52

The parable of the wheat-field had fully shown, what must have been an unexpected blow to the thoughts of the disciples, that the dispensation just opening would turn out as complete a failure, as regards man's maintaining the glory of God, as the past one. Israel had dishonored God; they had wrought, not deliverance, but shame and confusion in the earth; they had failed under law, and would reject grace so thoroughly that the King would be obliged to send His armies to destroy those murderers, and burn up their city. But it might not have been so clearly understood, that if there was to be a new work which was to take the form of gathering disciples to the name of Jesus by the word preached to them, it was by no means so clear that this new work would be spoiled in the hands of man. As far as the salvation of souls is concerned, it is independent of the creature at any time. But its trial by God turns out now, as ever, a complete failure. Man came short of the glory of God in Paradise, and outside he corrupted his way and filled the earth with violence. Afterward God chose a people to put them to the test, and they broke down. And now came the new trial. What would become of the disciples who professed the name of Christ? The answer has been given: “While men slept, the enemy sowed tares.” And a solemn announcement declares that no zeal on their part could remedy the evil. They might be faithful and earnest themselves; but the evil that has been done by the introduction of the tares—false professors of Christ's name—will never be eradicated. The Lord evidently speaks of the vast field of Christian profession, and of the sad fact that evil was to be introduced from the very beginning; and, once brought in, it would never be turned out till the Lord Himself returns to judgment, and by His angels gathers the tares in bundles to burn them, while the wheat is gathered into the barn. Thus we saw tares from a very early period were to be mingled with the wheat—not necessarily with the Church, for the field is not the Church, but the world; and the meaning is, that there might be those bearing the name of Christ who were clearly wicked persons. We know that such people have managed to get and even to keep a footing within a great deal that bears the name of the Lord; but the field—mark it well—is not the assembly, but the scene of outward adhesion to Christ. If we are thinking about the Church in reading Matt. 13, we shall never understand the chapter. “The field is the world,” the sphere where the name of the Lord is professed, and extending much beyond what could be called the Church. There might be, there are, many persons, neither Heathens, nor Jews, nor Mahometans, who would call themselves Christians, and yet show by their ways that there was no real faith in them. These are called “tares.” It is not necessary that they should be conscious hypocrites. They might or might not be; but they are unregenerated professors of the “one Lord,” and “one faith;” baptized persons who have no appreciation of Christ, no care for His glory—destitute, consequently, of life—not born of water and the Spirit, but withal bearing the name of Christ, and zealous, it may be, for the faith after an outward sort. These are now found everywhere in the western world, as once in the east. There are many, whom nobody believes to be born of God, who, nevertheless, would be shocked if they were regarded as infidels. They acknowledge Christ is the Savior of the world, and as the true Messiah, but it is as entirely inoperative upon their souls, as theirs was who, in Jerusalem, believed in Christ when they saw the miracles which He did. (John 2) Jesus does not commit Himself to such now any more than He

did then.

The next parable intimates that the evil would not be merely the intermingling of a false profession, but something quite different would surely follow. It might be connected with the tares, and grow out of them; but another parable was required in order to set it forth. Beginning with the smallest possible nucleus, most humble as regards this world, there was to be that which would assume vast proportions in the earth, which would strike its roots deeply among the institutions of men, and rise up into a system of vast power and earthly influence. This is the mustard-seed springing into a great tree, into whose branches the birds of the air come and lodge. These last the Lord had already explained as the wicked one or his emissaries. (Compare ver. 4 and 19.) We must never depart from the meaning of a symbol in a chapter, unless there be some fresh and express reason for it, which in this case does not appear. Thus we have the smallest of all seeds that grows into anything like a tree; and from this exceedingly petty beginning, there comes a stem, with boughs sufficiently capacious to yield a shelter and a home to the birds of the air. What a change for the Christian profession! The destroyer now housed in its bosom!

Then follows the third parable, and again of a different nature. It is not a seed, good or bad. It is not the small now becoming lofty and large, a protective power in the earth, and for what? But here we find that there would be the spread of doctrine within, assimilating to itself whatever came in its way. “Leaven” is used in the Gospel of Matthew, as well as occasionally elsewhere, for doctrine. For instance, we have “the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees,” which is called “leaven.” No doubt, there it is speaking of hypocritical doctrine. The thought here is not to characterize the doctrine, whether good or evil, but rather, it would appear, as symbolic of that which spreads and permeates what is exposed to itself. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” The three measures of meal are not legitimately assumed to mean the whole world; they are, I suppose, a certain defined space that was devoted to the action of the leavening doctrine, throughout which the doctrine spreads effectively. Whether the result is a good or a bad state when the whole is indoctrinated, we must judge by the word of God in general, and not merely by a particular figure or expression. It is not usual to find the truth make such way. We know what the heart is, and we may infer that the doctrine which is so thoroughly spread under the name of Christ must be very far departed from its original purity when it becomes welcome to any considerable “masses” of men. We have, moreover, seen the tares, which do not imply anything good, mingled with the wheat. We have had the mustard-seed grown into a tree, and strangely harboring the birds. of the air, which erst preyed on the seed that Christ sowed. Again, whenever “leaven” occurs symbolically in the word of God, it is never employed save to characterize corruption which tends to work actively and spread. So that the point here must not be assumed to be the extension of the Gospel. The meaning, I doubt not, is a system of doctrine which fills and gives its tone to a certain given mass of men. What sort of doctrine it is must be decided by other considerations, but leaven assuredly would be an unwonted symbol of good. On the other hand, the Gospel is the seed—the incorruptible seed—of life, as being God's testimony to Christ and His work. It may be taken away, or trodden down; but wherever the Gospel is lodged in the heart, there it issues, through grace, in a new nature. Leaven has nowhere and nothing to do with Christ or giving life, but expressly the contrary. Hence there is not the smallest analogy between the action of leaven and the reception of life in Christ through the Gospel. I believe that the leaven here sets forth the propagandism of dogmas and decrees,

after that Christendom became a great thing in the earth (answering to the tree, which was the case, historically, in the time of Constantine the Great). We know that the result of this was an awful departure from the truth. When Christianity grew into respectability in the world, instead of being persecuted and a reproach, crowds of men were brought in. A whole army was baptized at the word of command. Now the sword was used to defend or enforce Christianity; more frequently earthly reward and imperial favor might quicken the downfall of heathenism. All this was, no doubt, that which prepared the way for the spreading of the leaven; but not for the sound truth of God nor for His grace.

Observe, too, that this interpretation flows on harmoniously. We have parables devoted to distinct things, which may have a certain measure of analogy one to another, and yet set forth distinct truths in an order which cannot but commend itself to a spiritual, unprejudiced mind. Much depends on a due understanding of that which is meant by the “kingdom of heaven.” Let us not forget that it is simply the authority of the Lord in heaven, acknowledged upon the earth. Whoever may own it, whether born of God or not, they are in the kingdom of heaven. Some are really renewed, while others have merely adopted Christianity as a good creed and a sound moral code. When it becomes a thing the world takes cognizance of, as a civilizing power in the earth, weighed in the scales of man's wisdom, it is no longer the mere field sown with good seed, which the enemy may spoil with bad, but the towering tree, and the wide and deeply working leaven; and such is the very unexpected disclosure which our Lord makes—what the multitude might admire, but the wise would understand. If the disciples looked for everything going on according to the mind of Christ, they were quite mistaken. They were informed that there was to be a state of things wholly different from what they expected according to the prophets, who discoursed in glowing strains of a time when there would be universal peace, blessing, and glory on the earth. Here they find that, although the Messiah was come, He was going away; that, while He should be in the heavens, the kingdom would be introduced in patience, not power—mysteriously, and not yet to sight; and that therein, consequently, the devil would be allowed to work just as before, only taking his usual advantage of the fresh truth revealed of God.

So far, then, these parables show the gradual growth of evil. First, there is the mingling of a little evil with a great deal of good, as in the case of the wheat field. Then the rising up of that which is high and mighty, and influential, from the lowly origin of early Christianity. Instead of having in the world tribulation, the Christian body becomes a patron, a benefactor, in its exercise of authority, and hence the place to which the most aspiring of the world betake themselves for what they want. After that a great propagation of doctrine follows, when the folly of Paganism and the narrowness of Judaism became so much the more apparent to men, as their interests carried them there also.

Mark a change now. The Lord ceases to address Himself to the multitude. Who could fail to see that the Lord was Himself sowing the wheat? Who could not perceive the growing up of the mustard tree, and the spread of the leaven, when once the facts were and the application made? But the Lord now turns aside from the multitude, who had been in view thus far. As it is said, “All these things spake Jesus to the multitude: and without a parable spake he not unto them.” But now Jesus sends the multitude away, and goes into the house. I would call your attention to that, because it divides the parables, and inaugurates a distinct set. The parables which follow were not such as man could see or enter into. Any one might take in the others. It is the world's wisdom, that Christianity is an institution to be proud of, but in creed, like another, involving no moral

responsibility—a leaven, in fact, that assimilates to itself, either from birth, habits, colonization, &c. But although these parables represent different aspects and states, the preaching of the word of the kingdom might be going on all the time. This has a place to itself; just as, among the Jews, there are many feasts, but the Sabbath was a constantly recurring one, repeated week after week. Here we come to a great distinction, and there is a like analogy in those feasts, for they, too, are divided. After the passover, and the unleavened bread, with the feast of weeks, following one another, you have an interruption, after which come the feast of trumpets, of atonement, and, finally, of tabernacles. Also, as the apostle teaches, Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed for us; so that we have to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread inseparably connected with it. Nor is this all. We read in Acts 2, “When the day of Pentecost was fully come.” There you have the feasts that are accomplished in us Christians. The feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles, it would be absurd to apply to the Church; their application (save what we enjoy in the way of earnest by the Spirit) is to the Jews. Thus, as in the middle of Lev. 23, the break indicates a new order of subjects, so, in this chapter, there is another just as marked; and while the first parables apply to the outward profession of Christ's name, the final ones pertain especially and intimately to what concerns real Christians. The multitude could not enter into them. They were the secrets of the family, and, therefore, the Lord calls the disciples within, and there He unfolds all to them.

But before He enters upon the new ground, He gives us further information touching the old. The disciples ask Him, “Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.” Ignorant as they might be, still they had confidence in their Lord, and that what He had spoken He was willing to explain. “He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.” The Son of man and the wicked one, it has been well remarked, are opposed to each other. As in the Trinity, we know there is a suited part which each blessed Person bears in their work of blessing, so the sad contrast appears in evil outside. As the Father brings out specially His love, and separates from the world through the revelation of it in Christ; as you have the Holy Ghost, in contrariety of the flesh, the great agent of all the Father's ways, counsels, and grace; so Scripture holds forth the devil, always acting as the grand personal antagonist of the Son. The Son of God is come that He might destroy the works of the devil. The devil makes use of the world to entangle people, to excite the flesh, stirring up the natural liking of our heart for present honor and ease. In opposition to all this, the Son of God presents the glory of the Father, as the object for which He was working by the Holy Ghost.

Discrimination runs strongly through the Lord's explanation to the disciples in the house. In the first of the parables, the good is thoroughly separate from the evil, but in the last of the three all is merged in an undistinguished lump. At first, however, all was plain. On the one hand, there is the Son of man, and He sows the good seed, and the result is the children of the kingdom. On the other hand, there is the enemy, and he is sowing his bad seed—false doctrines, heresies, &c.; and the result of this is the children of the wicked one. The presence of Christianity in the world has given the devil an opportunity for making men a great deal worse than if there never had been any fresh and heavenly revelation. The infidel historian has put the result in an awful light— “the annals of Christianity are the annals of hell.” We know that this arises from his confounding the nominal system, which is Babylon, with the true Church. In God's sight, that which bears the name of Christ

is a more wicked thing than any other in the world. There never, elsewhere, has been so much righteous blood shed as at the hand of religion so-called. Is not this solemn? What we have had in Popery is merely the full carrying out of earthly religion. Every religious system of the world tends to persecute whatever falls not in with it. This is seen even now, where there is a measure of faithfulness to Christ. The bitterness and opposition towards those who are seeking to follow the Lord in our day, is the same kind of thing that broke out into the horrors of the dark ages, and lingers still in the holy office of the inquisition, when and wherever it holds up its head.

To continue, however. “The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.” The “world,” in verse 38, must not be confounded with “the world,” in verse 39. They are totally distinct words and things. “The world,” in verse 39, means the age. It is a course of time, and not a geographical sphere. In verse 38 the sphere is intended, wherein the gospel goes forth; in verse 39 it is the space of time in which the gospel is either advancing or hindered by the enemy's power. The harvest is the consummation of the age, that is, of the present dispensation, i.e., the time while the Lord is absent, and the gospel is being proclaimed over the earth. It is grace that is going forth now. The only means which God now employs to act upon souls are moral or spiritual means. The angels introduce a sort of judgment, and deal with wicked people to destroy them, while the Gospel lays hold of poor sinners to save them, The Lord intimates here that an end will be put to the present sending out of the word of the kingdom, and a day when the effects of Satan's working would be fully developed and judged. “The reapers are the angels.” We have nothing to do with the judicial part, only with the spread of the good; the angels, with the judgment of the wicked. “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.” The same word is used for “world” in verse 40 as in verse 39. Unfortunately our version gives only the same English word in all.

Many scriptures show a state of things to come at a future time upon the world, totally different from what the gospel contemplates. I will refer to one or two in the prophets. Take Isa. 11, which speaks first of our Lord under the figure of a branch out of the roots of Jesse. It is plain that this is true of Christ, whether at His first or second advent. He was born an Israelite, and of the family of David. And again, as to the Holy Ghost resting upon Him, we know now that was true of Him when He was a man here below; but in verse 4 we find another thing “With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” If you argue that this applies now, because in the kingdom of heaven the Lord acts upon the souls of the meek, &c., I ask you to read a few words more: “And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” Is the Lord doing this now? Clearly not. Is He not sending a word of mercy throughout the earth? and instead of slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips, is He not converting the wicked by the word of His grace ?—all in entire contrast with what is described here. The breath of His mouth is sometimes applied to the gospel; but let us see how this suits Isa. 30:33. “For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared. He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” I find there a most valuable help to the understanding of chap. xi. What is He said to do with the breath of His mouth there? He slays the wicked one. “The breath of the Lord,” as interpreted by the Holy Ghost, forces us to the conviction that it means the execution of the Lord's judgment on the wicked. The Lord Jesus came to save; but the time is at hand when He shall come to destroy. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of

his lips shall he slay the wicked." The Revelation also gives us the key, where He is seen with a sword proceeding out of His mouth. It represents righteous judgment executed by the bare word of the Lord. As He spoke the world into being, He will speak the wicked into perdition. Taking this as the indubitable meaning of the verse, what follows? A state of things quite unlike what we have now under the gospel: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

All this is not contemplated now; for whether we look at the gospels or at the epistles, when the Holy Ghost is speaking about the preaching that goes on now, the effect we have to anticipate is this—some believing, but the great majority rejecting. Besides, it is added, that in the latter days perilous times should come; and that which is most prevalent in the last time is not the truth of Christ, but the lie of Antichrist (1 John), not the triumph of the good, but of the bad, till the Lord puts to His own hand; and this is what is reserved for His appearing and kingdom. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." As the consequence, we see all those blessed effects. The Lord is not smiting the earth now. He has opened heaven—by and by He will take the earth. In the Revelation you have the vision of the mighty angel, with his right foot upon the sea, and the left on the earth. It is the Lord taking the whole universe under His own immediate government. Now the mystery of iniquity is left unjudged. Evil is allowed to go on rampant in the world. But this will not be forever. The mystery of God is to be finished. Then will begin this amazing change, "the regeneration," as our Lord styles it, when the Spirit of God shall be poured out, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But till these times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord, Scripture calls the intervening space the evil age. So in Gal. 1:4, not the material world is meant, but the moral course of things, that is, "this present evil age." The new age, on the contrary, will be a glorious, holy, blessed one.

In the very next verse of Isa. 11 we have the restoration of God's ancient people foretold, the gathering in of all Israel, as well as of Judah. At the return from the Babylonish captivity such was not the case. A very inconsiderable fraction of Judah and Benjamin came back, and none beyond a few individuals of Israel. The ten tribes are universally called the lost tribes; whereas, "it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nation, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Mom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea" —a thing that has never been done, nor anything like it. The Egyptian sea exists just as it

was; whereas, there would be outward marks of the accomplishment of this prophecy, both spiritually and physically, had it ever taken place. “And with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” Both in the Egyptian sea and in the Nile there will be this great work of God, outstripping what He did when He brought the people out the first time by Moses and Aaron. This will be the age to come; but as to the present age, the tares and the wheat are to grow together till the harvest, which is the consummation of this age; and when that arrives, the Lord sends forth His angels, “and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” The severing then takes place: the tares are gathered and cast into a furnace of fire, and “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Mark the accuracy of the expression, “then shall they shine forth;” not “then shall they be caught up.” I believe they will have been caught up before this epoch. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” So that the meaning is as plain as possible. It will be a new age, in which is no mingling of the good and bad; but the gathering out of the wicked for judgment closes this age, in order that the good may be blessed in the next. The righteous, here spoken of, shine forth as the sun, and are in a higher sphere; but the heavens and earth will then be a united system, though there be no confusion of its several parts. There will be the heavenly and the earthly glories. There will be those who shine above and others destined to rich blessing below. It will be all one kingdom, but there will be the heavenly and the earthly things, as the Lord distinguishes in John 3 “If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?”

So here, we have the upper region called the kingdom of the Father, and the lower the kingdom of the Son of man. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” These are not even allowed to be on the earth, but are cast into a furnace of fire. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Both are “the kingdom of God.” What a glorious prospect! Is it not a sweet thought that even this present scene of ruin and confusion is to be delivered that God is to have the joy of His heart, not only in filling the heavens with His glory, but in the Son of man, honored in the very place where He was rejected?

But let us now look at the next parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and “buyeth that field.” This is the first of the new parables within the house. The Lord is there showing, not the state of things found under the public profession of the name of Christ, but the hidden things, or those which require discernment. It is a treasure hid in a field, which a man finds and hides, and for joy thereof sells all that he hath and buys the field. I am aware that it is the habit of persons to apply this to a soul finding Christ. But what does the man in the parable do? He sells all that he has to buy the field. Is that the way for a man to be saved? If so, salvation is to him that worketh. It becomes, then, a question not of faith, but of a man giving up everything to gain Christ, which would be the law carried to the greatest excess. When a man has Christ, he would doubtless give up everything for Him. But those are not the terms on which a man first receives Christ for his soul's need. But this is not all. He buyeth the whole field; what do you make of that? “The field is the world.” Am I to buy the world in order to obtain Christ? This only shows the

difficulties into which we fall, whenever we depart from the simplicity of Scripture. But where we really search, and try the Scripture by Scripture, the meaning is made plain. The Lord Himself confutes such an interpretation. He shows that there is one man, and one only, who saw this treasure in the midst of the confusion. Who? It is the Lord; the Lord who gave up all His rights in order that He might have sinners washed in His blood and redeemed to God; and He bought the world in order to acquire the treasure He valued. The two things are distinctly presented in John 17:2, “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” There is the treasure— “as many as thou hast given him.” But “all flesh” is no treasure at all. It is the outside thing that goes along with the bargain, if I may speak thus familiarly; but it is not the thing that is in His heart. He buys the whole, the outside world, in order to possess this hidden treasure.

But, moreover, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” (Ver. 45, 46.) The parable of the hid treasure did not sufficiently convey what the saints are to Christ. For the treasure might consist of a hundred thousand pieces of gold and silver. And how would that show the blessedness and beauty of the Church? The merchantman finds “one pearl of great price.” The Lord does not see merely the preciousness of the saints, but the unity and heavenly beauty of the assembly. Every saint is precious to Christ: but “he loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” That is what I see here— “One pearl of great price.” I do not in the least doubt that its spirit may be applied to every Christian. But I believe it is intended to set forth the loveliness of the Church in the eyes of Christ. It could not be fully said of a man awaking to believe the Gospel. If we consider a sinner before he has received Christ, is he seeking goodly pearls? Is he not rather feeding on husks with the swine? Here it is one who seeks “goodly pearls,” which no unconverted man ever really sought. There is no possibility of applying these parables except to the Lord Himself, or to the working of His Spirit in His own people. How blessed it is, that in the midst of all the confusion which the devil has wrought, Christ sees the treasure of His saints, and the beauty of His Church, spite of all infirmities and failure!

Then we have all wound up by the parable of the net, which is thrown into the sea. (Ver. 47-50.) It is a figure used to remind us that our energies and desires must be directed after those who are floating about in the sea of the world. The net is cast into the sea, and gathers of every kind, “which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. Who are “they?” Never do we find angels gathering the good, but always severing the wicked for judgment. The fishers were men, like the servants in the first parable. But it is not only the Gospel that we have here. The net gathers in of every kind; but is not the putting the good into vessels, more? Is it not gathering saints according to God? It is shown us that out of every class, before the Lord returns in judgment, there was to be a mighty operation of the Spirit through the fishers of men, gathering saints together in a way quite unexampled. May not the spirit of this be going on now? The Gospel is going out with remarkable power over all lands. But there is another action—the gathering the good together, and putting them into vessels. This is not what takes place in heaven. The bad are cast away; but that is not the end of them. Another thing is reserved for them—the furnace of fire. But we have this additional information in the next verse, “The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.” The angels' business is always with the wicked; the servants' with the good. The severing of the wicked from among the

just is not the fishermen's work at all; and their casting of the bad away is not the same thing as the furnace of fire.

Chapter 80

Remarks on Matthew 13:54 and Matthew 14

In commenting on chapters 8 and 9 of our Gospel, some striking instances of displacement have been already pointed out. Thus the incidents of crossing the lake in the storm rebuked at last, of the cured demoniacs, of the raised daughter of Jairus, and of the woman healed on the way, belong, as matters of history, to the interval between the parables we have been lately occupied with and the despising of our blessed Lord, which our evangelist proceeds to set down next in order. I then sought to explain the principle on which, as I believe, the Holy Spirit was pleased to act in thus arranging the events, so as most vividly to develop our Lord's Messianic ministry in Israel with His rejection and its consequences. Hence it is, that the intervening facts having been inserted in that earlier portion, the unbelief of in presence of His teaching naturally follows. He was in His own country and taught them in their synagogues; but the result, spite of astonishment at His wisdom and mighty works, is the scornful inquiry, “Is not this the carpenter's son? And they were offended in Him.” A prophet He is, but without honor in His own country and in His own house. The manifestation of glory is not denied; the vessel is not received according to God's will, but judged according to the sight and. apprehensions of nature. (Chap. 8:54-58.)

Nor is this the whole sad truth. About this time the twelve were sent forth. This we have had in chapter 10, forming part of the special series of events transplanted into that part of the gospel; but, in point of time, it followed the fleshly judgment which was now Messiah's portion. Their mission was beautifully given before by Matthew, so as to complete the picture of Christ's patient persevering grace with Israel, as well as to testify the rights of His person as Jehovah, the Lord of the harvest. Here consequently the fact is omitted, but the effect appears. “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.” (Chap. 14:1, 2.)

This gives occasion to the Spirit of God to tell the tale (ver. 3-12) of the extinction of John the Baptist's testimony in his own blood. It was not only a blinded people, but in their midst ruled a false and reckless king, who feared not, first to imprison, and finally to slay, that blessed witness of God. Not that he did not fear the multitude (ver. 5), for his passions would have impelled to do the deed; not that he had not sorrows and qualms when it came to the point (ver. 9); but what can these restraints avail in presence of the undiscerned wiles and the unremoved power of Satan? Bad as Herod was, he was not without conscience, and the preaching of John had reached it so far at least as to render him uneasy. But the issue was what he might expect who knows that an enemy is behind the scene, who hates all that is of God, and goads man on to be his own slave and God's foe, in the gratification of lust and the maintenance of honor worse than vanity. What an insight into the world and the heart we have here from God! And with what holy simplicity all is laid bare which it would be profitable for us to hear and weigh! Man being in honor abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. So sang the Psalmist, and surely it was right and of God. “And he (the king) sent and beheaded John in the prison; and his head was brought in a charger and

given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother." (Ver. 10, 11.) Such is man, and such woman without God.

When word was brought to the Lord about John's death, He marks His sense of the act at once—"he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him." (Ver. 12.) There was no insensibility in Him, whatever His longsuffering and grace. He felt the grievous wrong done to God, and His testimony, and His servant. It was the harbinger of a storm still more violent and a deed of blood darker far—the awful sin of His own rejection. He would not hurry the moment, but retires. He was a sufferer, a perfect sufferer, as well as sacrifice; and while His sufferings rose to their height in that most solemn hour, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, it would be to ignore much if we limit our thoughts and feelings of His love and moral glory to His closing agony. The Lord, then, so much the more felt the evil, because of His unselfish love and unstained holiness. It is ever felt most in God's presence, where He felt everything.

Did this deep sense, in His spirit, of the growing power of evil in Israel interrupt the course of His love? Far from it. "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." (Ver. 14.)

The disciples poorly enter into His grace, and leave small space for the display of His beneficent power. So, when it was evening, they "came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals." (Ver. 15.) "Send the multitude away!" Away from Jesus! What a proposal! The greatness of the strait, the urgency of the need, the difficulty of the circumstances, which to unbelief are so many reasons for men to do what they can, are to faith just so much more the plea and occasion for the Lord to show what He is. "Jesus said to them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat." O the dullness of man!—the folly and slowness of heart in disciples to believe all! And yet, beloved friends, have we not seen it! Have we not proved the self same thing in ourselves? What lack of care for others! What measuring of their wants to the forgetfulness of Him who has all power in heaven and on earth, and who, in the same breath that assures us of it, has sent us forth to meet the deepest necessities of sin-darkened souls!

"And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes." Ah! were they, are we, so blind as to overlook that it is not a question of what but Whom, we have. Jesus is nothing to the flesh, even of disciple.

He said, "Bring them hither to me." Oh! for more simplicity in thus bringing every lack and every scanty supply to Him whose it it is to provide, not for us only, but for all the exigencies of His love; to reckon on Him more habitually as One who cannot act beneath Himself.

"And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake; and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Ver. 19-21.)

How blessed the scene, and how the perfectness of Christ shines through it all! In nothing does He depart from grace, spite of the recent display of murderous hatred in Herod; His very retiring apart

before it is but a further step in the path of His sorrow and humiliation; and yet there, in the desert, to this great multitude, drawn out by their wants, comes forth this striking testimony. Should they not have assuredly gathered who and what He was? Jehovah had chosen Zion—had desired it for His habitation—had said, this is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. But now an Edomite was there, the slave of a ravening Gentile; and the people would have it so, and the chief priests would shortly cry, We have no king but Cesar. Nevertheless, the rejected One spreads a table in the wilderness, abundantly blesses Zion's provision, and satisfies her poor with bread. The miracle may not be the fulfillment of Psa. 132:15, but it is the witness that He was there who could, and yet will fulfill it. He is the Messiah, but the rejected Messiah, as ever in our Gospel. He satisfies His poor with bread, but it is in the wilderness, whither He had withdrawn apart from the unbelieving nation and the willful apostate king.

But now a change opens on our view. For “straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and go before Him unto the other side while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.” (Ver. 22, 23.) The crown was not yet to flourish upon Himself. He must leave His ancient people because of their unbelief, and take a new position on high, and call out a remnant to another state of things also. Rejected as Messiah on earth, He would not be a king by the will of man, to gratify the worldly lusts of any, but go above and there exercise His priesthood before God. It is an exact picture of what the Lord has done. Meanwhile, if the masses of Israel, “the great congregation,” are dismissed, His elect are ushered into a scene of troubles, in the absence of their Master, during the night of man's day. “The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.” (Ver. 21.)

Such were some of the consequences of Christ's rejection. Apart on high, and not in the wilderness, He prays for His own; locally severed and yet in truth far nearer, He prays for the disciples, left alone to outward appearances. They are “such as should be saved,” the chosen ones, companions of His own humiliation while the nation despised Him.

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Ver. 25-31.) Without dwelling now on the moral lesson, with which we are all more or less familiar, a few words on the typical instructions conveyed by the passage may be welcome.

He will leave His intercessional place above, and rejoin His disciples when their troubles and perplexity are deepest. The mountain, the sea, storm and calm, darkness and light, are all, as to security, alike to Christ; but His taking part in the distress is the terror of the natural mind. At first, even the disciples “were troubled, saying, it is a spirit; and they cried out for fear,” only hushed by the sign of His speedy presence. This hardly goes beyond the circumstances and condition of the Jewish remnant. If there be any part which does, it is set forth in Peter, who, on the word of Jesus,

quits the ship (which presents the ordinary state of the remnant), and goes to meet the Savior, outside all support of nature. The wind was not hushed—the waves as threatening as ever. But had not Peter heard that word, “Come;” and was it not enough? It was ample from the God and Lord of all. “And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” As long as Jesus and His word was before his heart, there was no failure any more than danger. “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me.” Peter failed, as the Church has failed, to walk towards Christ and with Christ; but as in his case, so in ours, Christ has been faithful, and has delivered us from so great a death, and cloth deliver; in “whom we trust that He will yet deliver.” “And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” Jesus now rejoins the remnant, and calm immediately follows, and He is owned there as Son of God. Nor this only, for “they came into the land of Gennesareth. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.” (Ver. 34-36.) The Lord is now joyfully received in the very scene where before He had been rejected. It is the blessing and healing of a distressed and groaning world, consequent on His return in acknowledged power and glory.

Chapter 81

Remarks on Matthew 15:1-20

We find in this chapter striking evidence of the great change which was now fast coming in through the rejection of Jesus by Israel. For, first, we have certain religious guides, “scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem,” who had the best spiritual opportunities of their nation, and who came clothed with all that savored of antiquity and outward sanctity. These men put the question to our Lord, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” The Lord at once deals with conscience. He does not enter into an abstract discussion about tradition; nor does He dispute with them as to the authority of the elders; but He at once jays hold of this great fact, that, in their zeal for the tradition of the elders, they were setting themselves point-blank against the plain, positive commandment of God. This I believe to be the invariable effect of tradition, no matter with whom it may be found. If we take up the history of Christendom, and consider any rule that ever was invented, it will be found to carry those who follow it in opposition to the mind of God. It may seem to be the most natural thing possible, and growing out of the new circumstances of the Church; but we are never safe in departure from God's word for any other standard. I am not now contending for the mere literal interpretation of Scripture. A certain course that the word of God binds upon His saints in dealing with one evil may not be their duty at some other crisis. New circumstances modify the path the Church ought to pursue. Were you to apply the directions given for judging immorality to fatal error touching our Lord's person, you would have a very insufficient measure of discipline. False doctrine does not touch the natural conscience as gross conduct. Nay, you may too often find a believer drawn away by his affections to make excuses for those who are fundamentally heterodox. All sorts of difficulties fill the mind where the eye is not really single. Many might thus be involved who did not themselves hold the false doctrine. If I hold the principle of dealing with none but him who brings not the doctrine of Christ, it will not do: for there may be others entangled with it. What is any individual, what is the Church even, in comparison with the Savior, the Son of the Father? Accordingly, the rule laid down by the Spirit for vindicating Christ's person from blasphemous assailants or their partisans, is infinitely more stringent than where it is a question of moral corruption, be it ever so bad. Again, there is a strong tendency to stereotype our own previous practice, and when some fresh evil comes in to insist on what was done then, or generally, without inquiring afresh of God, and searching into His word in view of the actual case before us and our own responsibility. The spirit of dependence is needed in order to walk rightly with God. There is in the written word of God that which will meet every claim; but each case should be a renewed occasion for consulting that word in His presence who gave it. People like to be consistent with themselves, and to hold fast former opinions and practices.

Our Lord, in this place, asserts that deference to mere human tradition leads into direct disobedience to God's will. Washing the hands might have seemed to be a most proper act. Nobody could pretend that Scripture forbade it; and no doubt the Jewish doctors could press its great significance. They might very well argue how calculated it was to keep before their minds the purity God insists on, and especially that we ought never to receive anything from His hand without

putting away all defilement from ours. They might reason thus to a people who loved all outward routine. At all events they might say, What was the harm of such a tradition? What mischief could it do for persons to wash their hands, while it might do so much good? But our Lord simply comes to this issue, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” It was not in spite of, but by, their tradition that God was disobeyed. This is illustrated by a very important relationship in Israel. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, shows us that the command to honor the father and mother was the first commandment with promise. Other commandments had the threat of death annexed to them; but this commandment was one that God singled out to crown with long life on the earth. The apostle's reasoning is, that if a Jewish child was not only bound, but encouraged, by such promise to venerate his parents, how much more is a Christian child now. He was to obey them in the Lord; not merely in the law, but in the Lord. This is the instance here also taken up: “God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.” That is, on the one hand, the honor was valued by God; on the other, disrespect was deadly in His sight. “But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and shall not honor his father or his mother.” The Jews had brought in a cheat for their consciences, by which they might free themselves from the obligation to meet filial duties. They had only to pronounce the word, “It is a gift” (Corbin), and a parent might be forgotten! Doubtless, it was one of their authorized traditions, and for the priest's profit, but it was as undoubtedly an unhallowed act in God's sight, and a direct infringement of His command. “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” This is a solemn thing to be remembered; for it is not merely applicable to this class of natural relationships, but if any will take the trouble of examining every kind of religious rule introduced, not only in popery, but in protestantism, they will find the same thing invariably true. To add to Scripture is ruinous; it does not matter by whom it may be done, nor for the holiest motive men may allege; for God is jealous about it, and will not have His word enlarged or amended. Revelation is complete, and our simple business is to be obedient to the word of God.

Thus, it matters not what example any may propose. Take one of the commonest possible—the choice of a minister. People, Christians, say, We must send for ministers, and choose between them who is to be ours. I am willing to conceive care and conscience in exercising their judgment without partiality or prejudice. But where is the warrant for choosing any one whatever to preach the gospel, or to teach the church? Is there one precept, one instance in all the New Testament? Did God, then, not foresee the difficulties and the wants of congregations? Surely He did. Why, then, is there absence of all such directions for them Because it was a sin to do it, not only not His mind, but contrary to it. There is not a single case, nor anything like it, from the time the Holy Ghost was sent down at Pentecost till the canon of Scripture was closed. And yet you have multitudes of churches spoken of in the Scripture. What, then, is a congregation to do where they want a minister Why not search and see the Scripture way of meeting such a dilemma.? The difficulty arises from their being in a false position already. The central truth of the church is the presence of the Holy Ghost. I am speaking now of the Christian assembly, wherein the Spirit is personally present to act according to His own will in the midst of disciples there gathered for the purpose of glorifying God, and exalting Christ. Where the meeting is thus carried on, the question of choosing a minister could not arise. Where there are but three meeting upon God's principles (that is, church-ground), it is, if I might so say, church, if not the church. If there were three

thousand real saints met, but not on God's principles, that would not be the church nor church either, though all members in Christ. So that, if you take this common Protestant tradition of choosing a minister, it is decisive. It puts the persons who use it in distinct opposition to the word of God. It might be good for a Christian assembly to feel their weakness. There might be none with any special gift among them; some might be able to help in worship and prayer, though not in preaching or teaching. But the blessed comfort is that, even if there were not some one specially gifted in the word, the Holy Ghost is able to edify the saints without him. If the assembly could have any amount of gift, and have it in a wrong way, the blessing would be impaired, and the will and glory of God so far set aside. But if there were not one with a special gift, there might be real blessing, provided the eye were towards the Lord. The object of the Holy Ghost is to put the souls of the saints in direct connection with the Lord. God in His wisdom may be pleased to raise up none in a particular assembly, or He may send there two, three, or more to minister. I do not believe that any one man has sufficient gifts for the church. The notion of having a single person to be the exclusive organ of the communications of God to His people, is a wrong to them, and above all, to the Lord. In every respect it opposes and destroys the will of God about His church. There might seem to be a great many good reasons why people should choose a minister, but never listen to any apology for that which you do not find in the word of God. We are bad judges of what would be best for us. Men may make great mistakes; but faith goes upon the ground that God can make none. He provides for everything in His word. God is pressing that upon us at this very moment. At the Reformation the point was to get the Bible at all, so that there might be the possibility of poor souls learning Christ for their salvation. But there nearly all that was known of the truth ended. The Reformation never touched the true question of the church. The Reformers had to deal with a very rough enemy. They had to blow up the masses of rock in the quarry; and we must not find fault if they could not fashion the stones nor build them with equal skill. But we ought not to stop at their hewings.

Tradition ought never to be held in any shape whatever. Here it was not mere following one another, but using tradition to indulge hypocritical selfishness. “Ye hypocrites,” says our Lord, “well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Those who pretended such zeal for the law were destroying its very foundations all the while. The father and mother stand at the head of the relative precepts which have to do with men. Thus, by their tradition, which allowed their dishonor, God's own authority, was made mill and void—and that, too, in the very highest earthly relationships in Israel. Isaiah shows that, as they had got rid of the law by their tradition, so the prophets condemned them. “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Having dispatched this matter, He calls the multitude, and says to them, “Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” It is the religious leaders chiefly that occupy themselves with tradition. The great general snare is denying the evil of men. The constant weapon which Satan uses now is the idea that man is not so bad but moral culture may improve him. The progress of the world is astonishing, they say. There are societies for promoting every philanthropic object, even down to preventing cruelty to animals. Here is a word that pronounces on these efforts of men in the gross. “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this

defileth a man.” The real secret of man's deplorable condition is his heart. This affects all that comes out.

It is not in any wise what God made. Man now is merely a corrupt creature, whose corruption is imparted to what he takes in. Therefore mere restraining of the flesh is entirely useless in God's sight and essentially false. The Lord says to the multitude, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” Observe, He has done with the question of Jerusalem and of tradition. He speaks of what touches human nature. Man is lost. But no one thoroughly believes this about himself, till he has found Christ. He may believe he is a sinner, but does he believe he is so bad that no good can be got out of him? Is not the prevalent theory and effort to better man's condition? But our Lord declares here that it is not by what you put in, or what you keep from man, that he is made better. The heart is bad; and till the heart is reached, all else is vain. “But the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.” God's way of dealing with the heart ought to be the nearest thing to a Christian. What so simple, so blessed, so mighty as the gospel? Who says that the gospel wants a handmaid? The handmaid has lost her mission and is discharged. As Hagar was sent out of the house, so all that you get by Hagar is merely Ishmael—the son born after the flesh, that mocks the child of promise. Man is not now in a state of probation. The trial has been made. God has pronounced upon men that the flesh is utterly worthless; and yet man is trying the question again, instead of believing God.

The disciples came to speak to our Lord about it. They did not altogether relish what He had been saying. They came and said unto Him, “Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?” They might not be offended themselves, but were disposed to sympathize with the people who were. We might have thought the multitude would be most offended. But no; the Pharisees, standing upon tradition, have no more notion of the true ruin of man's nature in the sight of God than even the poor multitude in all their ignorance. Nothing so blinds the mind as tradition. The Pharisees, then, were offended, and the disciples were trying to act as mediators between them and our Lord. But our Lord answers still more sternly, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” There needs be a new life from God, not an improving of the old one. A plant must be planted, then, and the heavenly Father must do it. Every other plant must be rooted up. “Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind.” We are not to spend our time reasoning with these Pharisees: it is altogether vain. They require first principles, and the work of God in their souls; and therefore all discussion is premature and thrown away. “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind.” He did not apply this to the multitude, but to the leaders that were stumbled by the doctrine of man's total corruption. Such are best left to their own devices. “Let them alone.” And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

But the Lord does not leave the disciples where they were. Peter answers and says unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. This is evidently instructive. What did He mean by calling it a parable? He did not understand it himself. Here was one, the very chief of the twelve apostles, and he cannot understand what our Lord means when He tells them that man is altogether wrong—his heart most of all; that what comes out of him is what is so bad, not that which goes in. And this is a parable! The difficulty of Scripture arises less from difficult language than from unpalatable truth. Truth is contrary to people's wishes; and they cannot see it, because they do not like to receive it. A man may not be always conscious of this himself; but it is the real secret that God sees. The obstacle consists in man's dislike of the truth. Peter says, “Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus

said, Are ye also yet without understanding?” Think where a disciple was when he could find a dark saying in our Lord's sentence upon man as utterly bad and worthless! “Do ye not yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draft? But those things that proceed out of the heart, they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” The source of man's evil is from within. And, therefore, until there is a new life brought in—till man is born again of water and of the Spirit, all is useless. “These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” There closes our Lord's most blessed and weighty instruction; showing that the day of outward forms was past, and that it was now a question of the reality of man's state in the sight of God. And this he brings out with the greatest possible clearness for the disciples who could not understand: all very suggestive indeed to us.

Chapter 82

Remarks on Matthew 15:21-39

But now we find our Lord turning to a different thought. He goes away from these scribes and Pharisees to the coasts of Tire and Sidon, that is, to the very extremity of the Holy Land, and that particular quarter of the borders of it that had been expressly the scene of the judgments of God. In chapter xi. our Lord had referred to them, and said, that it would be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for the cities where His mighty works had been done. They were proverbial as the monuments of God's vengeance among the Gentiles. There our Lord is met by a woman of Canaan coming out of the same coasts. If there was one race in all these borders more particularly under God's ban, it was Canaan. “Cursed,” said Noah, “be Canaan.” Such a deep character of evil had come in by the youth Canaan, who seems to have been specially the leader of his father in his wickedness against his grandfather Noah. “Cursed be Canaan. A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” And so, when Israel was brought into the land, the Canaanites were to be exterminated without mercy. They were persons whose abominations had gone up to heaven with a cry for vengeance from God. Here this woman came out of the coasts of Canaan, and cries unto Him, saying, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” If we could have conceived any case most of all opposed to what we had before—scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, full of learning and outward veneration for the law—we have it in this poor woman of Canaan.

The circumstances, too, were dreadful. Not only was it in Tire and Sidon, recalling the judgments of God, but the devil had taken possession of her daughter. All these circumstances together made the case to be as deplorable a one as could be found. How was the Lord going to deal with her? The Lord shows, in meeting her case, a great change in His ways. We have seen the Jews pronounced hypocrites; their worship intolerable to God, and declared such through their own prophets. For if the Lord pronounced these men to be hypocrites, He did it out of the lips of their own prophet Isaiah. Now comes one that had not the smallest tie with Israel. In former times, the obligation of Israel had been to kill the Canaanites. How would the Messiah deal with her? She cries unto the Lord, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word.” Not a word!

Why was this? She was on totally wrong ground. What had she to do with the son of David? If the Lord had acted as the son of David, what could he have done with her except order her to be executed? Had the Lord merely been the son of David, could he have given her the blessing He had in His heart? She appealed to Him as if she were one of a chosen people who had claims on Him as their Messiah. Was it ever promised that Messiah was to heal the Canaanites? Not a word about it. When the Messiah does come as son of David, the Canaanites will not be there, Look at Zech. 14, and you will find that, when our Lord shall be King over all the earth, “In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts.” So that it is plain that the judgments which were not thoroughly executed by Israel, because they were unfaithful to the trust of the Lord, are to be executed by and by when the son of David will take His inheritance. This woman was altogether confused about it. She had the conviction that He was much more than the

son of David, but she did not know how to bring it out. In the same way, many persons now, anxious about their sins, have tried the Lord's Prayer, and have asked the Lord to forgive them their sins as they forgive others. They go to God as their Father, and ask of Him to deal with them as children. But that is the very thing which is not yet settled. Are they children? Can they say that God is their Father? They would shrink from it. It is that which they chiefly desire, but they fear it is not so: i.e., that they have no right to draw near to God on the footing of a relationship that does not exist. So that when persons are thus confused, they never get thorough peace to their souls. Sometimes they are hoping they are the children of God, sometimes fearing they are not, cast down with the sense of the evil within them. The fact is, they do not understand the matter at all. They are quite right in wishing to turn to God, but they do not know how to do it. They are not willing to go to God in all that they are—just as they are—giving up all thought of having promises or anything else. This shows the wrongness of an anxious soul seeking after God on the ground of promises. A good deal is said about sinners “grasping the promises;” but I say you have no title to grasp the promises. Who were they for? In the Old Testament they were for Israel; in the New, for Christians. But you are neither an Israelite nor a Christian. A soul brought to that point is confounded.

It is good for a soul to be brought to this: I have no claim upon God for anything; I am a lost sinner. If God shakes a person from what they have no right to, if He strips them of everything, it is for the purpose of giving them a blessing that He has a right to give them. People forget that now it is the righteousness of God—God's right to bless through Christ Jesus, according to all that is in His heart. No right of theirs: sin has destroyed that. The cross has come in. Men are lost. But they are afraid to confess the true ruin in which they are found. This is what the Lord was dealing with in the poor woman of Canaan. He was bringing her down to feel that she had no right to the promises. As son of David He had promises. He was to do all kind of things for Israel: but where were the promises to the Canaanites? So that on the ground of promise, on the ground of His being the son of David, it was impossible for the Lord to give her what she asked. She did not understand that. She thought that if an Israelite might go on the ground of promise, she might. But it is a mistake. “All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.” But who are the “us?” We who have the Lord Jesus. When we have got Christ without a promise, then we have a Christ in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen. We go to Him as sinners, naked and bare, without the smallest help even of a promise. But when we have got Christ as sinners, then we find that in this Blessed One all the promises of God are found ours. But we get Him as lost sinners first, and there are no such things as promises to lost sinners. Not a soul has a right to a promise till he has got Christ; and when we have got Christ, we have got all the promises. So God will deal with Israel by and by; not on any claim that they have got, for He has allowed them to forfeit that by rejecting Christ now. “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. 0 the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

This poor woman compelled the Lord not to answer her. If He had spoken to her, it must have been with a rebuke. It was grace and tenderness that led the Lord not to answer her: He remains silent till she drops the ground that she had first taken. But the disciples were not silent; they wanted to get rid of her importunity; they did not like the trouble of her. “They came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.” But the Lord confirms what has been already said as to the wrongness of her plea, He says, as it were, She does not belong to the house of

Israel: I cannot give her a blessing on the ground she takes, but I will not send her away without a blessing. He stands for the special privilege of the sheep of the house of Israel, and she was not a sheep. She could not get the blessing on that ground. “He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then the poor woman “came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” She drops the words “son of David.” She no longer uses the title which connects Him with Israel, but acknowledges His lordship, His authority. Now He answers her, though she is not vet down low enough. When she appeals to Him as Lord, which was a suitable title, He answers, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.” The moment that this is uttered, all the secret is out. “Truth, Lord,” she says, “yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” She takes the place of being a dog. She acknowledges that Israel was, in the outward ways of God, the favored people, as children eating of bread upon the table; whereas the Gentiles were but the dogs around it. She acknowledges it, and it is very humbling. People do not like it now. But she is brought down to it. The Lord may, for the purpose of leading us into deeper blessing, break us down to the very lowest point of the truth about ourselves. But was there no blessing even for a dog? She falls back upon this truth: let it be that I am a dog, has not God some blessing for me? No one could fancy that there were ever promises for dogs; yet that was the place she took. When she is brought down from it, the Lord gives her the full blessing. He even meets her with the strongest approbation of her faith— “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” When He had pronounced the sentence upon the nation of the Jews, who were only hypocrites, the Lord goes out to the Gentiles. Faith meets with its blessing. The faith that penetrates through outward circumstances, and bears the discovery that we have not yet got down to the lowly place that we ought to take, only receives deeper and more enduring blessing than ever. The poor woman was blessed even to her heart's content. “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” This was grace—and grace dealing with the most extreme case of a Gentile is that which occupies the Lord on His turning away from Israel.

But there is more than this. It is not the Lord retiring after He has fed the multitude, but the Lord coming down from the mountain in sovereign goodness. “Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain and sat down there.” It is now the Lord, who had been away visiting the Gentiles, when the multitude can approach to Him. “Great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.” I consider that this is a picture of Israel feeling their real condition. They are coming to Jesus, looking to Him, and saying, as it were, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” They are to speak thus by and by; and the Lord said they should not see Him till they should say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. What they saw in Jesus led them to glorify the God of Israel. It is the Lord having relations with Israel. They come not now in controversy, but as a poor, maimed, blind, and miserable multitude; and the Lord heals them all. But that is not He feeds them as well as heals them; and we have the beautiful miracle of the loaves.

But mark the differences. In a former case, the disciples were for sending the multitudes away; and the Lord allowed them to show out their unbelief. In the present instance, it is Christ Himself

that thinks of them and purposes to bless them. “I have compassion,” says He, “on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.” You may remember that it is said in Hos. 6, “After two days will he revive us, and the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” It is the full time of the trial of the people. Literally, it was the time our Lord laid in the grave. But it is connected also with the future blessing of Israel. “I will not send them away fasting lest they faint by the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?” How slow they are to learn the resources of Christ, as before to learn the worthlessness of man. “Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye'? And they said, Seven, and a few fishes.” It is not now five loaves, and twelve basketsful left; but seven loaves with which they begin, and seven with which they end. The reason is this: Seven is always the number of spiritual completeness in Scripture, and this is intended to spew the fullness with which the Lord makes the blessing to flow to His people; the fullness of provision that they have in Him. “He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.” I conceive that this is the picture of the Lord providing amply for the Jews—for Israel—the people of His choice, whom he never can abandon, to whom he must accomplish His promises, because He is the faithful God. Here the Lord, out of His own heart, is providing for their refreshment fully, even for their bodily refreshment. This will be the character of the millennial day, when not only the soul will be blessed, but where every kind of mercy will abound, God vindicating His world from the hand of Satan, who has defiled it. Even here below, there will be this flowing out of divine compassion toward them, and giving them all they need. In the seven loaves before they eat, and the seven baskets of fragments taken up after they had eaten, you have the idea of completeness, an ample store for wants to come.

Chapter 83

Remarks on Matthew 16:1-19

In the last chapter, which introduces a new part of the subject of Matthew, we saw that the two great pictures introduced were, first, the hypocritical disobedience of those who boasted of the law, completely exposed out of their own prophets, as well as by the touchstone of the Lord Himself; and, secondly, the true nature of grace shown to one whose circumstances demanded nothing but sovereign mercy if she were to be blessed at all. I need not enter more into a chapter already looked at, but I would recall also the particular manifestation at the close of the Lord's perfect, patient grace towards Israel, spite of the condition of the Jewish leaders. If He compassionated the Gentiles, His heart still yearned over the people, and He showed it by repeating the great miracle of feeding thousands in the wilderness, though this was not intended to be the figure of His dispensational retirement from earth, which, as we saw (chap. 14.), followed the first miracle of feeding the multitudes—the type of our Lord's occupation at the right hand of God.

Now, we have another picture quite distinct from the last, though akin to it. It is not the flagrant disobedience of the law, through human tradition, but the source of all disobedience—unbelief. Hence, in the language employed by the Holy Ghost, there is only a shade of difference between the words unbelief and disobedience. The former is the root of which the latter is the fruit. Having shown us the gross systematic violation of God's law, even by those who were religious leaders in Israel, and having convicted them of it, even about the highest earthly relationships, which that law bound and encouraged them most of all to honor, a deeper principle is now brought out. All that disobedience of God flowed from unbelief of Himself, and, consequently, misapprehension of their own moral condition. These two things always go together. Ignorance of self flows from ignorance of God; and ignorance of both ourselves and God is proved by despising Jesus; and what is true of the worldly man or the unbeliever in full, partially applies to Christians who in any measure slight the will and person of the Lord. All these are only the workings of that heart of unbelief, of which the apostle warns even believers. The grand provision against this, the operation of the Holy Ghost, in contrast with the working of the natural mind of man, comes out here plainly. “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired that he would show them a sign from heaven.” They were beginning the same story over again; but now it is higher up the source, and, of course, therefore worse in principle. It is an awful thing to find opposed parties with one only thing that unites them—dislike of Jesus; persons who could have torn each other to pieces at another time, but this is their gathering point—tempting Jesus. “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came tempting him.” There was nothing in conflict between the scribes and Pharisees, but a wide chasm separated the Sadducees and Pharisees. Those were the free-thinkers of the day, these the champions who stood up for ordinances and for the authority of the law. But both joined to tempt Jesus. They desired a sign from heaven. The most significant token that God ever gave man, was before them in the person of His Son, who eclipsed all other signs. But such is unbelief, that it can go into the presence of the full manifestation of God, can gaze at a light brighter than the sun at noonday, and there and then ask God to give a farthing candle. “But Jesus

answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Their own moral condition was the sign and proof that judgment was imminent. Doubtless, for those who could see, there was the fair weather, the day-spring from on high that had visited them in Jesus. They saw it not; but could they not discern the foul weather? They were in the presence of the Messiah, and were asking Him, who consummated all signs in His person, to give them a sign from heaven! The God that made heaven and earth was there, but the darkness comprehended it not. "He came to his own and his own received him not." Nothing could be more awful, but they were utterly blind; they could discern physical changes, but they had no perception of moral and spiritual features. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed." Such was His word to them. Men constantly err as to the character of Jesus. They imagine that He could use no strong language and feel no anger; but yet there it is in, the word, written in the light. It is the same thing now as ever. Unbelief is always blind, and shows its blindness most against Jesus. The same kind of unbelief that could not then discern who and what Jesus was, sees not now Jesus coming, and discerns not the signs of the times, or of their own impending ruin. It is the moral condition of men, no matter where they are, only the more remarkably manifested where the light of God is. If England be now the focus where God's light is more displayed than in any other place, it is this which makes all the more glaring the unbelief of men, who perhaps are engaged in His work, who are professing to help it on, one way or another, and at the same time are utterly careless as to whether they are walking according to His will revealed in the Bible. Clearly we have no right merely to follow the word of God in what suits us, but the word of God as a whole, for our own souls first, and for all the children of God next, as far as in us lies. This is what we have gravely to consider. If we cannot act upon people's consciences, at least let us keep our own unsullied ourselves. There is always the question of personal allegiance to the Savior, and this is what puts us to the test above all. Precept is most weighty when commended by our own example.

Here we have our Lord who does not hesitate to touch the evil with unsparing hand. He was the perfect fullness of love: but do men remember He is the One who said, "wicked and adulterous generation," "generation of vipers," &c.? It flows from true love, if men would but think so, and bow to the truth that convicts them. To submit, at God's word, to the truth in this world is to be saved; to be convicted of the truth only in the next world is to be lost forever. Christ was the Faithful Witness; He brought God face to face with man, and caused His perfect light to shine upon them. Why, then, could not He grant them a sign? God, full of love as He is, never does anything to the disparagement of Him who made Himself known. Jesus can meet a soul in its sin; He may eat with publicans, to show that He is able to receive sinners and forgive sins to the uttermost; but He will never give any sign to satisfy the unbelief which rejects Jesus. These Pharisees and Sadducees did not hear His voice of grace. They listened only with their outward ears; but they were compelled to hear their own sentence from the Judge of all the earth: and shall not He do right? "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Had Jesus not been there, to ask for a sign would not have been so wicked; but His presence made it audacious unbelief and frightful hypocrisy. It was flying in the face of what God had already vouchsafed, and asking for something altogether inconsiderable in the presence of His best gift. So now, the death and resurrection of Christ is preached to a soul that turns away from it. He says, salvation is not so easy a thing as all

that; I must do something myself. This is asking a sign, and that not even from heaven, but from his own heart. And what is his heart? God declares that from his heart proceeds everything that is wicked. Yet he still clings to the fatal delusion, that some good thing must be got out of that which God pronounces only and always evil: and so he turns away from Jesus and God's righteousness in Him, that has been perfectly brought out, because Jesus is risen and at the right hand of God. When you find very high religious pretensions along with disparagement of Jesus, what can be more offensive to God? “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” And what was that? The sign of one that disappeared from the earth, that passed into the figure of death away from the Jewish people, and after a while was given back to them. It was the symbol of death and resurrection, and our Lord immediately acted upon it. “He left them and departed.” He would pass under the power of death; He would rise again, and would carry the message, which Israel had despised, to the poor Gentiles.

But there are other forms of unbelief; and the next scene is with His disciples: so true is it that what you find working in its grossest shape in an unconverted man may be traced, in another way, perhaps, in believers. “Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” They did not understand Him: they reasoned among themselves; and whenever Christians begin so to reason, they never understand anything. “They reasoned among themselves saying, It is because we have taken no bread.” There is such a thing, of course, as sound and solid deduction. The difference is that wrong reasoning always starts from man, and tries to rise to God, while right reasoning starts from God towards man. The natural mind can only infer from the experience of men what they think or feel, and thus form within a sort of image of what God must be. This is the basis, the aim, and the character of human speculation in divine things; whereas God is the source, strength, and guide of the thoughts of faith. How do I know God? In the Bible, which is the revelation of Christ from the first of Genesis to the end of the Apocalypse. I see Him there, the key-stone of the arch, the center of all Scripture speaks of; and unless the connection of Christ with everything is seen, nothing is understood aright. There is the first grand fallacy, the leaving out of God's revealing Himself in His Son. It is not the light behind a veil as under the Jewish system, but infinite blessing now that God has come to man and man is brought to God. In the life of Christ I see God drawing nigh to man, and in His death man brought nigh to God. The veil is rent; all is out, of man on the one hand, and of God on the other, as far as God is pleased to reveal Himself to man in this world. All stands in the boldest relief in the life and death of Christ. But disciples are apt to be very dull about these things now as ever; and so when He warned them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought that He was merely speaking of something for daily life—very much like what we see at the present time. But our Lord “said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?” Why did they not think of Christ? Would they have troubled themselves about loaves if they had thought of Him? Impossible! But what may there not be in a believer's heart, even before Him in whose hands is the earth and the fullness thereof? They were anxious, or thought Him so, about bread! “Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spike it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the

doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." And this is what disciples even now often misapprehend. They do not understand the hatefulness of unsound doctrine. They are alive to moral evil. If a person gets drunk, or falls into any other gross scandal, they know, of course, it is very wicked; but if the leaven of evil doctrine work, they do not feel it. Why is it that disciples are more careful of that which more natural conscience can judge, than of doctrine, which destroys the foundation of everything both for this world and for that which is to come What a serious thing that disciples should need to be warned of this by the Lord, and even then not understand! He had to explain it to them. There was the working of unbelief among the disciples; making the body the great aim, and not seeing the all-importance of these corrupt doctrines which menaced souls in so many insidious forms around them.

But there is another way and scene in which unbelief works. This chapter is the dissection of the root of many a form of unbelief. "By faith we understand," says the apostle to the Hebrews. The worldly man tries to understand first and then to believe; the Christian begins with the feeblest understanding, perhaps, but he believes God: his confidence is in One above himself? and thus out of the stone there is raised up a child unto Abraham. The Lord now questions the disciples as to the real gist of all the matter, whether among Pharisees, Sadducees, or disciples themselves. "He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" It is now Christ's person which comes out; and this, I need hardly say, is deeper than all other doctrine. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." There are so many opinions among men, unbelief argues, that certainty is impossible. Some say one thing and some another. You talk of truth and Scripture, yet, after all, it is only your view. But what says faith? Certainty, from God, is our portion, the moment that we see who Jesus is. He is the only remedy that banishes difficulty and doubt from the mind of man. "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" This was for the purpose of bringing out now what is the pivot of man's blessing and God's glory, and becomes the turning point of the chapter. Among these very disciples we are to have a blessed confession from one of them—the power of God working in a man who had been rebuked for his want of faith before, as he was indeed just after. When we are really broken down before God about our little faith, the Lord can reveal some deeper, higher view of Himself than we ever had before. The disciples had been relating the various opinions of men: one said he was Elias; another, John the Baptist. "But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Most glorious confession! In the Psalms He is spoken of as the Son of God, but very differently. There it is as one dealing with the kings of the earth, who are called upon to take care how they behave themselves. But the Son of the living God. The Holy Ghost now lifts up the veil to show that the Son of the living God involves depths far beyond an earthly dominion, howsoever glorious. He is the Son of that living God who can communicate life even to his enemies. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee," &c.

First, there is the Father revealing; and the moment Christ hears Himself confessed as the Son of the living God, He also sets His own seal and honors the confessor. It is the assertion of One who at once rises up to His own intrinsic dignity. "And I also say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He gives Simon a new name. As God had given Abraham, Sarah, &c., because of some fresh manifestation

of Himself, so does the Son of God. It had been prophetically announced before; but now comes out for the first time the reason why it was affixed to him. “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” What rock? The confession Peter had made that Jesus was the son of the living God. On this the Church is built. Israel was governed by a law; the Church is raised on a solid, and imperishable, and divine foundation—on the person of the Son of the living God. And when this fuller confession breaks from the lips of Peter, the answer comes, Thou art Peter—thou art a stone—a man that derivest thy name from this rock on which the Church is built.

In the early chapters of the Acts, Peter always speaks of Jesus as the holy child (or servant) Jesus. He speaks of Him as a man who went about doing good; as the Messiah slain by the wicked hands of men, whom God raised up from the dead. Whatever Peter might know Jesus to be, yet when preaching to the Jews, he presents Him to them simply as the Christ, as the predicted Son of David, who had walked here below, whom they had crucified and God had raised again. Then, at Stephen's martyrdom, a new term is used about the Lord. That blessed witness looks up and says, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” It is not now merely Jesus as the Messiah, but “the Son of man,” which implies his rejection. When He was refused as the Messiah, Stephen, finding that this testimony was rejected, is led of God to testify of Jesus as the exalted Son of man at God's right hand. When Paul is converted, which is given in the very next chapter but one, he goes straightway and preaches “Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.” He did not merely confess Him, but preached Him as such. And to Paul was entrusted the great work of bringing out the truth about “the church of God.”

So here when the Lord hears Peter's confession, He says, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” You understand the glory of my person; I will show you the work I am going to accomplish. Mark the expression. It is not, I have been building; but I will build my Church. He had not built it yet, nor begun to build it: it was altogether new. I do not mean by this, that there had not before been souls believing in Him and regenerate of the Spirit; but the aggregate of the individual saints that were born of God, from the beginning to the end of time, it is an error to call “the Church.” It is a common notion which, I am bold to say, has not got one thread of Scripture to give even the appearance of truth to it. The expression in Acts 7:38, “The church in the wilderness,” means the whole congregation—the mass of Israel—the greater part of whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Can you call that “the church of God?” There are only a few believers among them. People are deceived in this by the sound. The word, “Church in the wilderness,” merely means the congregation there. The very same word is applied to the confused assembly in Acts 19, which would have torn Paul to pieces. If it were translated like Acts 7, it would be, the “Church in the theater,” and the blunder is obvious. The word that is translated “church,” simply means assembly. To find out what is the nature of the assembly, we must examine the scriptural usage and the object of the Holy Ghost. For you might have a good or bad assembly: an assembly of Jews, of Gentiles, or God's assembly distinct from either and contrasted with both, as can be readily and undeniably seen in 1 Cor. 10:32. Now it is this last alone which we mean, i.e., God's assembly, when we speak of “the church.”

What then, to return, does our Lord intimate when He says, “Upon this rock I will build my church?” Clearly something that He was going to erect upon the confession that He was the Son of the living God, whom death could not conquer, but only give occasion to the shining forth of His glory by resurrection. “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades” —the power of

death – “shall not prevail against it.” This last does not mean the place of the lost, but the condition of separate spirits. “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” The Church and the kingdom of heaven are not the same thing. It is never said that Christ gave the keys of the Church to Peter. Had the keys of the Church or of heaven been given to him, I do not wonder that people should have imagined a pope. But “the kingdom of heaven” means the new dispensation now taking place on earth. God was going to open a new economy, free to Jews and Gentiles, the keys of which he committed to Peter. One of these keys was used, if I may so say, at Pentecost when he preached to the Jews, and the other when he preached to the Gentiles. It was the opening of the kingdom to people, whether Jews or Gentiles. “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 in earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The eternal forgiveness of sins has to do with God only, though there is a sense in which forgiving was committed to Peter and the other apostles, which remains true now. Whenever the Church acts in the name of the Lord and really does His will, the stamp of God is upon their deeds. “My Church,” built upon this rock, is His body—the temple of believers built upon Himself. But “the kingdom of heaven” embraces every one that confesses the name of Christ. That was begun by preaching and baptizing. When a man is baptized, he enters “the kingdom of heaven,” even if he should turn out a hypocrite. He will never be in heaven, of course, if he is an unbeliever; but he is in “the kingdom of heaven.” He may either be a tare in the kingdom of heaven, or he may be real wheat; an evil or a faithful servant; a foolish virgin or a wise one. The kingdom of heaven takes in the whole scene of Christian profession.

But we have seen, when Christ speaks of “My church,” it is another thing. It is what is built upon the recognition and confession of His person, and we know that he that believeth “that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” And again “He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God overcometh the world.” He has got the first workings of life in him if he acknowledges Jesus as Christ; but he has the power of the Holy Ghost if he acknowledges Him as Son. The higher the acknowledgment of Christ, the more spiritual energy in going through this world and overcoming it. If one believer is more spiritual than another, it is because he understands the person of Christ better. All power depends upon the appreciation of Christ. Mark our Lord's words first: “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Christ must be found outside the Church and before it; Christ must be discerned first and foremost by the individual soul; Christ, and what He is, must, before and above all, be revealed to the heart by the Father. He may employ persons who belong to the Church as instruments, or may directly use His own word. But, whatever the means employed, it is the Father revealing the glory of the Son to a poor sinful man; and when that is settled with the individual, Christ says, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” Faith in Christ is essentially God's order and way before the question of the Church comes in. This is one great controversy between God and the mystery of iniquity which is now working in this world. The aim of the Holy Ghost is to glorify Christ; whereas that of the other is to glorify self. The Holy Ghost is carrying on this blessed revelation that the Father has made of the Son; and when the individual question is settled, then comes the corporate privilege and responsibility—the Church.

It is not, therefore, enough to say I have got Christ, infinitely blessed as that is. If I know that He is the Son of God, I ought to believe also that He is building His Church. Do I know my place there?

Am I found walking in the light of Christ—a living stone ever in my place in that which He is building—in healthy action as a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? The building of the Church is going on here. It was here that salvation was wrought, and here it is that the Church is being built upon this rock; and the gates of Hades, the invisible state or separate condition, shall not prevail against it. Death may come in, but the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The Lord says in the Revelation, that He has the keys of death and Hades. The death of the believer, the Christian, is not the wages of sin: all is changed now. Christ is the Lord both of the dead and of the living; death is not our Lord, but Christ. “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's.” The Lord has absolute command over us; and therefore death is robbed of all that makes it so terrible; even to the believer that is looking at it with unbelieving eyes. The Lord here says that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His Church. The book of the Revelation at the close, brings us its blessed light. That book which people commonly talk about as the most obscure in the Bible, is the very one to which we are most deeply indebted for light upon this and other parts. There you have the Lord with the keys of death and Hades. He gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to Peter, because he it was who was to preach to Jews and Gentiles. The keys did their office; the door was flung open on the day of Pentecost first, and afterward, yet more widely, when the Gentiles were brought in.

Remarks on Matthew 16:20-28

But, further, we have internal administration committed to Peter, both binding and loosing, authority vested in him by Christ to act publicly here below, with the promise of ratification above. “Whatsoever thou shalt bind in earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” That is first said to Peter; and I presume from what we have in Matt. 18:18 (“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”), that the binding and the loosing belong to the other disciples: not, unless I am mistaken, to the apostles only, but to the disciples as such. Compare also the charge in John 20:19-23. On that principle people are received into the Christian Church, and on that principle wicked people are put away till restored on the acceptance of their repentance. The Church does not forgive sins as a matter of eternal judgment, of course, which God alone has the power to do. But it is called of God to judge a person's state for reception or exclusion from the circle which confesses the name of Christ here below. In Acts 5 Peter bound their sin upon Ananias and Sapphira. That does not necessarily prove that they were lost; but the sin was bound upon them and brought present judgment. Peter was not, nor Paul, at Corinth; and there the Lord acts Himself, laying His hand upon the guilty: some were weak and sickly, and some falling asleep. Their sins were indeed retained; but this does not decide against their final salvation—rather, indeed, the contrary. When they were judged of the Lord, they were chastened, that they should not he condemned with the world: that is, that they should not be lost. They might be taken away by death, and yet be saved in the day of the Lord. The church puts away a wicked person. The man at Corinth, whom they were told to excommunicate, was guilty of appalling sin; but he was not lost. He was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might “be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” In the next epistle we find this person so overwhelmed with sorrow on account of his fall, that they were charged to confirm their love to him. Nothing is more simple than the binding and loosing which people often make so mysterious. The only sins that the Church ought to judge are those that come out so palpably as to demand public repudiation according to the word of God. The Church is not to be a petty tribunal of judgment for everything. We ought never to claim the assembly's intervention except about the evil that is so plain as to be entitled to carry the consciences of all along with it. This I take to be the meaning of binding and loosing. The former is applied when a soul comes under public discipline before the Church, and the latter when he humbles himself and is formally restored. Eternal forgiveness of sins is another thing altogether. Therein popery has shown its wickedness—confounding remission in this world with the absolute and eternal forgiveness which God reserves in His own power. Protestantism has thrown away the other truth—the Church's bounden duty to judge sins in this present life.

“Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.” What a remarkable change is here! Peter had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God: now the Lord charges them that they were not to tell any man that He was the Christ—not that He was “the Son of the living God.” What is the meaning of this? It was as good as saying, It is too

late; I am rejected as the Christ, or the Messiah, the anointed of Israel. He is refused by Israel, and He accepts the fact. But mark another thing. “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” If you compare it with Luke, it comes out more distinctly. There we are told (chap. ix. 20), “He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.” A remarkable thing! “The Christ of God.” “The Son of the living God” is not mentioned in Luke: consequently, nothing is said about the building of the Church. How perfect is Scripture! The two things go together. But in Luke it is said, “He straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing (i.e., to tell no man that He was the Christ of God), saying, The Son of man must suffer many things,” &c. He does not forbid them to tell this. There is a great distinction between “the Christ” and “the Son of man.” The latter is the title of Christ, first as rejected, and then as exalted in heaven. This is the turning point in Christ's ministry—where He forbids the disciples to tell that He was the Christ. The meaning is that Christ drops His Jewish title. He speaks of His Church. Before it comes He says, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” From that time He begins to show unto them how that He must “go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Luke adds that “He must first suffer,” &e. All this is connected with the building of the Church, which began to be built after Christ rose from the dead, and took His place in heaven. In Ephesians the Church is not even named till after Christ's resurrection and His taking a new place in heaven have been brought out. We had God choosing the saints in Christ Jesus, but not the Church. Election is an individual thing. He chose us—you and me, and all the other saints of God, wherever they are. He chose us that “we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” But when Paul has introduced Christ's death and resurrection, he says that God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Christ was not so given till He was at the right hand of God. There His headship commences. His Sonship was from everlasting; He was a man in this world; and He was made Head of the Church, after having accomplished redemption. The word of God is wiser than men: what men call foolishness, is really the wisdom of God. It is our duty to give up our own theories, as much as the notions of other men. We must always bring ourselves up to the standard of God's word—not be always correcting other people, but ourselves. The word of God is what He has written for this purpose: it is no doubt very useful for others, but we must honestly use it for our hearts first. When the children of Israel were going to make war with the Canaanites the Lord appears, and lets them know that they must take the knife to themselves before the sword against others.

But mark the solemn fact that is here recorded. Immediately after Simon had made this glorious confession of the Lord Jesus, he is called, not Peter, but Satan! How could this be? Because he savored not the things that were of God, but those that were of men. He had not said one improper word according to human judgment. He had not even indulged in haste, as was often his wont. The Lord never called mere excitement “Satan;” but He so called Peter because he sought to turn Himself away from suffering and death. The secret was this: that he neither fully felt what sin was nor what the grace of God was. He stood in the way of the Lord's going to the cross. Was it not for Peter that he was going there I Had Peter thought of this, would he have said, “Be it far from thee, Lord?” It was man; and when it is man thwarting Christ, He pronounces it Satan. “He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not

the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter thus feeling and acting is the true foundation of the mystery of iniquity; not Peter confessing what flesh and blood taught not but God.

Our Lord turns to the disciples and puts before them that not merely is He going to the cross, but they must be prepared to follow Him there. If I am to be in the true path of Jesus, I must deny myself and take up the cross and follow—not the disciples—not this church or that church, but—Jesus Himself. I must go in the very teeth of what is pleasing to my heart naturally. I must be found compassed by shame and rejection in this present evil world. If not, depend upon it, I am not following Jesus; and remember, it is a dangerous thing to believe in Jesus without following Him. The Lord shows that it must be a man losing his life as it were. At the present time the confession of Christ is comparatively an easy matter. There is no opposition or persecution. How it shows what the heart is! People imagine that the world is changed, and they talk of progress and enlightenment. The truth is, Christians are changed; the world is but restrained in the exercise of its power. "He that letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." When that day comes, it will not be merely the usual spirit of hatred that animates the world, but God sending men a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, and should thus be ready to receive the antichrist, the man after their own hearts. I am not speaking woes and troubles of my own imagining, but what we find in the word of God. There is a great calm before an earthquake. The cry is of peace and safety, but there approaches fast this time of dissolution of all that men count so settled and secure. That we, Christians, shall be taken up to be with our Savior before that day comes, I have no doubt. We must look at the bright side, the coming of Jesus, to take us to be in the Father's house. But for the little while that we are here, the important thing to remember is, that, as Jesus must needs go to the cross for our deliverance, each Christian has got his cross too. Do we desire this to be true of ourselves? If so, we shall be sure to find it out. Let us ask ourselves whether we desire to be found taking up our cross and following Jesus? "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

What lessons for our souls! The flesh easily arrogates superiority over the Spirit; and indulgence to the path of ease comes in (though of Satan) under the specious plea of love and kindness. Is the cross of Christ our glory? Are we willing to suffer in doing His will? What a delusion is present enjoyment.

Chapter 85

Remarks on Matthew 17:1-8

The chapter at which we have been last looking, has shown us Jesus rejected as Christ or Messiah, confessed as the Son of the living God, and about to return in glory as the Son of man. But along with the glory in which He is to come, and reward each according to his works, we have His suffering: not merely rejection, but His being put to death—raised, no doubt, the third day, but still the suffering Son of man, and, as the Son of man, returning in glory. Following up this subject of His Father's glory, in which He declares He is to come with His angels, and judge in His kingdom, we have now a picture given on the holy mount: a picture most striking, and this in a twofold point of view. The glory, as we saw, of the kingdom, depends upon His being the Son of man, the exalted man who had erst suffered, and into whose hands all glory is committed—who had, at every cost, retrieved the honor of God, and is to make effectual the blessing of man: who, by virtue of His suffering, has already brought to naught the power of Satan for those who believe, and who eventually, when the kingdom comes, is to expel Satan altogether, and bring in that for which God has been waiting—a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. Accordingly, “After six days” (type of the ordinary term of work here below), “Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.” That is, He takes chosen witnesses; for it was merely a testimony to the kingdom—not exact the kingdom, but the sample of it that He had referred to when He said, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” The point there is the Son of man coming, rather than the kingdom itself; and what follows in our chapter is only a partial view of it, as illustrative of the glory of the rejected Son of man. But partial as it was, nothing could be more blessed, save the thing itself; and faith brings us into wonderful present realizing of that which is to be. It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of thing not seen.” The kingdom, of course, of which our Lord spoke, is not yet arrived. When it is said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” it is clear He speaks of a kingdom which we do enter now. For John does not speak of it as a thing of mere outward manifestation, but was giving a deeper revelation of the kingdom, as it is true now, into which every one that is born of God comes, anal which shall yet be displayed with its heavenly and its earthly things. But Matthew, who takes up the Jewish part, or Old Testament prediction of the kingdom, gives us the presentation of the Son of man coming in His kingdom.

The Lord, accordingly, fulfilling His word, takes these disciples “up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” The sun is the image of supreme glory, as that which rules the day. “And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.” Moses was the great person by whom the law was given; Elias, the grand sample of the prophets, who recalled the people to a broken law. They were thus the pillars of the Jewish system, whom every true Israelite looked back to with the deepest feelings of reverence: one of them singled out as the only Jew taken to heaven, without passing through death; the other, lest he should become an object of worship after his death, having the singular honor of being buried by the Lord. These two appear in the presence of our

Lord. They were known to be Moses and Elias: there seems to have been no difficulty in recognizing them. So, in the resurrection-state, the distinction of persons will be kept up thoroughly. There will be no such thing as that kind of sameness which blots out the peculiarities of each. Though there will be the termination of earthly relationships, and no peculiar links will survive in heaven which connected one with another, no matter how closely, upon earth. Yet each will retain his own individuality—with this mighty difference, of course, that all saints will bear the image of the heavenly. All men are after the pattern of the earthly now: for we all in the body resemble fallen Adam now, yet are we not all lost in one common undistinguishable throng. We each have our own proper character and our peculiar conformation of body. So in glory, each will be known from what he is. Moses and Elias are seen here as glorified, but as Moses and Elias; and the Lord is transfigured in their midst. “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias;” showing that he perfectly well knew which was which. “While he yet spike, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.” I conceive there is the grand depth of the whole passage. Peter, meaning to do honor to his Master, but in a human way—Peter, still savoring in a measure the things of men and not of God, proposes to put his Master on common ground with the heads of the law and of the prophets. But it must not be. The Father at once breaks silence. New revelations were about to follow, and indeed were being made. Whatever might be the value of Moses—whatever the special charge of Elias, who were they, and what, in presence of the Son of God? The Son may make nothing of Himself; but the Father loves the Son. Peter may put Him on a level with the most honored of mankind; but the Father's purpose is, that every knee should bow to Him—that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Man never does this, seeing simply man in the Son, in no adequate way honoring Him with divine homage. Faith does, for it sees God in the Son—hears God in Him, and also hears Him in the peculiarly blessed relationship of Father. For if Jesus were conceived to be simply God, and not the Son, it would be an incomparably less blessed a revelation than that which we have in Jesus. If such a thing could be as divine nature, without the blessed relationship of Sonship with the Father, we should lose the very sweetest part of our blessing. For it is not barely the deity of Jesus that has to be owned—though that lies at the bottom of all truth; but the eternal relationship of the Son with the Father. Not merely was He Son in this world: it is most dangerous to limit the Sonship of Christ to that, for it is from all eternity. People reason that, because He is called Son, He must have had a beginning in time, subsequently to the Father. All such argumentation ought to be banished from the soul of a Christian. The Scripture doctrine has no reference to priority of time, but He is called Son in respect of affection and intimate nearness of relationship. It is the pattern of the blessed place into which grace brings us through union with the Lord Jesus Christ, though of course there be ineffable heights and depths beyond in Him. But if we are simple about it, we gather from it the deepest joy that is to be found in the knowledge of the true God—and that, in His Son.

The Father, then, interrupts the word of Peter, and answers Himself. The bright cloud that overshadowed them, Peter well knew to be the cloud of Jehovah's presence: but the Father adds, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” It is not, This is your Messiah—though, of course, He was this; but He brings out the grand New Testament revelation of Jesus. He reveals Him out as His own beloved Son; and, further, asserts His unqualified delight in Him. “This is my

beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him:" this last, also, a statement of all importance. What was Moses, and what Elias now? They are entirely left out in the word of the Father. I need not say that every one who heard Jesus was the Son of God would be very far from despising Moses and Elias. They who understand grace have a far deeper respect for the law than the man who muddles grace and law together. The only full way to value anything that is of God is in the intelligence of His grace. I do not understand myself nor God till I know His grace; and I cannot know His grace, except as I see it in the person of His Son. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He was full of grace and truth.

The Father therefore directs attention to Him. He says, "Hear ye Him." It is no longer, Hear Moses, or hear Elias, but "Hear him." Could anything be more startling to a Jew? All must give place to the Son. The dignity of the others is not denied, nor their due position slighted. To assert the glory of the sun that shines all day is in no way to despise the stars. God made Moses to be what he was, and Elias received in like manner what He saw fit; but what were they compared with His Son? How fearful it is that men should be at this present moment making two tabernacles—one for Moses (if not, for Elias), and one for the Lord Jesus! What Peter was rebuked for doing is what men have continued to do. They talk about God being the unchangeable God. But He who ordained the night made the day; and as surely as He once spike the law, He has now sent the gospel. I see there the display of the glory of God, showing out now one part of His character and now another. That is not changing. God gives us to see His different attributes, and His various wisdom, and His infinite glory; but I must see each in its own sphere, and understand the intent for which God has given each. Moses and Elias were the two great cardinal points of the Jewish system; but now there is One that eclipses all that system—Jesus, the Son of God; and in presence of Him not even the representatives of the law or the prophets are to be heard. There is a fullness of truth that comes out in the Son of God; and if I want to understand the mind of God, as it concerns me now, I must hear Him. This was most difficult for a Jew to enter into: and, indeed, it was, if possible, more important for him to heed the call than for anyone else; because he had already a religion based upon the law and the prophets. Now the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father Himself expresses His perfect satisfaction, is commended to all. "Hear ye him." As Jesus, the Son of God, is the object of the Father's infinite love, so He is the means of that same love reaching even to us. If I see Him to be the beloved Son of the Father, my soul resting upon Him, enters into communion with the Father. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." What is fellowship? It is our having common joy in a common object which we share with one another. Our joy now we share with the Father and with the Son. The Father bids me hear the Son, and the Son declares the Father. We have fellowship with the Father who points out to our hearts Him in whom He Himself delighted; we have fellowship with the Son, inasmuch as He makes known to us the Father. How shall I know the Father?—how know His feelings? But by one way. I look at His Son, and have now seen the Father. The Son speaks, and I have heard His voice also. I know how He acts—His love going out to the very vilest. Such was Christ; and now, I am sure, such is the Father also. I know what God the Father is, when I follow the Son and listen to the Son. It is the Father He is revealing, not Himself: the Son came to make known what the Father was, in a world that knew Him not. Even those who had faith, what thoughts had they about the Father? We have only to look at the disciples, to see that there was no answer to the Father's heart, and no sympathy with it. Although they were born of God, up to this time it was just what Philip said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Not that he did not

divinely know Jesus as the Messiah; but he had not entered into the blessedness of what He was as the Son revealing the Father. It was only after the Holy Ghost came down, after the Son's departure to heaven, that they acquired the consciousness of the grace wherein they stood. So, yet more, the Apostle Paul says, “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” To know Christ at the right hand of God—to appreciate what He is there, is to know Him far better than if we had heard every discourse, and seen every miracle, of His upon earth. The Holy Ghost brings it out more and more fully through His word. I am not saying now how far we enter practically into what the Holy Ghost is teaching, because this depends upon the measure of our spirituality. But the Holy Ghost is here to take of the things of Christ, and show them to us—to make His glory known and His sufferings, as it is the Father's delight that He should be known. But there were many things that they could not then bear. When the Holy Ghost was come, He should lead them into all truth. This was the great object of the Father. He takes advantage of the very glory of Jesus, seen as Son of man, to show that a still deeper glory attaches to Him. The kingdom of Christ by no means exhausts the glory of His person: and it is as connected with His deeper glory that the existence of the Church is brought out. So the confession of His Sonship brought out the word, “Upon this rock will I build my church.” This is the pith of the New Testament revelation—it is the Father revealing His Son, and the Holy Ghost bringing out what the Son is, both as the image of the invisible God, and as introducing us into fellowship with the Father. It is not God merely known as such, but the Father in the Son, made known by the Holy Ghost. Hence it is, then, that here, in a gospel specially written for Jewish believers, the Holy Ghost takes particular pains to show us this. (Compare the close of chap. xi.) When Peter would have put the Son of God upon an equal ground with the most exalted and favored servants of God, a higher object is brought out. When before Him, Moses and Elias rejoice to take the place of servants merely. The Son is commended of God to us as the One whom we are to hear. This is a truth of all importance, in order to a soul's getting thoroughly settled upon Christian ground. Christians are often afraid of distinguishing between the ways of God, and afraid of bringing out the full place of our Lord. But to give Jesus His rightful place is the first duty of the soul; even as the Father Himself proclaims it. He spoke of Jesus as God the Father speaking of God the Son. We want more singleness of eye, a more fervent spirit, and greater intelligence, to give increasing honor to the Son of God. All heresy has as its root the slighting of Christ. One man makes doing good his object, another the gospel, another the Church, each rising perhaps above the other; but he is practically nearest to God who makes everything a question of Christ. This is the highest spirituality, because it is the most simple reproduction of His own thoughts and feelings.

The disciples, confounded by what they heard, fall on their faces and are sore afraid. There was no communion with it yet. For the present they enter into it but slightly, though it was afterward recalled to them by the Spirit of God. “And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” The heavenly vision had passed away for a time: they were on the mount alone with Jesus. What a joy that, if it vanish, He abides!

Let us just refer briefly to the account of this scene as given in the other Gospels. In Mark 9 we have this same vision of glory, and it is opened in a similar manner. I am not now going to enter into all the points of difference, for there are several. But what was chiefly on my mind was this: in

what the Father says about Christ, the words, “in whom I am well pleased,” are left out. The emphatic point, forgotten nowhere, is that He was the Son; and in Mark, as in Matthew, He is the Son (not a servant only, though truly such), who is to be heard. But the Holy Ghost by Matthew adds, “in whom I am well pleased.” The satisfaction of the Father in the Son is given as the ground why He should be heard, as the full expression of His mind. In Luke we have another thing. (Luke 9:30.) “Behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias.” They are called “men” here in a distinct manner, this Gospel having been written more particularly in view of man at large. These men “appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” There we have the subject of their conversation—a thing of the deepest interest for us to learn. The death and sufferings of Jesus are the great theme on which men in glory converse with Himself, the Son of God. And Jerusalem, yea, Jerusalem, would be the place of His death, instead of welcoming Him to reign! But then we find the sad trait of human weakness. Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep. There again we find the Father's affection for His Son. The highest glories of Judaism wane: the Son is to be heard. The moral features are prominent throughout.

Chapter 86

Remarks on Matthew 17:8-27

Now there is another thing to be observed. John leaves out the transfiguration altogether; because his proper work was to dwell, not upon Christ's outward manifestation to the world as Son of man in His kingdom, but on His eternal glory as the only-begotten Son of God; or, as he says himself, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.”

In 2 Peter we have a most interesting allusion to this scene. It is said there (2 Peter 1:17), “He received from God the Father honor and glory” —confirming what I said, that this scene does not show us so much His essential glory, but that which He received from God the Father, “when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory,” or the cloud, which was the known, external symbol of Jehovah's majesty. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But mark, “hear ye him” is omitted here. This is very striking. In the three Gospels, not one of them omits the words, “hear ye him.” In the Second Epistle of Peter they are omitted. Matthew gives us the fullest account. All that God the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.” But the others, that is, Mark and Luke, give, “This is my beloved Son: hear him;” while Peter himself, who was an eyewitness of the scene, omits the words, “hear him.” Matthew shows us the complacency of the Father in Jesus, for the purpose of specially raising the hearts of the Jewish disciples above His mere place as Messiah, to the Father's peculiar delight in Him as the Son; and this as a ground for valuing His word above all. Peter leaves out “hear ye him,” because now, the revelation of Jesus having come out, the point that remains is the Father's delight in Jesus. I do not pretend to say how far the inspired writers knew all the mind of God in such a thing: they wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost.

There are two ways, I would observe, of looking at these differences in the accounts that are given us: the one is the infidel view, and the other the Christian. The infidel way is to suppose that Matthew, Mark, and Luke did their best as men; but that they sometimes made mistakes. The infidel way is always the most foolish in the world. It is not only unworthy of God, but, I repeat, also as absurd as possible when the facts are quietly looked into. How came it to pass that the man who wrote the first gospel gave this scene the most fully? If he had written it after the others, I could conceive his remembering and registering what the others had forgotten; but Matthew gives both the first and minutest account. Mark and Luke leave out some parts, and Peter leaves out what they had all put in— “Hear him.” Such criticism, therefore, is not merely pride of heart, but it is the folly of spoiled children against the word of God.

But, again, let us look at it in the other way. We are ignorant; we know nothing as we ought to know. Let us believe that what God says is perfect—that everything that He has given in His word is perfect; and that in the very differences there is a divine object. Matthew, writing to those who were under Jewish prejudices, brings out the Father's good pleasure in Jesus as His Son, which is the grand thing that lifts up the soul from earth. And as it was the Evangelists who were the first to bring out this new and blessed truth, they all put in, “Hear him.” But Peter, writing long after, makes the person of the Son to be the prime object, and not His revelation. What does Peter mean to

teach us, when he says that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation? You cannot understand prophecy if you take it merely piecemeal and by itself. A prophecy confined to particular circumstances and persons loses its chief value. Christ is the substance of prophecy. It is His glory that the prophecies bring out. They are not connected merely with England or France or any other country you may choose: but you must see the connection of the prophecies with Christ; when you do, you have a sure light. God is thinking of His beloved Son, and commending His Son to us. He wants to have our hearts filled with His Son, and not with thoughts about our country or great men. The Son of God is the object of the Father. This is what the Holy Ghost is insisting upon here. He spews that prophecy is a lamp which shines in a dark place, but not when it is severed from the object of God. Take it in connection with its due aim, and all is bright; but connect it with self, and you turn the very prophecy of God into a false light which will lead you astray. Let us, therefore, settle it in our hearts. I am to trust in every word of God; to lay up and consider each word and thought, confiding in the Holy Ghost to lead me into all truth. I must wait upon God to see what the particular design and object of the Holy Ghost is: and “God is faithful who has called us unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And if He has called us into fellowship with His Son, what will He not tell us about His Son? The Son is before Him; and the Lord grant that He may be before us.

As the disciples came down from the mount, the Lord charges them, saying, “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.” It was no longer a question of testifying to the kingdom of Christ. That was rejected. This vision was for the disciples, for strengthening their faith in Jesus. The Lord was occupying Himself with the souls of believers, not with the world. There is always a period when testimony of an outward kind may close. You may remember the time when Paul separates the disciples that were at Ephesus from the multitude, and leads them into what more particularly concerned them. Now for the present time till the Holy Ghost was given, till the Lord was risen from the dead, and power came from on high to make these things a fresh starting point, it was no use to speak of them any further. “His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things; but I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.” He shows that to faith Elias was come. If the nation had the word, Elias would have come in person, according to the prophecy in Malachi; but the nation refusing Jesus, the disciples were instructed to regard the testimony of John the Baptist as being virtually that of Elias: This accords with the statement that we have in chapter 11, where it was said, “If ye wilt receive it, this is Elias which was for to come;” showing that it was not Elias actually and literally, but the spirit and power of Elias in the person of John the Baptist. The Messiah is coming in glory by and by, and Elias is coming too. But the Messiah was come in weakness now, and humiliation; and His forerunner had been put to death. It was Elias who was come in the person of the suffering John the Baptist, and his testimony was despised. The disciples are let into the secret of this: “Elias is come already, and they have done unto Him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.”

But now another thing is noticed. The power of Satan is in no wise put aside by the effect of the glory of Jesus being revealed upon the mountain. At the fact of that same mountain where the Lord displayed the glory of the kingdom, Satan displayed his power. It was not broken yet. The

kingdom was only a matter of testimony. The disciples failed to draw upon the resources of Christ to put down the power of Satan. It came out thus. A man comes to the Lord, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and sore vexed; for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.” There was every kind of trial brought together. “And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him. And the child was cured from that very hour.” And when the disciples wanted to know how this was, that they could not cast him out, He tells them, “Because of your unbelief.” It is a wonderful thing, but nothing can be more sure, than that unbelief is at the root of the difficulties Satan foists in. He has lost his power over those that have faith. A believer could never, if walking with the Lord, fall under the power of Satan. We must distinguish the falling into sin from falling into the power of Satan; which latter I believe to be his power in eclipsing all confidence in the goodness of God. Hence when a man is put away from the Church, he is delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, though it is that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Whenever a person is really and rightly put away from the table of the Lord, unless there is a restoration of spirit, which can only be when the power of Satan is defeated, exceeding power is acquired over the soul. But here we have it as to the body. This child is described as a lunatic and sore vexed. But unbelief entirely misses the power of God which ought to have been at the command of the disciples. “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place.” The very least working of faith in the soul is power available for present difficulties. The power of the world, the settled power of anything here, which is what the mountain sets forth, would completely disappear before the faith of the disciples. “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” There must be dependence in the conflict with the power of evil. It was Christ's moral glory; it is one secret of strength. The assumption of power because of association with Jesus simply fails and turns to shame. There must be self-emptiness, and self-denial, that God may act. When Jesus descends, all Satan's power is broken and vanishes.

Then comes another declaration of His sufferings, but I will not dwell upon that now, beyond remarking that, as in chap. 16:21, we had His suffering through the Jews (elders, chief priests, and scribes), so here it is rather Gentile rejection. “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.” This follows the manifestation of His glory as Son of man, while the other followed the confession of His still deeper glory as Son of God.

In conclusion, let us look at the beautiful tale of the piece of money demanded for the temple. Peter there answers quickly, according to his usual warmth of character. When the tax-gatherer came, who was connected with the temple, and the usual fee was demanded, Peter answered very hastily, that of course his Master would pay this tribute. His mind went not beyond their Jewish position. But our Lord anticipates Peter when they come to the house, and says to him, “What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children or of strangers?” It was not that any king of the earth was demanding tribute now from them, but it was a payment for Jehovah's temple. Peter answers truly enough, Of strangers. Then Jesus says to him, “Then are the children free.” Nothing can be more beautiful. For the truth taught us here is this: whatever be the glory of the kingdom that is coming, whatever the power of Satan that disappears before the word of Jesus, whatever the faith that can remove mountains, nothing

is to take the Son of God out of the place of grace. It may be that there is no claim, no right to ask—the children are free. It would be an absurdity to suppose that among the kings of the earth, the children would come under the same circumstances as strangers in the payment of tribute. They are exempt. Jesus takes that place, and most sweetly too He puts it in a general form. The principle of it would be true of others, as well as of Himself: the children were to be free. He puts it in the broadest form, in order to give an idea of the place of blessing into which the children of the kingdom would be brought—the children of Him in whose name this demand might be made. “Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” This is the great wonder of Christ, and the practical wonder of Christianity—that while we have the consciousness of glory, and ought to pass through this world as sons of glory as well as sons of God, for that very reason the Lord calls us to be the humblest, the meekest, taking no place upon the earth. I do not mean claiming no place for Christ. It is our business to live for nothing but for Christ and the truth: but where it is a question of ourselves to be willing to be trampled upon, and counted as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things. Flesh and blood cannot like it; but it is the power of the Spirit of God raising us above nature. It is not hastiness of feeling. It is not persons talking about their rights or anything of the kind. Here we have the consciousness that the children were free—fullness of privilege their portion, but at the same time, “lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea.... thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” This is the place of a Christian: not contending for anything that pertains to ourselves; yet earnest for what pertains to God; but in what concerns ourselves, the willingness to suffer. See the manner in which our Lord provides for all demands for this tribute. He directs Peter how to find the piece of money, and says, “That take and give unto them for me and thee.” What a joy to think that Jesus associates us with Himself and Himself provides for everything, if we would only let Him; that Jesus who proves Himself in this very thing to be God the Creator, displayed divine knowledge, having the command even of the restless deep, and as such working this most extraordinary miracle (making a fish to provide the money needed to pay the tax of the temple), should thus give us a place with Himself, and undertake for all our need. Nothing can more beautifully show us how, with the consciousness of glory, our place should ever be that of the bending and lowliness of Christ. How blessedly the Son stooped to be the servant, and leads the children into the same path of grace!

The Lord grant us to know how to reconcile these two things. We can only do it so far as our eye is upon Christ.

Chapter 87

Remarks on Matthew 18

In chapter 16 we had two subjects connected with the revelation of the Lord's person to Simon Peter—one of them entirely new, or for the first time divulged; the other the familiar subject of the kingdom of heaven. We shall find in the chapter before us that these two topics are again brought together, but of course not confounded or identified. We are called to see the kingdom and the church in their practical bearing. We heard already that the Lord was to build the Church upon the rock of the confession of His person— “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” Afterward, He promised to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. Now we find, and I think connected with our Lord's showing the practical principle which actuated Himself with the consciousness of glory, and of the absolute command of all that He had made (for He was the Lord of heaven and earth, if He paid the tribute of the temple)—it was not a question of rights. Had it been a mere matter of right, the children were free: He was the Lord of the temple, so that there was no claim possible on that ground. But “lest we should offend them,” &c. Grace you see gives up its rights; at least, it does not seek to claim and exercise them for the present. And in the very consciousness of the possession of all glory, it can bend in this evil world. But, then, carefully observe that what it leads the soul that understands it to, is never to yield God's rights, but our own. We must be as unbending as a flint wherever God is in question. Grace never surrenders the true holiness, the claim or will of God; in fact, it is the only thing that, as far as man is concerned, strengthens any soul to value them, or assert them, or walk in them: and grace does this. It is God's own way from the gospel upwards. “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The practical lesson follows: “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” That which the law claimed, but never produced, is accomplished by the power of grace acting upon the heart of man. Christ does not so much demand as give the power. It is all of His goodness. And grace consists not merely in forgiving sins, but in giving, power to be and to do that which is entirely contrary to nature and above it. The law never even sought this. The law addressed itself to man as he was—suppose him to be a sinner, to have evil lusts and passions, and forbade them; but what more could it do? It claimed the heart of man, the very last thing he would or could give. He might give his body to be burned, and all his goods to feed the poor, but never his heart to love God. I am speaking now of man as man. When you speak of a Christian, what makes him a Christian? Not the law, which never made a Christian since the world began, nor ever was intended so to do. It condemns a man because he is a sinner, and does not like to obey God: but it does not even hold out what a Christian ought to be. It never proclaims that a man should forego his rights, and be willing to suffer: a Christian is one who does this, being called to go far beyond what the law asked; and if he does not, he is not walking as a Christian. So that, in both ways, looking at the law, whether as dealing with an ungodly man, it cannot save him; and in dealing with a godly man, it never puts before him the full character of the holiness Christ enjoins. What, then, is it God has given the Christian? If he is not under the law, under what is he? He is under Christ, under grace; under Christ as the very fullness of grace and truth.

This is what comes out here. And it is a very beautiful feature of the chapter we are about to look at just now. We find the grace of the gospel is the pattern of the spirit that is to actuate the Church and its members in everything that merely concerns ourselves. There is often a great practical difficulty that people do not understand. While you are called upon to walk in nothing but grace, as to your own relations with God, it is a misuse of grace to suppose it to be an allowance of evil or indifference. Grace, on the contrary, while it meets a man in his ruin, and forgives him, spite of his sins, imparts a power that he had not before, because it reveals Christ, strengthens the soul, gives a new life, and acts upon that life so as to carry him forward in the obedience as well as in the enjoyment of Christ. Our Lord shows that this ought to govern everything. But, first, we have the spirit that befits us. “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” This furnishes opportunity for our Lord to indicate the spirit that becomes the kingdom of heaven. “Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Now this is what is wrought in a soul when it is converted: there is a new life given, even Christ. Hence there is much more than entire change. That would be very far short of the truth as to a Christian. Of course the Christian is a changed man, but then the change is because of something still deeper. A Christian is a man born again, possessing a life now that he possessed not before. I do not mean merely that he lives after a new sort, but that he has a new life given to him that he had not as a man. It is in this way that he becomes a little child. Then this new life has to be cultivated and strengthened. Our natural life as men grows up, or it may be checked and hindered by various circumstances. So it is with the spiritual life, though it be external.

Our Lord shows here what is the characteristic moral feature that suits the kingdom of heaven; and this in opposition to Jewish thoughts of greatness. They were still thinking of the kingdom of heaven, according to Old Testament delineations of it. When David came to the kingdom, his followers that had been faithful before, were exalted according to their previous worth. You have the three great chiefs, and then thirty other warriors, and so on; all of them having their place determined by the way in which they had carried themselves in the day of trial. The disciples came with similar thoughts to our Lord, full of what they had done and suffered. Peter gets rebuked for that very thing afterward. The same spirit broke out on many occasions, even at the last supper. Our Lord here uses it for showing that the spirit He loves in His disciples is to be nothing—to be without a thought of self, in a spirit of lowliness, dependence, and trust—that does not think about itself. This is the natural feeling of a little one. It may be spoiled; but naturally it looks up to its parents, and thinks there is nobody like them; and as long as this child is unsophisticated so it goes on. In the spiritual child, that self-forgetfulness is exactly the right feeling. The little child is the standing witness of true greatness in the kingdom of heaven. In our Lord Himself this was shown fully. The wonder was that He who knew everything, who had all power and might, could take the place of a little child; and yet He did. And indeed you may be sure that the lowliness of a child is in no wise incompatible with a person being deeply taught in the things of God. It is not a lowliness that shows itself in phrases or forms, but the reality of meekness that confides not in itself but in the living God: and that has the respect which God Himself loves there should be toward those around it. Perfect humility was just as much a feature of our Lord Jesus, as the consciousness of His glory. The two things may well go together; and you cannot have becoming Christian humility unless there be the consciousness of glory. To behave ourselves lowly, as children of God, is the

beautiful thing the Lord is here putting before us. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” It is not merely the becoming like little children, as begotten of God, and brought into the family, but there is here the practical work of humbling ourselves. But then comes another thing: not only the humbling ourselves, but how we feel towards others. “Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.” Whatever may be the lowliness of the Christian, he should be viewed with all the glory of Christ, which is meant by receiving him in the name of Christ. It is a person that does not defend his rights, nor assert his glory in any way, but is willing to bend and make way for any one; and yet conscious of the glory that rests upon him. There may be the very opposite of this— “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believes in me.” What is meant by this? Anything calculated to shake their confidence in Christ, to put a stumbling-block in their way. It does not mean anything said in faithful love to their soul. People may take offense at this; but that is not what is spoken of here. It is what shakes the confidence of the little one in God Himself. “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” These things are constantly occurring in the world. Therefore, says the Lord, “Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.” What is to be done? The Lord shows in two forms the way to guard against these stumblingblocks. The first is this—I must begin with myself. That is the most important means of not stumbling another. “Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee.” It may be in one's service, or in one's walk; but if hand or foot become the occasion of stumbling (something in which the enemy takes advantage against God), deal resolutely and at once with the evil thing. “It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.” The Lord always puts the full result of evil before the soul. In speaking of the kingdom of heaven, He takes into account that there may be persons in it false as well as true. He therefore speaks generally. He does not pronounce upon them and say, If you really belong to the kingdom, you have nothing to fear. But He looks at the kingdom of heaven; and there are persons who apparently enter that kingdom, some of whom may be truly born of God, others not. The Lord solemnly puts before them, that such as are indifferent about sin are not born of God at all. It is impossible for a soul to be regenerate, and habitually careless about that which grieves the Holy Ghost. Therefore He puts before them the possibility of such being cast into everlasting fire. Of no one who was born of God could this be said. But as there may be in the kingdom of heaven a false profession as well as a true, so a grave thing for the believer to look well to is, that he do not allow sin in any of his members. “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.” It may cost ever so much, but God is not a hard master; none is so tender and loving. And yet it is God giving us His full mind by the Lord Jesus, who shows us that this is the only way of dealing with that which may become an occasion of sin. (Comp. Eph. 5:5, 6.)

The first great source of offense to others, and which must be first removed, is that which is a stumblingblock to our own souls. We must begin with self-judgment. But there is also the despising the little ones that belong to God. “Take heed,” therefore, our Lord says, “that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” A beautiful word; specially as here it is evidently so broadly stated by our Lord, as to take in a real literal little

child as well as the little ones that believe in Him. I believe this chapter was meant to give encouragement touching little ones. The plea on which our Lord goes is not that they were innocent, which is the way in which they are so often spoken of among men, but that the Son of man came to save that which was lost. It supposes the taint of sin, but that the Son of man came to meet it; so that we are entitled to have confidence in the Lord, not merely for our own souls, but for the little ones too.

But our Lord goes further. “How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? and if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” No doubt we can embrace all those that are saved on the same principle, and Luke does so in another chapter. The Gospel of Luke shows us (chap. 15) this very parable applied to any sinner. But here the Lord is taking it up in connection with the foregoing, namely, the right feelings for one who belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Starting from a little child, whom He sets in the midst, He carries the thought of the little one all through this part of His discourse. And now He closes with the proof in His own mission, of the interest which the Father takes in these little ones.

But more than this. He now applies it to our practical conduct. Supposing your brother does you wrong, something that may be very hard to bear, perhaps; an evil word, or an unkind action done against you,—something that you feel deeply as a real personal trespass against you: the man has done it deliberately, and of course it is a great sin. Nobody knows it but himself and you. What are you to do? At once this great principle is applied. When you were ruined and far from God, what met your case? Did God wait till you put away your sin? It never would have been done at all. God sent His own Son to seek you, to save you. “The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” That is the principle for you to act upon. It is not merely that this is the way in which God acted. You belong to God; you are a child of God. Your brother has wronged you: go you to him, and seek to set him right. It is the activity of love, which the Lord Jesus now presses upon His disciples. They are to seek the deliverance, in the power of divine love, of those who have wandered from God. It is not the flesh feeling its wrong, and resenting what has been done against itself. The law would enable even a Jew to judge this. But now it is grace, and grace does not shroud itself up in its own dignity, and wait till the offender has come and humbled himself and owned the wrong. The law executes punishment upon the guilty. If I have to do with the law at all, I am a lost man. But now another has come in—not the law, but the Son of man, the Savior of the lost. Nor is this all. I want you, He says, to be walking after the same principle—to be vessels of the same love. As you have received your life from me, so I want your walk to be characterized by grace, going out after that which has sinned against God—grace to seek the man that has gone astray. This is a great difficulty, unless the soul is fresh in the love of God, and enjoying what God is for him. How does God feel about the child that has done wrong? It is the loving desire to have him right. When the child is near enough to know the Father's heart, he goes out to do the Father's will. It may have been a wrong done against him, but he does not think about that. It is his brother who has slipped into evil, and he sorrows over him. It is a real desire of heart to have the person righted who had gone astray; and this, too, not in order to vindicate self, but that his soul may be restored to the Lord. “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between

thee and him alone." He could not bear that another should know it. It is not here the case of a sin known to a great many, but some personal trespass only known to you two. Go, then, to him, and tell him his fault between you and him alone. A thing, no doubt, very contrary to the flesh, which would ever demand that the offender should first come and humble himself, or that would act on the worldly ground of not troubling itself about the man, but let him go from bad to worse. Love seeks the good, even of the one that has done ever so wrong. "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Love is bent upon gaining the brother. It is always so to him that understands and feels with Christ. It is not the offender, but thy brother that is the thought before the heart. "Thou hast gained thy brother." "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more that n the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established." is it possible for him to resist one or two who come to him, witnesses of the love of Christ? He has refused Christ pleading by one, can he refuse Christ now that He pleads by more? He is sought again. Will he refuse? It may be, alas! that he will. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." The church means the assembly of God in the place to which the man belonged. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." It does not mean what people call "a" church now; there is no such thing in the word of God. Scripture never knows anything but God's church; the Churches Scripture recognizes were simply His assembly in each city or analogous place. And therefore all the terms of men that have been brought in through departure from His thoughts, are entirely unknown in Scripture. "A church" separate from others and independent, has no warrant except in the will of man. Every Christian person is bound not only to have done with these names, but with the thing itself, because God is looking for reality, and we are bound to act upon the truth of God. His will is that we should not belong to a church of the world or a voluntary association of our own. Nothing is more simple than for a Christian to act as a Christian. It is only pleasing the flesh whenever we depart out of the path of God. It is evident that this passage contemplates a known assembly to which these persons belonged. It was the Church—the only assembly which we are called upon to acknowledge.

The assembly, then, are told of the guilty person's fault. The thing has been solemnly investigated and pressed home; and the church now pronounces upon it. The church warns and entreats this man, but he refuses to hear: and the consequence is— "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." A most solemn thing! A man who is called a brother in the verse before, is like an heathen man and a publican now. We are not to suppose that the man was a drunkard or a thief; but what he has shown is a hardness of self-will and a spirit of self-justification. It might have arisen out of small circumstances; but this unbending pride about himself and his own fault, is that on which God may pronounce him to be regarded as an heathen man and a publican: that is, that you no more acknowledge him in his impenitent state as a Christian. And yet it may spring mainly from the spirit of justifying ourselves when we are wrong. In the case of drunkenness, or anything of that kind, there would be no necessity for adopting any such mode of dealing with it. If there were not the least question on the mind of anyone as to the sin, the duty of the church is clear: the person is put away. He might not have been seen by a number of persons: there is no absolute need for that. Nor would there be reason in such a case for going one at a time, and then one or two more. This is only where. it is unknown to anyone but the individual against whom the trespass has been done. But the Lord shows here how, out of a little spark, a great fire may be kindled. The end of this personal trespass might be that the church are convinced the man displays not a trace

of Christian life about him. “Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.” It is not a mere question of agreement. What gives the validity is that it is done in the name of the Lord. (See 1 Cor. 5:4.) “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Whether for discipline, or for making requests of God, the Lord lays down this great principle, that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them. Nothing could be more sweet and encouraging. And I am persuaded that the Lord had in view the present ruin of the Church, when there might be ever so few gathered aright. No company of saints is thus gathered, unless it assemble in obedience to the word of God and nothing else—founded and carried out according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any sect may contain good people, and have good preaching; but these things do not make it to be the Church. Unless it be upon the foundations of the word of God, subject to the Lord by the enemy of the Holy Ghost, it is not such. But a person may ask, Do you mean to say that you are upon that ground? I can only say that we are taking an immense deal of trouble for a delusion if we are not. We are very foolish in acting as we do, unless we are sure that it is according to the mind of God. I have no more doubt how Christians ought to meet together for worship or mutual edification, and that we are doing so, than I have about any other directions in the word of God. Not being restrained by rules, there is nothing for it but the word of God; and there is the most entire liberty to carry out that word. But while I speak thus confidently, I feel, on the other hand, that we need to take a very low place. Where members of Christ's body are scattered here and there, humiliation alone becomes us, and this not because of others' ways but our own. For what have we been to Christ and the Church? It would be very wrong to call ourselves the Church; but if we were only two or three meeting in the name of Christ, we should have the same sanction and blessing as if we had the twelve apostles with us. If through unbelief and weakness the Church at large were broken up and scattered, and if, in the midst of all that confusion, there were only two or three who had faith to act upon the Lord's will, for them the word would still be true, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The whole thing is wound up with this grand truth. It is the presence of Christ that gives sanction to their acts. If the church has fallen into ruin, the business of those who feel this is to depart from evil; to cease to do evil, learn to do well. We always come to first principles when things get astray. This is the obligation of a Christian man. He is never to go on doing what he knows is wrong. Where a man makes up his mind to do even a little wrong, he is an Antinomian. If people think they may sin in the worship of God, they deceive themselves. “God is not mocked.”

There is one other thing that I must close with. Peter says to our Lord, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” We had the case of how we were to act in the case of a personal trespass. But Peter raises another question. Supposing my brother sins against me over and over, how often am 1 to forgive him? The answer is “I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.” In the kingdom of heaven not under the law, but under the rule of Christ—forgiveness is unlimited. How wonderful! To think that holiness, the deeper holiness that Christianity reveals, is at the same time that which feels with the deepest possible love, and which goes out with it to others. So we find here. “I say not unto thee, until seven times,” which

was Peter's idea of the largest grace, “but until seventy times seven.” Our Lord insists that there really was no end to forgiveness. It is always to be flowing out. But remember this, it is a sin against you: it is a person that does wrong to you. We are not to forgive a wrong done to the Lord till the Lord has forgiven it; and the Lord only forgives upon confession of sin. I am now speaking, not of the grace that meets a man in his unconverted state: the case here is that of a brother. When a man is converted, he has to confess his sins day by day. It shows a wretched state of soul if a person breaks down in his daily path without confession to God. But what we learn here is, that if it is some sin done against you personally, and it is a question how often you are to forgive, the answer is, “Till seventy times seven.” God will never be outdone in His perfect love: but even a man upon earth is called to forgive after this wonderful and divine pattern.

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants.” And then we have two servants brought before us. The king forgives one of them who had been very guilty (who owed him ten thousand talents: practically, a debt that never could be paid by a servant). The king forgives him. The servant goes out from the presence of the, king after the debt was remitted, and he meets a fellow-servant who owes him a hundred pence—a small sum indeed in comparison of that which had just been forgiven to himself. Yet he seizes his fellowservant by the throat, saying, “Pay me that thou owest.” But the king hears of it through the sorrow of the fellow-servants, and summons the guilty man before him. What is taught by this? It is a comparison of the kingdom of heaven: and these comparisons refer to a state of things established here below by God's will. While we may take the principle to ourselves, much more is taught than this. Taken in the large way, the servant that owes the ten thousand talents represents the Jew who was peculiarly favored of God, and yet had contracted the enormous debt that he never could pay. When the Jew had completed this debt by the death of the Messiah, a message of forgiveness was sent them— “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” The Holy Ghost presses on them a message of repentance. They had only to do so, and their sins would be blotted out: God would send the Messiah again, and bring in the times of refreshing. The Holy Ghost answered the prayer of our Lord upon the cross, and Peter was entitled to tell them that they were forgiven. “I wot, brethren,” he says to them, “that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;” even its the Lord had said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” That does not mean a personal forgiveness, but a national one, which required their faith and repentance. Thus the servant had heard the sound of forgiveness to himself, but he had no understanding of it. He goes out and casts a fellow-servant into prison for what was comparatively a very small” debt. This is the way in which the Jew acted toward the Gentiles. After rejecting the message of mercy for themselves, the Jews followed the Apostle Paul wherever he went, in order to stir up hatred against him. When the apostle told them he was sent to the Gentiles, the word was, “Away with such a fellow from the earth.” That answers to the catching of the fellowservant by the throat. It was the hatred of the Jew toward the Gentile. And thus all the debt that God had forgiven them became fastened upon them. The lord says to the servant, “O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.” You may apply this to an individual who has heard the gospel, and who does not act according to it. The principle of it is true now of any mere professor of the gospel in these days, who acts like a worldly man. But taking it on the broader historical scale, you must bring in the dealings of God

with the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentile had, no doubt, treated the Jew badly: but what was all his debt compared with that which God had forgiven the Jew? The Jew therefore is cast into prison; and he will not leave it until he has paid all that was due. The day is coming when the Lord will say that Jerusalem has received of His hand double for all her sins. Jehovah in His grace will count that Jerusalem has suffered too much. He will apply to them the blood of Christ which can cleanse out the ten thousand talents and more; but the unbelieving generation of Israel are cast into prison, and will never come out; the remnant will, by the grace of God: and the Lord will make of the remnant a strong nation.

Meanwhile, for us the great principle of forgiveness is most blessed, and a thing that we have need to remember. We have specially to remind our souls in the case of anything that is against ourselves. May we at once look steadfastly at what our God and Father has done for us. If we can, in the presence of such grace, be hard for some trifling thing done against ourselves, let us bethink ourselves how the Lord judges here. Sometimes a soul goes on well for a time. But if there is not life from God, a slight circumstance happens, which brings out a man's true state; and then you have such a turning back from Christ as proves that there is nothing of grace in the man's soul. For where there is life, the warning of God is heeded.

May the Lord grant that His words may not be in vain for us, that we may seek to remember the exceeding grace that has abounded towards our souls, and what God looks for from us.

Chapter 88

Remarks on Matthew 19

Thus far the Holy Ghost was pleased to give us the Lord's announcement of the Church and the kingdom of heaven. We have seen them not only as distinct though connected objects in chapter 16, but also (in chap. 18) the practical ways which suit them. It was necessary also to bring out the relation of the kingdom to God's order in nature. There are certain relationships which God has established entirely apart from the new creation, some of which may be carried on when a soul enters the new creation. The believer is still a man here below, although as a Christian he is called not to act on human principles, but to do the will of God. It was therefore of much importance to know how the new things affect the recognition of that which had been already set up in nature. Accordingly, this chapter largely reveals the mutual relations of what is of grace and what is in nature. I am of course using the word “nature” now, not in the sense of “the flesh,” as expressive of the principle and exercise of self-will, but of that which God ordained in this world before sin came in—what God, consequently, would have to survive all the ruin here below. Now the man that understands grace alone can enter into, and thoroughly recognize the outward natural order in the world. Grace never leads a person to slight anything God has introduced, it matters not what it might be. Take for example the law, and what a profound error to suppose that the gospel weakens or annuls God's law! On the contrary, the Apostle Paul teaches in Rom. 3, “By faith we establish the law.” If I am on legal ground, there is terror, anxiety, darkness, the dread of meeting God as a Judge: the law keeps up all these thoughts as long as I am there; and very properly. If I, a sinner, am under it, I reap the bitter consequences in a sense of condemnation and guilt. I shall not know what confidence in God's love to my soul is. I may have hopes betimes, very much more frequently fears; perhaps a sort of excitement of joy overcoming one for awhile: but this soon passes away, and the reaction is greater than before. Hence it is only the man who knows that he is saved by grace and who is entirely lifted above the region to which the law applies its death-stroke, who can gravely, yet in peace, look at all, because he is in Christ before God and above all condemnation. A believer can do it, just because he is not under law; if he were, “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” That is, if he has to do with the law himself; for his own walk and communion, and not only his standing before God, he must be miserable, the more so in proportion as he is honest in referring the law to his own case. The attempt to be happy under the law is a most painful struggle, with the danger too of deceiving ourselves and others. From all this grace delivers the soul, setting it on a new ground outside the spirit of the world, the ways of men, and nature too even in its best estate. But it is not at all as if the believer did not honor and admire all God has laid down. He can look with delight and see the wisdom and holiness of God that shine in His every arrangement and all His moral government. Still it is very plain the law is a testimony to what God forbids or wishes, but not the revelation of what He is. This you cannot find outside Christ. However the law holds up the standard of that which God demands of man. It shows His intolerance of evil, and the necessary judgment of those who practice it. But we should be helplessly, hopelessly miserable if this were all; and it is only when the soul has laid hold of the grace of God that it can take pleasure in His ways.

This chapter, then, surveys the relationships of nature in the light of the kingdom. The first and most fundamental is that of marriage. “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” There you have the conduct of such as are on legal ground. There is really no respect for God, no genuine regard for His law. The Lord at once vindicates from the Word the institution and the sanctity of marriage: “Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?” That is, He shows that it is not a mere question of what came in by the law, but He goes to the sources. God had first established it; and, far from dissolving the tie, as men list, He made a single pair, and therefore only to be the one for the other. All other relationships were expressly to be light in comparison of this closest tie—even union. “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.” Next to the relationship of marriage is the tie of a child to its parents. Still it is said, “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.” It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of marriage as a natural institution. Who would talk of a child leaving his father and mother for any cause? The Pharisees even would not think of such a thing. The conclusion is irresistible: “What therefore God path joined together let not man put asunder.” They were ready with an answer, of course, even to our Lord Himself: “Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” There was really no such command: a divorce was simply allowed.

Thus, even where men boast of the law most loudly, it is only grace that gives a man to understand it. The very teachers of the law never understood what it meant, nor whereof they affirmed. So the Apostle Paul reproaches those that desired to be its doctors in his day. But our Lord draws the distinction with the most perfect truthfulness. Moses suffered certain things not according to the original archetypal intention of God. Nor should this be matter of wonder; for the law made nothing perfect. A solemn word that: which shows, not that the law was anything but what was good; but the law made nothing perfect. It was good in itself, but it could not impart goodness. The law might be perfect for its own object, but it perfected nothing, nor was it ever the intention of God that it should. But more than this—there were certain concessions contained in the law which did not at all express the divine mind; but God therein was dealing with a people after the flesh. The law does not contemplate a man as born of God; Christianity does. So far as there were men of faith during the law, they were of course born of God. But the law itself drew no line between regenerate and unregenerate; at least, it addressed all Israel, and not believers only, and hence suffered certain things because of the hardness of their hearts. So that our Lord, while intimating a certain consideration of Israel's condition in the flesh, at the same time vindicated God's law from the corrupt deductions of these selfish Pharisees. “From the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And whosoever marrieth her that is put away doth commit adultery.” There our Lord adds what was not in the law, and brings out the full mind of God touching this relationship. There is but one just cause for which it may be dissolved; or rather, marriage must be dissolved morally in order to terminate as a matter of fact. In case of fornication, the tie is all gone before God. Such a union is incompatible with that sin; and then the putting away of the wife merely proclaims before others what has already taken place in His sight. All is made perfectly clear. The righteousness of the law is established as far as it went, but it stops short of perfection by admitting in certain cases a less evil to avoid a greater. And then we have our Lord supplying the needed truth: going up to the very beginning, and on to the end also. Thus it is that

Christ, the true light, alone and always introduces the perfect mind of God, supplying all deficiencies and making all perfect. This is the aim, work, and effect of grace. Nevertheless, “His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” Alas! the selfishness of the heart even in disciples. It was so much the custom then to dismiss the wife because of petty dislike, &e., that it shocked them to hear the Lord insisting on the indissolubility of the marriage tie.

But, says the Lord, “All men receive not this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.” There, I apprehend, He is showing, that whatever may be the sanctity of the institution of marriage, naturally, there is in the last, or spiritual instance, a power of God that can raise people above it. The Apostle Paul was acting in the spirit of this verse, when he gives us his own judgment as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. Doubtless he was called to a remarkable work, which would have made due attention to family relationship out of the question. His business lay and took him everywhere. Wherever there was a church to take care of, wherever souls cried, Come hither and help us, nay, far beyond the calls of saints or men, the Holy Ghost laid it on his devoted heart. A work which might summon him at a moment's notice to the ends of the earth, would hardly have consisted with the care that devolves upon a husband and father. Had it been sought to unite the two, either the natural relationships must have been neglected, or the work of the Lord could not have been so thoroughly done. Hence the wise and gracious judgment of the apostle, not imposed as a command, but left to weigh on the spiritual mind. The last of the three classes in the verse is figuratively expressed: it means, plainly, the living unmarried for God's glory. But mark, it is a gift, not a law, much less a caste. Only such receive it “to whom it is given.” It is put as a privilege. As the apostle presses the honorableness of marriage, he was the last to lay the smallest slur on such a tie; but he also knew that there was a higher and all-absorbing love, an entrance, in its measure, into the affections of Christ for the Church. Still this is not an imposed obligation, but a special call and gift of grace in which he rejoiced to glorify his Master. The appreciation of the love of Christ to the Church had formed him in its own pattern. Observe here, it is “made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake” —that order of things which depends on Christ, now in heaven. And hence, strong in the grace that shines in Him at the right hand of God, they to whom it is given walk above the natural ties of life; not, I need not say, despising them; honoring and calling all honor to them, yet individually surrendering themselves to that goodly portion which shall not be taken from them.

But there is another aspect of nature that comes before us—that of children i and something that is apt to be despised. What in this world so helpless, such a picture of utter weakness and dependence, as a babe! “Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray.” The disciples thought it an annoyance or a liberty, and “rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.” So completely were met all the demands of love, even where the desire seemed ever so unseasonable. For why should the Lord of heaven and earth occupy Himself with putting His hands upon little ones? But the Lord would hear no miscalled reason: love never does, being in truth above all reasons.

Charity, it is written, never faileth: therefore surely not His, who, if appealed to, cannot refuse those who confide in it. He laid His hands on them and blessed them. The unworthy thoughts of the disciples were set aside, who thought babes unworthy of His notice. Ah! how little they knew Him, long as they have been with Him. Was it not worthy of Him so to bless the very least in man's eyes? The disciples, because their own hearts feebly entered into and enjoyed the grace of God, disdained the act of those who brought their babes to Jesus. But it was right: they knew enough to give them confidence in His love. They were quite sure He would not despise the little ones, nor refuse His blessing; nor did He. How important a lesson for our souls is this! It need not be one connected with ourselves; it might be another's child. Do we claim the Lord for it? What is His feeling? He is great, He is mighty; but He despiseth not any. Before His glory there is not so much difference between a world and a worm. The world is a mere cipher, if God measures by Himself. But if He does, then He may look upon that which is a worm and no man; and there may be the object of His deepest love and care. Our Lord looked at these babes, O with what interest! What was the globe compared with the destiny of a little babe blessed of Jesus? Each had a soul: and what was its value? What to be a vessel of grace in this world, and of glory in the bright eternal day? The disciples did not enter into these thoughts; and if any of us have in any measure, do we not often forget them? How little our souls are able to interweave the coming glory with the scenes of present misery in daily life, and to act unwaveringly now on that which we believe will be manifested then! Can we take pleasure in infirmities as well as distresses, for Christ's sake! It is in weakness that His strength is made perfect. We must be made nothing of, if we are indeed to be strong. Let us bear the same thing in mind if we have to do with those we are in danger of despising. Jesus not only blessed the babes, but rebuked the disciples, who had misrepresented Him. Had they not given the impression of a rabbi? But He says, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” O what a withering word for the pride of religion! Were the disciples “of such” at that moment, or at least in that act? Had they not declared themselves practically outside the kingdom, by the spirit shown towards the babes and those who brought them?

But this is not all. A young man, as it is said, “came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” It is not now a question of marriage, or of a babe; but of one who combined in his person every quality that was estimable; and in his circumstances every advantage that the natural heart could desire: of one who not only had all that men think productive of happiness in this world, but also most sincere in desiring to know and do the will of God. His was evidently a lovely natural character. And, further, he was attracted by, and came to Jesus. What did the Lord say to him? From another Gospel, Jesus, we know, loved him; and this, not because he believed in and followed Jesus; for, alas! we know he did not. There are various forms of divine love, beside that which embraces us as returned prodigals. This man went away sorrowful from Jesus: no person has a right to add that he ever came back glad to Jesus. I do not say that he did not, but Scripture does not say he did; and Scripture, as it cannot be broken, so neither must it be added to. While we have a special love for the children of God, and ought only to value in the things of God that which is of the Holy Ghost, it does not follow that we are not to admire a fine mind or a beautiful character naturally. If we do not, it only proves that we do not understand the mind of God as here displayed in Jesus. Even as to creation, am I to look coldly, or not at all, at a river or a mountain, the sea, the sky, plains, valleys, forests, trees, flowers, that God has made? It is a total mistake that spirituality renders dull to His outward works. But am I to set

my mind upon these sights? Are we to travel far and wide for the purpose of visiting what all the world counts worthy to be seen? If in my path of serving Christ a grand or beautiful prospect passes before me, 1 do not think that he whose handiwork it is calls me to close my eyes or mind. The Lord Himself draws attention to the lilies of the field, brighter than Solomon in all His glory. Man admires that which enables him to indulge his self-love, his ambition, in this world. That is merely the flesh. But as to the beautiful morally or in nature, grace, instead of despising, values all that is good in its own sphere, and does homage to the God who thus displayed His wisdom and His power. Make the creature the object, and there is the flesh abusing the truth of God. To admire when they are brought before us, is a very different thing from making them our pursuit and our life. Grace despises neither what is in creation nor what is in man. If I see benevolence, I admire it: it is a bad thing if I do not. This young man the Lord loved, when certainly as yet there was no faith at all. He went away from Jesus in sorrow: what believer ever did since the world began? His sorrow was because he was not prepared for the path of faith. Jesus desired him to follow Him, but not as a rich man. He would have been delighted, to do “some great thing;” but the Lord laid bdre self in his heart. He knew, that, spite of all that naturally, and even tested by the law, was so beautiful in him, there was, if tested by Himself, self-importance at the bottom—the flesh turning these very advantages into a reason for not following Jesus. But self must be brought down. As nothing at all, he must follow Jesus, making Him to be his all in all, or it is a mockery. “Good Master,” said he, “what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” He had not learned the first lesson a Christian knows—what a convicted sinner is learning: that he is lost. He had no such idea in his mind. By being with Christians, one may adopt their language and thoughts; but he is sure before long to bring out something which betrays that he has no real understanding of the matter. The youth showed that he had never felt his own ruin. He assumed that he was capable of doing good. The sinner is like the leper in Lev. 13, who could not bring an offering to God, but only remain outside, crying, “Unclean, unclean.” The young man had no sense of sin. His word is not, “What must I do to be saved?” but, “What good thing must I do to have eternal life?” He regarded eternal life as the result of a man's doing good. He had been doing the law; and as far as he knew he never broke it.

Our Lord says to him, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one; that is, God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” He may take him up on that ground. This man had no idea that the one to whom he was speaking was God Himself. He merely went to Him as a good man.

Now, on this footing the Lord would not allow Himself to be called good. As far as the man's own perception of His person was concerned, He was no more than man, and therefore not entitled to be called good: God alone is. Had he known Christ to be what He was and is—a divine person—He would not have refused, I conceive, to be so addressed. But in such a case, would the young man have put the question at all? The Lord, therefore, first simply deals with him on his own ground. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; honor thy father and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Lord quotes the commands that relate to human affairs—the second table of the law, as it is called. “All these,” says the young man, “have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” But says the Lord, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt

have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." And what then? "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." He loved his possessions better than he loved Jesus. This gave our Lord an opportunity for unfolding another truth; and one most startling to a Jew, who regarded wealth as a sign of the blessing of God. It was in a similar spirit that the friends of Job also acted, though they were Gentiles; for, in truth, it is the judgment of fleshly righteousness. They thought that God must be against Job, because he had got into unheard-of trial. The Lord brings out, in view of the kingdom of heaven, the solemn truth, that the advantages of the flesh are positive hindrances to the spirit.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you that a rich man shall hardly" (that is, with difficulty; not, he cannot, but "shall hardly") "enter into the kingdom of heaven." Emphatically He repeats it, "Again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" (beyond nature of course) "than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved!" The Lord's answer was perfect. "Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." If it was a question of man's doing anything to get into the kingdom, riches are only so much a burden that hinders him; for vain man would carry his riches with him. And so it is with all else, counted desirable. Whatever I have good in myself, whether it be moral ways, position, or what not—these are but impediments as far as concerns the kingdom, and make it impossible, yes, utterly impossible, to man. But with God (and we may bless Him for it) all things are possible, no matter what the difficulty. Therefore, God chooses in His grace to call all sorts and conditions of people. We read of a person called out of Herod's court, we hear of saints in Caesar's household, A great company of the priests believed; so did Barnabas the Levite, with his houses and lands; nay, above all, Saul of Tarsus, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. All these difficulties only gave God the opportunity to assert His own power and grace.

When Peter heard how hard it was for the rich to be saved, he thought it time for him to speak of what they had given up for the Lord's sake, and to learn what they should get for it. "Behold, we have forsaken all, and have followed thee. What shall we have therefore?" How painfully natural was this? "Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." There is nothing the believer does or suffers but what will be remembered in the kingdom. While this is most blessed, it is also a very solemn thought. Our ways now, though they have nothing to do with the remission of our sins, are yet of all consequence as a testimony to Christ, and will bear very decidedly on our future place in the kingdom. We must not use the doctrine of grace to deny that of rewards; but even so, Christ is the sole motive for the saint. We shall receive for the things done in the body according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad, as the Lord shows plainly here. The twelve had followed the rejected Lord, albeit His own grace had given them the power. It was not they who had chosen Him, but He had chosen them. They are now cheered with the assurance that in the blessed time of regeneration, when the Lord will work a grand change in this world (for as He makes a sinner regenerate before he is raised from the dead, so He will, as it were, regenerate the world before the new heavens and earth are fully brought in), their work and sufferings will not be forgotten of

Him.

Remember that what is spoken of here does not refer to heaven: there is still better work in heaven than judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet is it a glorious destiny reserved for the twelve apostles during the reign of Christ over the earth. A similar glory is destined for other saints of God, as we read in 1 Cor. 6:2: “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?” There it is used to show the incongruity of a saint seeking the world's judgment in a matter between himself and another. This ought always to be the uppermost thing in the mind of the Christian—to keep himself entirely apart from the world, true to the objects for which Christ has called him. Still judging the world can hardly be what we shall do in heaven, but what we shall come out of heaven with the Lord to do, as to the earth. You never can lose sight of a single truth of God, without less to the soul. It is a lower truth, but we cannot do without it. We must always draw our weapons from the quiver of the Lord, and may be sure His arrows alone are effectual.

As to all the natural relationships and advantages of this life, if lost for His name's sake, the losers shall receive an hundred fold and inherit everlasting life. The gospel of John speaks of everlasting life as a thing that we possess now: the others speak of it as future. We have got the principle of it now in Christ, and we shall have its fullness in glory by and by. “But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” What a hint to Peter to take care! A self-righteous claim is a ready snare, and soon finds its level under the mighty hand of God. The leaving of all, if valued, lost all its value. Thus, many who began to run well, turned aside from grace to law; and Peter himself was blamed by the last (but first) of the apostles, as we know from the Galatians.

The Lord make His grace the strength of our hearts; and if we have suffered the loss of any or of all things, may we still count them dung that we may win Him.

Chapter 89

Remarks on Matthew 20:1-29

The last chapter closed with the important doctrine that in the kingdom the Lord will remember all suffering and service here for His name's sake. But it is evident that though this be an undoubted truth of Scripture, referred to in the Epistles of Paul, and elsewhere in the New Testament, it is one which the heart would be ready to abuse to self-righteousness; and that a person might soon forget that all is of grace, and might be disposed to make a claim upon God by reason of anything which He had enabled a soul to do. Hence a parable is added which brings in a totally different principle, where the prominent thought is the sovereignty of God, for the express purpose, I think, of guarding against such effects. For God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love which we may have showed toward His name. But, then, there will be a danger in our remembering it. It does not follow because God will not forget what His people do for Him, that His people are to remember it themselves. We have but one thing to think of and set before our souls—Christ Himself: as the Apostle Paul said, “This one thing I do; forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before:” not forgetting what we have done wrong, the very reverse of what will be even in glory. When there is not a vestige of humiliation more, we shall have a more lively sense than ever of our manifold failures; but not as producing one thought of doubt, or fear, or unhappiness. Such thoughts would be contrary to the presence of God. It is a good thing for the believer, holding fast his full blessing, to think of what he is—to humble himself day by day in the sight of God; always remembering that true humiliation is on the ground of our being children of God. If we take the place of being still in our sins, and needing to start afresh, as it were, over and over again, there never can be proper Christian experience or progress. There is a great difference between the humiliation of a sinner and that of a saint, who, while he has an evil nature, has also a new nature in Christ. Humility is always right; but when we draw near in worship to God, it is no proof of this humility to be speaking about ourselves as poor sinners. We come together to enjoy Christ, to set forth what God is; and after all, can there be a doubt that this, involving as it does the consciousness of our nothingness, really shows the deepest and most genuine humility. A person who had some office about the queen, and who had proper respect for her, would be thinking of her, not of himself. How much more when we are in the presence of God? This ought to fill our souls with joy in the worship of the Lord. What is comely for the saint, what is most acceptable to God, is not the constant bringing in ourselves in one way or another, right as this may be, in a certain sense, in our closet. But the praise of God for what He is, above all, in the knowledge of His Son and of His work, is the great end of all the dealings of God with His children.

This will be a test for the soul. Where there is a consciousness of habitual carelessness and lack of dependence, with their sad results, there will not be a preparedness of heart for worship. In such circumstances, the Spirit makes the conscience active, instead of drawing out the heart. What does not the Lord deserve from us? When we go to praise Him, breaking bread in His name, it is not because we can take comfort from anything but Himself: and this will not arrest, but strengthen, our self-judgment. What is the Word of God, and what the Holy Ghost, for? Is it not

that we should be growing up into Christ in all things? The proper thought connected with the Lord's table is, I am going to meet with Christ, to praise Him, together with His saints: and this keeps a check upon our spirits, and brings before our souls what a thing it is to meet with Christ, and to be found in His presence. Worship is the soul finding itself in the presence of God, in the Spirit. By and by we shall have perfect worship in heaven. Now we have it only in part, even as we know but in part. But in principle the worship of the believer is a heavenly thing, even while accomplished on the earth, as we ourselves are said to be “heavenly” also. What we have to forget is not our shortcomings—to be indifferent or light about them; but “let a man discern or examine himself:” it is the inward discernment of the soul. And what then? “So let him eat.” That is, the Christian even, if conscious that he has forgotten the Lord during the week, is not to distrust Him. What is he to do? To go to the Lord's table as if it were no matter at all? That would be sin. Is he, then to stay away? Neither one nor the other. What, then, can he do? He is to judge himself, to confess his fault, to humble himself before God; and “so let him eat.” This is God's way. A person staying away does not mend matters. I am as good as saying, “I am not a Christian at all,” if I keep away from the Lord's table; or I have been behaving so badly, that others would consider me not a Christian if they knew it. Constantly bringing it before the soul is one of God's ways for preserving from sin. But let it be done in the spirit of self-judgment at home, so that we praise when we come together in the name of the Lord.

In order to keep up this sense of grace, the Spirit of God recurs in this chapter to the sovereignty of God; the counteractive to the self-righteousness that is to be found even in the heart of a disciple. Peter might say, “We have left all and followed thee,” and the Lord might assure him that it would not be forgotten; but He immediately adds the parable of the householder. Here you find not the principle of rewards, or God's righteous recognition of the service done by His people; but His own rights, His own sovereignty. Hence, there are no differences here—no one specially remembered because he had won souls to Christ, or left all for Christ. The principle is this, that while God will infallibly own every service and loss for the sake of Christ; yet does He maintain His own title to give as He will. There might be some poor soul brought to the knowledge of Christ at the day of his death. Now, God the Father claims His own title to give what He may please; he may have done no work, but God's title is reserved to give to those who have not wrought anything at all—as you may think—just what is good in His own eyes. This is a very different principle from what we had in the last chapter, and exceedingly counter to the mind of man. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.”

The common application of this parable to the salvation of the soul is a mistake. For this is that which Christ wrought for, suffered for, and lives for, independently of man. The poor sinner has just to give himself up to be saved by Christ. When brought to an end of itself, acknowledging that it deserves nothing but hell, how sweet that God brings before such a soul that Jesus Christ (and this is a faithful saying) came into the world to save sinners. When content to be saved as nothing but a sinner, and by nothing but Christ, there and then only is there rest given of Him. Wherever we have to contribute our part, it will be only uncertainty, and doubts, and difficulties; and there is where the salvation of God shines forth. Christ alone is salvation. The man that is saved contributes nothing but his sins. But God is delighted, and not the less because it is the fruit of His

grace, to hear a poor sinner acknowledge that Jesus is worthy to bring him, freed from sin, to heaven. But in this parable the question is not this. There is nothing in it about believing in Christ or His work. It is positive work that is done. There you may think, surely the Lord will reward the work according to its kind and degree. This we have seen: but there is another principle not always understood—God reserves in His own hand the right to do as He pleases, and He never makes a mistake. It may seem hard that a man should be toiling for fifty years, and that another, brought in just at the close of his life, should be honored in heaven as much as himself. But God is the only righteous, the only wise judge of what is for His own glory. If He please, He will put all upon an equal footing. He will reward the work that is done, but He will give as He will.

"When he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market-place; and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way." It is not grace in the sense of salvation here. "Whatsoever is right I will give you." It is God that judges what is becoming. "Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise." And, singular to say, "About the eleventh hour he went out." What a heart this tells? What infinite goodness! That God, who recognizes every service and suffering done for Himself, yet keeps intact the prerogative of going out at the last moment to bring in souls, and occupy them with what might seem to be a little service! But He can give grace to do that little well. "About the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." "Beginning from the last" in the perfect wisdom of God. And why is it that "the last" are made so much of in this parable? What makes it the more striking is, that in the close of the preceding chapter it was not so. There, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." But here the last are always spoken of first. So the steward is told to begin from the last unto the first. And again, when the master of the vineyard has to speak himself, it is the same thing: "the last shall be first, and the first last." It is the sovereignty of grace in giving as He pleases; not alone in saving, but in rewarding in the time of glory—for this is what is spoken of. Of course the last received their wages thankfully. But when the first heard about it, they begin to think themselves entitled to more—they who had borne the burden and heat of the day. But the master reminds them that all was a settled thing before they entered upon their work. In their selfishness, they forgot both the terms and the righteousness of him with whom they had to deal. If, out of the liberality of his heart, the householder was pleased to give others, who had worked the twelfth part of what they had done, as much as he gave themselves, what was that to them This was his affair entirely. God maintains His own rights. And it is of the greatest importance for our souls that we hold to the rights of God in everything. Persons will argue as to whether it is righteous for God to elect this person or that. But if you go upon the ground of righteousness, all are lost, and lost forever. Now, if God is pleased to use His mercy according to His wisdom, and for His glory, among these poor lost ones, who is to dispute with Him? "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" God is entitled to act according to what is in His heart: and "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Is He entitled to act from Himself? He cannot act from man on the grounds of righteousness. There is no foundation on which He can thus deal; and it is entirely a question of His own good pleasure. And we must remember that there is not a man that is lost but rejects the

mercy of God, despises it, or uses it for his own selfish purposes in this world. The man that is saved is the only one that has a true sense of sin, the only one that gives himself up as lost really unto God; but then he falls back upon His infinite mercy in Christ to save a poor sinner.

In the case we have here, when the first came and complained to the good man of the house, he answered them, “Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” There comes out the whole secret. Man, yea, a professing disciple of the Lord, a laborer in His vineyard, may be disputing because he is to have no more than another who, in his opinion, has done little as compared with himself. It was the same principle that made the Judaizers so jealous about the Gentiles being brought in. So says the Lord, “The last shall be first, and the first last.” I would just ask, Why in the last chapter is it, “Many that are first shall be last, and the last first,” and here, “The last shall be first, and the first last?” In speaking about rewards, according to the work done, the failure of man is intimated; for indeed weakness soon shows itself. “The first shall be last.” But in this new parable is the sovereignty of God that never fails. Consequently here, “The first shall be last, and the last first.” “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world.” There was a first, we may say, who became last—a laborer for the Lord, who had not given up Christianity, but grown tired of the path of unremitting service for Christ. If instead of honor now, the thousands of those who are engaged in the service of Christ were to receive only scorn and persecution, there would be no slight thinning of their ranks. The present return should be shame and suffering. This must be looked for by him who intelligently seeks to serve faithfully the Lord in this world.

Demas may have been a believer; but the trial and reproach, the love of ease and other things all came strongly over his spirit, and he abandoned the service of the Lord. “All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's:” there is a similar principle.

We have our Lord next shown going up to Jerusalem; and now he prepares them for still greater trouble. “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.” And yet even after this, so selfish is the heart of man, the mother of Zebedee's children comes to Him with her sons, who were among the apostles themselves. She comes worshipping Him and desiring a certain thing of Him. “And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” Now comes out another principle; for, indeed, so perfect is the humiliation of Christ—such the self-abandonment of the only One who had a perfect knowledge of all things and a right to everything by His personal glory, that He says, I have no place to give you in my kingdom. It is not mine to give, save as my Father may desire. But I have something to give you now: and what is it? Suffering. Yes, suffering is what Christ gives His servants now, and this as the highest privilege. When the Apostle Paul was converted, he asks at once, “What wilt thou have me to do?” The Lord tells him what great things he should suffer for His name's sake. Suffering all is better than doing anything. It is the best portion a saint can have in this world. The highest honor we can have here is suffering with and for Christ. This our Lord lets the mother of Zebedee's children know, when she asks for a place for her sons on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom. “Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of,

and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able." He took in two different kinds of suffering: the cup, which is inward suffering; and the baptism, which expresses what we are immersed into outwardly. The two include every kind of trial, inward and outward. He is not here speaking about the cross in atonement, for there can be no fellowship in this. But there might be the cross in rejection, though not as atonement. There may be the sharing of what Christ suffered from man, but not of what He suffered from God. When He was suffering for sin on the cross, He drops relationship, and bows in infinite grace to the place of judgment. He is made sin. He realizes what it is to be forsaken of God, making Himself responsible for the sins of men. He says therefore in that terrible moment on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" With this we have nothing to do—no rejection because of sin. God forsook Jesus that He might not forsake us. There never can be God forsaking a Christian, or even hiding Himself from him. There is no such thing in Scripture since the death of Christ as God hiding himself from a believer. We have not a promise merely, but the accomplishment of it. The first principle of the gospel is perfect forgiveness and reconciliation. We are brought nigh unto God through the blood of Christ and forgiven all trespasses.

The Lord, then, says that they knew not what they were asking; and asks if they were able to drink of the cup that He should drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with. They say unto Him, We are able. They did not know what they said, any more than what they asked. For after this, when our Lord was only in danger of death, we find that they all forsook Him and fled. And one of these two sons of Zebedee, if he did venture into the hall of judgment, it was merely, as it were, under the high priest's robe, that is, on the plea of being known to him. When Peter followed on his own ground, it was only to show his utter weakness. In presence of such a cup as this, and such a baptism, the Lord says, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;" not, Ye are able: "but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." I would just remark that the words which are put in in italics mar the sense very much, being inserted without warrant. Leave them out and the sense is better. It was His to give to those only to whom the Father destined it. Christ is the administrator of the rewards of the kingdom. He says, As I am now the servant in suffering, so I shall be in the glory. In everything, Christ is the One who will turn all things to the glory of God. Every knee shall bow to His name, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; but then it will all be to the glory of God the Father. "And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." A good deal of our indignation is no better than theirs. Their own pride was wounded. No doubt it seemed a very right thing to put down these two brethren who were so full of themselves. But why were they thus indignant? Because they too were full of themselves. Christ was not filled with indignation. It was a sorrow to Him: but they were moved with hot feeling against the two brethren. We have to take care. Often where we seek to pull down those that seek to exalt themselves, there is self on our part too. Supposing, too, we take one who has fallen into sin, you will see a good deal of strong feeling about it: but is this the best way of showing our sense of sin? Those who feel most for God have always the deepest feeling for poor sinners, and for saints who have slipped away from God. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great exercise authority upon them.” He put His finger upon that very love of greatness in themselves. They were loud in condemning it in James and John; but the feeling with which it was condemned, betrayed that they had the same thought in their own hearts. He says, “It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” There is a difference between the two words. The word translated “minister” means a servant, but not necessarily a slave, though a person who might be hired. But in verse 27 it is a bondman or slave. Do you want to be really great according to the principles of my kingdom? Go down as low as you can. Do you want to be greatest? Go down the lowest of all. Whoever has least of self is greatest in the kingdom of Christ. For “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” He took the lowest place of all, and gave His life a ransom for many. Blessed forever be His name!

The last verses properly belong to the next chapter, which is the approach of our Lord to Jerusalem from the way of Jericho. And it is necessary to take the two chapters together, to have the proper connection of all that the Holy Ghost has given us here. But I cannot close even this part of the subject without recalling attention to the principles of the kingdom of God as shown us by Christ Himself. And what a wonderful call it is for self-renouncing service! What a joy to think that everything that now is a trial, will be found as a joy in that kingdom! There are those who may think that they are favored with few opportunities for serving the Lord—who are shut out from what their hearts would desire. Let us remember that He who knows everything reserves His right to give as He will to His own and of His own. He will do the very best according to His heart. Our one business now is to think of Him who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. That is our prime call and need—to be Christ's servants, in serving each other.

Chapter 90

Remarks on Matthew 20:30 and 21:1-22

(Chap. 20:30; 21:1-22.)

In the transfiguration we had a picture of the coming kingdom, Christ, the head and center, with representatives of its heavenly and its earthly things; on one side, Moses and Elias glorified; and on the other, the three disciples in their natural bodies. This was a turning point in the history of our Lord's course which John passes by, but it is given fully in the other three gospels. The cross, now that sin exists, is the foundation of all glory. There could be nothing stable or holy without it. It is the sole channel through which flows to us all our blessing; and Christ's decease, we know from Luke, was the theme on the holy mount. But John gives us nothing of that scene. The reason is because he is occupied with Christ as the Son; we find there, not the human side, but the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. His rejection by Israel, and Israel consequently rejected by God, are assumed from the beginning of John's gospel: as we read, “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” Now, the transfiguration does not bring out the Deity of Christ, but His glory as exalted Son of man, owned withal as Son of God. This was a sample of the glory of the Lord in His future kingdom, with the types of some risen, and of others in their natural state. So will it be by and by. John does not show us the mount, but the Father's house. This is for the Church. The world may see the glory, more or less, as foreshown on the mount, but this is not our best portion. We look for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory. Our hope is Christ, to be with Him in the many-mansioned Father's house; a hope which is far beyond any blessing of the kingdom. Neither will it be displayed. The secrets of love and communion which the Church will have with Christ in the Father's house can never be the subject of manifestation to the world. Who now could or would publish the tenderest feelings of his heart? Doubtless the glory, the external pomp, and the place of power which the Church will possess in the coming kingdom will be displayed: for these form some of the chief features in the millennial reign. We shall reign with Christ, the glory of the Bridegroom enveloping, as it were, the Bride. If we discriminate what the Scriptures distinguish, we may find a marked distinction between the proper position and hopes of the Church, and the glories of the kingdom, however real, which all the glorified share, when it is established in power. Thus the Mount of Transfiguration holds an important place in the three synoptic gospels, as showing Christ in the capacity of Messiah, servant, and Son of man. As such, He will be displayed after the pattern in the mount, and, accordingly, the three evangelists, who present Christ in these three aspects, give us the transfiguration. Further, the thought of present reception by the Jews had been entirely given up, and the new thing begins to be announced immediately before it. Christ must suffer and die: and those who follow Him during His rejection will be in the kingdom, but not as subjects; they will be kings with Him when He reigns. When responsibility and even individual privileges come in, “the kingdom” is the thought; but when our corporate place is intended, “the Church” is spoken of. (Matt. 16; 18)

Here, in this chapter (21), and from verse 30 of chapter 20, a preface to it, we have the last formal presentation of the king, though not with the thought of being received; but in order to the filling up of man's iniquity and the accomplishment of the counsels of God, He presents Himself as such.

We find first, that He is on His way to Jerusalem, and sees two blind men, who cry unto Him, “Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David!” If they knew nothing of the impending crisis, they notwithstanding were completely in the spirit of the scene. The Holy Ghost was acting upon them, that they might bear testimony to Jesus, who was now for the last time to be publicly presented as Heir to the throne. What a picture! The seeing ones, in their blind hardness of heart, rejecting their own Messiah, though owned of Gentiles as the born king of the Jews; and the poor blind ones, through faith loudly confessing Him the true king. Perhaps their principal, their one desire, may have been to be healed of their blindness. Be it so; but God at any rate gave to their faith the proper object and the just confession for that moment, for He was guiding the scene. His hand was upon the spring; and whatever was the thought of the blind men in crying after the Lord, God's design was that there should be a suited testimony rendered to His king, the “Son of David.” A Jew would well understand all that was implied in the title. What a condemnation of Pharisees who had rejected Christ! The highest point of view is by no means always that which is most proper; a lower one is sometimes far more right. Thus the confession of Christ as “Son of David” was more in keeping here than if they had said, “Thou Son of God.” This may sound strange where the various titles have not been weighed; but in hailing Him according to His Jewish glory, they uttered that which was in unison with what God was then doing.

And now, let me ask reverently, Why should the resurrection of Lazarus be omitted in the three first gospels? Man, if these accounts had been his work, would not have omitted it: he would deem the insertion of it in each gospel as necessary for a full and truthful account. Besides, it would have been thought far too important an item to be left out under any consideration. The omission of so stupendous a miracle, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, points out clearly that it is the Spirit of God who wrought sovereignly and writes by each with a special purpose. If so, all which men call inconsistencies and imperfections finds no place here, unless God can make mistakes, which none will say. It was a part of the special purpose of God to omit the miracle; for He only presents those facts which suit His design in each gospel. Now this miracle of raising Lazarus does not show us Christ as the Messiah, or the Servant, or the Son of man; but as the Son of God, who gives life and raises the dead—a grand point of doctrine in John 5 and there alone found in the gospels. There were other miracles of raising from the dead in the other gospels; but the truth of His Sonship and present glory in communion with the Father is not in these others the prominent one. It is not, therefore, as Son of God that He appears in them. Take for instance the raising the widow's son at Nain. What are the circumstances brought into emphasis there? He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Luke, or rather the Spirit, is careful to note this; for it is what gives point to the touching story. “He restored him to his mother.” It is the Lord's human sympathy, the Lord as Son of man, which is the object here. True, he must have been Son of God, or He could not have thus raised the dead. If the Godhead, and relation to the Father, of Him who was made flesh, had been the only truth to show, the attendant circumstances need not have been narrated; the Gospel of John might have sufficed, as it does, to display eminently the Lord Jesus as the Son.

All this manifests the extreme perfectness of the word of God, in these gospels. When the mind is subject to Him this is seen, and He teaches those who submit themselves and confide in Him. There is a blind man healed in John 9; but it is not these near Jericho who appealed to Jesus; but as Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. Rejected of men, He was going about,

seeking for objects on whom to bestow His blessing; the Son acting in grace and truth, who, unsought, saw the deep need and dealt accordingly. It was an opportunity of working the works of God. He waits for nothing, goes to the man, and the work is done, though it were the Sabbath-day. How could the Son of God rest in the presence of sin and wretchedness, whatever religious pride might feel? The Lord leaves him not until he can say, “Son of God,” and worships. Moreover, we may say, John never mentions a miracle simply for the display of power, but in order to show the divine glory of Christ. In Matthew it is the rejected Messiah. Here (chap. xx.) the thought is, that, being despised by the nation, God makes two blind men to bear testimony to Him as Son of David; and this, in the well-known spot of Israel's triumphant power, and, alas! also of rebellious unbelief entailing a curse, now of the Messiah come in grace, and with equal ability and readiness to bless.

The place (near Jericho) was accursed. But if Jesus has come as Messiah, although the Jews reject Him, He shows Himself to be Jehovah; not only Messiah under the law, but Jehovah above it; and so he blesses them even at Jericho, and they followed Him. This was the place that Israel should have taken: they ought to have known their King. The two blind men were a witness for Him and against them. There was a competent testimony—two witnesses: “In the mouth of two,” &c. Mark and Luke, whose object was not to bring out testimony valid according to the law, only mention one. There is, of course, no contradiction in this. One thing is certain, that they were both healed in the journey from Jericho to Jerusalem. Luke mentions simply the vicinity of Jericho—not as He was come nigh, but as He was nigh, which would be equally true when He left the place. The Authorized Version has increased the difficulty unwittingly.

Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives. The Jews well knew what was prophesied concerning this mountain; they ought to have entered into the spirit of what the Lord was doing.

The sending for the colt shows the Lord as Jehovah, who has a perfect right to all. “The Lord (Jehovah) hath need of him.” What more thorough than His knowledge of circumstances in the womb of the future I How evident His control over the owner's mind and feeling! Meek as He was, sitting upon an ass, the King of Zion according to the prophet, He was indeed as surely Jehovah as Messiah coming in His name: the “need” as amazing as the glory of His person. But the Lord goes onward to Jerusalem. And the multitude cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David!... Behold thy King cometh.” They apply Psa. 118 to Messiah, and they were right. They might be very unintelligent, and perhaps many of them joined later in the fearful cry, “His blood be upon us,” &c.; but here the Lord guides the scene. He comes to the city; but He is unknown: His own citizens know Him not. They ask, “Who is this?” So little understanding had the multitude, who had just been saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” that they answer, “This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.” But though they only see Jesus of Galilee, yet He shows Himself as King, and takes a place of authority and power. He enters into the temple, and overthrows the tables of the money-changers, &c. This may certainly be looked at as a miraculous incident; for it was astonishing that He whom they knew only as the prophet of Nazareth should dare to enter their temple, and drive out all who were desecrating it. But they turn not upon Him. The power of the God of the temple was there, and they flee, their consciences doubtless echoing the Lord's words, that they had made His house a den of thieves. But here we see not only the testimony of the crowd to the Kingship of Jesus, but the response to it, as it were, in the act of Jesus. As if He had said, “You hail me as King, and I will show you that I am.” Accordingly, He reigns, as it were, in righteousness, and cleanses the defiled temple. Into what a state had the Jews not fallen? A clear

testimony it was to them what Jesus thought about them; for what more severe condemnation than “ye have made it a den of thieves.” There were two cleansings—one before our Lord's public ministry, and the other at its close. John records the first, Matthew the last. In our Gospel it is an act of Messianic power, where He cleanses His own house, or, at least, acts for God, as His King. In John it is rather zeal for the injured honor of His Father's house— “Make not my Father's house an house of merchandize.” A collateral reason why John tells us of the first cleansing in the beginning of his Gospel is, that he assumes the rejection of Israel at once. Hence their rejection by Christ, set forth in this act, was the inevitable consequence of their rejection of Him: and this is the point from which John sets out when he begins with the ways of the Lord before His ministry.

But now the blind and the lame come to Him to be healed. “He healed their diseases and forgave their iniquities.” Both these classes were the hated of David's soul—the effect of the taunt upon David's soul. How blessed the contrast in the Son of David! He turns out the selfish religionists from the temple, and receives there the poor, blind, and lame, and heals them—perfect righteousness and perfect grace.

On the one hand, there are the voices of the children crying, “Hosanna,” &c.—the ascription of praise to Him as King, the Son of David; on the other, there is the Lord acting as King, and doing that which the Jews well knew had been prophesied of their King. He was there the confessed King; but not by the chief priests and scribes, who took umbrage, willfully and knowingly rejecting Him— “we will not have this man to reign over us.” Naturally, therefore, they seek to stop the mouth of the children, and ask Jesus to rebuke them: “Hearest thou not what these say?” But the Lord sanctions their praises: “Have ye never heard, out of the mouth of babes,” &c. The power of Jehovah was there, and there was a mouth to own it, though only in babes and sucklings. It is a wondrous scene. The Lord here quotes from Psa. 8, where He is seen as Son of man after His rejection as Son of David in Psa. 2 and seq. In Psa. 8 we have the suffering and exaltation of the Son of man. Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and Israel, gather, and do their worst. Refused, then, as the Messiah, He takes the higher place of Son of man, humbled first, and then glorified. The blind men owned Him in the first, and the babes in the last and deeper way. What has not God wrought?

He left them—a significant and solemn act. They rejected Him, and He abandons them, turning his back upon the beloved city.

As to the fig-tree, Mark says that the time of figs was not yet. Many have been perplexed at this, thinking that the Lord sought figs at a time when there could be none. The meaning is, that the time was not come for the gathering of figs; and consequently, if the tree had been in bearing, the Lord must have found figs thereon, for the time to gather them—the time of figs—was not yet. There ought to have been a show of fruit, but there was no appearance, save of leaves—outward profession. It was thoroughly barren. The Lord pronounces a curse upon it, and presently it withered away. Looking at Mark 11:12, you will see how Matthew disregards time; for the circumstance occupied two days, which he puts together without distinguishing. The sentence on the fig-tree was an emblematic curse upon the people, inasmuch as it was the national tree. The Lord found nothing but leaves, and the word is that henceforth no fruit should grow upon it forever. The nation had failed in fruit to God, when they had every means and opportunity for glorifying and serving Him; and now all their advantages are taken away, and it is not possible for them as the

old stock. The remnant even now is excepted who believe in Christ, and so is “the generation to come.” The disciples wondered; but the Lord says to them further, “If ye shall say to this mountain (mountain symbolizing Israel's political place among the nations, as exalted among them), be thou cast into the sea,” &c. This has been done. Not only is there no fruit borne for God, but Israel, as a nation, has vanished—cast into the sea—scattered, and to appearance lost in the mass of people—trodden down and oppressed under the foot of the Gentiles.

Here, then, in these miracles and scenes, is a remarkable witness of the Lord's last presentation to the Jews, and an equally striking picture of the judgment of God on Jerusalem and the Jews because of their rejection of the Messiah, who, according to Dan. 9, was cut off and had nothing, only to have all things by and by far more gloriously; and if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

2 Cor. 4:10, 11; 5:10.—The “body” has an important place in the exhortations of the word of God. The outward man, as well as the inward, is to be a witness for Christ. A person may say, If I display the world, my heart is not in it. Whereas the truth is, if Christ is enjoyed, things unlike Him drop off like fading leaves. So with the mode of life, furniture, habits, &c., as well as external appearance. Only we must be patient to others and give the truth time to expand and work.

Chapter 91

Remarks on Matthew 21:23-46

To the question about His authority our Lord answers the chief priests and the elders of the people by inquiring their thought of John's baptism. He appeals neither to miracles nor prophecy, but to conscience. How evident the accomplishment of the ancient oracles in His person, life, ministry! How full the testimony of signs and wonders wrought by Him! Yet their question showed how vain all had been, as His question showed either their dishonesty or their incompetency. In either case, who were they to judge? Little did they think that they and every other class in Israel, who successively sought to canvass the Lord of glory, were in truth but discovering their own distance and alienation from God. So indeed it ever is. Our judgments of others and of all things, above all of what concerns Christ, are the unfailing gauge of our own condition; and equally are we laid bare, whether right or wrong, by our refusal to judge. In this instance (ver. 23-27) the want of conscience was manifest—nowhere so fatal as in religious guides. “They reasoned within themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him! But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.” God was not in their thoughts; and thus all was false and wrong. And if God be not the object, self is the idol, and what more debasing? These chief priests were, at the bottom of their hearts, the abject slaves of the people over whose faith or superstition they had dominion. “We fear the people.” This at least was true. “And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell.” This was as clearly false, the merest shift of men who preferred to allege their incapacity to judge in their own sphere rather than own what they knew must convict them of fighting against God. They could tell but would not, because of the felt consequences. In the hands of Satan they are the main energy of evil and enemy of good, their private interests being always opposed to the real interests of God's people. Blind guides by their own acknowledgment! Infinitely worse the blindness, which, governed by no motive higher than present advantage and self-importance, overlooked God manifest in the flesh, and threw away, as incredulity ever does, riches greater by far than the treasures in Egypt! To such as these the Lord with ineffable dignity declines to render an account of His authority: He had often borne witness to it before. To ask it of Him—now furnished of itself the best proof that an answer was useless. How explain color to men who never saw I to men who would not see, if they could But our Lord does more. In the parable of the two sons commanded to work in the vineyard (ver. 22-32) He convicts these religious leaders of being worse before God than the most despised classes in the land. “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not,” &c. Decent lip-homage forms— “I go, sir, and went not” —such was the religion of those who stood highest in the world's estimate of that day. Self-will was unbroken and unjudged. As for those who disgraced the decencies of society in riotous or otherwise disreputable ways, they were more accessible to the stirring, searching appeals of John. Their very open and unrestrained evil exposed them to his righteous rebuke; and, in fact, they, not the respectable devotees, “believed him.” Such as made a fair show in the flesh were not prepared to withdraw the veil of a fair reputation without from a godless, self-pleasing course and character within; and as they rejected the counsel of God against themselves at John's summons, so they would not follow the example

of the poor outcasts now repentant. Deaf to the call of righteousness, they were just as hardened against the operations of God's grace, even where it was most conspicuous. “And ye, when he had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” Repentance awakens the sense of relationship to God as the One sinned against. The resolutions of nature begin and end in “I go, sir.” The Spirit of God produces the deep and overwhelming conviction that all has been evil against Him, with neither room for, nor desire of, excuse. But it is lost for worldly religion, which, resisting alike God's testimony and the evidence of conversion in others, sinks into increasing darkness and hostility to God. The ordained Judge of living and dead pronounces these proud, self-complacent men worse than those they deemed the worst. They were no judges now: nay, they were judged.

But next the Lord sets forth, not merely man's conduct toward God, but God's dealing with man, and this in a two-fold form: first, in view of human responsibility as under law: and secondly, in view of God's grace under the kingdom of heaven. The former is developed in the parable of the householder (ver. 33-41), the latter in that of the king's marriage-feast for his son. (Chap. 22:1-14). Of these let us now look at the first.

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.” It is a picture founded on, and filling up the sketch in, Isa. 5—a picture of God's painstaking dealings in Israel. “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” Then He looked for fruit. All had been settled by His directions, every outward advantage afforded by His goodness and power under Moses, Joshua, &c. There was definite arrangement, abundant blessing, ample protection, and adequate assertion of His rights by the prophets. “And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.” There was full patience too. “Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise.” Was there a single possibility that remained, a hope however forlorn? “Last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.” Alas! it was but the crowning of their iniquity and the occasion of bringing out their guilt and hopeless ruin. For “when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” They recognized the Messiah then, but only so as to provoke their malice and worldly lusts. “Let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance.” It was not only lack of fruit, persistent refusal of all the just claims of God and robbing Him of every due return, but the fullest outbreak of rebellious hatred, when tested by the presence of the Son of God in their midst. Probation is over; the question of man's state and of God's efforts to get fruit from His vineyard is at an end. The death of the rejected Messiah has closed this book. Man—the Jew—ought to have made a becoming answer to God for the benefits so lavishly showered on him; but his answer was—the cross. It is too late to talk of what men should be. Tried by God under the most favorable circumstances, they betrayed and shed the innocent blood; they killed the heir to seize on his inheritance. Hence judgment is now the only portion man under law has to expect. “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?” Seared as the poor Jews were, they could not but confess the sad truth: “He will miserably destroy those wicked men,” &c. The wickedness of the husbandmen failed to achieve its

own selfish end, as surely as it had never rendered fruits meet for Him whose provident care left men without excuse. But the rights of the householder were intact; and if there was still “the lord of the vineyard,” was He indifferent to the accumulated guilt of wronged servants and of His outraged Son? It could not be. He must, themselves being the witnesses, avenge the more summarily, because of His long patience and incomparable love so shamefully spurned and defied. Others would have the vineyard let to them, who should render Him the fruits in their seasons.

Thus the death of Christ is viewed in this parable, not as the groundwork of the counsels of God, but as the climax of man's sin and the closing scene of his responsibility. Whether law or prophets or Christ sought fruit for God, all was vain, not because God's claim was not righteous, but because man—aye, favored man, with every conceivable help—was incorrigible. In this aspect the rejection of the Messiah had the most solemn meaning; for it demonstrated, beyond appeal, that man, the Jew, was good for nothing if weighed in divine scales. It was not only that he was evil and unrighteous, but he could not endure perfect love and goodness in the person of Christ. Had there been a single particle of divine light or love in men's hearts, they would have reverenced the Son; but now the full proof stood out, that human nature as such is hopelessly bad; and that the presence of a divine person, who deigned in love to be of themselves as man, gave only the final opportunity to strike the most malicious and insulting blow at God Himself. In a word, man was now shown and pronounced to be LOST. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Christ's death was the grand turning point in the ways of God; the moral history of man, in the most important sense, terminates there.

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in his eyes.” (Ver. 42.) It was the revealed conduct of those who took the lead in Israel—so revealed in their own Scriptures. Marvelous doing on the Lord's part!—in manifest reversal of such as set themselves up, and were accepted, as acting in His name: yet to be marvelous in Israel's eyes, when the now-hidden but exalted Savior comes forth, the joy of the people, who shall then welcome and forever bless their once rejected King: for truly His mercy endures forever. Meanwhile His lips utter the sentence of sure rejection from their high estate: “therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God (not of heaven, for this they had not) shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Nor was this all: for “whosoever shall fall on this stone (Himself in humiliation) shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall (i.e., consequent on His exaltation), it will grind him to powder.” Thus, He sets forth the then ensuing stumbles of unbelief; and further, the positive execution of destructive judgment, whether individual or national, Jewish or Gentile, at His appearing in glory. (Comp. Dan. 2)

It is in all respects a notable scene, and the Lord, now drawing to the conclusion of His testimony, speaks with piercing decision. So that, spiritually impotent and dull as the chief priests and Pharisees might be, and couched as His words were in parables, the drift and aim was distinctly felt. And yet, whatever their murderous will, they could do nothing till His hour was come; for the people in a measure bowed to His word, and took Him for a prophet. He brought God in presence of their conscience, and their awe feebly answered to His words of coming woe!

Chapter 92

Remarks on Matthew 22

WE are not positively informed that the parable of the marriage-feast was uttered at this time. It is introduced in so general a manner that one could well conceive it the same as that which Luke, with more definite marks of time, presents in the fourteenth chapter of his gospel. However this may have been, nothing can exceed the beautiful propriety of its occurrence here, as the sequel to the latter part of Matt. 21 For as the vineyard sets forth the Lord's righteous claim from Israel on the ground of what He had entrusted to them, so the wedding sets forth the new thing, and hence is a comparison of “the kingdom of heaven” —not now fruit sought as a debt due to God from man, but God displaying the resources of His own glory and love in honor of His Son, and man invited to share. We have nothing properly here of the Church or assembly, but the kingdom. Consequently, though the parable goes beyond the Jewish economy, so elaborately treated in the preceding portion, and Christ's own personal presence on earth, it does not take in corporate privilege, but individual conduct, as variously affected by God's astonishing mercy, and this in view of and flowing from the place of Christ as glorified on high. The characteristic point is, that it is an exposition, not of Israel's ways toward the Lord, but of the King's ways who would magnify His Son; though here, as before, unbelief and rebellion never fail to meet their just recompense. It had been proved that God could not trust man: would man now trust God, and come at His word, and be a partaker of His delight in His Son?

It is manifest that here we are no longer on Old Testament ground, with its solemn prophetic warnings. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come.” Our Evangelist, true to his plan and the design of the Holy Ghost, presents this striking picture after that of the Messiah's rejection. What would be the fresh intervention of God? and how received of man, especially Israel? In Luke, I may mention by the way, the dispensational connection does not appear: but the Spirit gives rather a view of what God is to mankind generally, and even puts it as “a certain man” making a supper with unexampled generosity, not the “King” acting for the glory of “His Son.” In both Gospels the parable represents, not righteous requirement as under the law, but the way in which grace goes out to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. He “sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden (Israel), but they would not come.” The kingdom was not come but announced, while the Lord was here below. “Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”

Mark the difference. On the first mission of the servants, He did not say, “All things are ready,” but only on the second, when Christ meanwhile was dead and risen, and the kingdom was actually established on His ascension. It is the gospel of the kingdom after His work, as compared with this gospel before it. Thus the two messages are distinguished, the rejection of Christ and His death by the grace of God being the turning-point. Matthew alone gives us this striking difference: Luke at once begins, with equal propriety for his task, with, “Come; for all things are now ready,” dwelling with a detail unknown to Matthew on the excuses made by the heart for despising the gospel.

The King, then, was active and His honor at stake in having a feast worthy of His Son. Not even the cross of His Son turned Him aside from His great purpose of making His people happy near Himself. On the contrary, if grace works, as it does, the interrupted message is renewed with new and infinitely more urgent appeals to the invited; and now by other servants beyond the twelve and the seventy. So we have in the beginning of Acts (2 - 6) the special announcement to Israel as the children of the covenant— “to them that were bidden.” The first sending out, then, was during the life of the Messiah to call the privileged people; afterward, there was the second and specific testimony of grace to the same people when the work of redemption was done.

What was the effect? “They made light of it, and went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandize. God was not in their thoughts, but a man's own field or his trade; and, alas! as God increases in the testimony of His grace, man grows bolder in his slight and opposition. “And the remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully and slew them.” This is what you find in measure in the Acts of the Apostles. The message is disregarded in the earlier chapters; in chapters 7 - 12 the servants are outraged and slain. The issue is then foreshown—judgment on the Jews and Jerusalem. “When the king heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.” Who does not see there the fate of the Jewish nation, and the destruction of the city? In Luke this is not found in the parable: how suitable to Matthew I need not point out.

But God will have His house filled with guests, and if those peculiarly favored would not come, and even incurred wrath to the uttermost, divine grace will not be outdone by human wilfulness, but evil must be overcome of good. “Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready; but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.” There is the indiscriminate dealing with any and every soul under the gospel. “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.” The gospel goes out to men as they are, and produces by grace, wherever received, that which is according to God, instead of demanding it. Hence all are welcome, bad and good, a dying thief, or a woman that was a sinner, a Lydia or a Cornelius. The question was not their character but the feast for the king's son; and to this they were freely called. Grace, far from asking or finding, gives fitness to stand before him in peace.

Yes, there is produced a necessary indispensable fitness. A wedding-garment is due to the wedding-feast. This the king, of his own magnificent bounty, provided, and it was for each guest to wear it: who that honored the king and the occasion would not? The servants did not look for such garments outside: they were not worn on the highways, but within at the wedding. Nor was it the point for the guests to appear in their best. It was the king's affair to give. Come who might, there was enough and to spare: “all things were ready.”

This is the great essential truth of the gospel. So far from looking for anything in man agreeable to God, the glad tidings come on His part on the express ground that all is ruined, wretched, guilty on the sinner's part. “Let him that is athirst come; yea, whosoever will.”

But where the heart is not right with God, it never submits to His righteousness; man, in this case, prefers to stand on his own foundation. Either he thinks he can raise a claim on God by being or doing something, or he ventures within, careless both of himself and God. Such was the man who

was found of the king without the wedding-garment. It was to despise the holiness as well as the grace of God, and proved that he was utterly a stranger to the feast. What did he think of, or care for, the feelings of the King bent upon the glorifying of His Son? For this is the true and real secret: God lavishes mercy on sinners for the sake of His Son. Opportunity is thus given to put honor on His name. Does my soul bow to it and Him? It is salvation. The heart may go through much exercise, but the only key to His astonishing goodness to us is God's feeling toward His Son. If I may venture so to speak, the Lord Jesus has put God the Father under obligation to Himself. He has so lived and died to glorify God at all cost, that God (I say it reverently) is bound to show what He is by reason of His Son. Hence that remarkable expression of Paul's epistles, “the righteousness of God.” It is no longer man's righteousness sought by the law, but God being righteous in Christ, when man has been proved to have utterly and in every way failed. Because of the infinite value of the cross, God loves to put honor on Christ; and if a soul do but plead His name, it becomes a question of God's righteousness justifying him freely of His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

How strikingly was the truth shown by the king's dealing with the Christ-despising intruder! “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment.” At once this was the ground of action. No question was started of what the man had been or done. The servants were warranted to bring in bad as well as good. “Such were some of you,” says the apostle. Indeed, this man may have been the most correct, moral, and religious of the company, like the young ruler who left the Lord in sorrow. But whether he were a hardened sinner or a self-righteous soul, one thing we know for certain—he had not on a wedding-garment. This at once arrested the king's eye. He looked at the simple fact: had the guests on a wedding-garment? This man had not. What was its meaning? It told a tale the most damning possible; it was setting at naught the king's grace—it was openly dishonoring His Son.

The wedding-garment is Christ. This guest therefore came before the king without Christ. He did not put on Christ. There might be ever so sincere efforts to be holy and righteous, but it was all and only himself, not Christ, and that is everlasting ruin and condemnation to a sinner. Whereas, if we suppose the very chief of sinners justifying God by accepting Christ as the sole means for a lost soul to stand before Him, this is what exalts God and His grace. It is as if a man were broken down enough in his thoughts of himself by God's revelation of what He is in Christ, to look up and say, I cannot trust myself, I cannot trust what I have been nor even what I desire to be to Thee, but I can trust fully what Thou art to me in the gift of Thy Son. Such confidence in God produces deep loathing of self, real uprightness of soul as well as diligence of heart and desire to do the will of God. There is nothing so humbling, and strengthening withal, as the heart's rest in God's grace towards us in Christ.

The man was not blamed for not bringing a new robe, no matter how splendid, of his own. On the contrary, what made his case so hopelessly evil was his indifference to the munificent provision of the king. Why should not his own robe do as well as the king's? He knew not, believed not, that nothing from earth suits His divine presence—only what is purchased by the precious blood of Jesus. He had no sense of the grace which invited him, nor of the holiness that befits the presence of God. The king accordingly says to him, “Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless.” He may have been ever so well attired, he may have liked the feast and the guests, but he thought nothing of the King nor His Son, and had not a word

to say when the solemn challenge came. He was in spirit and before God entirely outside the feast; else he would have felt the absolute need of an array in keeping with the King's joy and the Son's bridals. And judgment cast him out of that scene for which he had no heart where the unbelieving, if it be in the hopeless wretchedness of remorse and self-reproach, must honor the Son. It is not merely governmental vengeance, such as that which providentially slew the murderers and fired their city, but full, final judgment on him who abused grace by presuming to draw near to God without putting on Christ—who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This man showed manifestly that he had no part nor lot in the matter; and by and by judgment will simply execute by power what is according to the truth now. “Then said the king to the servants (or attendants, not the bondmen of verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10), Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” Was this most solemn sentence rare because one man only is here instanced? Nay, verily; “for many are called, but few chosen.”

Thus terminated the double trial of the nation, first, on the ground of their responsibility as under the law, and next, as tested by the message of grace. The rest of the chapter details the judgment of the various classes in Israel who successively sought to judge and ensnare the Lord, bringing into relief their position and winding up all with a question which they could not answer without understanding His position and withal His glorious person.

“Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians.” What an alliance! The partisans of strict Judaism and the law, and the political time-servers of that day whom the former hated cordially, join in flattering Jesus to ensnare Him by the question of Jewish title against the Gentile. Would He, the Messiah, gainsay the hopes and privileges of Israel as a nation? If not, how escape the charge of treason against Cesar? Diabolical craft was there, but divine wisdom brings in the truth as to God and man, and the difficulty vanishes. It was the rebellion of the Jews against Jehovah which gave occasion to His subjecting them to their heathen lords: their wrong made nothing wholly right. Were they humbled because of it and seeking the resources of God's grace? Nay, they were proud and boastful, and at that moment in deadly opposition, mingled with malignant craft, plotting against their own—His Messiah. “Tell us, therefore: what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute-money.” They brought a denarius, owned Cesar's image and superscription, and heard the unanswerable sentence, “Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.” Had the Jews honored Him, they had never been in bondage to man; but now being so through their own sin and folly, they were bound to accept their humiliation. Neither Pharisee nor Herodian felt the sin, and if one felt the shame which the other gloried in, the Lord, while forcing them to face the real position to which their iniquity had reduced them, pointed out that which, if made good in their souls, would be the speedy harbinger of a divine deliverance.

“The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying, Moses said,” &c. (Ver. 28-33.) Thus unbelief is as false and dishonest as pretended human righteousness; and if one could be in league with Herodians and affect loyalty to Cesar, so could the other plead Moses as if the inspired Word had plenary authority over their conscience. But the Lord, as He laid bare the hypocrisy of those who stood high as religionists, equally

detected what the skeptic never suspects, that their difficulties flow not merely from overlooking the power of God, but from downright ignorance, whatever may be their self-complacency and conceit. “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.” Faith, on the contrary, sees clearly, just as it counts on God according to the revelation of Himself He has made in the Word.

As to the particular point in question, our Lord, not content with tracing their sophism to the sheerest misapprehension of the resurrection-state, proves and from Moses too, without going further, that the resurrection of the dead is an essential, radical part of God's scheme and truth. Luke was inspired to convey an additional statement as to the intermediate living of the separate spirit. But in our gospel, the one point is that the dead rise, because God declared Himself the God of the father after their death; and confessedly He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. They must therefore rise to live again. If He NA cr.: their God in their state when He spoke to Moses, He must be the God of the dead, which the Sadducee had been the first to deny. It was the more important so to reveal Himself to Moses, who was in due time to bring in the conditional system of the law with its visible rewards and punishments and the sure ruin of all who through unbelief clung to it and present things, despising the promises which hang on “the Seed” and resurrection. Thus, infidelity is made unwittingly to bring out from Christ with divine clearness the power and purpose of God revealed in Scripture, and this on the ground chosen to create difficulty. And God's purpose to bless Israel fully in resurrection-power is asserted, after He had shown the necessary dealing with their sin in subjecting them meanwhile to the Gentile.

But if the Pharisees retired with wonder, they were far from subdued; and, indeed, they bestir themselves afresh when their skeptical rivals were put to silence. They assemble together, when a lawyer “tempts” Him, but in fact only elicits a perfect summary of practical righteousness. They talked and tempted: Jesus was the expression of all the perfectness of law, and prophets, and far, far more, the image of God Himself in grace as well as righteousness here below: not as Adam, who rebelled against God—not as Cain, who loved not his neighbor, but slew his brother. (Verses 34-40.)

And now, finally, it was the Lord's place to ask them the question of questions, not only for a Pharisee, but for any soul: “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?” He was David's Son, most true; but was this the truth, the whole truth? “How, then, does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, Jehovah saith unto my Lord?” &c. How was He both—David's Son and David's Lord? It was the simple truth, the key to all Scripture, the way, the truth, the life, the explanation of His position, the only hope for theirs. But they were dumb. They knew nothing, and could answer nothing. “Neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.”

Chapter 93

Remarks on Matthew 23

The last chapter had silenced those who pretended to most light. Not believing in Christ, they were destitute of the only key to Scripture, and Psa. 110, bright as its testimony is to their own Messiah, was a thick cloud not only to Egyptians now as of old but to Israel. They saw not His glory, and were therefore hopelessly puzzled how to understand that David, speaking by the Spirit, should call his son his Lord.

In this chapter 23 the Lord pronounces the doom of the nation, and most of all, not of those man would chiefly denounce, not of the openly lawless, licentious, or violent, nay, nor of the ease-loving, skeptical Sadducees, but of those who stood highest in general esteem for their religious knowledge and sanctity. And so it always is when we find a dealing of God with His people. Conscience, man, the very world can with more or less exactness judge of immoral grossness. God sees and eschews what looks fair to human eyes and is withal false and unholy. And the Word of God is explicit that so it is to be. The heaviest woes yet in store for this world are not for heathen darkness, but, as for rebellious Judaism, so for corrupt Christendom, for the spot where most truth is known and the highest privileges conferred, but alas: their power despised and denied. It is not that God when He ariseth to judge will leave the pagan nations unpunished. They shall not go without punishment, but surely drink of the cup. Yet “hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Even so is it now with the professing Gentile; and the fuller the light bestowed, and the richer the grace of God revealed in the Gospel, they are only so much the graver reasons for unsparing judgments on Christendom, when the knell of divine vengeance tolls for those on earth who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord seeth not as man seeth, whether in grace or in judgment; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. No otherwise did Jesus speak in the scene before us.

It is remarkable, however, that in the first instance He spoke “to the multitudes and to his disciples.” They were yet to a great extent viewed together. The full distinction between them could not be made till the death and resurrection of Christ; and even then the Holy Ghost slowly breaks one old tie after another, and only utters His last word to the Jewish remnant (then Christian, of course) by more than one witness not long before the destruction of Jerusalem. But even in principle separation there was not, nor could be, till the cross. Hence the fatal error of some who argue from that which was done in Israel before the death of Christ to neglect and overthrow the holy union, apart from the world, to which believers are called since that momentous day. The foundation for it was not even laid, the middle wall of partition still subsisted; and though the faith that pierced through to the deeper glory of the Lord's person never failed to reap a rich reward and the fullest welcome, yet would it have been premature, and indeed contrary to God's order as yet, to have led the Jews outside the camp, or to have gathered them and the Gentiles into one body, before the cross. The more solemn the sentence of God pronounced or executed, the greater and

more wondrous is the display of His long-suffering. And if He call us to patience, how astonishing is His own! How truly in His case patience has its perfect work! But what shall we say of the spirit that abuses His patience toward that which He is going to judge to a denial of the truth, equally sure, of His sensitive love and jealous care over such as stand in Christ in the most intimate nearness of relationship to Himself 1 He does speak peace to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly.

It was, then, part of our Lord's Jewish mission to say that “the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.” But there was the careful warning against making the Scribes and Pharisees in anywise personal standards of good and evil. “Do not ye after their works; for they say and do not.” They were in themselves beacons, patterns of wrong, not of right. (4-7.) Still not only are the disciples classed with the multitude; but in the very strongest denunciations of these religious guides, they are bound as yet by the Lord to acknowledge those who sat in Moses' seat. There they were in fact, and the Lord maintains, instead of dissolving, the obligation to own them and whatever they set forth, not of their own traditions but from the law. This was to honor God Himself, spite of the hypocrites, who only sought man's honor for themselves, and it affords no warrant for false apostles or their self-deceived successors now. For the apostles had no seats like that of Moses; and Christianity is not a system of ordinance or formal observance like the law, but, where real, is the fruit of the Spirit through life in Christ, which is formed and fed by the Word of God.

It has been urged, confidently enough of late and in quarters where one might have hoped for better things, that, as the saints in Old Testament times looked for Christ, and eternal life was theirs by faith, though they were under the law, so we who now believe in Christ are nevertheless and in the same sense under the law like them, though like them we are justified by faith. Now plausible and even fair as this may seem to some, I have no hesitation in pronouncing it extremely evil. It is a deliberate putting souls back in the condition from which the work of Christ has extricated us. The Jews of old were placed under the law for the wise purposes of God, till the promised Seed came to work a complete deliverance; and the saints in their midst, though they rose above that position by faith, were all their lifetime subject to bondage and the spirit of fear. Christ has set us free, by the great grace of God, through His own death and resurrection: and we have thereon received the Spirit of Sonship whereby we cry, Abba Father. And yet, spite of the plainest testimony of God to the momentous change brought about by the coming of His Son, and the accomplishment of His work, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it is openly, seriously proposed, as if it were part of the faith once delivered to the saints, that this wondrous working and display of divine grace should be set aside, with their results to the believer, and that the soul should be replaced under the old yoke and in the old condition! Doubtless this is precisely what Satan aims at, all effort to blot out all that is distinctive of Christianity by a return to Judaism. Only one may be amazed to find so barefaced an avowal of the matter in men professing evangelical light.

The true answer, then, to such misunderstandings of Matt. 23 and misapplications of similar portions of Holy Writ, is that as yet our Lord was adhering, and so He did to the last moment, to His proper Messianic mission; and this supposed and maintained the nation and the remnant under the law, and not in the delivering power of His resurrection. Which of the disciples could yet say, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new

creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Now, on the contrary, this is the normal language of the Christian. It is not a question of special attainment nor of extraordinary faith, but of simple present subjection to the full Christian testimony in the New Testament. And this I may add, that what the law was to the Jew, the Word of God in all its extent is to the Christian, specially that part which was founded on and followed Christ dead, risen, glorified, and sending down the Holy Spirit. Even were we Jews, the old tie is dissolved by death, and we are married to another, even to Christ, raised from the dead. Thus to have the law as well as Christ for our guide and rule is like having two husbands at one time, and is a sort of spiritual adultery. Subject even to one another in grace, we are to heed no authority save God's in the things of God.

Surely also we can and ought to take the moral profit of our Lord's censure of the Scribes and Pharisees (for what is the heart!) We have to beware of imposing on others that which we are remiss to observe ourselves. We have to watch against doing works to be seen of men. We have to pray against the allowance of the world's spirit—the love of pre-eminence, both within and without. (Ver. 4-7.)

The truth is that here, as everywhere, the power of the truth and blessing depends on a hearty acquiescence in Christ's glory in one form or another, and our participation consequently in His thoughts and feelings. Hence the word is, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ." (Ver. 8-10.) The question here is not of the various gifts which the Lord confers by the Holy Ghost on His members in His body the Church, but of religious authority in the world and a certain status and respect by virtue of ecclesiastical office or position. This were to govern divine things on the principle of men and to reward the fruit of God's grace, if it be anything real, with that which appeals to and gratifies the base selfishness of the heart. Thus, while asserting the authority of the law in the sphere for which it was given, there is gradually increasing severity in the exposure of the moral worthlessness of those who turned it to their own exaltation. But there is no development as yet of the blessed provision His love would make, when He was ascended, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. But the great moral principle of the kingdom (which is always true, I need hardly say) is enforced here. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Ver. 11-12.) The cross and the heavenly glory would but deepen the value and significance of these words of the Savior; but even before either and independently of the new order of things in the Church, they bore His stamp and were current for the kingdom.

In marked contrast with this pattern of true service for the disciples were the Scribes and Pharisees, on whom the Lord next proceeds to pronounce eight solemn woes. (Ver. 13-33.) What else could He say of men who not only entered not the kingdom of heaven, but hindered those disposed to enter? What else could be due to those who sought religious influence over the weak and defenseless for gain? Granted that their proselyting zeal was untiring, what was the fruit in souls before God? Were not the taught as usual the truest index of such teachers, as being more simple and honest after the flesh, unreserved as to their ways, and aim, and spirit? Then there is

the laying bare the nice hair-splitting as to outward distinctions, which really overlooked the patent authority of God; and the insisting on the pettiest exactions to the neglect of the plainest everlasting moral truth. Next is detected, the effort after external look, whatever might be the impurity within; and this both in their labor and in their lives and persons, which were full of guile and self-will, crowned by affected great veneration for the prophets and the righteous who had suffered of old, and no longer acted on the conscience. This last gave them the more credit. There is no cheaper, nor, in the world, more successful means of gaining a religious reputation, than this show of honor for the righteous who are dead and gone, especially if they connect themselves with them in appearance, as being of the same association. The succession seems natural, and it sounds hard to charge those who honor the dead saints in this day with the same rebellious spirit which persecuted and slew them in their own day. But the Lord would put them to a speedy and decisive test, and prove the real bent and spirit of the world's religion. “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” It was morally the same race and character all through. In righteous government, adds the Lord, “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.” Thus should be judged the full measure, begun by their fathers and completed by themselves. Hypocrites they were on all the counts of which the Lord accused them, and as guilty as the worst of their predecessors, they would soon prove themselves in the very point of their self-complacency. Serpents indeed they were—a viper-brood. How could such escape the judgment of hell?

Yet how touching here is the Lord's lament over the guilty city, His own city: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,” &c. His glory shines out more than ever; the rejected Messiah is in truth Jehovah. He would have gathered (and how often!) but they would not. It was no longer His house nor His Father's, but theirs, and it is left unto them desolate. Nevertheless, if it be a most solemnly judicial word, there is hope in the end. “For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Israel are yet to see their, king, but not till they, at least a godly remnant of them, are converted to welcome Him in Jehovah's name.

Chapter 94

Remarks on Matthew 24:1-31

We see in this prophecy of our Lord a remarkable confirmation of a great principle of God—that He never opens out the future of judgments on the rebellious, and of deliverance for His own people, till sin has so developed itself; as to manifest total ruin. Take the very first instances in the Bible. When was it said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head When the woman was beguiled, and the man in transgression through the wiles of the enemy; when thus sin had entered the world, and death by sin. Again the prophecy of Enoch, given us by Jude, was uttered when the term of God's patience with the then world was almost closed, and the flood was about to bear witness of His judgment on man's corruption and violence. Thus, whether we look at the first prediction of Christ before the expulsion from Eden, or at the testimony of the Lord's coming to judge before the deluge, prophecy thus far evidently comes in when man has wholly broken down. So, next, we find Noah, when there was confusion and failure in his own family and in himself too, led of the Holy Ghost into a prophetic summary of the whole world's history, beginning with the doom of him who despised his father, even though it were to his own shame, and proceeding with the blessing of Shem and the portion of Japhet. So, later on, with the prophecies of Balsam and of Moses, “yea, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those that follow after;” for Samuel's is that striking epoch which the New Testament singles out as the commencement of the great line of the prophets. And why? It was the day when Israel openly abandoned God as their king, consummating the sin which their heart conceived in the desert, when they sought a captain in order to return into Egypt. It was a proud crisis in Israel, whose blessedness lay in being a people separated from all around by and to Jehovah their God, who would surely have provided them a king of His own choice, had they waited, instead of choosing for themselves, to His dishonor and their own sure degradation and sorrow, in order to be like the nations. The same principle equally and conspicuously applies to the time when the great prophetic books were written—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest. It was when all present hope had fled, and David's sons wrought no deliverance, but rather at last a deeper curse through their towering iniquity and profane insults of the true God, who was thus morally forced to pronounce the nation Lo-ammi— “not my people.” Before, and during, and after the captivity, the Spirit of prophecy laid bare the sin of king, and priests, and prophets, and people, but pointed the heart to the coming Messiah and the new covenant. And Him we have seen, in our Gospel, actually come, but growingly and utterly rejected by Israel, and all their own promises and hopes in Him; and now in the near prospect of His own death at their hands, in itself their worst of deaths, He takes up this prophetic strain.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.” For what was it now? A corpse, and no more. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” “And his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down.” The hearts of believers then, as too often now, were occupied with present appearances, and the great show of grandeur in God's service; the halo of associations was bright before their eyes. But Jesus passes sentence on all that even they admired on the earth. In truth, when He left the

temple, all was gone which gave it value in the sight of God. It is ever thus. Outside Jesus, what is there in this world but vain show or worse 1 And how does the Lord deliver His own from the power of tradition and every other source of attraction for the heart? He opens out the communications of His own mind, and casts the light of the future on the present. How often worldliness unjudged in a Christian's heart betrays itself by want of relish for God's unfolding of what He is going to do 1 How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I tun seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to gain or keep a status by his ability, and hoping that his sons may outstrip himself by the superior advantages they enjoy. On some such idea is founded all human greatness; it is, “the world,” in fact. Christ's coming again is a truth which demolishes the whole fabric; because, if we really look for His coming as that which may be from day to day—if we realize that we are set like servants at the door with the handle in hand, waiting for Him to knock we know not how soon, and desiring to open to Him immediately (“blessed are those servants!”)—if such is our attitude, how can we have time or heart for that which occupies the busy, Christ-forgetting world? Moreover, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not; and as for means and agents to carry on its plans and ends, there never was nor will be a lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the world's honors. Let our outward position here below be ever so menial or trying, what so glorious as in it to serve the Lord Christ? And He is coming?

In the cross I see God humbling Himself—the only One of all greatness making nothing of Himself for my soul—the only One who commands all becoming a servant of the very vilest. A person cannot receive the truth of the cross without having his walk in measure in accordance with the spirit of it. Yet saints of God have regarded the cross, not so much as that power by which the world is crucified unto them and they unto the world, but rather as the remedy by which they are set free from all anxiety, in, order to make themselves a comfortable place in the world. The Christian ought to be the happiest of men; but his happiness consists not in what he has here, but in what he knows that he will have with Christ. Meanwhile, our service and obedience are to be formed according to the spirit of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's evil and God's grace thoroughly came out in the cross; all met there; and it is founded upon this great truth that it is said so often in Scripture, “The end of all things is at hand;” because all was out in moral ways and in dispensational dealings between God and man.

Connected with this, our Lord does not unfold here the portion of us Christians exactly, but takes up the disciples where they were. They were believing, godly Jews. Their associations connected Christ and the temple together. They knew that He was the Messiah of Israel, and they expected him to judge the Romans and gather all the scattered ones of the seed of Abraham from the four winds of heaven. They looked for all the prophecies about the land and the city to be accomplished. There was no thought in the minds of the disciples at this time of Jesus going to heaven and staying there for a long time—of the scattering of Israel, and the Gentiles being brought in to the knowledge of Christ. Consequently this great prophecy on the mount of Olives starts with the disciples and with their condition. Their hearts were too much occupied with the buildings of the temple. But the Lord, now rejected, announces that “there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” This excited greatly the desire of the disciples to understand how such things were to come to pass. They were aware from the prophecies that there was a time of dismal sorrow for Israel, and they did not know how to put this

together with their predicted blessing. They ask Him, therefore, “When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?”

“Thy coming” means, the Lord's presence with them on earth; and “the end of the age” is a totally different word from that translated “world” elsewhere: it means here the end of the time during which our Lord should be absent from them. They wished to know the sign of His presence with them. They knew there could never be such desolation if their Messiah were reigning over them. They wished to know when this time of sorrow should come, and what should be the sign of His own presence that should close it, and bring in unending joy.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” In the epistles of Paul it is never exactly such a thought as warning persons against false Christs. For there the Holy Ghost addresses us as Christians; and a Christian could not be deceived by a man's pretensions to be Christ. It is most appropriate here, because the disciples are viewed in this chapter, not as the representatives of us Christians now, but of future godly Jews. We, as Christians, have nothing to do with the destruction of the temple; it does not affect us in any way. These disciples were regarded as the godly remnant of the nation, who were looking for the Messiah to bring in glory. The Lord, therefore, warns them that if any should arise among them, saying, I am Christ, they were not to believe them. The time was come when the true Messiah ought to appear. And He had appeared, but Israel had rejected Him; they refused to bow to Him, hardening themselves in the lie that our Lord could not be the promised One. But Israel have not given up the hope of the Messiah yet, and this exposes them to the delusion spoken of here, i.e., to persons saying, I am Christ. At any rate, the rejection of the true Christ lays them open to the reception of a false Christ. Our Lord had warned them of this. “I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” If a Messiah were to come full of self and Satan, the nation should be given up to receive the false, as a just retribution for having rejected the true. The disciples were the representatives of godly Jews, and were warned of what should befall their nation. But take the epistles of John, and what have you there? “Beloved, believe not every spirit.” Why? Because the great thing that the Church is distinguished by is the presence of the Holy Ghost; and the deceit which we have to watch against is false spirits, not false Christs, though there are many antichrists.

How are we to do God's will? How are we to be directed to what will honor Him? The Holy Ghost alone can guide us in a right path, and He acts by the word of God. I must find myself meeting according to the Scriptures, where what is of man is disallowed, and what is of God is freely and fully acknowledged. We are bound to see whether all that we are doing will bear the full searching of the Scriptures; if not, let us stop at once. Never do a single thing which you believe to be contrary to the written word. “Cease to do evil.” “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Supposing I only know that what I am doing is wrong, but that I see nothing further, I must stop. God gives me no fresh light before me if I am doing what is wrong. I may have to remain in my chamber, and not see what to do; but wherever I see evil, I am bound by it. We never can go on in evil, hoping for more light. What is the walk of faith? A believer may seem to go blindfold, but he has God for his guide. He does not see before him, but he has the eye and heart and hand of One who does. It is God who guides. He shows me His will for that one step, and when I have taken it, He will show me the next. It is a question of honoring God. When we have

done that in any particular step, the Lord opens a further path for us.

Our Lord does not warn against false spirits here, because He is not speaking to the disciples on the ground of Christianity. By a Christian, I mean a believer since the Holy Ghost was poured out from on high. He is not a bit more a saint than a man called to the knowledge of God before; but he has entered more fully into the truth of God as revealed in Christ. The disciples did not enter into this yet; and the Lord takes them as examples of a believing remnant in the latter day. The danger of Christians is grieving the Holy Ghost—nay, listening to false spirits. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” These are persons in whom an evil spirit wrought. There are false prophets now, and evil spirits work in them. In these days, faith either in the Holy Ghost or in Satan's power is very much weakened. People only look at the man; whereas Scripture makes a great deal of God and of Satan. What gives Satan power over a professor of the name of Christ is the allowance of sin. Satan has not one atom of power against a child of God who is looking to Jesus; but where self is allowed, Satan can come and make a resting-place for a season. A believer could not be a false prophet, but there might be a temporary power of the enemy over his soul.

Here it is a question of false Christs, because our Lord was going to speak to the disciples about Jewish circumstances and hopes, though He afterward turns to Christian subjects. The prophecy consists of three great parts. The Jewish remnant have their history thoroughly described; then comes the portion of Christians, and after that of the Gentiles. The prophecy divides itself into these three sections. Why are the Jews, we may ask, first brought forward? The disciples were not yet taken out of their Jewish position: only when Christ was crucified was the wall of partition broken down. Our Lord's intention was to take up a Jewish remnant and show that there would be a company in the latter day on the same ground as these disciples—the Christian would come in between. This we have described in the latter part of the chapter, and in chapter xxv. And then we have the Gentiles, “all nations,” gathered before the Son of man. Such is the thread of connection between the parts of this great discourse.

“Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” Observe, there are two great moral warnings given by our Lord. First, they were to beware of a true hope falsely applied. He guards them against the attractions of a false Christ, who would take advantage of the fact that the Jews ought to be looking for Christ, and they would pretend to be Christ. But, besides, there is the fear that would be excited by the enemy, who knows how to bring in a new deceit suited to another set of circumstances. Verse 6, therefore, guards them against alarms: “Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.” We have nothing to do with these. Where do you find that the Holy Ghost warns the Christian about trouble from wars and rumors of wars I Do we find anything about it in the Epistles, where the Christian Church is properly brought out? Am I then denying the importance of the Lord's prophecy? God forbid! But the portion we are looking at does not refer to Christians as they now are, but to Jewish disciples as they then were and as they will be. Our calling takes place after our Lord went to heaven and before He returns in glory; whereas the Jewish remnant will be found in the latter day on similar ground and with hopes like those the disciples had whom our Lord was here addressing. We do not arrive at a clear knowledge of anything by denying the great landmarks of God. If we want to put things rightly together in the word of God, we must notice what and to whom He speaks. If I, a

Gentile, take up the language of a Jew, a great mistake is made; or if a Christian adopt the language of either Jew or Gentile, there is again an equal mistake. Therefore it is that such stress is laid on “rightly dividing the word of truth.” We find various ways of God according to His sovereign will about those with whom He is dealing, and we must take care to apply His word aright. Here we have disciples having a peculiar calling in a particular land, the land of Judea; and if they heard of wars and rumors of wars, they were not to be troubled. “For all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet.” Mark the difference in the language of Scripture. Do we ever find the apostles saying, The end is not yet, for us? On the contrary, it is said of us (1 Cor. 10), “Upon whom the ends of the world are come.” So again, speaking about the cross of Christ, it is said (Heb. 9:26), “Now once, in the end of the world;” whereas, when the Lord is predicting about the Jewish remnant, “the end is not yet.” And this, because many things must yet be accomplished before the Jews can come into their blessing. But for Christians, all things even now are ours in Christ; the blessing is never put off, though we await the crown at His coming. Again, many parts of Scripture speak of scenes of anguish before the Lord's coming; others make Christians to be expecting Christ at any time. These Scriptures cannot be broken nor contradict one another; and yet they must do so, if they are applied to the same people.

Practically, too, the difference is immensely important; for the Christian is not of the world, even as Christ is not, which could not be equally said of the Jewish body yet to be called in the latter-day. For us “wars and rumors of wars” ought not to be a source of trouble, any more than of interest on either side of this world's combatants. Surely they should be an occasion of holy concern and intercession in the spirit of grace, and this for all engaged. The Jewish remnant, on the contrary, will not be separated after this heavenly manner; and the earthly struggles which will then rage in and round the land cannot but affect them nearly: so that they will need especially to cherish confidence in the Savior's words and not be troubled, as if the issue were a doubtful one, or themselves forgotten in that dark day. They must wait patiently; “for nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famine, and pestilence, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

It is evident that the language is only applicable in its full force to Jews—believing ones, no doubt, but still Jews in the midst of a nation judicially chastised for their apostasy from God and rejection of their own Messiah.

Besides, the Lord prepares the Jewish disciples or remnant for their own special trials, partially true after His own departure till Jerusalem disappeared, and once more to be verified before Jerusalem is fully owned after the destruction of the antichrist. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations (or the Gentiles) for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” (Ver. 9-11.) There should be false profession among them, and hatred of the true even among themselves, and not only troubles without. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Thus there is a certain defined period of endurance—an end to come as truly as there was a beginning of sorrows. But what trial, and darkness, and suffering, and scandal before that end come! When our Lord speaks, as in the gospel of John, of the Christian's lot, He never names either a beginning or an end, but rather implies that tribulation should be expected throughout his career. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” And such is the

constant language and thought in the epistles, where beyond question our calling is supposed.

Then follows a final sign. “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Ver. 14.) The gospel of God's grace is not the same as the gospel of the kingdom. Both should be preached—that God is saving souls of His mere favor now through Christ; and that there is a kingdom which He is going to establish by His power shortly, which is to embrace all the earth. Before the end come, there will therefore be a special testimony of this coming of the Lord, as He here intimates. So in Rev. 14 an angel is seen by John in the prophetic vision, having the everlasting gospel to preach to the dwellers on earth and to every nation, and saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Now it cannot be so said that the hour of His judgment is come; for it is, on the contrary, and expressly, the day of His grace and salvation. Clearly, therefore, the inference is that, just before the close of this age, there will be a remarkable energy of the Spirit in the midst of the Jews; and from that very people who rejected Jesus of old, messengers of the kingdom shall go forth touched by His grace to announce the speedy fall of divine judgment and establishment of the kingdom of the heavens in power and glory. Who so suited, in God's mercy, to proclaim the returning Messiah as some of the very nation who of old had nailed Him to the cross, among all the proud Gentiles whose then representative inscribed it with “This is Jesus the King of the Jews?” The testimony shall go forth universally. How humbling for Christendom! What has become of the East? What of the West? Mahometanism! Popery! with Paganism too still prevalent over vast tracts of Asia and Africa. And yet Christian men close their eyes to the plainest and most solemn facts and boast of the triumphs of the gospel! No: the Gentiles have been wise in their own conceits, though grace has wrought where God has pleased, spite of all; but it is reserved for other witnesses, when the falling away shall have been complete in Christendom and the man of sin revealed, to proclaim the coming kingdom in all the habitable earth.

In verse 15 the Lord goes back in point of time, and shows us not general tokens of the approach of the end and that which should distinguish the end in general from the earlier throes of Israel; but here we have circumstances of the most definite character, which may be applied perhaps partially to what occurred before the fall of Jerusalem under Titus, but which can only be fulfilled in the future of Israel if we duly heed the peculiarity of the scene, the connection of the prophecy, and above all, the consummation in which all is to terminate.

First, then, our Lord points to a Jewish prophet. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (Whoso readeth, let him understand),” &c. The parenthesis warns that the prediction might be misunderstood—at any rate demanded attention. Two passages of the prophecy (chap. 11:31 and 12:11) speak of this abomination; but I have no hesitation in affirming that the former was a foreshadowing of the doings of Antiochus Epiphanes centuries before Christ, and that the latter is the one referred to here and still unaccomplished. Entirely distinct from the epoch of Antiochus, Dan. 12 speaks of another idol which brings desolation in its train, and this expressly “at the time of the end.” “Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” In this we have another link of connection with our Lord's words” whoso readeth, let him understand.” “And from the time that the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a

thousand, two hundred and ninety days." Thus, beside the idolatrous evil imposed by the notorious king of the north long before the Lord appeared, Daniel looks onward, to a similar evil at the close of Israel's sorrows, the destruction of which immediately precedes their final deliverance. "Blessed is he that waiteth." As to this last, our Lord cites the Jewish prophet, and casts further light on the selfsame time and circumstances, when Daniel himself shall re-appear in his lot. The conclusion is clear and certain: our Lord in this verse 15 of Matt. 24 determines the allusion to be to that part of Daniel which is yet future, not to what was history when He stood on the Mount of Olives. I am aware that some have confounded the matter with what we read in Dan. 8 and in Dan. 9 But "the transgression of desolation" is not the same as "the abomination of desolation;" nor can we absolutely identify "the last end of the indignation" with "the time of the end." The distinctions of Scripture are as much to be noted as the points of resemblance and of contact. (Comp. Isa. 10) The last verse of Dan. 9 might seem to have stronger claims. There we have a covenant confirmed for one week; and then in the midst of the week sacrifice and oblation are made to cease; after which, because of the protection given to abominations or idols, there is a desolator "even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate;" i.e., Jerusalem. I have thus given what I conceive to be the true sense of this important passage, because when it is stated with precision, the supposed resemblance to "the abomination of desolation" disappears. A desolator who comes because of the wing, i.e., protection of abominations, is very distinct from the abomination that makes desolate, or the idol which is yet to stand in the sanctuary. With the setting up of this abomination, the date of 1290 days is connected. Even for those who understand this of so many years, it is impossible to apply the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem, or its temple by the Romans. Had it been so, the period of blessing must long ere this have arrived for Israel. Has the prophecy then failed? No; but readers have failed in understanding it. We must correct, not the language of Scripture, but our interpretations: we must go back to God's word again and again, and see whether we have not mistaken our bearings.

The truth is, that the understanding of Dan. 12 is of all moment for reaping due profit from Matt. 24 In its first verse we have a plain landmark: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." There can be no just doubt that Daniel's people mean the Jews, and that a mighty intervention on their behalf is intimated; but, as usual, not without the severest trial of faith. For "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." This our Lord has unquestionably in view in verse 21: "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be." There cannot be two tribulations for the same people, each of which is greatest: both statements refer to the same trouble. Now Daniel is positive—that "at that time thy people (the Jews) shall be delivered." Who can pretend that Michael stood up for Israel against Titus any more than Nebuchadnezzar? Does not everybody know that at that time, far from being delivered, they were completely vanquished by the Romans, and that those who escaped the sword were sold as slaves and scattered over the world? God was then against, not for, Israel; and, as the king in the parable, he was wroth, sent forth his armies, destroyed those murderers, and fired their city. Here, on the contrary, the unequaled hour of sorrow is just before their deliverance on God's part, not before their captivity.

Carrying this back to our chapter, the sight of the desolating idol in the holy place is the signal for flight. "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." There is no thought of a sign to

Christians as such, but to Jewish disciples in the holy land; and this that they may instantly retire from the scene of danger. “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.” (Ver. 17-19). It has been tried to find in this the warning on which some fled to Pella in the interval after the Roman lieutenant surrounded the city, and before the final sack under the victorious emperor. But this arises from confounding Luke 21:20-24, with Matt. 24:15-21; whereas they are demonstrably distinct, spite of a measure of analogy between them. It perfectly fell within the province given of the Spirit to the great Gentile evangelist, to notice the past Roman siege, as well as the present supremacy of the nations which tread down Jerusalem till their times are fulfilled. Matthew, however, had his own proper task in giving the grand future crisis, at least from verse 15. And it is evident that as the abomination in the holy place differs widely from armies compassing Jerusalem, so there was ample space for the most leisurely departure from the menaced city, yes, for the most impeded and infirm of either sex to go, after Cestius Gallus withdrew. I conclude, therefore, that by Matthew our Lord gives us what bears on the time of the end; by Luke what refers to the past, and the present too, cursorily, as well as the future. Matthew, for instance, could not speak like Luke, of Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles, because he is here occupied only with the horrors which immediately precede Israel's blessing and deliverance. Luke has both an earlier and a later time of trouble: Matthew, from verse 15, leaves that and confines himself to this.

“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day for there shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” How considerate the Lord is. And how surely His disciples in that day may count on His care, that their petitions will be answered, so that, urgent as their flight must be, neither the inclement season nor the day of Jewish rest shall hinder! Here again is another proof that not Christians but His Jewish followers are here contemplated. Holy as is the Sabbath, I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord's day, with which the Church has to do, is founded on a deeper sanctity. The believer has now to beware, on the one hand, of confounding the Sabbath with the Lord's day: and, on the other, of supposing that, because the Lord's day is not the Sabbath, it may therefore be turned to a selfish or worldly account. The Sabbath is the holy memorial of creation and of the law; as the Lord's day is of grace and the new creation in the resurrection of the Savior. As Christians we are neither of the old creation nor under the law, but stand on the totally different ground of Christ dead and risen. The Sabbath was for man and the Jew, the last day of the week, and one simply of rest, to be shared with the ox and the ass. This is not the Christian idea, which begins the week with the Lord, gives the best to Him in worship, and is free to labor for Him to all lengths in the midst of the world's sin and misery.

Thus we have, at every step, a fresh testimony to the real bearing of the prophecy. For us the holy place is in heaven, not in Jerusalem; for us it is no question of escaping some unexampled tribulation, but of being prepared for and rejoicing in it always; for us, gathered out of all nations and tongues, the mountains round Judea are no suited hiding-place; nor could the winter or the Sabbath-day be a just source of alarm. Every word is for us to ponder and profit by; but the evidence unmistakably points to a converted body of Jews in the latter day, not standing in Church light and privilege, but having Jewish hopes, and, while awaiting the Messiah, warned how to escape the deceits and overwhelming trouble of that day. It is a question of flesh being saved (ver.

22), and not of fellowship with Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death, so as, whatever the cost, to have part in the resurrection from among the dead. Hence, too, there is no thought here of Christ's coming to receive us to Himself, and to give us mansions where He is in the Father's house, but of His presence in glory to destroy enemies, to judge what was dead and offensive to God, and to deliver the scattered elect of Israel. For their sake, those days of terror should be shortened. With this agree the warnings in ver. 22-28: “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there: believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders,” &e. Could such a delusion be addressed even to the simplest Christian who waits for the Son of God from heaven? Yet is it very intelligible if we think of these future Jewish disciples, who might expect something akin from a prediction such as Zech. 14, where we find that the Mount of Olives is the appointed spot on which Jehovah-Messiah is yet to stand. We can well conceive rumors for such saints that Christ was in the desert or in the secret chambers: they might deceive those who expected to meet the Lord on earth, not those who know that they are to join Him and the risen ones in the air. (1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2) The manner of His presence for delivering the Jews is then made known as the guard against their deceits. “For as the lightning cometh,” &c. The figures (ver. 27, 28), which illustrate the presence of the Son of man, convey the thought of sudden, terrible manifestation, and of rapid, inevitable judgment, on what is then but a lifeless body before God, whatever may have been its pretensions. Nothing similar appears wherever, beyond controversy, Scripture describes the descent of the Lord to receive His risen saints. And what is the result of thus misapplying these verses? The revolting interpretation that “the carcass” means Christ, and “the eagles” the transfigured saints, or the converse, calls for censure, not comment. Nor is it needful to refute the claim set up for the Roman standards. Applied to Israel, all is simple. The carcass represents the apostate part of that nation; the eagles or vultures are the figure of the judgments that fall upon it. It is not only, then, that there will be the lightning-like display of Christ in judgment; but the agents of His wrath shall know where and how to deal with that which is abominable in God's sight. The allusion is to Job 39:30.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened,” &c. (Ver. 29-31.) I can hardly be asked to notice the old effort to apply these verses to the Roman triumph over Jerusalem. On the face of it, could this be said to be “immediately after the tribulation,” or was it not rather the crowning of Jewish sorrow, not the glorious reversal of their sufferings by a divine deliverance? Whatever prodigies Josephus reports were rather during the tribulation he records; whereas the signs spoken of here, literal or figurative, are to follow “the tribulation of those days,” i.e., the future crisis of Jerusalem. No; an incomparably greater than Titus is here; and an event is announced in connection with that poor people, which will change the face and condition of all nations. “Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the coming of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The elect throughout are the chosen out of Israel. (Ver. 22, 24, 31. Compare Isa. 65) Others elect there are, no doubt; but we must ever interpret by the context; and this in the present case seems to me clear and conclusive. The Son of man in heaven, and seen there, is, I conceive, the sign to those on earth. This fills all the tribes with mourning; and Christ visibly comes to judgment. Other Scriptures show that the heavenly saints have been already translated, and are then to accompany their Lord; but here nothing of this appears. It would have been premature. Besides, the object of this portion of the prophecy is to show His coming for the

relief and ingathering of His elect out of Israel. Hence, it is as Son of man (that is, judicially, see John 5:27) that He is present; and hence, too, His angels He sends with loud trumpet sound. “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 in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (Isa. 27:13.) It is the proclamation, not alone of the acceptable year of the Lord, but of the day of God's vengeance. “And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.” The four winds in connection with Israel are no difficulty, but rather the contrary. (See Zech. 2:6.) As the Lord had scattered and spread them abroad “as the four winds of the heaven,” so now are His chosen ones to be gathered in.

Chapter 95

Remarks on Matthew 24:32-51

The general outline and the special view of the Jewish portion have been given thus far in chapter 24. This is next illustrated both from nature (ver. 32-35) and from Scripture (ver. 36-41) and closed by a suitable application. (Ver. 42-44.)

“From the fig-tree learn the (or, its) parable.” What is the peculiar significance and propriety of the fig-tree here? It is the well-known symbol of the Jewish nationality. Thus we saw it, in chapter 21, bearing nothing but leaves—that generation given up to the curse of perpetual fruitlessness, whatever grace may do for the generation to come. In Luke 21 the word is, “Behold the fig-tree and all the trees.” Why this striking change? Because the Holy Ghost all through, and notably in that chapter, introduces “the Gentiles.” Luke takes in a larger scope than Matthew, and expressly treats of Jerusalem's sorrows in connection with “the times of the Gentiles.” Hence the difference even in the illustrative figures. Here it is the tree not withered away, but with signs of vitality. “When its branch has now become tender and the leaves are shooting, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is nigh by the doors;” i.e., the end of this age, and the beginning of the next under Messiah and the new covenant. And how solemnly the Savior warns that “this generation,” this Christ-rejecting race in Israel, shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled! The notion that all was fulfilled in the past siege of Jerusalem, founded on a narrow and unscriptural sense of that remarkable phrase, is from not hearing what He says unto the disciples. In a genealogy (as Matt. 1), or where the context requires it (as Luke 1), a life-time might be meant; but where is it so used in the prophetic Scriptures, Psalms, &c.? The meaning herein is rather moral than chronological, as for instance in Psa. 12:7, “Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.” The words “forever” prove a prolonged force, and accordingly the passage intimates that Jehovah shall preserve the godly from their evil, vain, flattering, lawless oppressors (ver. 2-5), from “this generation” forever. It is the distinct and conclusive refutation of those who would limit the phrase to a short epoch or a man's life-time. So in Deut. 32:5-20, we find generation similarly used, not to convey a period, but to express the moral characteristic of Israel. Again, in the Psalms we have not only “this generation,” but “the generation to come,” and neither confined to a mere term of thirty or a hundred years. (Compare also Prov. 30) But what may make the case the plainer, is the usage in the synoptic gospels. Thus, in Matt. 11:16, “Whereunto shall I liken this generation,” means such as then lived, characterized by the moral capriciousness which set them in opposition to God's testimony, whatever it might be, in righteousness or in grace. But evidently, though people then alive are primarily in view, the moral identity of the same features might extend indefinitely, and so from age to age it would still be “this generation.” Compare Matt. 12:39, 41, 42, 45, which last verse shows the unity of the “generation” in its final judgment (not yet, I believe, exhausted) with that which emerged from the Babylonish captivity. Again, note chapter 23:36, “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.” This generation, chapter 24:34, shall not pass till all the predictions of judgment, &c., Christ uttered shall be fulfilled. As it is plain from what has been already shown—indeed, most of all from the plain Scripture itself—that much remains to

be accomplished, “this generation” still subsists and must till all is over. And how true it is! There the Jews are, the wonder of every thoughtful mind, not merely a broken, scattered, and withal perpetuated race, not only distinct, spite of mighty effort from without to blot them out, and from within to amalgamate with others, but with the same unbelief, rejection, and scorn of Jesus, their own Messiah, as on the day He pronounced their doom. All these things—He warned of their earlier and their latest sorrows—must come to pass, before that wicked generation shall disappear. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” That which incredulity counts most stable, the scene of its idolatry or of its self-exaltation, shall vanish, but the words of Christ, let them be about Israel or not, shall abide forever.

But if all be thus sure and unfailing, the Father alone knows the day and hour. (Ver. 36.) Ample and distinct signs the Savior had announced already, and the wise shall understand; “but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand.” “But as the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of man be.” Here is another testimony that our Lord in this position speaks of the Jewish disciples of the latter day, represented by those who then surrounded Him, and not of the Church. For His illustration is taken from the preservation of Noah and his house through the waters of the deluge; whereas the Holy Ghost, through Paul, illustrates our hope according to the pattern of Enoch, caught up to heaven entirely apart from the scenes and circumstances of judgment here below.

Moreover, when the Son of man thus comes in judgment of living men here below, it will not be as when the Romans or others took Jerusalem, indiscriminate slaughter or captivity; but whether in the open country or the duties of home, whether men or women, there will be righteous discernment of individuals. “Then shall two be in the field, the one is taken and the other is left; two women grinding at the mill, the one is taken and the other is left.” The meaning clearly is, that one is taken away judicially, and the other left to enjoy the blessings of His reign, who shall judge God's people with righteousness and His poor with judgment. It is the converse of our change, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; for those who are left in our ease are left to be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence. But the Lord will also have an earthly people. He waits till the heavenly saints are gathered to Him above, and then begins to sow, if I may thus speak, for earthly blessings, in which case His coming as Son of man will be for the removal of the wicked, leaving the righteous undisturbed in peace. “There shall be a handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever: his name shall continue as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. 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.”

“Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour (or day) your Lord is coming.” The dealings with Israel, ending with the rescue of the just in their midst, involved, we saw, the judgment of the self secure, unconscious world. Accordingly, in these transitional verses, 42-44, we have an allusion to a wider sphere than the Jews or their land, in which the godly remnant would be found; protected, but still there. God will know how to deliver the godly out of temptation. There they are, however,

surrounded by snares and foes, but preserved: a totally different position from ours, who will be then above in the sovereign grace and wisdom of our Savior. “But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of man is coming.” I suppose that if we are to apply “the good man,” or proprietor, of the house strictly, the enemy is meant as the prince of this world, who will be surprised by the sudden day of the Lord as a thief. But the object is evidently a practical warning to the godly on earth to be ready. They had been comforted in view of trouble and violence; they had been set on their guard against the religious deceits of the old serpent; they had been solemnly assured of the stability of the Lord's words in the very point where Gentile conceit has misled even true believers; they are now exhorted to vigilance and readiness for their coming Lord, that they might not only escape the fowlers, but stand before the Son of man.

From verse 45 of chapter 24 to chapter 25:30, we enter on the parables which pertain to Christendom only, and not to the Jewish remnant. Hence here we have so distinct a portraiture of profession, true and false. Whenever we touch what is properly Christian, God we find dealing with the heart and conscience. He is calling out and forming those who are to be the companions of His Son in heavenly glory. Therefore nothing is passed by; all is judged of God in its real light. Hence, too, there is no limit here of either place or people. Christianity is above time, and of and from heaven, though it may be divulged in fact on earth during the gap in the dispensations of God made by the rejection for a season of Israel. It is a revelation of grace flowing from Him who now speaks, not from earth, but heaven. It is not, I need hardly insist, that evil is slighted. No mistake can be more profound or fatal than that grace implies levity about sin. On the contrary, grace is the very strongest condemnation of all evil, as it is indeed not the mere claim of what man ought to be toward God, but the revelation of what God is toward man in the judgment of his sin in the cross of Christ. Therefore it is the fullest display of divine hatred and judgment of evil, but this in Christ, so as to save the most guilty who believe, at the cost of His own Son, the Savior. When dealing with His earthly people under the law, many things were allowed for the hardness of their heart, which never had His sanction. But it is precisely where the complete display of grace shines, as it does now, that there evil is not borne with but judged. Such is Christianity in principle and in fact. And hence it is, that for the true Christian all the time for his earthly sojourn is a season of self-judgment; or if he fail in this, the assembly is bound to judge his ways; and if they fail, the Lord judges him and them, holily but in grace, that they should not be condemned with the world. False profession He may expose now if He see fit, but the end of it We see here in all these three parables. Grace never winks at evil; and if evil takes advantage of grace for its own purposes, the issue is frightful, and will be manifestly so at the coming of the Lord.

And this leads me to remark that the Lord's coming has a two-fold character. First of all, there is His coming in full grace, entirely apart from all question of our service, and consequently of special rewards in the kingdom in which we are to be manifested along with Christ. But we must bear in mind that this manifestation to the world in the future kingdom is far from being the highest part of His glory or even ours, as it does not elicit the deepest exercise of His grace. In receiving us to Himself, on the other hand, all is purely from Himself. It is His own love who would thus have us with and as Himself. Thus we find St. John puts the coming of Christ in his gospel, chap. xiv., nor am I aware that it is ever treated otherwise there. In the Revelation we find both ways. In the first

chapter the testimony is, “Behold he cometh with the clouds,” &c. Plainly there is no trace of the saints caught up there, but “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” The Bride nowhere appears in the scene, but rather what is public and affects the world universally, and especially the blood guilty Jew; and all are mourning. But the last chapter could not close without letting us know that there is, spite of all evil and woe and judgment, such an one as the Bride awaiting her heavenly Bridegroom. No sooner does He announce Himself the root and off-spring of David, the bright and morning star, than the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Here we have the intimate intercourse of heart between the Lord and the Church. It is impossible for any one not born of God to say “Come,” though there may be those who are so born, and yet ignorant of their full privilege of union with Christ. And for them, I doubt not, gracious provision is made in the word, “Let him that heareth, say, Come.” But in no case can the world or an unforgiven soul take up such a call; to such it would indeed be the madness of presumption, for His coming, to them, must be sure and endless destruction. Again, it is not merely saving flesh, or deliverance out of misery and danger by the overthrow of their enemies; the Holy Ghost never puts the aspect of Christ's coming for us in any such light. We shall have rest, and those who trouble us shall have tribulation in the day of His appearing; but we go to meet the Savior, and to be with Him forever; and meanwhile, it is our sweet earthly privilege to suffer for His sake now. We are left for a while in a world where everything is against us, because against Him, and we belong to Him. But we know that He waits to come for us, and we wait for Him from heaven; and while the waiting lasts, we expect nothing but suffering from the world, but are happy in it, assured that glory in heaven and the cross on earth go together. The cup of trial, the reproach and scorn of men, may be less at one time than another. This is for our Father to give as He sees fit. But if we look for aught else as our natural portion here as Christians, we are faithless to our calling. Rejection is ours because we are His: “therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

As the Bridegroom, then, the Lord has nothing but love in His heart to the Bride. Nor is there question of any save His own. He has told them He is coming; and the greater the power of the Spirit in the soul, the more ardently does the Bride say, “Come.” How incongruous here that other eyes should see! or that wailing throngs should intrude into or witness such a meeting! Scripture does not so speak.

The Jew, the world, which refused the true Christ, will receive the antichrist. This is what men wait for and will fall into; and in the midst of their delusion and apparent triumph, the Lord will come in judgment. But when He thus comes, it will not be alone. Others, His saints, appear along with Him in glory. This is what we see in Rev. 17, and with detail in chapter 19. Not angels only, but His saints follow Him out of heaven, clothed in white linen, and on white horses, according to the striking figures of the Apocalypse. The saints had been in heaven before the day of the world's judgment. They must have been removed from earth to heaven before this, in order to. follow Him out of heaven, and be with Him when that day dawns. And this could only have been through His coming to receive them to Himself. Hence, again, it appears that His coming has a double character, according to the object of each of its steps or stages. He comes to gather above His saints, dead or living, and presents them in the Father's house, that where He is, there they may be also. In due time afterward He brings them with Him, judging the beast and the false prophet, the Jews, and the Gentiles, as well as every false profession of His name. This is still His coming,

or state of presence: only now it is (what the former act, when He takes us to be with Him, is never called). His appearing, the shining forth of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8), His revelation, and His day.

With this second act of the Lord's coming or His day is connected the appraisal of our service, and the assigning of reward for work that has been done. For all must be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, and each must receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad. Some find a difficulty in bowing to both truths; but if subject to the Word, we shall overlook neither the common blessedness of the saints in the full grace of the Savior at His coming, nor the recognition of individual faithfulness, or the lack of it, in the rewards of the kingdom. When we read of the many mansions, we are not to dream of one being more glorious than another. The truth conveyed is that we are to be as near and dear as sons can be in the Father's presence, through the perfect love and work of the Son. In this point of view I see no difference whatever. All are brought absolutely nigh, all loved with the love wherewith Christ was loved, and having His portion as far as can be for the creature. But am I therefore to deny that “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor?” or that in some cases the work will abide, as in others it will be burnt? or that, as the parable teaches, one servant may receive ten cities, and another five?

It will be found accordingly, that there is a close connection in Scripture between Christ's day or appearing and present exhortations to fidelity. Thus, Timothy is exhorted to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukeable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus. So the apostle, in 2 Tim. 4, speaks of the “crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” The results of faithfulness, or of unfaithfulness, are only manifest then. It is the day of display before the world; and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.” Hence it is as awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus that the apostle speaks of the Corinthian saints as coming short in no gift, and at once brings in the thought of His day. So Christ's day is the blessed end and solemn test of all in writing to the Philippians. Of the Epistles to the Thessalonians I need say the less, as they present in the clearest way both these truths.

Returning now to the first of the three parables which refer to the Christian profession, I would make the general remark from what we have been examining, that while the words “appearing,” “day,” &c., are special and never used, I think, except where responsibility is concerned, the word “coming” is general, and though applicable, if the context so require it, to the case of responsibility, is in itself of wider character, and is used, therefore, to express our Lord's return in nothing but grace. In other words, the appearing, day, or revelation of Christ is still His coming or presence; but His coming does not necessarily mean His appearing, revelation, or day. He may come without appearing, and I believe that there is proof from Scripture that so it is when He receives us to Himself on high; but His appearing is that further stage of His coming again, when every eye shall see Him.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season?” It is not a question of evangelizing here, but of care for the household. The principle of trading outside with the Master's gifts will come by and by (chap. 24:14 and seq.); but here the great thing is that, as the Lord loves His saints (“whose house are we”), so He makes much of faithful or faithless service within that sphere. For I need not say that faithfulness to the Lord involves no denial of ministry. Ministry when real is of God; but the mode in which it is

exercised is often wrong and unscriptural. Ministry is not Jewish, but characteristic of Christianity. But it is a thing very apt to lose its true character. Instead of being Christ's servants in His household, many sink into the agents of a particular body. In such a case it always flows from the church or denomination. Real ministry is from Christ, and Him alone. Therefore the apostle says he was the servant or bondman of Jesus Christ—never deriving his mission from or being responsible for his work to the church. The gospel and the church were the spheres of his service (Col. 1), but its giver and his Lord was Christ Himself exclusively. It appears to me that this is necessary, in order that ministry should be recognized as divine; and nothing but divine ministry is owned in Scripture, nor should be by God's people now. This, then, is the first thing our Lord insists on, that the faithful and wise servant whom the Lord makes ruler over His household be found doing His work, caring for what is so near to Christ. It is a most painful proof of the low estate of the Church in these days that such service is regarded as the waste of precious ointment. So completely have even. God's children fallen from the thought of true ministry that they think it idleness or proselytism to attend to those that are within. Why not preach to those without, say they, and seek to bring such to the knowledge of Christ? But this is not the first thing our Lord presses. The “faithful and wise servant” had to do with those within his object was to give them their meat in due season; and the Lord pronounces that servant blessed. “Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.” Others might raise questions as to his title; but He simply says, If I find you “so doing,” blessed are you. The great point is to be doing His will. It is not title or position, but doing the work which the Lord wishes to be done.

But now comes the other side of the picture. “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with the drunken.” There you have the great danger of the professed servants of Christ in this world. First, wronging the fellow-servants by assuming an arbitrary place. Authority is right where it is exercised under obedience to Christ. No change of circumstances or condition alters the truth that the Lord remains Head of the Church and raises up His servants at all times to carry out His wishes with authority. But here it is man's will, where the servant takes the place of His Master, and begins to smite his fellow servants. Secondly, along with that, there is evil communication with the world. It is not said that he is himself drunken; but it is association with the world. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Where the thought of the Lord is gone, ministry loses its true character. There will be oppression towards those within, and evil commerce with those without. “The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” It supposes that the servant still pursues the same course, and is found there when the Lord comes; his heart thoroughly with the world. He began by saying in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming. This is far more than wrong thoughts about the coming of the Lord, which some saints might hold, without this Scripture applying to them. If there were, on the other hand, persons professing to look for the Lord's coming and acting as if they did not believe it, they are much more like the servant saying in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming. What the Lord judges is not a mere mistake or doctrinal blunder; but it is the state of heart—content that Christ should stay away. If we are desiring something great and of esteem among men, how can we say, “Come?” His coming would spoil all our schemes. We may talk about the Lord's coming and be learned about prophecy; but the Lord looks at the heart and not at the appearance. He sees where, let the profession be ever so loud or high, souls cleave to the

world and do not want Him.

Chapter 96

Remarks on Matthew 25

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.” We have here the general aspect of those who bear the name of Christ. The kingdom of heaven here implies a certain economy at a given point of time. “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” “Their lamps” set forth the light of profession. They were witnesses for the Lord, and their calling was to meet the Savior. That was to be the attitude of the Christian from the first, going forth to meet the Bridegroom. Christianity does not mean that its professors remain where they are and so look for Christ, but that they leave everything in order to go out and meet the Bridegroom. Some of the early believers were Jews, and some were Gentiles; but they abandon for Christ their previous connections, their position in the world, and all that they hitherto valued. They had a new object; they knew that the only blessed one in the sight of God was the Savior; they were waiting for Him, who is in heaven, and they go out to meet Him who has promised to come again. This is the true expectation of the Christian. There ought to be no fixing of dates, but the certain hope that the Lord is coming we know not when. The stronger such a hope is in our hearts, the more completely separated shall we be from the plans and projects of this world.

“And five of them were wise and five were foolish.” The kingdom of heaven becomes a thing of profession. As in the case of the servants, there was an evil as well as a faithful servant, so here we have five wise and five foolish virgins. “They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.” They were persons who had the lamp of profession but no oil. Some have thought that they were Christians who failed in looking for the Lord to come. But I believe this to be false, because the foolish proved their folly in this—that they took no oil in their lamps. What does this prove? Oil is the type of the Holy Ghost. We read in 1 John of “the unction of the Holy Ghost.” Will any one maintain that there are real Christians who have not this “unction?” The wise virgins set forth true believers: the foolish ones mere professors; these took the name of Christ, but there was nothing that could fit them for the presence of Christ. Our power of enjoying Christ is entirely by the Holy Ghost. The nature of man may admire Christ, but only at a distance, and without an awakened or a purged conscience. There is no living link of relationship between the heart of man and Christ; and therefore man crucified Him. These foolish virgins, having no oil in their lamps, showed that they possessed nothing that could enable them to welcome Christ. The Holy Ghost alone can fit men to stand in the confession of His name to do His work. The oil was that which fed the lamp, and these foolish virgins had none. “But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” They all dropped practically the hope of Christ's coming—there was no difference in that. There were true Christians and false, but all were in this respect asleep. Thus, while the original calling of Christians was to wait for Christ's return, united by the Holy Ghost, yet was there to be a universal giving up of expecting Christ. But the Lord adds, “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” Plainly that cry was the movement of the Holy Ghost Himself. It was the power and grace of God that sent it out by the means that He saw proper. We are not told how, but it plainly

reveals a general movement among Christian professors—a revival of the truth of the coming of the Lord. “Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.” The cry affected even those that had not the Holy Ghost dwelling in them.

But now comes out the solemn difference. “The foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,” or rather, “are going out.” They had lit their wicks, but there was no oil. The light of natural strength burns soon and rapidly, but there is nothing that implies the Spirit of God—they had never had oil. “But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.” I need not say that the terms on which God sells and man buys the Holy Ghost are “without money and without price;” but the great point is, that every soul must have to do with God. The believer listens and bows to God in this world; the unbeliever will quail before God in the next world. Grace compels souls to come in and to have to do with Him now, in this world; but if I put off facing God about my sins here below, I am lost forever. Now is the day of salvation; and it is only a delusion of the devil to persuade the heart to defer it to a more convenient season. If I go to God about my sins, and because I hear that there is a Savior, I shall find, not merely Jesus the Son of God, but the Holy Ghost is given, by whom I shall be able to enjoy the Savior. The wise had this oil, and they could await the coming of the Lord in peace. But the foolish ones are unacquainted with His grace. And to whom do they go? Not to those who sell without money and without price. “While they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” Afterward, as we see in the painful picture of the foolish virgins, they come, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.” The words “wherein the Son of man cometh” have no sufficient claim to follow in the verse. This is no particular view of mine, but it is the judgment of every competent person who has examined the original testimonies to the word of God. When the Lord is coming in the way of judgment, He is spoken of as Son of man. Here He is introduced as the Bridegroom, and if the words “Son of man” were really read here, it would be hard indeed to account for them. How plain that you cannot add anything to Scripture without spoiling it! Our Lord here appears in an aspect of grace towards His saints, and this is one reason why you have no description of the judgment about to fall upon the foolish virgins. The displayed execution of divine vengeance would be incongruous with His title of Bridegroom. No doubt, even here the door is shut; and our Lord tells the foolish virgins when they appeal to Him to open, “I know you not;” but He thereon immediately turns the fact to the spiritual profit of His disciples: “Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.” (Ver. 1-13.)

Then comes another parable. “For the kingdom of heaven [or, literally, ‘For he,' or, ‘it'] is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to other two, and to another one: to every man according to his several ability: and straightway took his journey.” There our Lord is represented as leaving this world and going to a far country. This is a very remarkable way in which our Lord is presented here. In Matthew His home is supposed to be on the earth, because He is the Messiah who came to His own, even if His own received Him not. As the rejected Messiah He leaves His home, and goes, the suffering but glorified Son of man, to the far country, which is clearly heaven: and while He is gone there, He has His servants to whom He has committed certain of His goods, and with these they are to labor. “Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same,

and made them other five talents." Here you have another kind of ministry. It is not serving the household, and giving them meat in due season. It is trading, or going out to others. This also is a characteristic of Christianity. In Judaism there was no such thing as the Lord sending His servants here and there to gain souls; but when the Lord Jesus left this world and went up to heaven, He thus sent them out. He left them His goods to trade withal. It is the activity of grace that goes out to seek sinners, and spread the testimony of the truth of God among saints. This also is the thing to which our Lord calls us, according to our several ability. The character of the gift put at our disposal is suited in the Giver's wisdom to the object and vessel. There is sovereignty, but all is wisely ordered. How could it be otherwise, seeing that it is the Lord who calls? It is here, too, that Christendom has so completely failed. Were a man now to begin to preach and teach without some human sanction, many would regard it as a piece of assumption, if not presumption. Whereas, in truth, if I look for authority to preach from the church established or unestablished, I shall be sinning against Christ. Any appointment by men for such a purpose is unauthorized, and opposed to the mind of Christ; and those that they would consider acting irregularly, are, in reality, in the lowly path of obedience, and will find their vindication in the great day. It is entirely a question between Christ and His own servants. He gives one to be a prophet, another an evangelist, another a pastor and teacher. (Eph. 4) But there are two things in the servant—both of them of importance. He gave them gifts, but it was according to their several ability. The Lord does not call any one to be His servant who has not an ability for the trust belonging to himself. The servant must have certain natural and acquired qualifications, beside the power of the Spirit of God. He gave them talents—to one five, to another two, and to another one. Here you have the energy of the Holy Ghost—the power that the Lord gives from on high, over and above the choice of each man "according to his several ability."

It is plain from this that there are certain qualities in the servant, independent of the gift that the Lord puts into him. His natural powers are the vessel that contain the gift, and wherein the gift is to be exercised. If the Lord calls a man to be a preacher, there is supposed a natural aptitude for it. Again, the gift may be increased. First, there is the ability of the man before and when he is converted; next, the Lord gives him a gift that he never possessed before; thirdly, if he does not stir up his gift, there may be a weakening, if not loss. He may become unfaithful, and may lose power. But if a man waits upon the Lord, there may, on the contrary, be increased power given to him. Many think that the one qualification of the servant of God is that of the Spirit. This is, of course, essential, and most blessed; but it is not all. The truth of God is, that Christ gives gifts; but He gives them "according to the ability" of the individual. The union of the two facts, the ability of the servant and the sovereignly-bestowed gift given him to trade with, it is of all-importance to keep distinctly in view.

But to proceed. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant." (Ver. 19-21.) In chap. 24 it was the "faithful and wise" servant; here, "thou good and faithful servant." Both are called faithful. But where it was a question of the household, wisdom was needed. In exercising a gift outside the house, it was a question of being good. What is meant by this? What is the source of all grace in the servant of the Lord? The appreciation of God's goodness. This comes out by contrast in the case of the slothful

servant. An unconverted man might have a gift from the Lord. The slothful servant was clearly one that never had life from God: and what proved it was, that he did not believe in the goodness of the Lord: he had no confidence in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I ought to have a divine sense of my sins. I cannot have too deep an abhorrence of sin; but this ought never to make me limit or doubt the grace of God. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” And what is true at first remains true all through the Christian path. I may become a sluggard—may be disappointed, allowing circumstances to binder me; but whatever may be my own fault or the wrong of others, this is no reason for giving up confidence in Christ. There is no trial but what He can turn to greater blessing than even if it did not exist. When things are happy, we can trust Him; but if they are miserable, are we to say, There is no hope? Never! The Lord says to us, “Overcome evil with good.” And does not the Lord act upon this Himself? Does He not hold to it, that there is grace enough in Him to meet any case, be it ever so bad There is the secret of power, where the soul holds to grace.

It was in the clean contrary of this that the evil servant showed what he was. He says to the Savior, “Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed,” &c. Christ takes him upon his own ground: for with the froward He can shew Himself froward. If the servant judges Him to be hard, He can say, On your own ground you ought to have done just the contrary. Why did you not make the best use of what I gave you? “Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.” According to his self-defense, he had utterly failed: and so it is always. The man who talks about the justice of God cannot, for an instant, stand before it, while he who casts himself humbly upon the grace of God will be found to walk soberly, righteously, godly, in this present evil world. The denier of the goodness of God is invariably a bad man himself. The Lord grant that we may make no excuses for ourselves, but feel and confess that He is full of grace and truth. He must indulge what is contrary to His nature; but there is always grace in Him to meet the soul that goes to Him about its sins, and spreads it before God in the desire of being delivered from it. And so, in the matter of our service also, whether we have two talents or five, and use them for Him, the Lord will return it to our souls again, and give us in the day that is coming to hear those blessed words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord.” (Ver. 14-30.)

We now approach a subject, viewed, I apprehend, with much prejudice—perhaps with more than most in the word of God. It has been perverted, and, I grieve to add, commonly perverted, even by those who love the Savior, have faith in the value of His blood, and own both the general blessedness of those that belong to Him and the sure doom of those that despise Him. But although on these fundamental truths all Christians must be in the main agreed, when we come to inquire what the Lord intended us to gather from His taking His seat upon the throne of His glory; when we would ascertain who the parties are that the Lord has before Him in this scene, and what the special destiny of the blessed is, we come into the region, not of uncertainty, but of the most various opinions. The root of the difficulty may be traced generally to one thought—the anxiety, even of Christians, to find that which bears upon their own lot. Not being thoroughly at rest

touching their acceptance, there is ordinarily a disposition to warp Scripture, partly to escape what they dread, and partly in order to gather comfort for their troubled souls. The greater part of God's children are, more or less, in spirit, under the law: and wherever such are honest in this condition, they must be miserable. There are comparatively few who know the fullness of deliverance in Christ; few who know what it is to be dead to the law and married to another, even to Him who is risen from the dead. They may hear and repeat the words of Scripture, thinking they mean something good; but the riches of the blessing of being dead to the law and united to a risen Savior, very few appreciate. This is the reason why so many are not in a state to understand the word of God. Not enjoying in peace their own position in Christ, they are hankering after what may console or secure them. This leads them to seize upon every promise, with small regard to the objects God had in view; and to dwell too exclusively on what may be called the covenant mercy of God, without heeding seriously His admonitions and His warnings. Their desire is, that out of the words of comfort in Scripture they may find some solid ground of assurance for their own souls. When, therefore, as here, the Lord speaks of certain Gentiles as “sheep,” they think it means us, because we are so called elsewhere, as in John 10. They find these are blessed of the Father, and thence conclude that it can be no other than our hope. Again, certain are here spoken of as “brethren” of the King. Who can these be but ourselves—Christians? For all we, unquestionably, are brethren, and He is not ashamed to call us brethren. In this superficial way Scripture is misunderstood; and the very comfort that souls are grasping after as surely eludes them. Wherever we turn aside the edge of the word of God, and appropriate indiscriminately what is said of persons in a wholly different position, there is loss. The sovereign grace of God has so arranged everything, that the best portion for us is what God has given. We cannot mend the counsels of God, nor add to the riches of His grace. If we know the love that God has to us in Christ, we know the best thing that we can find in earth or heaven. The moment we lay hold of this, and see how greatly we are blest, we cease from the anxiety that each good word of God should converge on ourselves; we see His infinitely greater object, even Christ, and we can delight in others being blest even in what we have not. This is most important practically—that we should be so satisfied with God's love to us and the portion He has given us in Christ, as to rejoice in all that He is pleased to give to others. Are we not sure our Father witholds nothing from us but what would interfere with our blessing? So reading this parable or prophetic description, we are under no constraint. We can examine it with other Scriptures, and see whom the Lord has in view, and inquire what their portion is to be.

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations.” Here are proofs enough of what the time and circumstances are of which our Lord speaks. He is taking His seat upon His own throne as the Son of man. He is gathering before Him all the nations. When will this be? Here, at least, it will not be contended that something past is in question. The Lord Jesus is not even yet seated upon His own throne. When on earth He had no throne; when He went to heaven, He sat down on His Father's throne, as says Rev. 3:21, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.” According to this promise, when it shall be fulfilled, He must have left His Father's throne and sat down upon His own throne. It is a future thing. All Scripture that touches on our Lord's actual place, shows that He is now seated on the Father's throne. But Scripture also shows that He is to sit on His own throne, and this is what we have here. All things in heaven and in earth shall be put under the

government of the Lord Jesus. He will be the head of all glory, heavenly and earthly. Of which does this portion speak? Are there any circumstances, with which our Lord surrounds His throne, that make the answer plain “Before him shall be gathered all nations.” Are nations in heaven? Clearly not. Who can imagine so gross a thing? When the boundary is crossed that separates the things seen from the unseen, no such earthly sight lowers or distracts the worship above. When men are risen from the dead, they will no longer be known as English or French; these national distinctions for them terminate. Their future lot is decided according to their reception or rejection of Jesus in the present life. This future throne of the Son of man is accordingly connected with a time-state on the earth. The more every word is weighed, the more this will be evident to the unbiased.

If we compare it, in the next place, with a resurrection scene, their distinctiveness will be apparent. In Rev. 20, “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.” There can be no question about this throne. It can have nothing to do with the earth, because the text itself tells us that the earth and heaven fled away. I learn at once the positive contrast between Matthew and Revelation. In the latter only do we hear a word about heaven and earth fleeing away in the former only we have very plain indications that the Lord is taking His throne in the government of the earth and of men living on it, not judging the dead when the kingdom is about to be given up. Those gathered before Him here are “all the nations:” a term never used about the dead or the risen, but only applied to men while still going on here below, and, indeed, applied only to a part of living men—the Gentile portion, as distinct from the Jews. For we have already had the Jews in chap 24, and now we see the Gentiles; as between the two were the Christians.

Thus, nothing can be more orderly than the whole connection of this prophecy on the mount. The Jews came first, as indeed the disciples themselves still were such; then the parables of the house servant, the virgins, and the talents, which describe the Christian position, so on to be developed, when Jerusalem should reject the Holy Ghost. Lastly, another section closes all neither Jews nor Christians, but “all the nations,” or Gentiles to whom the testimony of the kingdom is to be sent out, and among whom the Holy Ghost will work; Satan working too, lest they should be brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. In Rev. 20 we find another throne, unconnected with the earth, which, indeed, ere this will have fled away. In Matthew we had nations, but in the Revelation they too have disappeared. Satan had previously gone out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth; fire has come down from God out of heaven and has devoured them. Hence, though there were nations just before the great white throne, they were completely destroyed by a divine judgment. In their disappearance from the earth the final throne is seen, and before the face of Him who sat upon it earth and heaven fled away. Thus time was done with, all present circumstances were closed, the wicked men of the earth having been killed by God's judgment: thereon follows the great white throne. “And I saw the dead, small and great stand” There you see the character of this throne at once. Not a living man is there in natural life. Every one there had been previously dead. I am not speaking now of those that had been changed and raised into the likeness of Christ long before. Every one called before this throne had been dead sometime before. The nations were destroyed by the judgment of God, and were, with others before them, but dead men: these are now raised from the dead, called up to be judged before the great white throne. In Matt. 25 not a single dead man is spoken of; in Rev. 20 not a single living

man. In Matthew the persons called before the throne are “all the Gentiles” or nations; in Revelation none but “the dead, small and great.” No matter what they might have been before, they all stand alike, small and great, before the throne. “And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.” When we come to look closely into Matt. 25 the principle of judgment is not according to works generally, but only a particular test is pressed upon them—faithful or unfaithful treatment of the king's brethren. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.” There is not a word about this in Matt. 25; and indeed the expression of “nations” involves, without a question, the inference that there was not a dead or risen man among those so spoken of. It is the judgment of those commonly called “the quick,” and they are dealt with according to the very special principle of their behavior to the messengers of the gospels of the kingdom. This will show that it is a grand error to suppose that all the judgments in the word of God mean one and the same thing. We must leave room for differences here as elsewhere. In what, indeed, do we find absolute sameness of God's way? Who says that there will be sameness in heaven? There is certainly nothing like it on earth. God shows Himself capable, according to His love and insight into all men, to enter into and meet every difficulty and to bring out His own perfections in dealing with all that comes before Him.

Gathering up the contrast of Rev. 20, let us turn to the closing scene in Matt. 25 The title, “Son of man,” at once prepares you for a judgment connected with the earth and with persons living there. No doubt the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, but He comes to judge the world and people on it. It may be even said of churches or assemblies, as in Rev. 1; but whatever the object of the judgment, it is the Lord judging persons still alive upon the earth and not the dead.

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” It is a careful and divine discrimination; not a mere act of vengeance which deals with masses, in which all might be overwhelmed in common ruin. He separates them one from another. At the great white throne the dead stand all together: there is no question or need of separating them there. But here there is a mingled company. Such a mixture is never found in heaven or hell, but only upon the earth. Thus every clause gives proof that our Lord speaks of a judgment of the living on the earth. He separates them, “as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” It follows that the persons meant by “the sheep” and “the goats” are respectively the righteous and the ungodly among the nations then living upon the earth, when our Lord comes to judge in His quality of Son of man. It is not now what we have seen in chapter xxiv., where He shines suddenly like lightning. Here it is the calm, peaceful, but most solemn judgment, with everlasting results, according to the discrimination which the Lord makes between individuals. When the judgment of the dead takes place before the great white throne, the heavens and earth are fled away, so that before then the Lord must have come, or He never can come to the earth as it is now, and as we all confess He shall come. The eternal separation will have taken place before the new heavens and earth.

Our Lord is here found separating the godly from among the ungodly of these living nations; and He disposes of them according to the manner set forth by His own lips. “Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” However blessed they are, He does not describe them as

children of their Father. I do not deny that they are children of God; but He says, “children of my Father.” No doubt the words said to them are very precious; but do they reach up to the height of the blessing the grace of God has given us in Christ now? There is nothing here about being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world—blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here they are called to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. When God laid the foundations of the earth, He was looking onward to this blessed time. Satan's getting power over man was only a fearful interruption, but not one whose consequences the Lord could not overmaster and purge out: He means to do it. He means to have this world the scene of incomparably greater blessedness than now it is of misery through Satan's misrule. He means to give the kingdom of this world to His Son. The Lord Jesus will have a higher glory, yea, will have the whole universe put under Him. And His blood has purchased us for His bride. He had a right in His own glory to everything; but He laid down His life that there might be a righteous title to give it to whom the Father would.

Again, let it be noted that there is not a word about His bride here—nothing that supposes such a position in these blest ones of the Gentiles. He speaks as “the King,” and He is never spoken of as such in His relation to the Church. In Rev. 15 the expression “King of saints” should be King of nations, quoted from the words of Jeremiah. It is a title we can rejoice in, but it is not His relationship to us. We are called by grace to be the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Here, in His capacity of King, then, the Lord severs the righteous Gentiles of his day from their unrighteous fellows— “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” When Eph. 1 speaks of our being chosen before the foundation of the world, it means a choice independent of the scene of creation, in connection with which these blessed Gentiles have their portion. Our place may be rather said to be with Him who created all. God has “chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.” The world may disappear; but our blessing is identified with Himself. We are made one with Him who spake the world into being. The thief on the cross asked of our Lord, “Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” But our Lord says, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” To be with Christ—with Christ at once—with Christ in paradise, are each better things than the kingdom that we, too, shall inherit. Christ Himself is far beyond all the glory displayed in and to the world. This is what our Lord gives to faith, and confidence in His love ever receives more than it asks from Him.

The blessing, on the other hand, given to these godly ones from among the Gentiles, is the inheritance of the kingdom prepared for them by the Father from the foundation of the world. The Lord gives them the key to it all—that which showed they were possessors of eternal life: “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Observe what they answer: “Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?” And could a Christian, understanding the membership of the body of Christ, say such a thing to our Lord? Above all, could he say it in heaven, where we shall know even as we are known? Impossible. The fact is, however, that the scene does not speak about saints in heaven at all. The time of wondering ignorance will be past, I need hardly say, when we are in the resurrection state. But there will be godly Gentiles on the earth then. “When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” They are very far

from full intelligence, and evidently in their natural bodies still. And the Lord is instructing them even after He appears in glory. When He, having come, is as King seated upon His throne, we, raised from the dead, shall surely still cast our crowns before Him; but there will be no need of light on our part in that day. It is undeniable that the righteous here do require to be instructed. Hence there is a positive contrast between the heavenly Church and these future “sheep” of the Lord from among the nations. However blessed this scene may be, still it is the Lord as Son of man judging all nations and blessing the righteous from among them, who were ignorant, up to that moment, that in showing acts of love and kindness towards Christ's messengers, it was so much done towards Christ Himself. Their last lesson was the first that a heavenly saint learned—indeed, even then but a small part of it, as I conceive. When Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus, what was the truth that startled his soul? “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Only just awakened, yet that was made known to him which these Gentiles only partially hear when they stand before the throne of the Son of man. Paul was taught of the Lord that to persecute the saints living upon the earth was to persecute Christ in heaven: they and Christ are one. It is evident that these Gentile sheep set forth men still in the condition that requires and receives instruction from Christ.

But this is not all. “The king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Who are “these my brethren?” We have had the sheep and goats—the Gentile righteous and the unrighteous; but who are the king's brethren? Men whom the Lord will send out before He comes in the glory of the kingdom; men sent to announce that He is coming in His kingdom. The sheep showed them love—care—sympathy in their sorrows. So that these brethren of the king must have been exposed to tribulation before the king appears. The conclusion is obvious that, in that day, the ground on which He will deal with the nations will be this— “How did you behave to my messengers?” The King's messengers, immediately before He appears in glory, will go forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom everywhere; and when the King takes His throne, those that received the gospel of the kingdom among the nations are recognized as “sheep,” and the despisers perish as “goats.” Those that honor the message treat the messengers well—caring for, and identifying themselves with, them— “companions of them that were so used.” The Lord remembers this, and counts what was done to His messengers as done to Himself. There is no opening of books here: all turns on this simple issue. They were arrested by the message when summoned to receive the true King who was coming. Their souls were wrought upon by the Spirit, and they treated the messengers with love and honor. The Lord stakes all upon this—if you have honored my messengers, it proves your faith in me. It will be as truly the work of the Holy Spirit as our entrance into the far fuller testimony of His love now. Their astonishment before His throne at having done anything to Him in the person of His brethren, proves that they were not in the Christian position, though truly believers.

But who were these brethren? From general principles of Scripture, and the special teaching of this prophetical discourse, I have little doubt that the King's brethren in this case will be godly Israelites, employed by the Lord, after the Church has been caught up to heaven, to be the heralds of the coming King and kingdom. We know that the Church is to be taken away before the time of the last great tribulation. “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.” But here there are saints found on the earth—not kept from the hour of temptation, but living upon the earth during it, and preaching this gospel of the kingdom. And according to the way in which they are received, the nations are cursed or blessed. There was no gospel of the kingdom preached before or after the flood, and it is the gospel of the grace of God that is, in general, being preached now. The gospel of the kingdom is often confounded with this.

Here we find the king upon His earthly throne. The Church's portion is heavenly. I have no doubt, therefore, that the king's brethren are a class distinct from the Church, but who, along with the Church, are the brethren of Christ. There are some blessings the Jewish saints will have that neither you nor I will possess; there are others we shall have that they will not enjoy. All depends upon this—What does God say? Whatever He reveals ought to have absolute authority over us.

But we have also another and a very solemn background to the scene to glance at. “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Observe, He does not say, Cursed of my Father, answering to “Blessed of my Father.” God hates putting away. So when the awful moment comes for the curse to be pronounced on these wicked Gentiles, it is, “Depart from me, ye Cursed.” I believe it is the deepest sorrow to God, and throws all the onus of destruction on those whose own sin it was, who rejected His love and holiness and glory in rejecting His Son. “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” In the other case the kingdom was said to be “prepared for you:” not so, when speaking about the curse. Hell was not prepared for poor, guilty man. He deserves it; but it was prepared for the devil and his angels. Where the souls rejected the testimony, He does pronounce them cursed. It is His place. He is the King, the Judge. But whether it be the great white throne, or this earthly throne, it is “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” There was no hope of deliverance for these fallen angels—no redemption for them. They willfully and without a tempter departed from God. Man was tempted by an enemy, and God feels for guilty man, drawn away by a mightier, if not more guilty rebel than himself. How solemn to think that it was prepared for others, and that men share it with these rebellious spirits! It was not in the heart of God to make a hell for miserable man: it was prepared for the devil and his angels. But there were those who preferred the devil to God; and to such He says, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” The same test is applied to them as to the godly before. For good or ill, the question will be the treatment of the King and of His messengers.

To us, although the same principle is involved, yet, in one way, what is yet deeper comes in. All turns upon—What think ye of Christ? Do you believe on the Son of God? “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John) The sinner is obliged to face the person of the Son of God, and it becomes an urgent, all-absorbing, eternal question that must be decided by the soul—Do I prefer Christ to the world? Do I prefer Christ or self? The Lord grant that we may be wise, and know how to find in Christ not only the wisdom but the power of God. For the same blessed One who gave us life, gives us power for every practical difficulty. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Chapter 97

Remarks on Matthew 26

The Lord had rendered His testimony, as the faithful witness, in deeds as well as words. He had finished all the sayings which proclaimed Him to be the Prophet like unto Moses, but incomparably greater withal, who was henceforth to be heard on peril of eternal ruin. The hour approached, the solemn hour of His sufferings; and Jesus passes into it in spirit, with a calm dignity found only in Him. (Ver. 2.)

The resolve of the religious guides was to put the Lord to death. The chief priests, the scribes, the elders, were all of one mind: they assembled at the high-priest's palace—they consulted, they plotted; but after all, as usual, if they consummated their infamy, they did unwittingly the will of God, and accomplished the words of Christ to His disciples, not their own subtly concocted plan of wickedness. They said to each other, “Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people” (Ver. 5); but He said to His disciples, “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” (Ver. 2.) Did they wish to kill Him? They must do it then. Man has his wickedness, and God has His way. But little did either the friends or the foes of Jesus know how the determinate counsel of God was to be brought to pass. A traitor from within the innermost circle, fit instrument for Satan's scheming malice, must lift up his heel against the Savior, the leader of that adulterous and now apostate generation into the pit of perdition. But the enemy loves to degrade morally his victims; and the beautiful offering of love, fruit of the Holy Ghost, in her who poured the very precious ointment from the alabaster box on the head of Jesus, gave occasion to the basest motives in Judas, and the final success of the tempter over a soul, spite of the constant seeing and hearing of Christ, long inured to secret guilt. (Ver. 6-16.)

I am compelled through circumstances to glance but cursorily at these final but most fertile as well as affecting scenes. Yet let us not fail to observe, first, for our warning, how easy it is for eleven good men to be led astray by the fair pretenses of one bad man, who was influenced by evil feelings unknown to them! Alas! too, the flesh in all, even in the regenerate, remains ever the same hateful and hating thing; and there is no good for the believer save where Christ is the object and the means. Next, for our joy how sweet to find that love to Christ is surely vindicated of Him and has the Spirit's guidance in the weakest one, spite of the murmurs of those who seem ever so high and strong! Thirdly, if a saint manifested her estimate of Jesus so lavishly in the judgment of utilitarian unbelief, what was His value in the eyes of the bribing priests and of the betrayer? “And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.” (Ver. 15.) A slave's price was enough for the despised Lord of all! (Com. Ex. 21:32; Zech. 11:12, 13.)

Still the Lord pursues, in the face of all, His path of love and holy calm; and when the disciples inquire His pleasure as to the place for eating the paschal feast, He speaks as the conscious Messiah, let Him be ever so rejected: “Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.” (Ver. 17-19.) As the twelve were eating, He tells out the grief of His heart: “Verily I say unto you, that

one of you shall betray me;" and this brings out the reality of their affections and their deep grief; and if Judas imitated their inquiry of innocence, fearful that his own silence would detect him, and, it may be, counting on ignorance because of the Lord's generality of expression ("one of you"), he only thereby hears his doom brought personally home. (Ver. 21-25.) Prophecy was accomplished, but woe to that man that betrayed the Son of man!

Nothing, however, arrests the flow of His own love. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Ver. 26-28.) The bread, but especially the cup set forth the Messiah, not alive on earth, but rejected and slain. The broad truth is given here, as in Mark, in "this is my body," without marking the grace which gave it; it is the truth in itself, without the accessories seen elsewhere. Stress is laid on. "my blood of the new covenant that was shed for many," because the refusal of the Messiah by Israel and His death opened the way for others outside, for Gentiles; and it. was important for our evangelist to note this. Luke has it "shed for you," i.e., for the believers in Jesus: Matthew adds, "for the remission of sins," in contrast with the blood of the old covenant, which held forth its penal sanction. This they were also here called, all of them emphatically, to drink. The blood in Ex. 24 sealed on the people their promise of obedience to the law under menace of death: here all drink the witness, in the Savior's blood, of their sins blotted out and gone. "But," adds He, "I say Unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Ver. 29.) He is henceforth separated from joy with them till the Father's kingdom come: then He will resume His association with delight in His people here below. The godly have to drink His blood with thankful praise now: by and by, He will drink the wine of joy new with us in the Father's kingdom. Till then He is the heavenly Nazarite; and so consequently should we be in spirit.

After partaking of the slipper, they sung a hymn (how blessed at such a time!) and repaired to Olivet. (Ver. 30.) With the ineffable grace and serenity which reign throughout, the Lord lets them know the trial which should befall and shake them all that very night, and this according to the written word, even as that Which He had shown of Himself. (Comp. verses 24 and 31.) The flesh had shown its worth in the goodly price it set on Jesus; it now proves the value of its self-confidence and courage on his behalf ("All ye shall be offended because of me," &c.); and he proved it most glaringly for others and bitterly for himself who Most trusted his own love for the Savior. (Ver. 3235.) Thus the end of the trials would be to confirm their faith and deepen their distrust of self, making Christ their all in everything; and He, risen, would go before them into Galilee, resuming in resurrection-power the relationship which He had with them there in the days of His, flesh.

The next scene (ver. 36-46) though equally perfect in its display of Jesus, and equally humbling in its exhibition of the choicest of the apostles, shows us the picture, not of complete and holy calm in the full knowledge of all that awaited Himself and His disciples, but of anguish to the uttermost and of death realized in all its horrors as before God. What an insight Gethsemane gives us of Him, Jehovah-Messiah though He were, as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Whoever saw affliction as He! It was not only that Jesus knew the cross in atonement as none other did or could, that He alone bowed His head under the full unsparing judgment of God when made sin for

us; but He underwent, beyond all others, the anticipative pressure of death on His soul as the power of Satan, and this perfectly but only the more painfully for all that, because He took it from His Father's and not from the enemy's hand. Yet it is the very reverse of calmness now, but strong crying and tears to His Father now, as afterward to God as such when it was a question of actual sin-bearing on the tree. “And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me.” When the cross came, there was no such call to disciples to watch with Him. He was alone, absolutely, essentially for us, that. is, for our sins, with none of men or angels in any way or measure, morally speaking, near Him, when God forsook and hid His face from Him on whose head met all Our iniquities. It was here, on the other hand, pleading as a Son with His Father, when “He went a little farther and fell on. His face (prostrate in His earnestness) and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” He watched, and prayed, and entered not into temptation, though tempted in all points as we are. But He finds the disciples asleep: they could not watch with Him one hour: “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And so it was again and again with them, till He bade them sleep, but warned that the hour was at hand, as was the traitor.

But the same flesh which drags down to sleep, when the Lord called to watch and pray, is zealous enough, with carnal weapons, when Judas came with his deceitful kiss and a multitude following (ver. 47 and seq.), though it preserved not from, but rather led into, either forsaking the Master or denying Him. Jesus, thoroughly suffering before His Father, is all dignity and peace before man, and goes forward to meet His will at their wicked hands, laying bare in the simplest, meekest words the base evil of Judas, the rash weakness Of His inconsiderate defender, and the scriptural key to His approaching death, spite of His title to command legions of angels, and in face of an inconsistent multitude. He was, after all, a prisoner for the will of God, and not of man.

Before Caiaphas (ver. 57-75) He is counted guilty of death, but this not because the falsehood of the Witnesses succeeded, but because of His own confession of the truth. He was the Son of God; but come in fullness of grace and truth as He was, henceforth should they see Him, the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven—His present position and His manifestation when He comes in power and glory. Yet in the midst of His rejection and contumely at the hands of high and low among His own outward people, Jesus causes His mighty word to be remembered by poor Peter, bold now in denying Him—cursing, swearing Peter. “And he went out and wept bitterly.” O what a servant! O what a Lord!

Chapter 98

Remarks on Matthew 27

All through this gospel the Holy Ghost bears in mind very particularly our Lord's relations with Israel. Hence in the preceding chapters, where we had the destruction of Jerusalem foretold, care was taken to bring out also the preservation of a godly remnant of Israel, as a fact which would be of special comfort to His own people. And, just as we have seen in that prophetic testimony, so in the narrative of the crucifixion, what comes out peculiarly in Matthew's gospel is the part which Israel takes in the wondrous scene; their accomplishment of what was written in the law and Psalms and Prophets touching their rejection of their own Messiah. Our evangelist wrote with a very express view to the Jews, and hence it was of the greatest importance to convince them, by his testimony, that God had accomplished the promises in the sending of the Messiah, whom Israel's unbelief had refused and crucified, by Gentile hands, on the tree. What would be the special value of quoting the law and prophets to Gentiles? The Old-Testament Scriptures formed a book of which the heathen had the scantiest knowledge. We do find references to these Scriptures in Luke, just enough to give a link, but that is all. But Matthew, while writing for all souls, has Israel in full view. Hence the Lord is so distinctly and carefully presented as Messiah in this gospel; but, at the very first, enough is intimated to show His rejection. In the subsequent details we see not only broad predictions accomplished, but the way in which enmity is brought out. The guilt of the religious leaders is prominent. In this world, religious evil works the part that is specially offensive to God. The devil cannot give effect to his ends here below unless he brings in the name of God to sanction what is done by man.

Hence here the active people are the priests. “When the morning was come” —they rise early to accomplish their design. And, mark, it is said, “all the chief priests,” &c. This shows the utter ruin and blindness of the nation. It was a most startling fact, and a capital one for a Jew to understand (for a Jew knew that the priesthood was instituted and ordered of God), that those who ought to have been the sure guides of the people, were their misleaders in the greatest of all sins. Were not the sons of Aaron divinely chosen l Was not the succession duly maintained? Were not the Jews a people called out from the rest of the world, to own the true God and His law? Most true; but what were they and their leaders now about? Led or leaders, they had played the chief part in crucifying the Christ. These were the men who had the best light of any nation, but all the use man made of the light was to become more hardened and embittered in rejecting the Son of God. “And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.” Whatever we find the Gentiles doing here, God takes care to point out that the Jews were not only the secret conspirators, but that the open guilt fell upon them.

“Then Judas, which had betrayed him,” &c. “And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that,” Awful picture of what Satan brings about in a wretched human heart! Only the farther from Jesus morally, because he was the nearer externally. Most of all guilty are those who have the greatest outward privileges, while the truth of God does not govern the soul. We see, too, the mockery of Satan—the way in which he cheats his victims even in this world. Judas did not expect that Jesus would die. He had known the Lord in imminent peril before; He had seen Him, when the people

took up stones to cast at Him, hiding Himself, going through the midst of them and passing on His way. He knew how Jesus could walk on the sea—how He could conquer all the obstacles of nature; and why not the raging storm of human passion and violence? But Judas was deceived, whatever his calculations may have been; he yielded to covetousness; he bargained for the blood of Jesus—and Jesus came to die. To his horror, he found it too true. And Satan, who had led him on by his love of money, leaves him without a single hope, in black despair. He goes to the priests; but miserable comforters were they all to the miserable despairing soul. Confession of sin, without giving God confidence for His grace, is worthless. Cleave to God, my soul, and give Him credit for what He is in Christ. But there is no faith where Jesus is not loved: and Judas had neither. Jesus was a forgotten object before his soul, and this proved that there was no life in him. All the outward nearness he had enjoyed before, was only a greater weight to sink him into perdition. What a thing is the end of sin even in this world, sin against Jesus! Judas brings the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders with the confession, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” They could not deny the truth of this; but with utter heartlessness they say, “What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.” Many a one sells Jesus virtually, if not literally. Let every soul look to it, that his sin be not in some way akin to that of Judas. If God is calling sinners to a knowledge of His Son, it is an awful thing to reject Him; it is selling Jesus for some object in this world, which either we seek to attain, or love too well to part with. In Judas, this came out in its worst form; but perdition is not confined to him who is the son of perdition.

“And the chief priests took their silver pieces,” &c. Conscience would have told them that theirs was the guilt of bribing Judas to betray Jesus. But another thing becomes evident here. Religion without Christ only gives persons the means of cheating their souls into the belief that they are doing God service. They said, “It is not lawful for us to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.” Here was religion, but where was conscience in giving the money for Jesus? “And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.” They are obliged thus to perpetuate their own wickedness. And this is exactly a picture of what the people, once holy, had now become—the chief priests the pattern of what the nation was. A field of blood that land remains to this day, a field “to bury strangers in.” Israel being cast out of their own land, it is left to others, if only to be buried there.

But it is not now the chief priests and elders, nor the wretched condition of Judas, nor the perpetuation of Israel's wickedness, foretold by the prophet, that occupies us. It is our Lord Himself, standing before the governor. He acknowledges the power of the world, when Pilate asks Him, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” To the chief priest and elders He answers nothing. Pilate, struck by the silence and moral dignity of his prisoner, desires His release, sees through the malice of the people, and proposes to them a choice, such as was the governor's custom. “Whom will ye that I release unto you?” But he had to find out the hatred with which men regarded Jesus: there is no person or thing the malice of man does not prefer to Him. God takes care, too, that there should be a home testimony to the conscience of the governor. His wife sent a message, saying, “Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” This, which is recorded only in Matthew, disturbed Pilate the more. All of it God ordered, that man's iniquity in rejecting Jesus should be evident and without excuse. Then

observe the solemn lesson: “The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.” The greater the moral advantages, where there is not simple faith in God, the greater the hatred of Jesus. The reception or rejection of Jesus now is the same thing in principle, though, no doubt, the circumstances of the world are changed. Persons may know just enough of Jesus for their souls' salvation and experience little of the world's rejection; but if I really cling to a crucified but now glorious Christ, I must know what it is to have the scorn and hatred of the world. If the world rejected Him, I must be prepared for the same thing. We cannot have both heaven and earth. The cross and the glory go together. The Lord presented hopes of blessing on earth to Israel if they had received Him; but they refused, and this brought in the cross of Jesus. God knew it was inevitable, and this because of man's wickedness. Then God brings in heavenly glory, and we must prepare for as much as man chooses to do in the present state of society. It is a lie of Satan's to say, that man is altered for the better in the last 1800 years; the feeling of the human heart is always the same, though there may be times when it comes to a focus. The very people who “wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth,” the same day sought to cast Jesus down headlong. And what was it that brought out their enmity? It was the assertion of God's grace. Man cannot endure it—the thought that His salvation is the same perfect, eternal salvation for the worst of sinners as for any. “Is it possible,” he says, “that I, who have tried to serve God for so many years, should be treated like a drunkard, a swindler, or a harlot?” He turns round on God, and becomes His open enemy. But, after all, there is no question of justice to man in the salvation of a sinner. It must be grace, if God saves any, and He shows that. Nor is it merely a partial remedy, for there is no case so desperate that His grace cannot reach.

“Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.” Here we see the righteousness of these religious men. If Pilate was, at least, too sensible to do as they, we shall see what his righteousness amount to. He asks, “Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water,” &e. There you see what the world's righteousness is. We have seen what the chief priests were; now we see what is the righteousness of the Roman. There cannot be true righteousness unless God governs. We have all failed—I must therefore be saved by another; for God shows all measured, weighed, and found wanting. One person alone in this scene is found full of wisdom, patience, goodness, perfect in every way. When it was the time to speak, His word is spoken; when it was the time to be silent, He holds His peace. He was God upon earth, and all His ways perfect. But this is not the great point here. The Gospel of John specially developer the Deity of our Lord, as that of Luke His humanity. In Matthew we see Him as Messiah; therefore Pilate asks Him here, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” When Pilate had “washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it” (as if that could relieve him of the fearful guilt he was perpetrating); all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children.” And there the dark fatal stain abides to this day. Others are guilty too, but the favored Jew above all. “When he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.” See what the righteousness of man is! This was he who had just before called Jesus a just man. And now come the soldiers. They are, and must all be proved, guilty. Not a class or condition of man but evinces its hatred of God in the person of His Son; failing most, too, in that which was their pride. For what base cowardice is that which tramples down One who suffers unresistingly! “And they stripped him, and

put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head.... and they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head," &c. But that was not all. "As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross." The excesses of human tyranny follow the rejection of Jesus.

"They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall." We must not confound this circumstance with that mentioned in John, where the Lord says, "I thirst." In Matthew's narrative it was the stupefying draft administered to prisoners before they suffered; and this the Lord would not drink. Whereas, in John, the Lord, while on the cross, remembers, as it were, a scripture as yet unfulfilled. Here then He is regarded not as One who did not suffer, but withal as the absolute Master over all circumstances. Alive therefore to the honor of Scripture, and a word which had not received its accomplishment, He says, "I thirst." "And they filled a sponge with vinegar,... and put it to his mouth." He did drink the vinegar then; but here, on the contrary: "When he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." He wished no alleviation from man. "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots," &c. The superscription differs in the various gospels. But we must remember that Pilate wrote it in three different languages. One gospel (Mark) does not profess to give anything but the substance of what was written, the accusation or charge against Him; in the others, the Holy Ghost gives the words. And what appropriateness is here! "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." The great thing for the Jew, was the identifying of their Messiah and King with Jesus. In Luke the word "Jesus" ought to be omitted, as in the best authorities. It is really, "The King of the Jews, this!" meaning "this fellow," a term of contempt, the point there being "He is despised and rejected of men." Here, "He came to his own, and his own received him not;" because though the Gentile shares the guilt, it is the Jew who leads Pilate to condemn Him to death. In John, we have, characteristically, the fullest form of all— "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The reason is, that it unites two things in our Lord, not anywhere else so brought into juxtaposition: the most complete humiliation and the highest glory. He by whom all things were made—God Himself—was as man "of Nazareth." The beauty of this must appear to any spiritual mind. Throughout John's Gospel the Lord is both higher and lower than anywhere else.

"The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." They found time to revile Jesus too, venting their bodily anguish in mockery of the Son of God. Oh! beloved friends, was there ever such a scene? We have looked at man's part, but what was God doing there? "About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We have full evidence that this was not the exhaustion of nature. "And when he had cried again with a loud voice, he yielded up the ghost." Our Lord died a willing victim. Man might will, and be the instrument of, His death. A man He became that as a man He might die; but He marks it in its every circumstance so as to show that He was there who could as easily have swept away a world as of old He laid down by a word the foundations of heaven and earth. "He yielded up the ghost; and, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." Nature was made to yield its testimony, above and below; and the darkness over the land was no mere eclipse. The Jewish system, too, yielded its solemn witness in the rent vail. Unrent, it had been the symbol that man could not draw near to God. Under the law it can never be. God dwelt then in the thick darkness. But in the death of Jesus there is the expression of full grace. God and man may now meet face to face. The blood is sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat, and man is invited

to draw near boldly. Why should it not be? It is due to that precious blood. God in Him had come down from heaven to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. For every soul that believes, it is done. The Jewish system might linger on, like a corpse waiting so many days for burial; but the rending of the vail was the soul severed from body. Thus there was witness on every hand: the earth and the heaven, the law and the unseen world. Jesus has the keys of Hades and of death. The very graves were unlocked when Jesus died, if the bodies of the saints did not rise till after His resurrection. He was Himself the firstfruits, and the power of life was brought in through His resurrection. What testimony could be more complete? The centurion set to watch (heathen as, no doubt, he was) “feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God.”

“And many women were there beholding afar off,” &c. But where were the disciples? Oh, what withering condemnation of all boasted strength! They had forsaken Jesus and fled; but here were these women, contrary to their natural timidity, “out of weakness made strong,” beholding, even though afar off. In Joseph of Arimathea, we see a man who had a great deal to lose: he was a rich man and a counselor; before, a secret disciple of Jesus: but now God brings him to a point when you would least expect it. With the death of Jesus before his eyes, he goes to Pilate, begs His body, and having laid it in his new tomb, rolls a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departs. If apostles and disciples fled, God can, and does, raise up testimony for His name's sake.

We have traced the history of self in this chapter. If we had all the riches, the learning, the power of this world, these could not make us happy. But Jesus can. Yet let us remember that we are in an enemy's country, which has shown its treachery to our Master. If we do not feel that we are passing through the camp of those who crucified Jesus, we are in danger of falling into some ambuscade of the enemy. The Lord grant us that calmness of faith which is not occupied with itself, but with Him who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

Chapter 99

Remarks on Matthew 28

The special purpose of this Gospel appears in the account of the Lord's death and resurrection, as plainly as elsewhere. Hardly any portion, indeed, more strikingly illustrates it than the chapter before us. Thus, on the face of it, we see nothing of the ascension. If we had only Matthew, should. we have known as a fact that the Lord went up to heaven at all? It is impossible, without a special purpose, that the apostle could have omitted an event so glorious and interesting. Not that this omission is a defect in Matthew's narrative; on the contrary, it is a part and proof of its perfection, when the scope is understood. Were the ascension scene introduced here, it would be mere patchwork, and out of keeping with the history that closes in our chapter. Yet even now it is one of the points that learned men stumble over. Neglecting the evidence of design, they reason a priori, and consequently cannot understand why such an event should be left out by our evangelist. Evidently they do not believe, in any full sense, that God wrote these gospels; else they would conclude that the fault lay in their ignorance and misreasoning. A simple-hearted believer rests satisfied that the omission in Matthew is as perfect as the insertion in Luke everything is as it should be in the word of God, as He wrote it. And the notion that anything is now wanting which Matthew ever wrote as a conclusion, is contrary to all evidence, external and internal.

Before closing, I shall endeavor to show how its presence here would be incongruous, and detract from the beauty of the picture God was supplying; on the other hand, its presence where it does occur elsewhere is, I need hardly add, equally beautiful and necessary. Events are selected in connection with the immediate subject. Taking the chapter as it comes, we see that the Holy Ghost here confines Himself to a risen Messiah from the dead, who meets His disciples in Galilee, outside the rebellious city. In other parts of this Gospel the ascension is implied or assumed, as in chap. 8:11; 16:27, 28; 22:44; 24, 25, and, above all, 26:64. It was, therefore, not omitted through ignorance, nor has any accident robbed us of it in the original. I only say this as entirely refuting the foolish and irreverent reasoning of men, chiefly modern.

“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn,” &c. This was not the morning of the resurrection day, but the evening previous to it. We, with our western notions of time, might think only of the early dusk, but it means simply that the week was drawing to its close. And evening, we must remember, to a Jewish mind, commenced the new day. An exactly similar phrase occurs in Luke 23:54, where the Jewish sense cannot be doubted. The Holy Ghost does not continue the description of this visit of the women to the sepulcher. There is no real ground for connecting the circumstances of the first three verses of this chapter. The first merely presents the devotedness of these holy women. When the disciples had gone to their own homes, these females, spite of natural fears at such a place and time, could not stay away. They had prepared spices for embalming the body, but rested the sabbath-day (as we read in Luke). according to the commandment. “It was just getting dusk” is the real thought here. It was the twilight after the sabbath. Their hearts lingered round the grave, bound up with Jesus.

“And behold, there was a great earthquake,” &c. This occurred afterward; how long is not said. We have simply a narrative of events, without defining the intervals of time, but one after another, in these early verses. We must not confound the visit of the women here (in verse 1) with their visit on the morning of the first day mentioned by Mark and in our verse 5, &c. The Lord was not on this last occasion in the sepulcher. But the angel, descending and rolling away the stone, had nothing directly to do with the Lord's rising. No such interposition was in any way necessary to Him. God raised Him, and He rose Himself. Such is the scriptural doctrine of the resurrection. This angelic action was, I suppose, to call the attention of men to what God had done, and the more fully to set aside the deceits or the reasonings of enemies. So the angel's word is, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

One remarkable consequence of the resurrection is always pressed. The angel says, “Fear not ye.” That mighty act of God is intended forever to dispel the alarm of those who believe in Jesus, by giving them the certainty of His intervention on their behalf. Up to the advent and resurrection of Jesus, there was a measure of darkness and uncertainty, however great the kindness and mercy shown by God. The resurrection left all the world apparently undisturbed; but what was the great resulting truth and blessing for the people of God? To faith it is the triumph of God over the last efforts of sin and the power of Satan. No doubt death is still in the world, pursuing its ravages. What, then, is the resurrection to you? says the caviler. Everything, if Christ is my life. I am entitled to have the comfort of it; my soul is welcome to drink into the joy of it, though my body does not yet share the deliverance. God has shown me in the cross of Christ, the perfect witness of suffering for sin. Man believes not that He is the Son, and cannot understand how God could allow His best beloved to suffer. Others who had cried to God, and spite of all their faults, had been heard; yet in the extremity of Christ's sufferings and spite of His grace and glory, and the Father's love to Him, He cries, and was not heard! For truly He was not till all the billows of divine wrath closed over His head, the spotless victim wreathed with our sins. But now the crisis is come, and all is changed. It might have seemed to the world that all was over with the claims of Jesus. He had died on the cross, and by His own confession forsaken of God. Was all as safe as man or the devil could desire? On the third day God interferes, Jesus rose from the dead, and all the power of earth and hell was shaken to its center. Resurrection settled everything in peace for the believer. Every cause for fear and selfish sorrow was buried in the grave of Christ. Every blessing overflows in Him risen. How much is made of this in the Epistles! Nothing is more fundamental or more insisted on. Vague thoughts of God's faithfulness, love, &c., would not be enough for the solid comfort of God's people. Many who see little more have only glimpses of joy. In order to have full settled peace they must be founded on the basis to which God points—the death and resurrection of Jesus. If His death meets all my evil, His resurrection is the spring and pattern of the new life and acceptance, above sin and death, which grace has given me in Him.

The course of the world was not interrupted by the Lord's resurrection, Men slept as usual, and rose as if nothing had happened. Yet was it the greatest work of power that God had ever wrought, yea (founded on the deepest suffering that ever was endured) it was the greatest work He ever will do; and I say this looking on to the day when everything shall be made new according to His glory. These are but consequences of Christ's resurrection—but applications of the power put forth therein. But if the world was indifferent to it, what should it be to us? Say not it is a little thing because it is as yet a matter of faith. Into the midst of this scene of weakness and death the mighty

power of God has entered and been here put forth in the resurrection of Christ. God does, and could do, no more to blot out sin: it has been put away by the sacrifice of Christ. But one thing abiding ought to make the soul afraid of God—even sin. Now Jesus was treated as if He were covered with it, and it were all His own. If it were to be removed, He must bear it thoroughly: He did so, and now it is gone; and we rest upon what God tells us of Him and it. This is what tests the soul's confidence in God. Am I willing to trust God when I cannot trust myself? Sin brought in distrust of God, but the gift, death and resurrection of Christ, more than restore what was lost, and establish the soul in such a knowledge of God as no angel ever did or can possess. What my soul wants is, not that God should be too merciful to destroy me because of my sins, but a full deliverance with a full judgment of sin. We cannot have fellowship with God except on the ground of sin being taken away righteously. Jesus crucified has abolished sin before God for those who believe. To believe God about the death of His Son is to take God's part against ourselves. Before Him to acknowledge ourselves lost sinners is repentance toward God.

Perfect love is in Himself, and comes out of the depth of His own holy being. God became a man that He might go through the whole moral question of sin: that done in Christ is the triumph of grace. No wonder then that the angel could say, “Fear not ye.” The resurrection shows every hindrance gone. The angel acknowledges Him as Lord, but what a blessing to be able to say our Lord! What a joy thus to own that risen One who was crucified, as entitled in everything to command! No doubt what made His work of value was that He was God Himself—One who, while He was a man, was infinitely above man—a daysman—One who could lay His hand upon both. The angel intimates this, that in the presence of a risen Savior there was nothing for the most timid believer to fear. On the other hand, Acts 17:31 says, “He (God) hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” If I do not trust to a risen Savior for the deliverance of my soul I participate in the guilt of His death. If I have not fled for refuge to Him, I belong to the same firm, as it were, that crucified Him. But by faith in His blood I am washed from this guilt. How just that the provision of grace which seals the believer's deliverance, should, if despised, become the dead weight that sinks the world! If I believe Him, I know it was man that crucified Jesus; and not merely profane man—the guilt pervades all. And there is one only door of deliverance for any, and that is Jesus crucified. “Fear not ye.” There is no need of alarm, for He is risen. God was waiting for this. “I know that ye seek Jesus,” &c. It was the heart set upon Jesus that was valued. It had ever been in the mind of God to blot but sin; but now it was all gone. He who was full of holy love in giving Jesus to die, now raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. If my faith and hope are in God, my delight is in Christ; if in myself, Christ becomes to me a cipher, and I justly perish forever. If I have not Christ for my rest and delight, my Savior and Lord here, I must by and by quail before Him as my Judge.

And now, returning to the women, they were to go and tell His disciples that Jesus was risen from the dead, and went before them into Galileo. In Luke there is no notice of Galilee; but He joins the two disciples going to Emmaus; and when they returned to Jerusalem the same evening, they “found the eleven gathered together saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” Jesus Himself appears in their midst. All circumstances there have Jerusalem as their center. In Matthew the great point pressed is the meeting-place assigned in Galilee. And why? Is it not remarkable on the face of it that one should give the meeting of Jesus with His disciples in

Jerusalem, another in Galilee? Has not God some truth to teach me hereby? We are apt to measure the importance of a truth by its results to ourselves; but the true standard is its bearing on the glory of God. The way in which God gives us His truth after all, too, is the best for us. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is found in Galilee. Jerusalem refuses Him—was troubled at His birth, and cast Him out unto death, even the death of the cross. “We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,” exactly describes their feeling. They looked in the Messiah for something suited to their earthly ideas: they vented their disappointment in the rejection of the Son of God. In accordance with this, then, Matthew records that where He manifested Himself as risen, after the house of Israel rejected Him, was the scene of His living labors and Jewish scorn—Galilee. He shows himself anew in despised Galilee of the Gentiles, when all power is given to Him in heaven and earth; and there He gives the godly remnant from His ancient people their great commission.

“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them,” &c. In John, where Mary stretches out her hand to the Lord, He says “Touch me not.” How comes it that here, when the women came and held Him by the feet, our Lord does not forbid it? A totally different truth is thus set forth by our Lord. The great hope of Israel was to have Christ in their midst. But to us, the absence of Christ on high, while we go through our time of trial, is just as characteristic as His presence will be to them. John speaks fully of our Lord's going away: another scene of glory entirely distinct from this world is brought out there. Hence the teaching there is, as it were, You may have been looking as Jews for a scene where I shall be personally present, but instead of this I tell you of my present place on high and the many mansions that I go to prepare for you in my Father's house. He reveals to them a heavenly hope totally distinct from His reigning over His people in this world. But in Matthew we are shown Jesus rejected by Jerusalem, yet found in Galilee, even after His resurrection. Whatever His power and glory now, and the comfort and blessing to His own, He is still, as regards the Jews and Jerusalem, the rejected and despised Messiah. Hence it is, that on this occasion He confirms the message of the angel, saying to the women, “Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”

The governor wielded the power of the Roman kingdom: but who were they that secretly instigated him? The false religionists of their day—the priests, utterly blinded of the devil. Always without simplicity of heart, they assembled together with the elders and took counsel; and those who bribed a treacherous disciple for “thirty pieces of silver” to put Christ to death, gave “large money” now to deny the truth of His resurrection. Such is man—such is the world; and solemn to say, such its highest, proudest phase. Such it was then: is the moral complexion altered now? If we read the Bible aright, we shall find in it not only the record of the past, but the divine lesson. Book of the present and the future. May we read it for our own souls! Certain it is that the Jews, and especially the religious chiefs, took the lead in evil and opposition to God, before Christ's death (chap. 26, 27), while He lay in the grave (chap. 27, 62-66), and after He rose again (chap. 28, 11-15). But unbelief is after all as weak against God, as faith is mighty with Him. Their own guard became the clearest, most willing, and least suspected witness of the resurrection. What a testimony was the alarm of the soldiers added to the doubts of His own disciples. It was more than unbelief now; it was a deliberate, willful lie; and there rest the Jews “until this day.” Their fears raised up unwittingly a sure testimony to Jesus; their enmity leads them on now to reject what they knew was the truth, even if they perished everlastingly.

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.” And yet these doubters were disciples. How good is God! How above the thoughts of nature! Man would have held back the fact. Why say that some of his disciples doubted? Would it not stumble others? But it is profitable to know the depth of our unbelieving hearts, to see that, even in the presence of a risen Jesus, “some doubted.” No matter what His love to His children, God never hides from them, nor makes light of, their sins.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Now it appears to me that, with such a word as this, the ascension-scene would be incongruous.

What more unsuitable, after He had said, “Lo, I am with you alway,” than the details of His going back to heaven? But there the curtain drops. Otherwise it would not have left the unbroken blessedness of this promise to ring on the ear. Thus, the keeping out of view His departure seems to me to crown the beauty of the parting promise, and of the whole gospel.

Why not here “repentance and remission of sins?” why not “preach the gospel to every creature?” what is the peculiar fitness of this conclusion of Matthew? The Lord, rejected as the Jewish Messiah, opens out fresh dealings of God with men. Before, they were not to go even to Samaritans; but here an entirely new sphere is opened. It is no longer God having His peculiar dwelling-place in one nation; it is now this larger thought— “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Baptism is here in contrast with circumcision, and the fuller revelation of the Godhead is contrasted with the name Jehovah, by which God was known to Israel. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” This falls in with the sermon on the mount, where the Lord says, in contrast with them of old time, “But I say unto you.” He was the Prophet like unto Moses whom God had promised to raise up, and to whom they were bound to hearken. What special guidance in this for Jewish disciples! They were to teach all things that Jesus had commanded. He was the beloved Son of God who now was to be heard preeminently. It was not a question of putting the Gentiles under the law, which has been the ruin of Christendom, the denial of Christianity, and the deep dishonor of Christ Himself.

And here all closes. The disciples were about to enter on a troubled scene; but “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” And this was and is enough for faith. The Lord grant that we may confide our souls, both for this world and the next, to that word which shall stand when heaven and earth pass away.

Chapter 100

Note: Not Merely Gifted but Inspired

Let me add, lest I should be misunderstood, that when I speak of the apostle being in one epistle as a teacher, in another as a pastor, in another as a prophet, and the like, I merely mean that the inspiration, which filled and guided him in every thought and word, gave him that character on each occasion as was suited to it. He wrote, not as a gifted one merely, but as inspired. That I surely know and own.

Chapter 101

Pauline Righteousness: Part 1

[The following letter to Dr. —, of Dublin, has been sent to us for insertion, as of general interest.]

MY DEAR BROTHER, I have read the paper which you gave me, and which I understand is so much thought of by Christians of the Establishment. We are so apt, in getting hold of some truth, to pursue our own reasonings on it, reasonings in which, in divine things, there may be so easily some error or defect, some positive text forgotten that would show the defect, or with which the conclusion is at variance, that it is important to review all one's assertions and statements, and compare them with God's word: and search that word that we may, in our measure, fully know all its teaching on any point, so as to be guarded against any self-drawn conclusion which may more or less swerve from it. At least so I find it. Conclusions are never knowing the truth. I draw a conclusion: this last is only a consequence, an idea which follows from another. The truth is what exists in Christ, or the showing everything, as it is, by Him. I say as to the truth—it is. I say as to a conclusion—it must be right. It may be so. But in the truth I have what is; in a conclusion, an idea justly deduced. An immense difference, morally speaking. I am subject to the truth. I have proved, if it be so, the justice of my conclusion. I say this not to hinder inquiry, but to insist on testing by the Scriptures all conclusions I arrive at—man's conclusions, by a divine testimony. If we were simply willing to bow to the word, reasoning really would not be necessary. We should need divine teaching, to have our understandings opened, but we should learn, not have conclusions to draw. However, we are not so simple as this, and there is pleading and reasoning, and if carried on in the spirit of grace, and continually tested by the word, it elicits truth, though it calls for watching one's spirit very closely. God has so ordered it. There is a convincing of gainsayers, as well as teaching the truth. We need the Spirit of God for this as for all else. How bright examples do we see in Scripture, as Paul, and Stephen, and others, of this power of confounding the opposers of the truth. Discussion and inquiry, if rightly pursued, if there is, through grace, a love of the truth, are a means of enlarging and deepening our own thoughts also, as well as of convincing others; of correcting them, too, of course, where needed, of perfecting them, rendering them, if in the main true, free from such objections as may apply really only to adjuncts to them, but serve to cast doubt on the truth we hold. Thus the truth and all its bearings are better known as they stand in the divine counsels, and it is held as from God, that which is alloy being removed. I have searched thus, I trust sincerely, the Scriptures, to learn what they say on righteousness; and I certainly, I hope with increased clearness of apprehension, believe the doctrines I have held to be the doctrine of Scripture, while the reading of the article in the Christian Examiner has made me feel more deeply than ever that the ground on which my opponents rest in their views of righteousness is false; that the root of it lies deep, and that, when carefully searched, or, as here, elaborately unfolded, it is worse than it at first appears. Many a traditional error is held without seeing all it implies, nor would it be just to charge on those holding it all that it does imply when they are not aware of it. But we are justified in showing that the error involves it. The evil and deep and deadly doctrine involved in the common doctrine of Christ's righteousness, comes more clearly out in this paper than in anything I have yet seen. I do not in the least charge the Editor or patrons of the

journal with what is really involved in their article, other truths may guard them from it; but the insertion of such an article is a proof how the error they contend for blinds them to the exceeding evil doctrine whose germ is in it, and in these days this is becoming important. The conventional landmarks of truth are being removed; confidence in the forms truth took 300 years ago is being shaken; and, alas! though not yet so much, thank God, in Ireland, the truth contained in the form often thrown overboard. Then, alas! a large class of the ministers of the Establishment cling in consequence more to formal ordinances, to have something steady. But this does not keep souls who thirst for the truth itself, it only stunts the growth of those subject to them, and Scripture in itself loses its authority. It does not recover those who are wandering They see these things are not truth. If they return to them it is to a practically Popish form of them, in which truth is sacrificed, to anything, that is, God's authority to man's. For God exercises His own authority over the conscience by the truth. Man's is Jewishly maintained by subjection to ordinances. Nor is it possible to hold godly men in these bonds; at least, a vast number of them; the word of God is too much studied. It may some, but it is soon found that where the word of God has its own power—that is, when God is owned—souls get on into too much real solid sanctifying truth to remain bound to ordinances as the bond of Christianity and Christendom, even when they are divinely given ones. Those who do are more thrown back on mere forms. Truth is needed to keep souls in progress and in holy subjection to God at the same time. In this case, Scripture, the word of God, must have its authority. If the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter on earth, as forming the unity of Christ's body on earth, and dwelling in God's assembly as His habitation; if the coming of Jesus to receive the saints to Himself, and then His appearing to judge the world, and the saints with Him, be taught, and these truths work their effect in people's souls, conventional church forms will not hinder persons who bow to Scripture (and they ought to bow to Scripture) from receiving them. Nor will denying their importance lead people who have known their power to yield to theory. They find them presented in Scripture as immense practical truths, and Scripture is read, the divinely declared safeguard in the perilous times. No man who knows what darkness and light is, can do otherwise than bless God with his whole heart for the blessed intervention of God in the Reformation. We cannot too highly prize that astonishing deliverance. But it set up the authority of Scripture. That was one great half of the blessing of it when it prevailed. Men have gone into infidelity. In no way, far from it, in Protestant countries more than in Roman Catholic. Every one acquainted with the latter knows the contrary. Only in Protestant countries, where there is liberty, it declares itself. But the principle of the authority of Scripture, remains firm wherever God is really owned. But, in all the present movement of mind, it must be its authority as God's word which we appeal to as justifying our statements. I know, alas! man's heart can reject it; but, then, I am authorized and bound to treat him as an unbeliever, for he is one. There is nothing to be believed but the word of God. Thus only can I set to my seal that God is true—thus only exercise true faith. The appeal even to reformers, or more modern authors, cannot avail. I do not believe in them. They cannot be, ought not to be, a ground of faith. They may instruct me; I may listen to them with personal respect. This is all right. But they cannot be authority for my soul. If I own them as such, the word has lost its authority; for I put man's word and God's word on a level. In receiving Scripture, I set to my seal that God is true, and hence His authority over my soul, while His love in giving His word is owned. Always a vital truth, this is now of inconceivable importance. On this question hangs that of the subjection of the soul to God, and in His word, or man's willful departure from it, be it in superstition or infidelity. On the subject we are now occupied with, men

have sought to put down what I believe to be the truth by quoting Reformers and Puritan divines. It does not affect my mind in the smallest degree. If they are not in unison with Scripture, I reject them at once. I value all their work, but God's word is alone an authority. I may be told it is only my thought on Scripture, instead of theirs. My faith must be mine, and must be direct, based on the word itself, or it is not faith. They may have been instruments, and blessed ones. They were, in their day. But they are not authority. Were I to hold them so, I must hold many errors, and many opposite things, and leave unlearned many important truths by which God is acting on the conscience of the Church at this day, which it was not in His wisdom to bring out in their day. Let us search Scripture together. God would, out of the common fund of Scripture, lead by His Spirit to the use of certain truths, according to man's need, or the Church's need at the time. Out of the same fund He will teach the humble enquirer by His Spirit now. They are momentous times: all is shaking; and the Holy Ghost knows on what truths to fix the attention of the saints now. Free inquiry is abroad, often without the smallest respect for the word of God. I am persuaded that the safe way for a soul to meet it, and all the difficulties that may arise, is perfect subjection to the word of God. Then let him inquire and search as much as he can, provided it be humbly done in dependence on grace, in true subjection to the authority of the word. The conscience will thus be kept in play, and divine authority will be maintained over the soul, and that is all-important. These ecclesiastical forms cannot keep a soul, unless in darkness; yet, whenever a soul gets from under authority, it goes astray. Where am I to find God's authority? In His word. There, in spirit, not only younger will be subject to elder, but in all grace one to another. Are we not in momentous times? Are we not in times when all is called in question? Does not the Church, and the Christian, need special founding in the truth? Do they not need from the word what is suited to the difficulties of these times, which are not the same as those of the Reformation, nor that of Puritans either. Let us, then, take the word, and inquire by it of the Lord's mind. Our subject is righteousness, and specially the righteousness of God. Now this is used, as the terms imply, in an abstract and in a special sense. The word speaks of righteousness, and there is the special way revealed in which we can have it in a way worthy of, and suited to, God. When I read, “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness,” or, “grace reigns through righteousness,” I have the word used abstractedly: when I read, “the righteousness of God,” or “the righteousness of faith,” I have a special character or way of righteousness. We must keep in mind both. And, first, what is righteousness? It is, I believe, the maintenance in my conduct, in my whole conversation, of what I ought to be, i.e., what I owe, towards others, the consistency of one's ways with the duties founded on relative positions. That is being personally righteous. Judgment maintains the same by the authority of another; but that, too, is righteousness. But God owes nothing to others. It is His consistency with Himself. A man is just when he recognizes the claims of others. Righteous is the same, only habitually the latter word carries more of the internal character of a man. Just refers more exclusively to actual relationship towards others. In Greek, both are δικαιος. Δικαιοσυνη is the habit and character required. But Scripture necessarily introduces from its object a special use of it. Man has to do with God; and, hence, while righteousness in man's dealings with his neighbor is fully treated of, yet the first part of righteousness is what he ought to be for God, what he owes to Him. I do not mean as if Savior: but in the relationship in which he stands, so as to meet the requirements of God as revealed. If man does this, he is righteous with God; but this has, in fact, become impossible. For man is a sinner; which means that he is in a state wholly inconsistent with the relationship in which he stands. Hence, God in judging is righteous in taking vengeance. Holy in repelling evil by His

very nature, He is righteous in making good His claims in judgment against those who have not made good what they owed under them.

Adam was not holy or righteous, but innocent. He did not know good and evil, hence could not be either. He was not called on to conform himself to any standard, but to be what he was, not leave his first estate. To this end his obedience was tested by a law. What the law referred to was not good or evil in itself. It was a test of obedience simply. Had the prohibition not been there, there would have been no harm in his eating. It was not life annexed to obedience of the law, as has been said. This is fatal error. It was death, on the contrary, coming in consequence of disobedience. In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. He ate, and estrangement from God and exclusion by God was the just and necessary consequence. Man was by nature a child of wrath. Now, how is peace to be restored, and needed righteousness attained? This is the serious question. How is he to be reconciled to God? The way back was barred—a return to innocence impossible. That relationship with God was for us wholly and irrevocably gone. The knowledge of good and evil had taken its place. Then comes a second question. Man is a sinner by nature, a child of wrath. He stands in the condition and relationship of the first and fallen Adam. He is in flesh before God. Is he to be restored in that state and position, made righteous by the completion of what he owes according to the responsibilities under which he has stood as born of Adam, and alive in this world; or is he, as in flesh, born of Adam, and under the responsibilities under which he stands as man alive in this world entirely condemned, and the whole condition to be set aside, death and condemnation being the only result of that responsibility; and an entirely new state introduced as that in which God introduces man into His presence on a wholly new ground, and on a new footing, of which the life, righteousness, responsibilities, and sphere of development are entirely new? And even if man be restored to blessing in this world (as in the millennium I believe he will be), yet even this upon the security of a glory, and a government, and a life which does not belong to it, “The sure mercies of David,” proving a resurrection. This is evidently a deep and serious question. It is really this: what is salvation? Is it making good the old state of man before God, as alive and responsible in this world; or is it transferring him into a new one of which the second Adam is the pattern and perfection as risen from the dead? I affirm that, according to Scripture it is the latter and not the former. I believe man is wholly condemned and set aside on the ground of his old responsibilities. The first Adam has no more place before God. God is not looking for fruit from the old tree. I believe he is accepted in Christ risen and ascended, and there only has his place before God. That salvation is not making good the defect and completing the status of the first Adam, but the total setting aside of this, and an introduction into the last—the second man; and that, in the accepted place, there is no mingling them. Conflict down here there is; but no acceptance of both the first and the last man. What is good and accepted is a new creation. All just exercise of conscience as to the state of the first, God glorified as to it in His own way of righteousness and grace; but if in flesh we cannot please God—and it is not by finding a way to make that up that our condition is met, but by our being taken out of that condition, our not being in flesh at all, but in spirit in Christ; we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. Now, to what does law apply? To whom was it applied It applies to man alive in this world, under the responsibilities of his Adam nature, before God: and it was applied to a peculiar people, brought out apart for the purpose, that man might be fully tested by it. Man ought to love God, he ought to love his neighbor. This was what he owed in these relationships. Had he done so he would have been righteous as such. This was developed negatively, as to the evils he was

prone to, in the ten commandments. His avoiding these evils would have been, under the circumstances, really fulfilling practically the positive requirements of the position he was in. Such was law. It addressed itself to man in flesh, and would have been his righteousness had he kept it; that is, he would have been righteous in keeping it. But man was a sinner, and he did not. Is now his old position under flesh made good, and the defects supplied, or he introduced into a wholly new one, by a new life, as a new man, no part of the old being allowed, and finally, none left, while we reckon ourselves to be dead even during our life here below? Is this last or the former Christianity? The system I combat admits a new life, or at least a moralizing action of the Holy Ghost, for some go very low with the idea of being born again, but they pretend that the defects of the old man are to be made good (whatever the means), so that that is to be set up in righteousness before God. The Christian even fails in walking as he ought, according to the measure of the law, the just rule for a child of Adam. And this is made up for him; so that he has the righteousness which he would have had as a child of Adam, had he kept perfect according to that just rule. Now, I say, that is not Christianity. The life which we receive is Christ as our life. And this is not to make good our place in flesh. It makes me own that there is in me, that is, in my flesh, in me as a child of Adam, no good thing. And, hence, knowing that Christ has died to put! away my sin, so that God's glory is maintained and enhanced as to it, I reckon myself dead, and accept my condemnation as such; but find myself, Christ being in me, in Christ. I have put on the new man, and that is all I am before God. I have given up, died to, owned the just condemnation of (only that condemnation borne on the cross) the old man. I am not in the condition, status, responsibilities of a child of Adam at all. As such, I have owned myself wholly lost. I have, through grace, put it off, am dead and risen with Christ. They that are in the flesh cannot please God; but I am not in the flesh, because the Spirit of Christ dwells in me. I do not look for any rehabilitation of the old man by any performance of its duties. I have given it up as wholly bad and condemned, and take my place through grace in Christ. For all that I was in the flesh Christ died. He has put it all away, and I reckon myself dead. I am in Him, with Him as my life, and accepted in Him my righteousness. The law, then, is the just measure of human righteousness. To speak of it as the measure of God's as such, that is, as the expression of perfection in His relationships, if He is pleased to have any, is simply absurd when the law, in its highest expression, is the requirement of loving Him with all our heart, and one's neighbor as one's self. For a human being, that is a perfect rule—for a divine, a contradiction in terms. By nature, man was simply lawless (ανομος), with a conscience, or the sense of good and evil. But he, being lawless in nature, was expressly put under law. If he had fulfilled it, he was righteous; but the flesh is not subject to it, nor can it be. If Christ had fulfilled and made up the deficiencies (a strange kind of righteousness), those for whom he had fulfilled it would have been legally righteous by His vicarious accomplishment. But it would have placed man on the ground of the fulfilled law, and given him a righteousness on the ground of His standing as a living man, a child of Adam in the flesh. That was the position to which the obligation he was under by the law attaches. It applies to a living man, not a dead and risen one. It was in that obligation that man is supposed to have failed in this world; and when we have failed, and are unrighteous, Christ, by keeping the law for us, according to that our obligation, has made the defect good. It is simply setting up the old man according to the divine requirement under the law. That was the debt, this the payment. Whatever our obligations to God for its being done in grace may be, whoever was the author of it, that was the thing done. Man is replaced as righteous on the ground he had lost. He is a child of Adam, righteous according to the law of God. He himself could

not do it, because of the flesh, of his sinfulness. Another has done it for him, and he is completely righteous according to law, and is to live in virtue of that. All defects are made good, and perfectly. It is righteousness such as is required from a man, for that is what he failed in, and which is made good. It is that blessedly done, but only that. But that is complete and perfect, and it is complete and perfect righteousness. And now remark: Christ having accomplished this, and set up the living man completely righteous, what place has death? There is no ground. for death at all. I mean morally no place for Christ's dying to atone for sin; for all defects are made good. He is not to die and make atonement for a perfectly righteous person. And we shall see, in examining the article you have sent me, how strikingly the death of Christ is left out. And this is what I think serious in this matter. But I must examine this vicarious legal righteousness a little more. Scripture goes farther than anything I have said. Not only are we under death as a penalty, nor is it alone necessary that the flesh must die, but morally speaking we are dead—dead I mean in trespasses and sins. I admit fully the responsibility of man. Scripture is plain upon it. But when am experimentally exercised under divine teaching, I find there is not a single living movement of the soul towards God. In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing. By the application of the law known in its spirituality if applied to my conscience, this becomes known to me. My righteousness under the law is absolutely null. The contrary is there—sin.

There can be no making up deficiencies. There is in God's sight evil, and nothing else. The flesh is thus judged. Then Christ dies for me because I am such, and I am born again—receive Him as eternal life. Is Christ now as to righteousness a maker up of defects, or absolutely my righteousness? Defects of what? Is my righteousness—what I am as living after the Spirit—made up as patchwork by Christ's acts, when I have acted after the flesh? Is that the idea of divine righteousness—of Christ being of God righteousness I The new man has in himself no defects—it is Christ as my life; and the old man no good in it.. Scripture says we have put him off—we are not seen in it at all—we are not now in the flesh. If I have the life of Christ in me, I stand before God in Christ's present perfectness. He, in all that He is, is my righteousness; and the workings of the old man, while they have been borne as my sins, and God glorified as to them, do not enter into account at all. I am not seen in flesh, but in Christ, in His absolute perfectness, apart from flesh altogether. I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living (alive) in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? If I am really alive in Christ, I have not a righteousness to be made up at all, since Christ is in the presence of God for me. I have to overcome. If I fail, Jesus Christ the righteous intercedes; God chastens me if needed; but I am not seen in flesh at all.

On the question of righteousness, and of the accuser, “He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor beheld perverseness in Israel;” there are no defects to be made up, because I am only Christ before Go I, only seen in the new man. The old man is dead and gone for faith, because Christ has died for us as to all it is. God has condemned me in the flesh, is not making up my defects in it, for I am not in it: and in Christ there are surely no defects to be made up. But I am nothing else before God. The making out a particular legal righteousness of Christ for my failures, is keeping me still in the flesh and in my responsibilities as to righteousness as in it (and I should really perish on this ground), and making out the righteousness of a man in flesh; that is, denying that I am dead and risen with Christ; for if He has thus made good my failures as in flesh, I am in flesh subject to have them imputed, and having to make out a righteousness in it. To be corrected and disciplined I am,

as a new creature, and a great blessing it is; but we are speaking of righteousness. Supposing I have lived half according to the Spirit, so far I am all right. The other half I have walked in the flesh. It is very sad, no doubt; but how am I now viewed of God as to righteousness Am I still viewed as in flesh before God, and a righteousness to be made good as being so! Why, walking in the Spirit is really being dead as to the flesh! But this other bad half; am I to hold myself half-righteous by my sanctified state in the Spirit, and half-unrighteous because I have suffered the old man to act? And this half to be made good But, then, it is the failure of the new man that is to be made good; or I must be considered as still in the old, a responsible man in flesh. But then there is no good at all. The truth is, this doctrine leads to an absurdity. It is based on not seeing that the flesh is simply bad, and hopelessly bad, and never anything else. It confounds practical sanctification, an immensely important subject in its place; cannot be held too much so, with righteousness before God. I know it will be said that, by holding man righteous in Christ, when we have failed, we are making allowance for sin. Quite the contrary. The truth of Scripture is, we are all utterly dead in sin. No one has a place really in this righteousness in his consciousness, and cannot have it till he is brought experimentally to know it; and then, while conflict will surely remain, he reckons himself dead and alive to God. Then Scripture reasons thus, “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” Every saint, even if obscure in doctrine, loves holiness; but, as a doctrine, the notion of this supplementary righteousness of Christ, instead of seeing the Christian wholly dead and only alive and righteous in Him, is to keep him quiet in sin, because death is not then its wages; it is made up for by the living acts of another. Either Christ, in His own present perfectness risen from the dead, is my righteousness, His place my place, and I reckon myself absolutely dead and gone as regards the old man, or I am making Christ a completer of my standing as alive in the old man. For if I hold it to be dead and gone, there is no such living person whose defects are to be made good. I shall be told, You are living as a person, and it is your defects as a man living in the world which are to be made good, and to you, as so alive in the world, law applies. And you fail, and Christ must make it good. My answer is, Scripture teaches me exactly the contrary. It is this denial of the import of death in sin, and I must add in Christ, that is the great evil. I am not alive as a child of Adam in this world. In saying that I am a living person in flesh, you are depriving me exactly of all my privileges in Christ, of all my sense of what the wages of sin is, of all my sense of what a state of sin is, of what it is to be in the flesh before God. For by faith I am not alive in this world. In my conscience I have wholly died before God. Such is Scripture teaching. Why as though alive in the world, says the apostle; if ye be dead with Christ, reckon yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God. Why? Because in that Christ died, He died unto sin once; in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. I am crucified with Christ; through law I am dead to law; I am dead to law (looking at man as under it) by the body of Christ; I am delivered from the law, having died in that in which I was held. The whole doctrine of the Apostle Paul is that for faith the Christian is not alive as a child of Adam; that he has been crucified with Christ, and yet lives—not he, but Christ in him. In the Ephesians the teaching goes a step further, and views Christ Himself only as already dead, and us as dead in sin, and the whole thing in us as a new creation, quickened out of that state of death, raised, and sitting in Christ in heavenly places. Only this new creation is recognized; associated with Christ not known till he is already dead. And hence it gives the Church's place.

Scripture then teaches, not a making good any defects of the old man (in the new such a thought has no place before God, it is Christ), but its death; and the Christian holding himself for dead, and

not in the flesh at all, consequently knows no making good the responsibilities of the child of Adam by himself or any other, but his death and condemnation. Now Christ, in infinite grace, has taken this on Himself on the cross, so that the guilt under which we were, as so responsible in a nature which in its corruption could do no good, and could never bear fruit, is borne and put away. And now I am in Christ, risen and ascended, and have no righteousness to make out, but to glorify God as His child, being the righteousness of God in Christ already. My defects have nothing to do with my righteousness; they have to my living to God and enjoying communion with Him; they have as to all my actual condition as a child of God. Here, then, is the question Is the old man to have a righteousness made out for it as still alive and responsible under law? Or is the Christian accounted crucified as to that with Christ, alive only in Him, and having no other standing before God than His abiding perfection, and all his conduct here measured by that? If I am to believe Scripture, the answer is plain. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “Ye are not in the flesh.” We are created again in Christ, placed on a wholly new footing, have nothing to do with the old man (save as an enemy, which is no longer I), but are alive, and the righteousness of God in Christ. Having laid these general grounds for our inquiry, I turn now more directly to the article you have sent me. First, as to the term “righteousness of God.” I should not call it properly an attribute of God, in the common sense of the word attribute. The word is generally used for what is essential to His being and nature, as power, whereas righteousness is a relative term. But the righteousness of God, like the righteousness of faith, is surely used to characterize the kind of righteousness in contrast with man's toward God, if such were to be had. It must be divine in its character as well as its source. It must not be what man owes to God, that is, man's righteousness. Man's righteousness is man's consistency with the relationship in which he stands, or, internally, the quality which makes him always such. But this cannot be God's righteousness. That, in the Old Testament, the Lord's righteousness means a quality in the character of God, is beyond all question or controversy. It occurs too often to make it necessary to cite proofs. A concordance will suffice. Is it different wholly in the New? I do not believe it. I do not doubt that the righteousness of God is a wider and fuller term. I quite recognize that the application is peculiar in the New, in the full explanation of it, but that is connected with God instead of Lord or Jehovah, and the full revelation of the way He has been glorified in Christ. But as to the use of righteousness; Jerusalem is called “the Lord our righteousness.” Christ is called so, too; exactly the same as the double use which is attempted to be insisted on, as making it impossible to use the righteousness of God as that which belongs to His character and nature. Christ is made to us righteousness, as “the Lord our righteousness” is said of the Jew. We are the righteousness of God in Him, as Jerusalem is called “the Lord our righteousness.” But why? Because Jehovah's consistency with all His glorious character was displayed both in the one and the other. In the latter, in grace and through righteousness, still that consistency was displayed. But that most assuredly in the Old Testament does not destroy the proper sense of the word as that which characterized God Himself. It displayed that character, and is the abiding witness of it. But now I read what to me is the very serious aspect of this paper. “There can in it, indeed, be no allusion to the divine attribute of justice, inasmuch as the act is only of grace. The former acceptation would furnish the idea of an incensed God, which is the essence of the purport of the law of a reconciling or justifying God, which is the gospel.” This is doubly false. First, justice or righteousness does not in itself imply an incensed person. I may be just in blessing, and certainly, if Scripture is to be believed, just in justifying. Note, therefore, how this doctrine of legal righteousness destroys the

thought of righteousness in God. God's being just in justifying. This is important, but a small thing compared with the other error. The gospel does present God as reconciling, not the one to be reconciled. But has justice, as wrath against sin, nothing to do with our justification? Was no sacrifice, no sin-offering, no propitiation offered to His justice? Had Christ to drink no cup, to bear no wrath, that we might be justified? I pray you seriously to note this. I see a deadly tendency in the present day to substitute living obedience (carry it, if you please, into death, for that is true, and it was all one obedience, as stated here—I should even urge that); to substitute, I say, a living obedience for the wages of sin—the drinking the cup of wrath. Justice, we are told, cannot, as an attribute of God, be in question in our justifying, because it implies wrath, “an incensed God,” a term used to make it offensive in contrast with grace, but which betrays so much the more the mind of the writer. It has been the fancy latterly to designate the “Brethren” Socinians, as the early Christians were called Atheists. But this article in this respect does tread on the heels of Socinianism. Justice, as an attribute of God, had nothing to do with our justifying, for wrath (an incensed God) could not have to do with it. What becomes of the cross here What of the cup Jesus had to drink? What of the bloody sweat in Gethsemane I It was obedience. To be sure it was. But what gave obedience such a character as this? Was it obedience to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That He was perfectly obedient when He said it, I freely admit. But obedient in what? What was the obedience? Was there no bearing of wrath; no drinking of a cup such as none else could ever know the depth and bitterness of? Was He not made sin in that dreadful hour? I say in that dreadful hour. The notion that He was made sin at His birth has no ground in Scripture. He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin. Does the apostle speak of a divine person in heaven simply knowing no sin, or one who in a perfect life had proved his sinlessness on earth? Oh! it is terrible, this blotting out, this merging, the sufferings of Christ, the true character of His death in its fullness, the bearing of wrath, His making His soul an offering for sin: the highest, most wonderful act of love of that blessed One. I avow to you, that I hate with a perfect hatred the doctrine of these men. You will ask, how can good men acquiesce in such doctrine? and I have always heard that the Editor of the Christian Examiner is an excellent person; my answer is, good men often carry with them certain truths and are unsuspicious; they assume them to be held, and suppose they are only getting some clearer view in which this truth is tacitly contained, and then it is undermined. This is going on everywhere in the propagation of rationalist views.

Now, in this article, the blood of Christ, save in a casual sentence, which has no force at all, unless to turn aside all thought of Christ's laying down His life atoningly for sin, is never mentioned, but justification, and redemption, and forgiveness, are attributed to something else. You will say, Is not Rom. 3:18-26 alluded to? Frequently, but to the exclusion of the blood. “The one” (the righteousness as a substantive reality) is a completed fact, as well as “the other” (the world's ruin by sin). Man came short of that revenue of glory which would have resulted from a sinless obedience. In the righteousness of God, that revenue or tribute is restored or paid.

Now, I am satisfied that almost all the exegeses of this paper is completely false; as to the γαρ-δικαιοσυνη, and all the rest utterly false. But I shall not dwell on it, the main point is too serious. Sin is the nonpayment of the just revenue or tribute to God. In God's righteousness that is restored (i.e. without propitiation or blood-shedding; and note the use of once for all, and how Scripture uses it, Heb. 9; 10) and paid. Christ's life, even His death, is simply a restoring or paying

to God a sinless obedience in which Adam had failed.

Now, read the passage on which this comment is made. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” This is the revenue or tribute restored and paid to God of a pure nature and sinless obedience.

Surely there was that in Christ. But what is left out in commenting on this passage, yea, really denied in the offensive term of an “incensed God?” PROPITIATION. The whole true groundwork of peace and salvation is left out. The value of Christ's blood—the only thing spoken of as that in which the righteousness of God was shown in forgiving past sins is left out. It is the “historical manifestation of righteousness,” and so there can be retributive justice. And this is fully brought out, and redemption grounded on the same obedience, without an allusion to blood-shedding or propitiation. The manifestation of this righteousness as an historical fact is noticed by the apostle when he says, Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. (Rom. 3:21.) In that phrase he refers to its coming into existence, or to its manifestation as an historic fact, in the incarnation of Christ. The allusion is not to the preaching of it, or to what he calls the revelation of it in the gospel (Rom. 1:17); but to the bringing in of this righteousness once for all, when Christ was manifest in the flesh. (1 Tim. 3:16.)

“And the language used by the apostle shows that it is coincident with the person of Christ and found in Him. This is evident from the way in which he speaks of one of those terms which describe the one obedience of Christ in the manifoldness of its effects and benefits. When he says that the redemption is 'in Christ Jesus,' the meaning is, that it is found in His person; that He is personally the redemption, just as He is called our peace. (Eph. 2:14.) (There, too, note the reconciliation is made (16) solely by the cross having slain the enmity thereby, which is wholly dropped here), and is furthermore described as made of God unto us righteousness. (1 Cor. 1:30). It does not denote that we have it in a state of union to His person, however true that is in itself, but that is actually IN Him, that He is Himself that manifested righteousness, and will continue to be so while His living person endures. The judge then sees our righteousness and our eternal redemption whenever He looks upon the person of Christ. The living Redeemer, in His crucified and risen humanity, is Himself the manifestation of the righteousness of God; and it must not be lost sight of that He is living through death according to the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:16), and the restoration of life to appear in the presence of God was essentially necessary to the existence, validity, and perpetuity of this righteousness of God (not, it seems, his laying it down or being a sacrifice for sin). It is, therefore, no putative, past, or transitory righteousness that has been manifested; one actually in the world, and the only great reality in it. Thus, when the righteous judge beholds His Son, He sees in Him the righteousness of God, the grand re-adjustment of man's relation to his Maker, the reunion of God and man.”

Now I could hardly conceive anything which could show more distinctly the true character of this interpretation of the righteousness of God than the passage I have quoted. Justification without blood-shedding, no wrath—such a sense of justice would imply an incensed God. Redemption by incarnation, in the person of Christ, without blood-shedding, righteousness manifested, brought in once for all as an historic fact in the incarnation, only in the accomplishment of law, as we read (p. 39), Peace found in His person, not through His blood; Christ as righteousness, the readjustment

of man's relationship to his Maker, the re-union of God and man.

In Scripture we are, in the passage referred to, justified by His blood for the manifestation of righteousness. In Eph. 1, “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;” in Eph. 3, peace is made by the cross; in Colossians “He has made peace by the blood of his cross.” Without it is no remission; though for our author, redemption, of which the apostle says, “even the forgiveness of sins,” is “in him.” He is, personally, the redemption. Scripture says he “entered in by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us:” that it is “by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first testament.” Our author declares it was His righteousness in life.

And all this (and it might be greatly enlarged upon) is not because he is not speaking of the death of Christ; for he takes care to say it must not be lost sight of, because this righteousness of God was to be manifested in His crucified and risen humanity. His account of this is, “His living through death, according to the power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16). And “the restoration of life to appear in the presence of God for us was essentially necessary to the existence, validity, and perpetuity of this righteousness of God.” My soul, come not thou into their assembly. I cannot conceive a more complete, deliberate, careful setting aside of the necessity, value, and true sufferings of Christ's death, viewed as atonement, as a victim, a propitiation for sins, as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, as one who drank that dreadful cup of wrath. Death, as death for sin, is wholly gone; not lost sight of, but set aside by language which slights the agonies of the Son of God.

And see how distinctly it is as I said, the setting up of the old standing of the creature with God, the old creation, the first Adam. It is “the grand re-adjustment of man's relationship to his Maker.” No thought of a new creation: but an idea fit for a Rationalist, and never found in Scripture at all— “a reunion of God and man.” God's justice demanding satisfaction is referred to. “Righteousness is measured by the standard of justice.” (There is no difference in Greek, but let that pass.) There is first a manifestation of justice in demanding the satisfaction, and then a display of it in connection with the preparation of this righteousness of God, when it is added, “that he might be just and the justifier.” This righteousness came “into existence as an historic fact” “in the incarnation of Christ.” “He who has the righteousness of God with this rectified relation which it brings” is not condemned, not under the curse.

(To be continued)

Chapter 102

Pauline Righteousness: Part 2

THIS leads me to another remark, which skews how carefully, as I have said, Christ's expiatory sufferings are set aside here. The curse of the law is diligently spoken of. Christ came under the law as violated. “If law is the sphere of this righteousness, it is evident that no knowledge can be acquired respecting it without a clear conception of the law in its relation to sinners, not only in respect of its positive claims, but in the extent of its curse.” Here, surely, if anywhere, we should find, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Not a word of it is found. All the unfathomable truth of the Holy One being made sin for us must be set aside. Not only so, but an entirely different view of the curse, or meeting the curse, of the law is given. I will give the whole passage, that I may not be charged with misstating it. He continues: “The law to which the surety must needs subject. himself was, moreover, the LAW AS VIOLATED, urging the unalterable demands which it made on man as man, and armed with the curse its violation entailed. Accordingly, the work of Christ is described in its relation to the law. He was made under the law (Gal. 4:4); the righteousness on which man's acceptance is based is termed the righteousness of the law (Rom. 8:4); the work of Christ is the end of the law for (or unto) righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4). This latter phrase (τελος νομου) can only mean that fulfillment which the law demanded, and could not but demand, till its end or accomplishment was reached; and that additional word, that Christ is the end of it 'unto righteousness' (εις) leaves no doubt that this fulfillment of the law is to be found in Christ, and is received in the reception of Christ.” As yet we cannot find a word of the curse, only of fulfilling the law, which, I suppose, did not bring a curse. I continue: “More particularly the obedience of Christ (called ■πακοη) (Rom. 4:19) extended over his entire life, and formed one obedience from first to last."].... [This is perfectly true.] “The element of obedience pervaded His life, and went through all His sufferings. The great commandment laid on Him was to die; and here, amid temptations to recede, the extent of His obedience was displayed. [All right; but where is the curse?] His is no common obedience, but one that passed through superhuman temptations.” This is the worst part of all to me, because it seeks to satisfy Christian feeling as to Christ's sorrow, while carefully excluding His being made a curse, or expiatory bearing of wrath, “and it has a dignity and value, from the greatness of His person, that entitle it to be called infinite.” All true; but the curse? The infinite value of obedience is not a curse. Again, “He was the living law, the personal law; and this was an event with a far more important bearing than any other that ever occurred. It is the world's new creation.”

Now, I ask any Christian reader whether, as we have seen, the expiatory value of Christ's death and justification, and redemption through blood, omitted and denied, so the being made a curse for those under the curse of the law, as hanging on the tree, that unfathomable truth of Scripture, is not here wholly set aside—spoken of, but set aside? If Christ is made a curse at all in this system, it was by birth. He was born under the curse; but if it be that, there is not one word of it. He kept the law, was obedient, and that is righteousness. What Scripture speaks of as the curse is set aside. The world's new creation is before His death and resurrection; His keeping the law on earth

was this. This I will touch on hereafter. Now, I affirm that Scripture speaks of the death of Christ in a way wholly different and the opposite of this. It was a baptism He was looking forward to. It was this hour pressed upon His spirit.

It was then and then only He was made sin for us. Then He was a victim of propitiation. Then He was delivered for our offenses, thereon raised again for our justification. Then He was made a curse to redeem from the curse of the law. Forgiveness the author does not speak of, nor the non-imputing of sin. But “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone.” It is out of the side of the dead Christ that the water and the blood flow, in the power of which Christ came to cleanse and expiate. Of this, of all this, nothing is, found in this false gospel! Righteousness is by the law. Of forgiveness he does not speak: of cleansing he knows nothing: of justifying by blood, i.e., being made righteous in God's sight, he will not hear. Redemption is by incarnation in the person of Christ. Is all this the gospel, or the denial of it? If Scripture be true, the denial of it.

I have now to show how, as to law, he contradicts himself and the Scripture, and then see what he says of righteousness, and how Scripture speaks of it.

First, as to law, he contradicts himself. “The fact that it is commonly put in contrast ‘to our own righteousness’ (Rom. 10:3): that ‘our own’ is said to be of the law, as compared with that which is ‘of God’ (Phil. 3:9); and that it is furthermore called ‘a gift of righteousness' (Rom. 5:17), determines the significance of the term to be something widely different from the divine attribute on the one hand, or a work of law on the other."... “This is, however, abhorrent to the divine rectitude, which insists on a true fulfillment of the divine law, and acquits only on account of an actual obedience.” This, as an abstract or absolute statement, is simple nonsense. An actual obedience does not need an acquittal. It is contrary to Scripture, for we are justified by blood. But to pursue. “It is obvious that, in the government of a righteous God, no one can be justified by a mere connivance at defects, or by being accounted what he is not.” This last, he says, is a legal fiction—the believer must be really righteous when he is declared so. All this is muddy enough. If it means anything, the man must himself be what he is held to be, which denies the whole truth of vicarious work, and believing on Him justifies the ungodly. And it is quite clear that, if Christ has kept the law, and I am counted righteous, that is a legal fiction: His having borne my sin and put it away is no fiction. My sin has been dealt with. But I return to the contradiction of the writer. “The standard or measure of this righteousness of God is Divine justice and the law.” Yet it is not a work of law which is the significance of the term! And a man, if righteous, must be righteous according to the measure of the law, and only on account of actual obedience, yet “it is not a work of law!” Yet again, “it is the accomplishment of law.” How true is the apostle, “desiring to be teachers of the law, they know not what they say nor whereof they affirm!” But if I turn to Scripture I find the whole system of its doctrines in direct opposition to our righteousness having anything to do with law. Whatever the contradictions, the doctrine of the paper is, that the accomplishment of the law is righteousness, that fulfillment which the law demanded. Now I affirm that what is demanded now is, that I should be fit for the presence of God in heaven, fit for the glory of God, fit to see His face: that the only goal is, “the resurrection from among the dead,” and that we are risen with Christ, and that this, consequent on the death of Christ, is our standing before God. But it is better to answer directly—in vain, almost, to quote the positive declarations of our death and resurrection in Christ. They will have legal righteousness for children of Adam alive in the flesh. I will turn to their own

ground, therefore. Is righteousness by the law? that is the question.

Now, Scripture speaks on this head: let us hear it. If righteousness came by the law, Christ is dead in vain. No matter who kept it, it was not to come by the law. And mark two things: 1st, Christ's death is what comes in contrast with it; 2ndly, this one grand foundation of Christianity is all in vain, if righteousness comes by the law. “That no man is justified by the law, is evident; for the just shall live by faith, but the law is not of faith.” The nature of the righteousness is different. So, in a remarkable verse, it is said, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” It will be said, but it means not by our own doing these works, but by Christ doing them; and then we believe in Him, and that this is held as our doing them. But this is being justified by the works of the law—Christ has done them and I am thereby justified. Only this is what is rejected by the author as “a legal fiction;” next, it is “putative” righteousness, which he equally rejects. It is not the man's actually being righteous, but accounted what is not. “They have fulfilled it (we are told) in a Representative, with whom they are one.” But the passage allows of nothing of this. It puts not merely my sin and works in contrast with the deeds of the law. but it puts the faith of Christ in contrast with works of law. “Christ received by faith establishes the law,” says the writer. “By the faith of Christ,” says the apostle, “not by the works of the law.” By the law he was dead to the law, that he might live to God. It is perfectly impossible for any person to read Gal. 2:15 to the end, iii. and iv., without seeing that works of law, in every shape and in every way, are rejected as the means of righteousness; and that a statement—that Christ has done them, and that thereby we are righteous, is incompatible with the statements of this part of Scripture. The idea of Christ keeping the law for us is never made the object of faith in Scripture; nor is it said, that He kept it for our righteousness. Man has said it; Scripture does not. If it does let the text be produced. And when He is said to be made under it, then it is said that it was that He might redeem them that were under it.

On the other hand, where righteousness is said to be imputed, it is that Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification: therefore being justified by faith.” Another thing, aye, another thing is presented as the object of justifying faith” He was delivered for our offenses.” “The promise was not... through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” God “imputes, or reckons, righteousness without works.” “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law,” χωρις εργων νομου. It is impossible to have a more complete denial that it is by works of the law, keep them who may. “Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law,” χωριςν ομου, apart from law. How comes it, if Christ's keeping the law is our righteousness, that these statements are not guarded? that it is never said, that it was by His keeping the law? that it should be said, not that it was not by our keeping it, but not by law at all? not by Christ's doing it as a representative, but apart from law altogether? Could these teachers of the law say what stronger language could be used, if the object of the apostle had been to show that it is quite apart from law and on another principle?

I do not see how it is possible that statements could be made stronger to prove that the Christian is not under it. “As many as are of the works of the law” (that seek life on this principle) “are under the curse.” Our justification by faith is rested on what? Christ being delivered for our offense's and

raised again. In Rom. 10 there is a righteousness by law: Do this and live. Well, is not, then, righteousness to be by law only—Christ fulfilling it and me getting the benefit? No. “The righteousness by faith” speaks quite differently. “Say not in thine heart,” &e. The two righteousnesses speak quite differently. So the apostle insists. I may leave this point. I do not see how language could make it plainer than the apostle has. Let any unprejudiced person read the Galatians, and say if righteousness be by law or not for the Christian. And whether righteousness by law, get it how you will, is not rejected and another proclaimed.

But we are told more particularly, that wherever the phrase, “righteousness of God,” occurs, it “always comes back to this, that it is the accomplishment of law.”

First, it is said, “Herein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” How this is the accomplishment of the law I do not know. There is not the smallest hint that it has anything to do with it, save that it is of God, i.e., not man's keeping it before God, and that it is on the principle of faith. “And the law is not of faith.” Indeed, the writer admits that it seems to be in God, as the wrath is. Matt. 6:33. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Here there is no possible connection with Christ keeping the law vicariously for sinners. It was their own walk which is the question. Men are to seek not the comforts of this world, but God's kingdom and righteousness, to have a part in the blessing, and glory, and acceptance which He was setting up. “If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God.” (Rom. 3:5.) Here it is clearly equally far from the thought of Christ fulfilling the law. It is God's consistency with Himself and faithfulness to His promises, even when man is unfaithful. As before—our unbelief, the faithfulness of God. God was true, if every man was a liar. It is expressly the righteousness of God without law. (3:21.) The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ. (iii. 22.) Ignorant of God's righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. (x. 3.) But this is so far from being the righteousness of the law, that it is specifically contrasted with it. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness of the law.... but the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise.” That is, it does not say that the man that does them is righteous, for they are done by Christ, and if I believe in Christ, they are done for me. But it is not now living by doing, but living by believing, and believing that one, Jesus, who was dead, God hath raised from the dead. In this passage the writer has attempted to say, that the end of the law can only mean that fulfillment which the law demanded, and could not but demand, till its end or accomplishment was reached. This is, I must say, impudent. Τελο■, he says, means fulfilling a demand till the accomplishment is reached. It is too barefaced: the rather as the apostle says Christ is the end of the law, because the law says so-and-so, but the righteousness of faith saith quite otherwise, and hence the say of the law is at an end, and something else comes in as righteous. Righteousness is on another principle. “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:21.) But this is explicitly Christ not keeping the law, but His being made sin. “Who knew no sin,” marks a Christ who has lived holily through this world. I have not heard that they have been bold enough, as yet, to say it means—God has no consciousness of sin, but was made it in incarnation. But if this most painful thought, even to mention, is not their opinion, then it is not keeping the law which is spoken of here, but Christ's being made a sacrifice for sin upon the cross. It is again contrasted with law: “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Phil. 3:9.) Titus 3:5 leads to the same point, but the word,

“righteousness of God,” is not there. “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20). This, clearly, can in no possible way refer to Christ keeping the law. The wrath of man cannot produce a righteousness according to God, a righteousness which has its character in His nature. 2 Peter 1:1, is the only one remaining where it has nothing to do with the law. We have received not a personal Messiah present in glory in the body, but the faith, Christianity, the revelation of Messiah to faith, by God's faithfulness to His promise to him that waited on Him. Our God and Savior has been faithfully righteous in giving it.

These are all the passages, not one hint at accomplishment of law. Several contrast law and the new way of righteousness, which has finished the law for those that believe. I defy any one to trace a single expression which makes it “come back to an accomplishment of law.” It carefully does the contrary—goes forward, leaving law as done with, to a new way of righteousness, faith in Christ, who, having been delivered for our offenses, has been raised again for our justification. That God is the author of it is not the sense, unless, perhaps, in Phil. 3, where Paul is speaking of his having it, not of its accomplishment; and so contrasts man and the source of his having it. Its general sense is the character of the righteousness, as in all such genitives, where they are not possessive, as the peace of God, the righteousness of faith; but it rises up to what it is in God Himself, as giving it this character. In the Old Testament it is constantly so. “If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God.” Here it is His own righteousness in Himself. “The righteousness of God without law,” is plainly characteristic. The righteousness of God, then, is a far wider term than His being the author of it, which He is of everything that is good, save Himself, who is author of all. It is that kind of righteousness which is suited to, fit for, His presence and glory; and that is found only in Himself. Man had been tried, and all was in vain, and he is wholly condemned. Righteousness would be measured by the law, then, if any had existed. Now, if we have to say to God, we must have to say to Him with a rent veil—be fit for His glory. This was always true, once sin had entered but it is now revealed. Judgment shall flow forth from His glorious presence, but in righteousness.

But how can we have it as a saving righteousness, a righteousness for us in the unveiled presence of God? It is now for us a new one—the only true one, by faith, fit for the throne of God, as we have seen it must be. We are called to stand in the presence of God. The righteousness we must have must answer to the absolute perfectness of His character as it is, and perfectly revealed. All His righteousness, His holiness, His truth, His majesty, even His love—nothing must be discordant, or it could not be accepted. by what He is, unveiled. To be accepted according to all that God is, it must meet all that God is—and this must be in respect of sin; for indeed all He is, in grace and love and righteousness against evil, could not be displayed if sin were not there. It is this: sin there, and yet with that, in view of that, everything that God is in His own infinite excellency must be satisfied and glorified. This is what Christ has done. Speaking of His dying, He says, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” He does not wait for the kingdom, but takes a heavenly and divine glory as man sitting at the right hand of God. We are accepted in Him. Our acceptance is according to the perfect glorifying God by Him on the cross. He has, besides, borne our sins, so that they are wholly removed out of the way. His blood, and His blood only, cleanses from all sin. Christ does not draw all men as a living Christ, but if lifted up. Then the veil was rent. The holiest was shut up till then for us; His death alone could open it for

sinners. Hence the Holy Ghost convinces the world of righteousness, because he goes to the Father. Till the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone—is not in the condition to bear fruit. When it dies, it brings forth much fruit. Hence, too, He is raised again for our justification; and, therefore, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God.”

The righteousness by the law is that which meets the requirements of God from man. Of course Christ fulfilled this: that it is important to remember. The righteousness of God is that which He requires to meet the necessary demands of His own glory and nature in His presence. Christ did glorify God as a man under law; but in this there was no drawing of all men: He abode alone; but He glorified God Himself in His own nature, in the place where it all came out, and was made good by Him in spite of all. God's highest love and our perfect sin were both here displayed. Here man stands on a new ground altogether, through the work of and in Him who is risen from the dead. God is glorified in the highest, in all the qualities of His nature, which must be made good. We are reconciled to God. He suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. No doubt all He did glorified God in its place, but this glorified Him as to sin, and brought out all His nature so as to glorify it, and so He, and we in Him, are accepted according to that glory. When I say I am righteous before God, I stand before God in the consciousness of acceptance according to the perfectness of His nature perfectly revealed. This was what Christ was, and He glorified it when He was made sin for us. Hence I am made the righteousness of God in Him: because Christ is so before Him, and through a work, in the virtue of which and in the glory He has gained by it, I have a part, so as to be the righteousness of God in it, for that is what is made good in it in the place where I am in Christ. All that He was and did met that in God which was perfection, glorified it, made it good, all that God is; for His glory was made good in Christ's cross; and so in me for whom it was done. Would there have been perfect love displayed without the cross? No. Perfect, inescapable judgment against sin in the highest way? No. Necessary divine majesty? No. In nothing could it have been shown that it must be glorified like the death of Christ. So His truth, that the wages of sin is death. I repeat, this was the making good of what God is in His perfections, and those perfections are displayed now in glorifying Christ, and then, in making me have a place in virtue of it, in which I enjoy Him righteously and as He is. I thus become in Christ the display and making good of God's righteousness. I am God's righteousness: I live before God according to all the truth of what He is in His glory. Is the law this Does it display God as Christ on the cross did? The true measure of man's duty it was, but to say that the law was the true measure of God's glory, proves man knows neither the law nor that glory. We have come short of that glory, and are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Him; so that the justifying, that is, grace and redemption, are not law, nor any one's keeping it perfectly as Christ kept it.

I turn, then, from the question of the righteousness of God to the application of it, and what we are to understand by righteousness and by imputing it. We have already seen that righteousness is the maintaining what is due to our relationship with others. In this general expression of it, it has its double expression of being it in our conduct, or securing it by judgment, in which, in English, it is more commonly called justice. It is thus always relative, though it is practically employed for the conduct which maintains this consistency with the relationship. It is thus used also for the condition in which I stand towards another who has a claim, in virtue of my conduct. I am righteous in God's sight, righteous before Him. Now, righteousness is constantly used in Scripture for conduct suited to our position with man and God. So the law; if kept, it would have maintained man in consistency

with his relative place as regards God and as regards man. The two tables contained the twofold obligation. Here, personal conduct is the ground of relative acceptance; I am righteous before God by personal righteousness. This may be spiritually carried on to the state of the heart, and has then been called inherent. Still it is my just acceptance in my relationship in virtue of my being perfectly what it demands. This the sinner is not. True, he receives divine life, so that there will be reality (of this a word hereafter); but this is not his righteousness; first, because he gets it in Christ, who makes him righteousness before God in another way (God's righteousness and a new divine life going together); and, secondly, because, the flesh being still in him in fact, there is not perfectness according to the relationship in which the new life has put him—perhaps, even positive failure. Hence his righteousness must be something else, and though he has divine life he must be accounted righteous beyond the measure of attainment in truth; blessed be God, according to the perfectness of Christ as He now is before God. His righteousness is not his conduct nor his nature, but his being seen and held by God as consistent with the relationship in which he stands before Him, that is the revelation of His glory. God holds him for perfect according to His own glory in that relationship. What is that? Christ's actual one as risen and in His sight. I am crucified and risen with Christ, and in that standing am seen to meet the glory of God as absolutely there displayed. How this? Because Christ has actually glorified God in what He is, as so displayed, and I am so seen before God, am so placed in Christ.

There are two points here. First, abstractedly, I am held to be righteous; that is, to have no failure in the relationship in which I stand, to be perfect in it, that it has been perfectly maintained. I am accounted righteous. When I inquire what and how it is, I say, I am as an ungodly person so accounted: I am as risen in Christ in this perfect acceptance of delight. But it is by a work which would never have had its character, if it had not been about sinners, and by Christ being made sin. Here it was all divine perfections were brought out, as they could not be to angels. It is in this I am justified. Hence, it is by faith, and according to the perfections of God so revealed and glorified. I have it as a sinner. Bring in any righteousness in me, any law-keeping, so that I am not in every aspect a mere sinner, and it has lost its glorious character of divine perfection displayed where the blessed One was made sin. And see how this gives truth in the inward parts. For I am a mere “sinner;” in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good “thing,” and I come as such. I come in truth when I come to the cross. There Christ is made sin, and, wondrous work and thought there meets GOD. I come in through grace and say, I am that—I am that sin; and I pass as a quickened soul into that in which He now stands, for it is accomplished in the presence of God. It is grace as well as truth, and righteousness, a mere sinner's righteousness; for it is made about, and in respect of, sin, not a making up human or legal righteousness. It is glorifying God in respect of my actual relationship as a sinner to God. Was not that which Christ was doing on the cross glorifying God in the place and in respect of sin (where we really were) in His own perfectness, divine perfectness?—death, wrath, all that could be, being gone through by Him who was made sin. Bring in any human righteousness in me or wrought for me, this is destroyed in its very nature. It is a justifying the ungodly, or it is gone, in glory, nature, and fact. If the heart says, But I must have reality in myself, as it does and will say, I reply, To be sure; that desire is the reality. But I say more. This risen Christ is your life, too. You are as far from gaining life by legal righteousness as from the righteousness itself. Thus it is Christ finished the work His Father gave Him to do. Having done it so that the ground of your acceptance, of your righteousness, is complete, He becomes your life really, and you have part in His righteousness.

Now, imputing righteousness is God's seeing a man in an accepted state before Him, according to the relationship in which he stands. He holds him, accounts him, righteous. We can add, according to His own nature, and the full revelation of Himself. It is God's righteousness: we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. A man is seen in perfectness of relationship towards God, fully revealed in all His perfections, and according to the claim of these perfections on all that is before it, according to the perfectness in which Christ so stands as glorified according to His work. And this is, in result, true in every way—we are sons, we shall be like Him actually in glory. We know this livingly, as in it now by faith. Love is made perfect with us, so that we have boldness in the day of judgment; because, as He is, so are we in this world. We are in the perfectness of the Judge; yet—aye, therefore—it is absolute grace.

Now for the words “imputed righteousness.”

As the paper you have put into my hands comes from the established clergy, I may appeal to their own documents. Take the Eleventh Article, “Of Justification.” “We are accounted righteous before God.” It “is more largely expressed in the homily of justification.” When I turn to this, then, righteousness and justification are absolutely identified— “justified and made righteous before God.” “Constrained to seek for another righteousness or justification, to be received at God's own hands, that is to say, the forgiveness of sins and trespasses.” “And this justification or righteousness which we so receive,” &c. “This is that justification or righteousness.” Now I am not quoting this for any doctrine. I would not in many points, but merely to show that righteousness and justification are held for one. Now in Rom. 4 justifying and accounting for righteousness are identified; but every one knows, at any rate, every one can know, and if he knows Greek can easily ascertain, that accounted for righteousness, or imputed for righteousness, is one and the same; that is, accounting righteous and imputing righteousness are identical. Imputed righteousness is a person being accounted righteous and nothing else. All else is false, and throwing dust in the eyes. We may inquire how. Is it by Christ keeping the law, or by His dying and rising again? That inquiry is all right, but the words to impute righteousness to a person, is simply and solely holding him, the person, for righteous. If I impute sin to a person, it is holding him guilty of the sin. Why, is another question.

Now it may be that reformers and puritans and divines are not clear about the law; the WORD OF GOD is, and tells me if I am justified by law I am fallen from grace. If Christ has kept the law for me, and that is imputed to me, I am justified by law. By what else in that case am I? He did keep the law—it was part of His perfectness, a needed part. He should have all human as well as divine perfectness, but where is it said He kept it for us, save as everything He did and was was for us, but I mean for us vicariously to impute it? I ask again and again for Scripture for this. I make no cavil as to words. Give me the sense, the thought, in Scripture in any words; I will bow to it at once. They cannot. According to the WORD OF GOD their doctrine is FALSE. But to return: let us examine the use of the term, “imputed righteousness” in Scripture. Almost all the cases of this use are in Rom. 4. The spring is in Gen. 15. Now what I say is this: that imputing righteousness to a man is reckoning him righteous because of something. Even if I impute a work to man for righteousness (εις), I esteem him so far thereby righteous. Supposing he has done it, I may say, I esteem it a righteous act, but I will not hold him justified or righteous for it. I do not impute it to him for righteousness nor righteousness to him. But if I say I impute righteousness to him because of it, or I impute it to him for righteousness, in both cases it is his standing and relative condition I

speak of when I say righteousness; only we know it is not by works. Let us take the passages: first, Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness. (Rom. 4:3.) Was it not that he was accounted righteous because of it? Clearly so. What else does it mean? That he was not counted righteous because of it, only that particular act as a righteous act imputed to him? It could not. He had done or felt it; it could not be itself imputed to him: he was it, morally speaking; but God could esteem him righteous in virtue of it, in His grace; that is, it was imputed to him for righteousness. He was, in God's esteem or account, righteous by this means. This is clear here, but this is the leading cardinal text from which all is drawn, on which all hangs. Nine out of the eleven passages are here (Rom. 4), Gal. 3:6 is identical. The only one which is not governed by this (and in sense it is) is James 2:23. But let us see if they give a different sense. It is reckoned of grace not of debt, that is, the reward or wages to a person who does not work. This says nothing as to it. If he gets the wages without working, it is clearly grace; only, by saying it is not debt, the principles of the paper are set aside. It says, “If the act of justification is conceived of as proceeding on no underlying righteousness, we are lost in the mists of uncertainty. This is, moreover, abhorrent to the divine rectitude, which insists on a true fulfillment of the divine law, and acquits only on account of an actual obedience.” I have already said this is nonsense, and assumes, besides, the point to be proved. But it is more; it is asserting that it cannot be by grace to one that works not. It must be, he says, of debt to actual obedience. It only proves total ignorance of what grace and righteousness are. To proceed: “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Here we believe on God, who justifies the ungodly and our faith, not our law-keeping, is imputed. The man is held for righteous. His relationship to God is according to the estimate of Him who justifies. He is righteous, has righteousness in God's sight. The sixth verse is clear beyond controversy: the man is blessed, and the imputing righteousness is forgiveness of iniquities and covering sin; i.e., the standing of the man faultless before God. Verse 9 rests on the same— “this blessedness;” only the verse carries this sense over all that precedes, by the words, “for we say;” and this goes on to the end of verse 11. Abraham had it before the law came in, that it might be valid for those who came not under the law, that they might be held righteous before God. But why insist it was before law, if it is made out by keeping the law? And this is urgently pressed by the apostle. It was not through the law but through the righteousness of faith; which is not of law. “For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.” Yet these doctors would place us all under law to get it and make Christ fulfill it for us to make it out—the point the apostle reasons so earnestly against, showing us in conclusion that it is by God's quickening the dead. We were dead in sin, and are then a new creation in that. Christ, as he then goes on to say, has been delivered for our offenses, then raised again to put us cleared from them (comp. Col. 2:13) into this new position, beyond the river of death and life under law. So Galatians: the Spirit is not by works of law, but by the hearing of faith; i.e., the report (atom) faith takes hold of; and then Gen. 15 is quoted—righteousness is imputed. But this is justifying the heathen. And he declares that “no man is justified by law,” and that those who are of its works (on that principle) are under the curse. How so if I am justified by them, by Christ keeping them? Here, too, imputing righteousness, or justifying, is for the apostle the same thing, i.e., imputing righteousness is accounting righteous. Abraham's case being introduced to distinguish it from, and to contrast it with, the obligation of law. In James it is the same truth. Works, as fruits of faith, are introduced in order to a man's being esteemed righteous; and the notion of imputing Christ's previous law-keeping can have no possible place in his

argument. A notional faith was of no avail, but one which wrought livingly; and then a man was justified, accounted righteous before God.

I have gone through these texts to have all cleared up. I return to the paper in the Christian Examiner. I should not, as I have said elsewhere, think of any one's holding Christ's fulfilling the law for us as, in itself, more than want of clearness, the effect being to injure their conscious standing before God, and their faith in the power of the Spirit to make them walk after Christ's steps. But this article has shown some deadly principles connected with it. I do not, I may beg leave to say, attribute them in the least to the Editor, who, I suppose, is a truly excellent man; nor to the journal, which, I daresay, would repudiate them. I am only surprised that the Editor and the readers of the journal should not have found out the evil of it. It only shows the blinding process of the enemy, and how he is working. The atonement, as meeting the wrath of God—the death of Christ, as drinking the cup, being made sin for us, is wholly excluded by this paper. A perfect, active obedience, even through superhuman temptations, is taught; but a passive one, a bearing wrath, being made a curse, is excluded. I cannot go into all the details here. I judge it wrong in every material point it refers to. I have spoken of the main points; I now refer to one or two consequences connected with it, proving how a main error leads away from all scriptural truth.

“Righteousness stands in the same casual connection with life.” “This second member of the parallel is expressed in the words, ‘unto the justification of life,' but with the obvious meaning, that this righteousness having come in the room of sin, there must be life. The thought is, that where sin is, there must be death, and that where righteousness is, there must be life.” Horrible poverty and falsehood! This is law. “He that doeth these things shall live in them.” It is not by grace, but by justice, we get life. Thus righteousness is the way to life, only Christ has done it. What does the word of God teach us? “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, which our hands have handled, of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us.” “This is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Talk of getting life by righteousness, and calling a man's self a Christian. “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” So in Ephesians. God had raised Christ from the dead. “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” “We were children of wrath.” “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, lath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” And this is so striking in this epistle, that he does not, in chap. 1:20, see Christ at all till He is dead, and then God's power comes in and raises Him up, and us with Him, to have His place. He knows of no Christ keeping the law here at all, no righteousness to gain life by. And the passage which might seem, at first sight, to one who did not know what divine life as the gift of God was (as it is evident the writer of this article does not), to justify the obtaining of life by righteousness, is the remarkable proof of the falseness of the view I combat here. “As sin has reigned unto death,” says the article, “so where righteousness is, there must be life.” What says the Scripture? “So might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life.” It is not that where sin had reigned unto death, so righteousness by law must bring life; but grace reigns. And if God took care that even so this should not be without righteousness, it is carefully taught that it is

the Second Adam in contrast with the first—that it could not be shut up to law, but must extend to the case where there was none—that where there was not, still sin reigned unto death, and therefore the blessing must be for those not under law—that the ruin came by one offense, and that the law was to be considered only as a thing that came in by the by to make it abound; and if, indeed, the many offenses under that were borne, yet the thing met, and met too, by Christ, was sin reigning by death, and the answer to it, grace reigning by righteousness, not to life under law, nor by life unto law, but to eternal life by Jesus, of whom Adam had been the image.

This leads me to another point: “The entrance of a sinless humanity, with the law in his heart, and comprehending all the seed, thus becomes the central point of all time to which previous ages looked forward, and after ages look back. He was the living law, the personal law; and this was an event with a far more important bearing than any other that ever occurred. It is the world's new creation.” I have difficulty in restraining the expression of unlimited indignation that this sentence produces. The use of the precious incarnation of that holy and blessed One to deceive and destroy souls! But I refrain. There are almost as many errors as words. Could any one rightly look to have any place with God short of Christ's death!? Is it not true, that, except He had died, He had remained alone? That if any are saved, they have part in Christ after, and not before His death? That except He wash them they have no part in Him, but that the water and blood came out of His pierced side? It is horribly, destructively false exactly the avowed ground of Puseyism, and more recently of the “Essays and Reviews.” What is a living law, a personal law? Nonsense; simply nonsense. A perfect example for a renewed soul Christ was; but grace towards a sinner is not even law in the exemplification of it. A law does not forgive. This I judge (from the very fairest appearance, and that it is arouses my indignation) is the devil's own doctrine to deceive; this exclusion of Christ's death to set up a living law, in which no sinner could have part with Him, instead of seeing we are dead, One dying for all, that we might live, our sin being atoned for by Him. But this is the world's new creation. Now, where is new creation spoken of? Eph. 2. We are created again in Christ Jesus when we are raised from the dead, as having been dead in trespasses and sins. The world's new creation is nonsense, unless it be the new heavens and the new earth, which is past death and resurrection. Our new creation, short of death and resurrection, is a lie against our state of original sin, and Christ's death and resurrection to deliver us by redemption. The place where new creation is spoken of in express terms, is remarkable in this respect. The apostle in 2 Corinthians, had been showing how he had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God, that raiseth the dead. He had there contrasted the law, as a ministration of death and condemnation, with the ministration of righteousness; and the Spirit shows that we belong and look into another's an unseen world; and then declares “the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they which live should live not to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again. Wherefore, henceforth, know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh (i.e., as a living Messiah in the world connected with Jewish and legal state, a Christ under law), yet henceforth know we him no more.” He had died for sin and risen; that was the way he knew Him. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (καινη κτισις. It is a new creation, the whole scene entered on): “old things are passed away, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who had reconciled us unto himself.” And how is this? God was in Christ reconciling—He was rejected. It was not even then to this end man and sinless humanity keeping the law, but God reconciling; and then, if rejected, making Him to be sin

for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That is, the new creation, in Ephesians and 2 Corinthians, is in resurrection; is not a connection with Christ in flesh, which was impossible, but our union to Him when he had begun the new state of man as risen from the dead, when redemption was accomplished.

This writer who makes redemption by incarnation without blood, without death, can, of course, make a new creation of the world without the death and resurrection of the Savior.

There are many other statements I should wholly object to. Many points, distressing to a Christian, maintained in this paper, have occurred to me, but I refrain from noticing them. The great principles are before you. I see plainly that a great warfare as to what is the truth has begun: not mistakes, we are all liable to them; but what is Christianity? What is divine righteousness? What is the desert of sin? What is bearing sin? Is Christianity the readjustment of the old creation by the law, or a new one, of which Christ risen is the first of the first-fruits? Did Christ bear our sins as dying, enduring wrath there for us, or living, so that death is not the wages of sin? These are the weighty questions involved in the present controversy. On these points I hold the paper you have sent me to be nothing less than the denial of the foundations of Christianity.

I see when the Scripture speaks of this righteousness of God, not the law sent out from a God who dwelt in the thick darkness, giving the perfect rule of man's righteousness, but God fully revealed in all His perfections, and glorified as to them all on the cross, so that Christ past death takes a new place founded on redemption, the putting away of sin by His blood, and perfectly glorifying God in all His perfections, love, righteousness, majesty, and all; so that we, blessed be His name, are reconciled to God. God as He is, in all that He is, glorified, made known, is that which reconciles us. We have peace with Goy. See what blessing there is in this. I stand before God in the conscious perfectness of that which He is, one with it morally, in Christ who has glorified it in the act dune for me, who is now in glory, where righteousness has placed Him because of it, and all the favor of God in love can shine out on me according to this. Not one blessed perfection of God with which I am not brought into perfect accord, which has not been glorified in my being brought there by Christ; and by faith I stand in the consciousness of it, and I know Him in the full revelation of Himself. I am reconciled to Him as He is. Now, I admit a man may be a sincere Christian, and not enter into all the privileges of his position, may not see that he is risen with Christ, and sitting in Him in heavenly places. But the simplest Christian recognizes the blood of Christ as that which has reconciled him and made peace, and that he is at peace with God, according to the value of that bloodshedding, and with such we are taught to walk as heartily as if they understood being risen with Christ. They may not know how fully God has revealed Himself, and what the extent of reconciliation in our resurrection with Christ is. Who does? But they are reconciled, and they know it. They do not think they want something else than Christ's work on the cross. Above all they do not deny the full putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. They do not suppress and annul the value of Christ's blood and work. Their faith is sound and genuine, though it may be enlarged. That one almighty work of putting away of sin is fully owned by them, it is their hope. The price of Christ's blood is owned, not denied. They may blessedly add to their knowledge, but their faith is sound. The article I have been commenting on is the opposite to sound in the faith. It sets up the law: that is mischievous, but may be borne with. But it annuls the value of the bloodshedding, the cup of wrath; and that is intolerable.

Chapter 103

Thoughts on Philippians 2

Phil. 3 presents the energy of life and of the Spirit of God in the Christian running toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that he might win Christ. In chapter 2 we find the display of the gracious affections. But in order to this, the Spirit of God fixes our minds upon Christ looked at in this humbled condition, or rather when He humbled Himself. It is beautiful, the way in which, toward the end of the chapter, without an effort, we find the Apostle's feelings were all drawn out—the spirit elevated really above the circumstances, but free to unfold itself in gracious affections in the midst of them all. And that is just what the Christian ought to be, having Christ as his one object, the power of the Holy Ghost raising him above all around him, that there should be the display of Christ towards all around him. The Christian's life here ought to be the manifestation of Christ in the midst of the world. For this we must be in constant communion with the source of it. The Christian's life as such down here is the display of Christ's life. It is the life of Jesus manifested in his mortal body.

The Philippians had sent to the Apostle to help him, when in prison, with a supply of what he needed. His heart had been touched, and he felt the kindness and love. But, while owning it, his heart turns to think of them. The Spirit of life in Christ is at work in him, and he immediately thinks of their things. He is comforted of them and can say, “I know how to abound and to suffer need.” I am rejoicing that I can get the blessing from you; but the consequence is that it turns back towards them. He says, “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” If the love of Christ is in our hearts, the consequence is that things acquire a character entirely different. They had sent to the Apostle what he wanted, and he says there is consolation in Christ. It is not merely the things he got, but the comfort of Christ and fellowship of the Spirit. It was the working of the spirit of grace in Jesus, showing itself in this fellowship. He says, if you want me to be perfectly happy, go on well among yourselves. There were some little jealousies at work, such things as do spring up among Christians; but be takes occasion, by owning all the grace that was in them, to say, “Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” And one just sees how these gracious affections are drawn out and in exercise, where the heart, in the power of the Spirit of God, is carried beyond the things which act on the flesh. His heart turns to Christ as the expression of this. He says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind. let, each esteem other better than themselves.” Now, if we are not very near Christ, that is often very difficult. We may see great vanity or pride in another, and one may be going on really better than this or that person. I do not mean that the other may be positively sinning; but I may feel that he is not walking spiritually. Yet, if I am practically close to Christ myself, I see my brother in Christ, and then it is not hard to estimate others better than myself. Where I am walking in nearness to Christ, if there is anything consciously wrong in myself, this is what I feel about, and not my goodness. The best thing is not to be thinking about myself at all; to have the sense of my own nothingness, which we always have when we are near the Lord. I feel my nothingness in the

presence of Christ. But if I look at my brother, I see Christ in him—not his faults. If we are thus close to the Lord, it is natural to esteem others better than ourselves. We judge ourselves in His presence; but we see the workings of Christ in our brother. The thing that is before us in our brother is Christ. See the amazing privilege of the Christian. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” The state here is the fruit of the energy which is brought before us in chapter iii. There he was counting all as dross and dung, and pressing on toward the mark. That is supposed here, and he says, “Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” In this passage we get the complete and absolute contrast of all that was in the first Adam and in the flesh now. You are to have the same mind as there was in Christ, looked at from the time that He was in the Father's glory till He came down to the cross. That is what governed all His path from the divine glory down to this nothingness of death, “the dust of death;” as it is called. You are to have the same mind as He had all that pathway. And you will see what it is here. It is a wonderful thing to see that we are called upon to have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is from having His nature, “who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation.” If we look at the first Adam, it was exactly the opposite. He was in the form of man, in the condition of man, and he did set about, as a robbery, to be equal with God. He took it in order to get into this place, to exalt himself: and he was abased. Whereas Christ abased Himself, and He is exalted. It is not only that He appears, but He abases Himself. “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” Then there was a second step in this humiliation. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” There is nothing so humble as obedience, because we have then no will of our own at all. Adam, besides setting up to be God, was disobedient unto death; whereas Christ, on the contrary, was obedient unto death, as a matter of sorrow and pain. He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The thing that I find in Christ exactly opposed to the first Adam and to our flesh is that He humbled Himself—emptied Himself. First, He made Himself of no reputation, and being made in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. You see it is not merely bearing wrongs—that He did most really. But there is another thing in this—perfect love. It was this that brought Him down. He came into the place of obedience, and it was through perfect love to others who wanted it. For love likes to serve; selfishness likes to be served, and thinks itself exalted when other people are waiting upon it. Love likes to serve; and that is what Christ always will do. He will never give it up. He served when He was down here upon the earth. “I am among you as he that serveth.” Wretched hearts they had to enter into it! Knowing that He was come from God and went to God, He girds Himself, pours water into a basin, and begins to wash the disciples' feet. That is what He is doing now; He is washing our feet; He is servant in that sense still. It is His glory really—the glory of His love towards us. And when the time of glory comes, it is the same thing. He tells them to be as men that wait for their Lord. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” The Lord thus presented Himself in this wonderful way as taking the form of a servant—His ear bored. It was not there His becoming a man; but when He had served the seven years perfectly, He says, I will not go out free. He remains a servant forever. He might have had twelve legions of angels and gone out free; but that is not what He came for. He said, I will be a servant forever. That is the very thing which Christ all

through His path has done. Leaving God in the glory, leaving the form of Godhead in abeyance, He became a servant, for the blessing of others. We have got the blessing now and the glory; and the way you show that, is by serving now in that spirit of love that thinks every one better than oneself, that serves everybody. In the presence of Christ selfishness disappears, and blessed, holy affections flow forth without difficulty. I am not thinking of myself. I see what is blessed and good in another, and this is in the energy that overcomes all difficulties. Christ humbled Himself, God therefore has highly exalted Him, and "given Him a name which is above every name," &c. In verse 13, it is God working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We have got by grace God as the worker in us of this willing and doing. That is what is displayed in our life. It showed itself in Christ by His coming down and humbling Himself, and now He says God is working in you the same mind, to will and to do of His good pleasure. You are to be blameless and harmless; that is what Christ was. You are actually manifested down here as Christ was. Did He not shine as the light? That is what you are. He was the word of life, and He was holding it forth; and He says, that is what you are to do too— "holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." Just see how all these affections come out. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." It was really manifesting Christ to them.

He was there a prisoner, perhaps going to be put to death; but "I joy and rejoice with you all." Your faith is what I look at as a precious sacrifice; you are going to be in glory with Christ; and if I am offered up, it is for that very reason: I am offered on your faith. The offering was their faith. He says, as it were, I throw myself in, that we may rejoice together. We are all going to heaven in company. He is looking at Christ having these saints, and he is helping them. "For the same cause (he adds) also do ye joy and rejoice with me." What! rejoice when he was going to be put to death! Looking at the blessedness in Christ, he rises above it all.

But we see the same affections coming out still. Even in common things, he cannot be happy till he knows their state. "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state." I cannot rest perfectly happy till I know that all is well with you all. "For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state." It was not that he could trust others for the same love, but it was in him. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." But still he rests in Timothy. "But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he has served with me in the gospel." It is still the same blessed happy feeling. Timothy's affection, too, is brought out. Paul knew that the Philippians would care about him, so he says Timothy shall come and tell you.

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants." Thus he links them all in one. "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." The Philippians had heard that he had been sick, and Epaphroditus felt they would be all miserable because of this. How he reckons upon their love? He was full of heaviness, not because of his own sickness, but because they had heard of it. It is the present flowing out of affection. "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." What a sorrow it would have been to me, if you had lost this blessed servant of Christ through serving me! I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful." How

all these gracious, blessed affections are drawn out where this mind of Christ is! Look at Christ Himself. “With desire,” He says, “I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” He was about to suffer; He was going to work the work of redemption. Still His soul was always bright instead of being oppressed. Even then He wanted for the last time to have the paschal supper with them. “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you.” It was not to be again. Think of the amount of lowliness, as well as love, that comes out in this affection. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” It cannot be unless we are near to Christ, because the wretched flesh rises and is anxious about itself. But where the soul has, as the single thing before it, the desire to honor Christ, the life of Christ is set free in displaying Christ in the world; and then all these blessed affections are in full play. What do we learn in Christ? He was always going down. We are elevated, because we are in Christ. But we are to have the same “mind;” and the way that this shows itself is in self-humbling and in obedience. This sets free all the Christian affections, because Christ has set me free from self.

May we so feed upon Him, and have Him for our object, and enter into His spirit, that we may have the mind of Christ and show Him forth in the world!

Psalm 31

The special subject of all the Psalms is connected with a remnant of Israel, or with such of the Jews as have their hearts touched by the Spirit of God, and look out for deliverance from the circumstances in which they are placed. In some of them, the interest which God had in them is then taken up, though prophetically, in great detail; and the Lord. Jesus is treated of as passing through circumstances of great trial on their account. It is not but that there are many things we may delight in, and godly souls have found great comfort in all ages in the Psalms, and rightly so. Still it is well to understand what the purpose and intention of the Holy Ghost is in them.

In Psa. 1 (which, with the second, is a sort of preface to the book), it is the distinction between the godly and ungodly man. The godly are called the righteous, and the ungodly are always called enemies. That the Lord should not spare any wicked transgressors, is not the grace of the gospel. There are many passages where there is the call for judgment, because there must be the destruction of the enemy to allow of the deliverance of the Jewish remnant, who seek rest on the earth. We could not consistently use this language, just as it is in itself, and say, “Spare not any transgressor.” Having received grace we cry, “Spare them, pity them, save them, O Lord.” But judgment will be executed another day—when the Church is out of, and the Jews are in, the scene. If they have taken the place of adversary against the Lord, then it must be judgment. When the patience of God has been fully exercised, and the continuance of mercy would only be to sanction and perpetuate iniquity in the earth, “the Master will rise up and shut to the door.” Then will be a time, not of grace, as now, but of judgment. And then it will be seasonable. The Holy Spirit will warrant their looking for the deliverance which will cut off the enemies. The distinction in Psa. 1, and so throughout the whole book, is between the righteous and the wicked. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,” &c. “The ungodly are not so,” &c. “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand,” &c.

In Psa. 2 the heathen are raging, the kings or rulers of the earth set themselves against Jehovah and His Christ. But God asserts and will enforce the rights of His Son on earth. Wherever the Spirit of God is working, there is the cry of the Spirit in the soul which must meet an answer. Now is a day of unmingled grace; but here the Spirit of Christ speaks of them as enemies, and is looking forward, as the only remedy, to their being cut off in judgment, unless they bow. Christ Himself is interested in this remnant, and is brought in as bearing their burdens. “They parted my garments among them,” is a direct prophecy about the Lord. He joins Himself with their sighs. He has been with them for their sins, and He will deliver them from their foes. The tone and character of this book gives us the expectant blessings to Israel in letter—the spirit of it we take to our soul's comfort. I find in my soul certain anxiety and distress—no doubt very imperfectly expressed—but it is more or less the same in us as in the remnant; I look up to the Lord, but it may be my own fault brought me into the trouble, and I do not know what to say: then the Spirit gives me in the Psalms an inspired feeding of what is right under such circumstances. Thus I hear God's expression of my sorrow. It is a great comfort to the soul, but it must be understood how far they apply. Then again there is sin or Satan. In either case it is wrath against sin which is the source of wrath on our

departure from God. Here is the power of Satan and the wrath of God. Christ had to come under the power of death, and therefore He had to come under the sin, I do not Say morally, but substitutionally, as bearing the whole burden of our sin; to deliver us He must take it on Himself. He had to drink up the cup of wrath for us—whether for Israel for earthly blessing, or for Christians for heavenly blessing. It is important to see the special bearing. Yet there are certain principles, immutable, and that always apply—eternal truths that never vary, whether earthly people or heavenly people are concerned. Only Christ can put us into blessing—the displayed ways may change, but the fundamental principle must always be the same. Sin is at bottom the same; and love is the same too, though the development of both may not be so.

In this psalm the evil looked at is the bondage of sin; not only servants of sin, but slaves of Satan. He is the god of this world and the prince of its course, and he holds it under thralldom. There are two points in the seventh and eighth verses I wish to speak about. “Thou hast considered my trouble, thou hast known my soul in adversities; and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.” These are the two things God has taken notice of. I would take the great principle of it; true to a Jew, but in a much larger way to us. We are now identified with Christ at the right hand of God. The High Priest is there. He is carrying on His work there. His place is there. Aaron's place is on the earth. God's love is set on this remnant. There they are—there we may be—held in bitter bondage. It seems liberty, because our wills are in it, but it is real and thorough bondage. A man knows a thing is wrong and foolish, yet he goes on doing it. He is away from God, so that there is no power to deliver himself from sin, from his passion, and he is not able to keep from it until he gets back to God. What he did, he did to render himself independent of God. This ruined Eve. Adam was led astray by her, and lost all his blessing, though our blessings are more than Adam lost. Adam thus cast off God's authority, and became the slave of Satan's power. There is no such thing as independence; man is perfectly incapable of it. He must have something to govern the heart. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Not where your heart is, there your treasure is. A thousand things may govern the heart, but there is something—it may be vanity, or anything else; but naturally it is governed without God. If you had been in Paradise now, it would not be in independence. “All power is of God.” If not, He would not be God. There can be nothing independent of Him. Creature independence is but setting up another god; any other power is not God. Nothing is independent of God. Satan, cast at last into the lake of burning brimstone, will show that he is not independent. The moment the heart departs from God, it must get some other object. When Adam hears the voice of God in the garden, he hides himself: that is not to be happy. Sin gave him the consciousness of his nakedness, and God had immediately, in his eyes, the character of a judge. Worship and prayer are vanished, the moment we have sinned and God takes this character before us. Man goes out of his mind if he has not an object. He has lost God as such, and he seeks some other, of which he makes himself the center. We have left God, and He has got the character of a judge, and so the heart seeks something below itself—looked at as made for God; something to satisfy its nature. An animal could not carry on a course of sin—it has no intellect to indulge in sin—but man does; and thus the superiority of our human nature is used to corrupt ourselves by vices. Man is a slave: the god of this world, the enemy of our souls, has got power over him through his passions, and it is thralldom. A man dare not do anything that would set him at variance with the world. Man has lost the knowledge of God (not that there is a God, but the knowledge of God), and this aggravates his guilt. He has a knowledge that there is a God, but he does not know Him. I may know there is a

great potentate, but I may not know him. A man's intellect may say, “No God;” but his conscience says there is a God, though he has shut God out, and does not know Him. We have lost, in a great degree, the power of measuring good and evil. Would not the young man have known it was unseemly to be feeding on the husks the swine did eat, if he had been living happily in his father's house? We are by nature, darkness; God is light. By the fall, man lost the image of God—gained the knowledge of good and evil, but not the knowledge of God by which we can judge the things around us. Satan has blinded you by motives. “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment tame, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death.” The moment the word reaches the conscience, then you say, “I am all wrong.” There may be almost despair, but the revelation of God's light alone comes in, and shows me I was in darkness. Man's very unconsciousness of evil, and contentedness with what he has without God, the thirst in his heart for other things, and the asking, “What harm is there?” prove he has not God. If you talk of sin when men are enjoying what they call innocent pleasures, and speak of either grace or judgment, it stops them immediately; it is all gone. They will tell you, “It is not the time.” Man's pleasure is never the time for God's presence. They will talk about God, will tell you what He ought to be, but they cannot bear His presence. The Lord may use outward means, trouble, &c., as in the Psalms, or work without outward means, and then we know the struggle against sin. “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.” It is better to be struggling against the tide than going down the stream with the world. When the light shines in, there is the consciousness of need; the world sees it; Satan sees it and says, There is a soul escaping. He has got the consciousness that God is there. It will be detected if the divine nature is at work in a man.

“Thou hast known my soul in adversity” —not my soul has known thee. There is as yet no full apprehension of His grace. I know I have been wrong, but “Thou hast considered my trouble.” I am in distress. What am I to do Well, God has considered my trouble. There is not liberty yet; but if the word has reached the heart, there may be ever so little perception of God, but there is a link between the soul and God. “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.” “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child, for since I spake,” &c. If there is any reader that knows he has been going wrong, as connected with the conscience, and he wishes to get back to God, I say, God knows it—He considers it, weighs the whole process, and He will surely deliver. The soul may know and have to pass through a good deal of exercise; but He is considering it. “Since I spake against thee,” &c. His eye is always upon it. “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.”

There is not only sin but the power of Satan to overcome. You cannot be independent of Satan. You cannot go after the smallest vanity, not even a little bit of dress for vanity's sake, without making God a liar and believing Satan. Eve did this when Satan said, “Thou shalt not surely die” —God knows if you disobey, you will become as he is. He treated God as a liar, and she trusted Satan for truth, and so God was entirely cast off. In everything you may be deceived by the same enemy.

Mau incautiously trusts Satan for truth, and even for goodness. But when you begin to struggle with Satan, he will trouble your soul, if he sees you want to get, away from him. He will send friends and temptations to you, so as to deceive (and that is the difference between the devil and Satan). The Lord comes in; Satan claims his right over us, and says, You have sold yourself to me already, but God says, “Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?” Satan was displayed

specially as the adversary when he said, “Fall down and worship me.” Then the Lord said, “Get thee hence, SATAN.” Satan uses Scripture for his own wicked purposes, and quotes what God has said— “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” You sold yourself to me. No, says the Lord, My eye is upon you—thou shalt not die. The judgment of death is with God, the power of death is with the devil! Christ comes and places himself, in blessed grace, in our place to bear the whole weight of Satan's power—puts Himself under the consequences of our sin: “was made sin for us.” Thus grace brought Him where sin brought us, that He might deliver us from the whole force of evil. Christ having not only delivered us, but glorified God perfectly by the cross, having made good His title at all cost, goes into that glory by virtue of redemption, with the full joy of the firstborn among many brethren, enters as man into the presence of His Father. This gives the character of what we are made partakers of. If He enters there, it is in a certain sense our entering; it is for us, as “our forerunner,” in virtue of His entering. We have entered in Him as our head; we sit “in heavenly places in Christ.” “Thou hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy, but thou hast set my feet in a large room.” There is liberty. The state of the heart delivered corresponds with the deliverance into a large place. “Set my feet in a large room.” We are in the presence of God without the possibility of wrath. The cup of wrath has been drunk—it is not now to drink. God's eye was upon me when I was in my sins. He has “known my soul in adversity,” and I am brought into the presence of God—into the sunshine of His glory, without a cloud, by virtue of redemption. It is after I was a sinner, I am brought there through the efficacy of the work of Christ. I am there necessarily, to be the proof of the value of His blood. God looks upon me as the fruit of His Son's work: I am set according to the value of God's Son in His sight. This is how I know His love, in the perfect favor of God—not only in divine favor without a cloud, but assured that there never can be a cloud. And there is another thing— “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Not that it will not be there; but that we are set free from sin and death. The same power that raised Christ into the presence of God has delivered me. I may slip through unbelief; but I am delivered, and am then one spirit with the Lord. Satan has no power against Christ up on high; all his power was exhausted at the cross, and it is all gone. God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness,” and set our feet “in a large room.” That we may enjoy this large room, the Holy Ghost is given. “Stand fast in the liberty.” Satan has no right or title against Christ. In Him I am delivered. I am entirely out of the enemy's reach (I do not mean if going on in the flesh): in Christ is my title and portion. I have received the Holy Ghost. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” “If led by the Spirit, we are not under the law.” By the Holy Ghost, I “know the things that are freely given of God,” and have the power of enjoying them (1 Cor. 2), an “earnest in our hearts.” (2 Cor. 1)

I add another thing that puts the crown to all: “we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I know it is forever. The Spirit has sealed me “until the day of redemption.” Well, now, I can trust and joy in God. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” No creature can separate us from the love of God. There we find ourselves, and the apostle is not afraid to say, “We joy in God.” This is a “large room.” All the holiness of God is our delight. He that first' descended is ascended into the proper glory; and we are brought into it all. If I cannot see the end of it, I can see it is boundless blessedness. And Christ is all and in all. The Lord give us to dwell there! Surely it is “a large place.”

Chapter 105

Psalm 84

We get ourselves so accustomed to certain things by their constant use, that the power of their meaning becomes destroyed. It may be a bad word or a good word, but words that would deeply affect others thus fail to move us. This we find but too true as regards the Scripture—truth itself. What an effect such an announcement as that in John 3 (“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,” &c.), would have upon us, if listened to for the first time, and the value of its meaning entered into! Just the same is it with this Scripture before us. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts,” &c. Would not such a thought as being in God's court, as men dwelling in God's own house, greatly delight and surprise us, if heard for the first time and its meaning understood? What an effect such a truth as this would have upon us if fully believed—God going to make us dwell with Himself in His own house.

He does dwell with us now, as we know; but we are not yet dwelling in His house. God never dwelt with Adam, nor did Adam dwell with God. He made a suitable dwelling-place for man, and put Adam in it. He did come down to visit him, but He did not dwell with him. Indeed, the first time we read of God coming down, His word is, Adam, where art thou? The paradise on earth was not God's dwelling-place. We read in the Revelation, the tabernacle of God is with man, and the Lamb is the light and the temple of it.

“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord.” The heart that has found God longs for a dwelling-place with Him. It was this desire that moved the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration to make a request for three tabernacles. It was Jewish, of course; but they could not bear the thought of the Lord Jesus going away. They wished Him to stay with them; they wanted to keep Him down here. He could not remain, but left them and us words of comfort. “Let not your heart be troubled In my Father's house are may mansions,” many chambers. “I go to prepare a place for you.... I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” This new thing is brought out here most blessedly—that man shall dwell with God in His own house. The Lord Jesus could not stay with His beloved disciples down here, because it is polluted; but He will have His people with Himself, where there is holiness, and everything suited to meet the need and claims of holiness. His people shall dwell with Him. “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.”

The first thought in the heart of Moses (Ex. 15), whilst recounting God's acts of power and delivering grace, is the desire to make Him a house: “He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation.” But verse 13 gives us a fuller thought of faith: “Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation”

the redemption-song of the Lord's strength and power. In verse 17 we get the clear promise of this new thing a dwelling-place with God, which He Himself hath made. That is what He will do for them. Not merely a rest in the wilderness, but the blessed purpose of God is to bring His people into His sanctuary which He has made. What! man to dwell with God! Wondrous fact! The thought

of this new thing fills my soul with the deepest joy.

The heart that longs for God finds rest in the altar of God. “Thine altars, O Lord of hosts,” &c. “My heart crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young.” How beautifully this parenthesis shows us the tender care God has over all His creatures! He fails not to find a house for the most worthless, and a nest for the most restless of birds. What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul gets that casts itself upon the watchful, tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all His creatures! We know what the expression of “nest” conveys, just as well as that of “a house.” Is it not a place of security—a shelter from storm—a covert to hide oneself in from every evil—a protection from all that can harm—a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in? The term is just as familiar in the Scripture as that of “the house.” The prodigal well understood the comfort and plenty of the Father's house before he turned his face towards it; but it was the Father that knew the claims of the house, and He must clothe him suitably for it before he is admitted into it.

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.” It is this new thing—that men should dwell in God's own house; not be there merely as a visitor, but a dweller. The visitor does not know all that belongs to the house; but nothing can be kept back from a dweller: he is at home, and must know all the privileges and blessings of the house. Surely there will be perfect blessedness in that house, where Christ has prepared everything where God is at home, and has arranged all according to His own wisdom, and power, and glory—the Lamb being the light and the temple. Now those who dwell there must have the moral qualities of the house; their tastes, and enjoyments, and nature, must be suited to the house.

In time past God did come into the temple after a Jewish order; but the people were shut out from even this glory—the very opposite to dwelling with God. They were a favored people, it is true—separated from the nations by God's grace; but they knew not the constant, increasing blessing of the house.

There is another thing—the way to this house; the road to that place where God and His people shall dwell. He has been dwelling with them, but He will have them to dwell with Him, and His heart has ordered the way. When we were sinners—merely sinners—and could do nothing but sin, He put it all away. “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” He has given us a new nature, which has the moral capabilities of enjoying a dwellingplace with Him in His own house.

God has dwelt with man; the God-man Christ Jesus has tabernacled down here, and His glory was displayed in grace and truth.

In Ex. 29 we learn a further truth of the tabernacle and the altar; but the grand thought all through is not only God dwelling with His people, but He must have them to dwell with Him.

In Ezekiel we see the glory that had rested on the temple departing gradually, reluctantly, yet really. But this had not been the fullness of His indwelling in the Christian; neither was it His presence in the Church, which is His body. “Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

How this new thing occupies God—the thought of His own house! His word declares it; “prophets tell of it;” grace puts us in possession of it; faith gives us the enjoyment of it; the Lord Jesus is the

way to it. The First Epistle of John brings out this truth very fully. (See chaps. 3.,4.)

Now, how is it that we feel ourselves wonderfully more united to a Christian we may only have known for half-an-hour, than to a mere acquaintance we may have known all our lives? Is it not the reality of the truth, God is there? God dwells in us, and we in Him. It is something more than a new nature, for it goes on to say, “We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit he has given us.” In the next chapter we get that wonderful word, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love,” &c. Oh the joy this knowledge gives the heart! What comfort the soul gets in such proximity to God! How the thought of this house delights one!—this house that God is bringing us to, where we shall learn Him most fully, and love Him without hindrance.

How complete, how perfect, is God's work? He gave Jesus to die for us, and He has sent down the Holy Ghost to teach us, to assure our hearts that the Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for us. He has fitted us for this house, and we have in Him all we need. He gives us the moral qualities of the dwellers of the house, the new nature that can enjoy the glory of the house. “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.” Nothing but praise becometh those who shall dwell in God's house; it will be their unwearied, untiring employ—continual praise. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are thy ways.” If by faith I am dwelling in God's house, I have perfect rest. If I am counting on His strength, let my difficulty be what it may, I have entire repose. Communion with God always gives confidence in His power. This is the key to the psalm before us. If my heart has learned the love God has for me, and what His purposes are towards me, I can trust Him to order the way. God's love was displayed in His Son—revealed in the gift of Him; and the Son will give grace and strength for the way. “Of those thou hast given me have I lost none.” God has fully provided for our need. He has quickened us—cleansed us—sealed us. If Paul had to say, I am not already perfect, he knew it was the way up, the way to the house, the way home. If my heart is set upon this glorious dwelling-place, I shall not be so much occupied about the ease or comfort of the way, as I shall be to know that it is the way. The glory of the inheritance will be far more to me than the character of the things that are round the pathway to it. Everything may be against me—all may seem united to hinder my progress. Should I be trying to make myself comfortable, desiring to settle down in a place and a world which is striving to keep me from my house and my home, depriving me of enjoyment and blessing? No; the one thing that should occupy me is the way out. I shall not be distressed much by what is going on down here if I can but learn that it leads up there. Is it the way home Will it take me to the house? This will be a vast deal more important to me than all else. It may be a dangerous road, a rough road, a difficult road; but is it the way up there? If I do but know that, I shall not care for the difficulties of the hill, nor fear the danger of the descent. Shall I be looking for an easier road, a smoother road? No. Is it the road? Is it the way there? If I am told there is a lion in the way—well, I have no fear: God is my strength—I cannot go without Him. “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” were the words of Jesus. He had to suffer, so may we; but is it the way there—the way to the home on which my affections are set—the way to the home of blessing which the Lord has prepared? This settles every question, and delivers from ten thousand sorrows. I do not care for the difficulties nor the dangers: it is the way there. I am kept up in it by the strength of God; I am kept up through it by the love of God.

“Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well.” (Verse 6.) The valley of Baca is a place of sorrow and humiliation, but one of blessing also. To Paul it was the thorn in the flesh—something that made him despicable in his ministry to the Galatians. It was truly humbling, and called forth from him a thrice-repeated prayer. But when he heard God say, “My grace is sufficient for you,” he no longer pleaded for its removal. No; he rather gloried in his infirmity, that the power of God might be known. This was the place of blessing to Paul: he found it a well. The valley of Baca was turned into a spot of untold intimacy and nearness to God. With some of us this valley may be the loss of that nearest our hearts, or the thwarting of the will—something that will humble us; but it is a place of blessing. We get far more refreshing from the painful than the pleasant things. The valley of Baca is made a well. Of which of your pleasant things can you say you make it a well? The refreshment and the blessing come from that which has pained us, humbled us, emptied us of self! This is God's way of showing us what He is; and so, in passing us through the valley of Baca, He makes it a well. So 1 Thess. 5 “In everything give thanks.” How is this to be done Did Paul give thanks for the thorn—the very thing he supposed would hinder his usefulness? Not whilst looking at the thing itself; it was only when his eye was fixed on the heart and the hand that had done it. There are many things in themselves that we cannot give thanks for the snapping of the cord nearest the heart, or the cutting to pieces of that our affections are set upon. We must see the love that has ordered it, and the hand that has appointed it; and then we can give thanks.

“The rain also filleth the pools.” The Lord can make springs in the desert to meet His people's need, or send down rain from heaven to supply their wants. He knows neither difficulties nor impossibilities: to lean upon Him is undisturbed security. He will bring His people safely through every trial; and every fresh victory should increase the strength of their confidence in Him.

“Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.” In every sorrow God is our shield. Oh! but some may say, My sorrow is brought on by my sin. Sad it should be so! But even then we can say, “Look upon the face of thine anointed.” God can always look upon His Son with delight; He is ever well pleased in Him: and we can plead what Christ is. There is no position a saint can be in but what he may go to God for help. No; although his very sorrow is the fruit of his sin, and there is no other way of getting rid of your sin, and out of your sorrow, but by going to God, and hiding yourself behind His Anointed. You may net choose to say, Look upon me; but you can ever say, “Look upon the face of thine Anointed.” Christ is your only shelter. He is a covert in every storm—ah! even that which your own failure has brought upon you. There is no getting back to God but by hiding yourself in Christ—taking shelter behind Him.

There is just one other word about the way, and I have done. Now, what are your ways? What is your walk in the way to the place you are going to? Is it in keeping with the character of the house? Are your ways suited to the home God has prepared you for?—His own dwelling which He has prepared for you? Are you so behaving yourselves as to rejoice in the thought that this world is crumbling? Is the hope of the Lord's coming your daily delight? Does it influence you in the ten thousand details of your every-day life? Or are you so walking hand in hand with the world that the very thought of His coming fills you with shame? May the Lord grant you grace to take heed to your ways! May you walk well pleasing in His sight, caring more for His glory than your own ease! “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.”

Chapter 106

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalm 45

Psa. 45. The object is evidently the celebration of Messiah the King. The heart feels it is inditing a good matter. When Christ is before the soul, it is enlivened and roused. Here, doubtless, as king, and in His victories, so that there is more of human triumph than in the Christian's estimate of Him. The power of evil will then be put down, and the heart exult in it. Now the joy is deeper and more divine. Collectively, we expect the Bridegroom; individually, the Savior, who is not ashamed to call us brethren. When we think of Him as a divine Person, we feel the depth of that divine work in which God met sin, and in which it has been put away for us, a work which none can fathom; and dwell on that glory into which He is entered, and of which He is worthy, both in His person and by His work. Still, we can understand the exultation of the delivered Jew, or, at least, one anticipating deliverance thus by Messiah. But there is, besides this joy, a principle of deep importance contained in this psalm: the call to the daughter to forget her own people and her father's house, so shall the king desire her beauty. So, as to blessing, instead of father's she shall have children's. Association with Christ breaks off previous associations which nature has had, and forms wholly new ones. This is, of course and evidently, a principle which is of an absolute and decisive character. But this is put in the strongest way here; “so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.” For the Christian, then, that he may walk so that the Lord may have delight in him, there is an entire breaking with all that nature is linked up with. The doctrines on which this is founded are not laid down here: that would not suit the Psalms. It is the state of the soul. It was to forget all that had a claim on it according to nature. It is the coming in of Christ which calls for this. He has Himself done it—broken with the world by death, and entered on a new world in resurrection. His claim is absolute, and in contrast with all others. According to nature, there was no link, no association with the blessings He brings into.

It was another order of relationships. These claimed the heart naturally in their place; but Christ takes to Himself, founds new ones, of which He is the center, and has a divine claim. The old ones are left, and the new ones entered on by redemption out of them. He must have the whole heart, as a divine claimant, who, by giving Himself for and to us, brings us into a new scene of relationship with Himself. No counter claim can be allowed. It is not owning His. It is giving up our nature and place, and going back into the old things. Being His is all our being. As Scripture expresses it, “Christ is all.” This is denied if concurrent claims are allowed. This is true as to religious claims. The Jew, when Christ reigns, must give up his glorying in his fathers to glory in Christ. So we; whatever legal or fleshly religion may have been indulged in, is all given up. All that was gain is loss. The past is gone—we are taken out of it. Christ, and the future He gives, are all. Christ may place in present duties connected with human relationships, and He does; but he who looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. All was failure before: Christ is joy and gladness, and that stably and in power. See the full doctrinal and experimental statement of this as to the Christian in 2 Cor. 5: “Yea, if I have known. Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know I him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

Psa. 46 gives us one most simple truth, but a most solemn and weighty one—one much needed by Christians in the heavings of this world, and in the tendency to seek relief by human effort. “Be still, and know that I am God.” That is the exhortation. The encouragement is this: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” But if GOD takes this character, the waters may rage and be troubled, and the mountains shake with their swelling; we can be still. For no matter what power or swelling there is, if God be there, our refuge. Only we must wait, and wait till He comes in: and here it is faith is tried. Hence, “and know that I am God.” This may be by the exercise of patience, or the resisting the tendency to human effort. But the truth contained in the psalm is a most blessed and precious encouragement, which no one trouble can touch; for trouble is at the utmost from the creature, and God is God. But it implies that nothing else is a refuge, and this is perfect reliance, and implies that all else may be against us.

The great point is, that it is God as such who is our refuge and strength. He does not say, “The Lord” (Jehovah). Further on in the psalm, where relationship is in question, he does. Here the point is, that it is God in His nature contrasted with man—indeed with every power; for if God be for us who can be against us? Faith gets hold of this. He is a refuge, where we may resort for safety; and He is strength, so that no adverse power can reach or succeed against us. It supposes that trouble, yea, insolent swellings of power, are there; but He is a present help. This secures fully; but the help is not always a present, apparent one. But God Himself is looked to; and the fact that we are left wholly to Him, and that no other resource is there, makes all the power of evil immaterial to us; for it is nothing against God. “What is this confidence?” said the King of Assyria to Hezekiah. Other help we might calculate and compare the value of. This only requires faith. “Ye believe in God.” Against this help all effort is unavailing; only we must wait for it. Human effort shuts this help out. It is another kind of resource which is not faith. God may command activity, and faith acts confidently. But this is never man's way; and when the matter is in God's hands, when there is not a duty, then our part is to be still, and we shall soon know that He is God. Human effort only spoils all. No human planning is ever right. God will come in, in His own time and way. There are duties. When there are, do them: but. when the power of evil against us is there, and there is not a duty, the path is to be still. Human efforts prove want of faith and restlessness, and planning is mere flesh. Elsewhere we have seen that integrity is needed to trust God, because it is God's holy nature which is trusted. This absolute trust is called for when the power of evil is rampant, and endurance till deliverance is the path of the saint. There is another thought here. God (the Most High over all the earth) has a dwelling-place, where the rivers of His grace refresh) then the city of God, Zion and the temple; now the Church. There the streams of refreshment run, and He will preserve her (not now as Zion, the city of God's solemnities, but in a better way), and there He enters into the proper character of His own relationship. And there He gives peace, having destroyed all the power of the enemy. Then will he who has waited know who is God—we in yet brighter and holier scenes.

Psa. 47 I have but few words to say on this psalm. It is the triumph of God's people when deliverance is come in, prophetically announced. That which will be useful to remark is, how entirely the government of the world is connected with Israel. God Most High is a great King over all the earth. Then the peoples and nations are subdued under Israel, and God chooses the inheritance for the remnant of His people—His beloved Jacob. But this issues in the praises of God Himself, awakens praise in His people, and whatever the blessings and glory of God's

people, their great delight is in the glory of God Himself. First, the power of God is celebrated, and the peoples, there in relationship with Israel, are called upon to triumph in it, for it is their deliverance and blessing, and that at least, Israel knows, and is the proclaimer of it to them. There Israel gets its place. But this makes God pre-eminent in Israel's thought. Thus it ever is when the soul truly knows blessing. It turns to the blesser. But this draws out, not merely thanksgiving, but the celebration of all that God is as known in blessing to those He blesses. But His own proper glory is their joy. I say, “known in blessing;” but not simply because of blessing, but in His own glory as so known. Thus ver. 5-8 celebrate what God is, as thus displayed and known. So in Rom. 5:11, it is not only the statement of salvation, but “we joy in God, by whom we have received the reconciliation.” Further, praises with understanding are called for. The relationships of God are stated in verse 8. This, too, is a point neglected by the saints—the living and praising in and according to the relationships in which God stands with us. We have to say, “The Father” and “Christ the Lord.” Here, in the kingdom, it is He sits upon the throne of His holiness, and He reigns over the heathen—only, now, that which is power on the earth. The princes of the peoples are gathered in recognition of, and association with, one peculiar people—the people of original promise—the people of the God of Abraham. The shields of the earth belong to God: He is greatly exalted; for this must be the last and possessing thought of the saint. I will only add, that this takes up the reign of God in its great general principle and connected with divine exaltation, though in connection with Israel who celebrates it. The following psalm connects it more with local details, and the judgments by which His throne is established in Zion. Psa. 49 is a full commentary upon all this, showing man's place in it.

Chapter 107

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 49-54

(Psa. 49-54)

Psa. 49 gives a commentary, showing the emptiness of the world, connected with the judgment of God at the end, but which is applicable in all times, though publicly proved then. Death proves the folly of all human wisdom and foresight, of all human grandeur—a common observation, little acted on, but always true. As it is said of wisdom, death and destruction have heard the fame thereof with their ears. They cannot give positive wisdom, but they can negatively show that only what does not belong to mortal man has any value. Man establishes his family, perpetuates his name, but he is gone: nothing stays the hand of death. Ransom from that is out of man's power. There is a morning coming when the righteous will have the upper hand of those who seem wise as regards this world. Death feeds on these, or, as neglecters of God, they are subjected to the righteous, when His judgment comes. But the power of God, in whom the righteous trust, is above the power of death. He saves the remnant from death. So those who are alive when Christ comes for the Church, will not die at all; those who are will be raised. Such is the confidence of the believer: death does not alarm him, because he trusts in One who is above it, who redeems, frees from its power altogether, or raises. But the Christian goes yet farther, though this be true of him. He can say, “That I should not trust in myself, but in God that raises the dead.” But he says more: “I had the sentence of death in myself.” He does not at all take, as the remnant, his portion this side death; so that deliverance from it to live here is the object of his soul. Christ having died, his connection with this world has ceased, save as a pilgrim through it. He has the sentence of death in himself. He knows no man after the flesh, no, not even Christ. His associations with the world are closed, save as Christ's servant in it. He reckons himself dead. He is crucified with Christ, yet lives; but it is Christ lives in him, and he lives the life he lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him, so that he is delivered from this present world. This, while it puts the believer on the ground of this psalm, as far as it goes as to its great principle, yet sets him in a totally different position. There is not a question about escaping death (though outwardly he may, for we shall not all die), for death is a gain, and he reckons himself dead and his life hid with Christ in God and Christ to be his life. Yet this only shows still more what the psalm insists on, the folly of laying up and making oneself great, and counting on a future in a world where death reigns, and in the things to which its power applies. Man being in honor abides not. How difficult, even if happy and heavenly minded in Christ as to one's own joys, not to look upon the things that are seen, to think that the wisdom, and talents, and success, and approval of men is simply nothing, the food of death; and that all the moral question lies behind, save so far as these may have deceived men! The saint has to watch still, not to be afraid when success accompanies those who do not accept the cross. We await God's judgment of things in power—we exercise it in conscience. There is no divine understanding in the man whose heart is in the glory of the world. Men will praise him. How well he has got on, settled his children, raised himself in his position! The fairest names will be given to it. He has no understanding. His heart is in what feeds death, and that death works it. All the motives of the world are weighed by death.

After all, in them man is only as the beasts that perish, with more care.

Psa. 50—But if death tells this tale, divine judgment is executed; and this brings in other considerations too, the contrast of ceremonial religion which God may have ordered in His goodness to man, and that practical righteousness which God must have in order to own man. But this will be found in special relationship to God, and that in His own way. Saints are gathered by sacrifice. Redeeming grace and the sense of its need must come in to be owned as such by God; but these are gathered to God. Judgment proceeds on the ground on which man stands; for abuse of privileges if he has them, but on the moral ground on which his conscience stands. So here as to Israel, God does not complain of want of sacrifices. No ceremonial religion will be in question, but wickedness. Because God had kept silence in long patience, the world may fancy he is to be dealt with as man is, with outward forms, sacrifices, ceremonies, and no conscience, and that God sees no further, but God sets before man what he has done. He who so knows God as to praise Him, who owns what He is, blesses Him for what He is, and orders his conversation aright, he will have the governmental blessing of God. Him who makes offerings as though he would quiet God so, and goes on without taking heed to Him in his conscience, He will reprove, and set in order before him all he has done. If here, for salvation; if in judgment, there is none to deliver.

But where there is a work of God, it goes much deeper, and this we see in Psa. 51. God, had announced judgment. Here mercy is looked for by the divinely moved soul, that He who alone can do it should make us clean, as is suiting to Himself; for the soul thus taught, feels it has to do with God, and looks for cleansing suited for that. Compare John 13—a “part with Me” —(He came from God and was going to God, and the Father had given all into His hand). The sin, too, is confessed. Having to say to God Himself is what marks this psalm, and the feeling of him thus concerned; and, as I have said, it goes much deeper than what is spoken of in judgment. From verse 5 the inward principles are looked at, for it is a question of having to say to God, not merely of judgment of acts.

There is the sense of sin in the nature and in the origin of our being; and that God must have truth in the inward parts; but confidence in God that He will give divine wisdom to be known in the heart, that which the vulture's eye hath not seen. This is precious to understand. The soul looks to humiliation with pleasure as against, and the breaking down of, an unholy will; for as it hates it, so it desires it to be broken. The bitterness of humiliation is in this respect sweet. There is the blessed consciousness, that, when the Lord washes us, we are clean every whit, whiter than snow. A blessed thought to be clean before His eyes: how little believed, because men do not believe in His washing! Thus far it has been more the intrinsic preciousness of being clean, clean for God—what is necessary for God and what the heart delights in. Now, gladness is looked for, but from God; as all is seen, the humiliation and chastisement, as the rest, from God's hand—joy, gladness, God's face can be rightly looked for now, not before. That would have been selfish comfort, though natural enough; but God does not give it till the heart is right. The heart must be real, truly purified in accord with God to enjoy here favor and joy. Nor, while looking to God to hide His face from its sins and blot out its iniquities, is this separate from the desire after cleanliness of heart; only now it is looked at, God's goodness being in view; not as the requirement of His holiness, to which the heart assents, but the work of His grace, something from Him. “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” Give it me, and renew (not a right, but) a fixed, settled spirit within me—one that calmly, settledly thinks on God, the heart's only object, and peacefully counts and waits on

Him. The soul thus taught cannot do without the presence of God. Its dread is to be cast out of it. It is not yet intelligent in grace and the sureness of God's favor, but cannot do without His presence. To be removed from it would be everlasting misery, as indeed it would, and felt the more, the more the eye is opened upon Him. It craves, therefore, this above all, not to be cast out from His presence; known in truth, desire, and the necessity of the soul; if not, no joy.

The action of the Holy Spirit is known as the power of joy; His indwelling is not. The soul pleads not to be deprived of the former. Here a difference must be noted with the case of a Christian, whether we consider his first conversion or his restoration to communion. Hitherto we have been able to weigh the great essential principles of the communion of the soul with God. In these verses the occasion comes in. An intelligent Christian could not say literally, Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; he views the effect of his sin quite in another way. He has grieved the Spirit, he has sinned against love. He does not believe that God will ever take His Holy Spirit from him. If the extreme of chastisement is on him, and the shield of faith is down, he doubts or disbelieves he has or perhaps ever had it, but does not ask that it should not be taken away. He despairs, all but; thinks himself a reprobate; and if he thinks he had it outwardly, as Heb. 6, thinks it impossible he can be renewed to repentance because he has lost it. But, save in this extreme case or the use of Heb. 6 (common before real peace is obtained) to our own condemnation, there is no such thought in a Christian. A man may doubt whether he has the Holy Ghost, but an intelligent Christian does not think of God taking it away. It is quasi despair, or grieving because he has grieved the Spirit which is in him. Its present action in Israel, inasmuch as God owned the nation, or the returning remnant hoped so, that remnant may plead for. Compare Hag. 2:5. And David in the same way, having sinned, could so speak; but a Christian could not. The cry might come from an inexperienced Christian who had not found peace, nor knew that God does not take His Spirit from the Christian, but not from one who knew the truth. A Christian knowing the truth, but having failed in walk, and assaulted by the enemy, might deprecate the practical loss of that action of the Spirit which alone keeps us in communion, and the shield of faith up, and this would be all right. So could one who had thus lost it, say, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, though in the extreme of such a case; neither is that the state of soul, but only where it is getting back. In the extreme case it is the thought of being lost, though, after all, hope is never absolutely given up. But on the returning of such a soul verses 11 and 12 are practically used, though never “take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” But there is a constant action of the Holy Ghost which keeps faith alive—may be, a source of great joy when we walk with God, but, when we have not joy, keeps the enemy from bringing doubt on our souls before God; keeps, as I said, faith alive. He is not between our souls and God, the power of darkness. This is, practically, what is desired here, and the sensible joy of God's salvation to be restored, but without the knowledge of the indwelling Spirit founded on redemption. What verse 12 looks for we may have to look for, the joy of salvation to be restored, and the having the heart established with God's free Spirit, that liberty before God and in His service which is enjoyed through the ungrieved Spirit by the soul that knows redemption and the blessed light of God's countenance. In David there was the uncertainty of repeated forgiveness, abiding acceptance being unknown, and of great sin. In Israel, in the latter days, the knowledge of long enjoyed relationships, all now in question, though God be trusted for them. But this is not the Christian state: if' he knows that the Holy Ghost dwells in him, he knows it abides there. The soul in which God's Spirit works may, as to this, be in the following states. First, exercised, but ignorant, having a general idea of mercy, it may apply all these consequences of sin to itself vaguely but with terror.

When forgiveness is known (and specially when it is known with little depth of conviction of sin), but the righteousness of God not, the soul, losing the sense of forgiveness through failure or carelessness, sees judgment before it, without having righteousness, and all previous joy becomes bitterness, and the sense of loss (Heb. 6), is applied, and all the passages which speak of continuing as a condition or of falling away. But the soul is not really set free here. It has known forgiveness, not righteousness. It has known the blood on the door post, not the Red Sea. It is in the path of learning divine righteousness and abiding peace before God in Christ risen. There is yet the case, where, with the truth known, sin has been trifled with, and there the enemy gets power—a case I have already spoken of, where there is no power to apply the word or promises, and every bitter sentence is applied to oneself. Yet, God's justice seen to be right, Satan, so to speak, is the interpreter of the word, not God. Yet this God uses as chastisement, to set the soul right; and the soul, through grace, clings to God in spite of all.

I have said rather more on these verses than might seem natural, because they are so often misused to put Christians on the ground of Old Testament knowledge, and deprive the Christian of the truth of the constantly indwelling Spirit. All this is a misapplication of it. I close with some remarks on the last verses of the psalm.

The soul is not yet restored in the psalm, nor free before God; it is looking for it. When it is, it can teach others freely. But while a clean heart is looked for, there is another character of sin which presses on the soul rejecting Christ, blood guiltiness. We cannot, of course, kill Him, but the sin is the same. Thus there is not only uncleanness in sin, but the affections are wrong—there is hatred against God shown in enmity to saints, but above all to Christ. We can understand how Israel will have to look for this: they have called for His blood on them and on their children.

But practically our hearts have rejected Him, and would none of Him. Yet the soul, brought near in grace, can look for cleansing from this also: more than this, in forgiveness of this, sees that God is indeed the God of its salvation, not of judgment; but in the extremest of sin is a Savior—saves in love. Then it sings aloud of God's righteousness. In its actual relationship with God there was only sin. The cross was God meeting sin, and sin meeting God in man. Man, i.e., the sinner, had only sin. There he showed what he was in respect of God present in love—hatred and violent will. This was all he was; but there God became, not a restorer, but a Savior—a complete Savior, and showed His righteousness in respect of the work of Christ by setting man, him as man, at His right hand. God's righteousness only now is known; and as it has triumphed in salvation, the soul sings aloud of it. This is true freedom—the Holy Ghost, thus given, the power of it. The necessary consequence is, sacrifices have no place. Where would they be? How would they own God? A broken spirit is what suits the cross, suits Christ's broken body and forgiven sins. Nor does God despise this. It answers to His mind in the cross, to His grace towards the sinner. Then comes peace, blessing, and service. Here, according to Jewish millennial order, of course, but true in spirit in the Christian.

Psa. 52 requires few words. It looks to judgment in Israel, but there are some principles which directly concern the believer at any time. Where he looks in the prevalence of evil power—not to circumstances. Evil boasts itself in power, but faith sees another thing. The goodness of God, before whom men are as grasshoppers, endures, however evil prevails yet continually. There is no moment where it is not fully in Him, no day when anything escapes Him or anything is out of His

reach. It is not only the power of God, but His goodness. This is a great general truth; but we say, Our Father. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father. Yet on the other hand there is something specially precious in the thought here. It is not the goodness of the Lord in His relationship with Israel, but what is in the nature of God. The goodness of God, what a resource against evil! It cannot cease or be interrupted, if it be thus. The end of pride is ruin, but he who trusts in the Lord and His faithful love shall be green when all else withers, and planted in the courts of God's house.

Psa. 53, as we know, convicts those who have the best advantage of entire sinfulness. But the secret of this course is old too, and on that a few words. All the path of the wicked comes from this. For him God is not. Faith does not exist, and God is not seen. This is the secret of all error in practice and in human reasoning. The more we examine the whole course of human action, the faults of us Christians, the various wanderings of philosophy, the more we shall find that an Elohim is at the root of all. Here it is the case that the conscience takes no notice of God. The heart has no desire after Him, and the will works as if there were none. He says so in his heart. Why should he say it? Because his conscience tells him there is one. His will would not have one; and as He is not seen in His workings, will sees only what it will. God is set aside, and the whole conduct is under the will's influence, as if no God existed. He takes pains to prove there is not, if he thinks, because he cannot get on if there is; but he lifts himself up, and deceiving himself, comes in practical condition to will there should be none—and not to think, but to act as if he thought, and that in purpose as well as act, as if there were none. In a certain sense, he even thinks so; for, being entirely occupied with present things, and blind through his alienation from God, his moral feeling dead, judging from present things, he can draw conclusions, not believe that there is none, and living in his own thoughts thus formed, live in the thought there is none—says so in his heart. If conscience awakes, he knows well there is; but he lives in his will and the thoughts of his will, and for him there is no God. But it is wonderful how habitually human reasoning goes on as if this were so. Man cannot look at all that is around him without feeling the mass of evil there is. If he does not accept the fall and salvation, what can he think when there are no immediate present interventions, as in Israel? Men leave God out, and account for all as if there were none. Men will not put all on the ground of truth. If not, they cannot bring God in it at all, and account for all without doing so. And this is called philosophy, and it leads on necessarily to the power of evil, for evil there is, and consequently the power of evil; and if God be not brought in, the power of evil must have the upper hand, for who is to hinder it having so? God does till His time is come, the time when no more good is to be done by waiting. Evil then comes to a head, which is embodied in this psalm; and the result is, the judgment spoken of at the end. But the principles of the world are such at all times. Whenever I act as if God was not (that is, without reference to His will), I so far say in my heart, “There is no God.” If the fear spoken of in verse 5 be of the congregation of the just, as I suppose, there we see how needless the fear of the godly is in the day of the power of evil. The more it increases, the more the question becomes God's. At its height it is wholly so; consequently, the less reason there is to fear. It is when at their height God despises them. The psalmist, as a Jew, longs for this time—the time of the restoration of Israel. In a certain sense we desire it, for we desire the disappearing of evil and the rest of the earth; but it is not the highest good.

Psa. 54 gives one, but a most weighty, practical, principle—God alone and His name; that is, the revelation of Himself is the resource of the soul. Strangers have not set God before them, the believer has, and all hangs from His name. Dependence is expressed, and God is sought according to His name. This, the name of God, holds the first place in this psalm. We must remark that God is not known here in subsisting covenant relationship. It is not Jehovah until the end of the psalm, but God, as such, in contract with men and all else; and in Himself known in what He is—the source of mercy and good, on which we depend. But God has revealed Himself—made Himself known to men; His name, that which expresses what He is, is known, and the heart trusts in this. And how sweet it is to do it! In itself it is joy and rest; and what can man do when God is for us? I may not know what God will do, but he is trusted. God says he is mine helper. When delivered, or in the thought of deliverance, all that God is in relationship with His people comes into the soul for praise; but what God is as God is the resource of the soul.

Chapter 108

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 55-58

Psa. 55 is the expression of intense distress of spirit. Outward enemies were there. This was the difficulty in which he stood; but it was but the occasion of what pressed upon his spirit. This was the hatred of those who stood in the closest relationship to him. This brought him into the presence of death, and divine judgment, because as special instruments of Satan they would bring the effect of guilt upon his soul between him and God. How completely the Lord Himself (though the psalm be not properly prophetic of Him) went through this, I need not say. They sought to bring the guilt upon Him and triumphed in His being forsaken of God, did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. Directly it is the remnant in the last day, but, as we have seen, in all their affliction He was afflicted. But this bringing iniquity on the soul by wicked men as instruments of Satan (which the Lord went through deeper than anyone could, because He took our iniquity) is a very solemn thing. It is not the wrath directly that Christ bore, and we never shall; but the bringing it on the soul by the power of Satan by wicked men. The Lord may see it needed, but it is only a special case with Christians. There is confidence in God, an expectation that His ear is open to the cry of the heart that trusts Him. But till the Lord is looked to, the power of wickedness, and the wickedness itself distress and bow dawn the soul. The existence and power of evil, of what is opposed to God, weighs on it. This is united with the deepest wounding of confidence in man, for it was not an open enemy, but a friend, who had done it. What in man was to be trusted when the nearest betrayed It gives isolation of heart. Nothing can be trusted. Now the Lord went through this power of evil. We only feel it when flesh is not broken down and has to be broken down. It is there but its power is broken by Him for faith. But inasmuch as we are sinners, this kind of power of Satan brings the character of judgment with it. We may get above this by grace and confide, for this it was that Christ prayed for Peter; and he was kept, when failing under the power of Satan, from going on to doubt the Lord's love, and despair. The most terrible thing here is wickedness coming as the power of evil. But the spirit itself shrinks from the heartlessness of it and would flee; for a gracious spirit would rest in peace when evil is all around. The heart meanwhile is conscious that it has no association with it, and would only flee away and be alone in quiet, for the condition is that it has none to trust in. But this casts the mind on the Lord, for after all it has not the wings of a dove in this world. The effect of this is to bring up the wickedness before the Lord, that is, in its full light. This necessarily brings (in the aspect in which all is looked at in the Psalms, of patience under evil, and righteousness which must view evil as evil; for though Christ's sufferings under it even to wrath are brought in, and so grace, in judgment, passed, yet, in general, as to the government of God)—this necessarily brings in the thought of judgment; for the judgment of evil and the deliverance of the oppressed are in the nature of God as governing and seeing all things. The heart groaning under oppression and suffering before, while thinking of evil sought to be charged on it, and so with horror and oppression of spirit, can now, as looking to the Lord, judge all the evil more calmly as to itself in its own character, and the judgment which must follow. And full confidence in Jehovah, a known covenant God springs pp. And then, free in spirit, one can, from verse 19, look calmly at it all and see the end. The full and blessed conclusion in the deepest sense of the most pressing evil is, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee; he

shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Here end all the exercises giving the ground of our constant faith. And although the psalm looks for judgment, if we take the principle of this declaration, it is the blessed sustainment of faith in all trial. There are two points in this. “Cast thy burden on the Lord.” Whatever the trial or difficulty may be, cast it upon the Lord. It is not that the trial goes always—here it would not till judgment came; but “He shall sustain thee.” It is better than the trials going. It is the direct coming in of God to ourselves, to our own souls, the sense of His interest in us, His favor, His nearness, that He comes to help us in our need. It is a divine condition of the soul, which is better than any absence of evil. God is a sure help to sustain us. The second point is the infallible faithfulness of God. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Tired they may be, but He cannot suffer evil in the world to prevail, nor will He. We may learn to trust by the evil, but in trusting we know the Lord will keep, and the extreme character of the evil only shows the rather that God must come in—makes His intervention necessary.

Psa. 56 - The soul has got out of the depth of inward distress in which it was in psalm 55. For, though the faithful one's enemies lie in wait for him, it is not the unfaithfulness and treachery of friends. They are enemies who seek to wrong him. He is afraid, more than distressed, and looks through the difficulties to God. Faith is readily in activity. In the previous psalm his spirit was inwardly deeply depressed. Here he is only tried. Hence he soon can trust in God, and His word is the testimony of certain deliverance to him. In psalm 55 it is only at the 19th verse and at the end he can bring God in. Here God is at once before his soul. In truth outward trials are little compared with inward breaches on the spirit. The spirit [even] of a man will bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear? The saint's trust, then, is in God. But this trust in God is not without some revelation of God. Hence, when the soul can look at Him and trust, that by which He has revealed His mind, the testimony which in His love He has given to us, becomes at once the guide and confidence of the soul. It is a blessed thing to have it. God cannot but make it good. These two points are the hinges of thought in this psalm—God Himself and His word. “In God will I praise his word.” His word gives us the sure witness of what He will be, what He is for us. But if it be God, what can flesh do? This is the conclusion that the soul comes to. It has enemies, perhaps mighty and strong ones, nor is it insensible to them. They hide themselves and plot against the faithful one; and he has no resource in flesh. All this is good for him. It makes him know the world he is in and weans him from flesh. But what can he do? He can do nothing. This casts him then on God, and this is as positively blessed as it is useful. In truth, if God be for us, what can flesh do? The worldly man may have fleshly resources against flesh. The saint cannot have recourse to these. It would take him away from God, just when God is leading him wholly to Him. He cannot say “confederacy” to all to whom the people weak in faith say confederacy. But he is not to fear their fear neither, not be afraid, but sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and He shall he for a sanctuary. It is out of the occasion of fear that the faithful one looks out to God here. Then what can flesh do? God disposes of everything and has His plans, which he will certainly bring to pass. But there is another blessing accompanies this and a deep one. The soul is in trial, the wicked plotting against it. But God is with it in the sorrow and takes account of it all. He tells the wanderings of the saint, for he inhere looked at as deprived of outward privileges, with God's people and in His house; but God counts all this up, and the saint can look, as it is beautifully expressed, to His putting every tear into His bottle. Every sorrow of the saint is in His book. It is a blessed thought. So the heart confides in Him and knows that when it cries to Him all its enemies will be turned back; then, as it praised His word in faith in the midst of its fears and sorrows, looking to it, sustained by it, counting

on it. Oh that saints knew how to do it! So now the soul will do it in counting on deliverance by His sure intervention. Another principle is found in this psalm (in a Jewish form of course) connected with these exercises of heart, and which are ever found in them, and indeed one great object of them as coming from God, the sense of belonging to, and being given up to, consecrated to God. “Thy vows are upon me.” It will be in the sense of praise and rendered in praise when delivered, but the heart learns in these trials what we are apt to forget, that we do not belong to ourselves. It is, in its lowest stage, connected with the want of deliverance; in the highest, with the joy that God owns us for His own. The foundation being the redemption which has made us wholly His in fact, as indeed Israel was externally as redeemed from Egypt. Hence praises are in the heart of the oppressed one already. He receives what he prays for, believing. But the soul uses mercies and deliverances to count for more. It has been delivered from death; hence it looks to be kept from falling. It was under the power and oppression of the enemy, him that has the power of death, the devil—it is set fret; but now it has to walk without stumbling and falling in the way, but it has learned its dependence in the trial and it looks to God for this. Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling? But the soul has learned more in its distress, the comfort of walking before God in the light of His favor and the safety of His presence. It looks to this as the object of its being kept. It does look for its own peace and comfort, but it looks for it before God. The light of the living was the light of divine preserving favor for Israel. It is not the highest order of joy here, but it is the soul's looking out of distress and oppression to that faithful goodness of God which shall make it walk before Him in safety and in peace.

In Psa. 57 there are the same trials, but more confidence. But his eye seeing more brightly God's power and help, it sees more of the evil and wickedness of its enemies and less of its own oppression, and this is constantly true. We have to watch this, for our heart is treacherous. If it gets out of its own oppression and fear, it is apt to dwell too much on the wickedness of its enemies. Looking more at God, it must see this more. That is not the evil, but dwelling on it. It is dangerous to merge evil and go on comfortably, but it is injurious also to dwell on evil. It does not nourish the soul—how should it?—and a spirit contrary to the gospel grows up. We shall see it, if we are near God, but we shall soon be occupied with God and not with the evil. He is above it all.

Thus there is progress in these three psalms. Between psalms 56 and 57 the first verse shows the difference: the former “for man would swallow me up;” the second, “for my soul trusteth in thee.” There he was trusting God's word, here he is looking for the accomplishment of it by the hand of God, and trusts under the shadow of His wings till the tyranny be overpast. Hence he is able to look out to God's exalting Himself above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. It is not that the power of evil is not there as much as it was. It is, and the soul is bowed down through it, but the mind rests more on God. Remark, too, that there is no thought of resisting the evil and getting rid of it by one's own strength. It waits on God, and this it must do to have its own path perfect. And this Christ did. The former psalm felt more God's entering into the sorrow. This looks more to its own escape out of it, but by God's sending from heaven and accomplishing deliverance. He sees, too, the evil taken in their own plannings. There is no thought of counter planning. But casting himself wholly on God, he sees their own plans to be their ruin, and this is a striking way of judgment and confirmation of faith. He gets through faith, so to speak, praise ready; and in the Ammim and Leummim—peoples and tribes: it is not, specially among the heathen as adverse and opposed. His trials are within the people, the men he was associated with; and it is

not triumph over adversaries, but deliverance where he could only bow down his heart. But the result was praise among men in a wider sphere than that he had been tried in; and so it ever is, for He who delivers is great. In fact he looks out to millennial glory, when all will be gathered together in one in Christ. But I use it now as seen here in God's ways.

On Psa. 58, very few words will suffice. The force of the psalm is this: the wicked as such are hopeless as to amendment, but God will judge them; so that men will see that there is a reward for the righteous and a God that judgeth the earth. Is there upright, just judgment among men) is the question. There is wickedness in their hearts: they plan and plot in it. It is in their nature and will, and characterizes itself by falsehood. It is of the serpent, in its nature devilish; and they refuse any and every attracting power and influence, whatever it may be. God comes in and Jehovah judges, let their power and strength be as lions. They melt away to nothing when His hand comes in. Vengeance—and this explains the joy in it—does come in, vindicates the just man and shows him right, however he may have seemed helpless and been oppressed, and God righteous, and that there is a judge in spite of oppression.

Chapter 109

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 59-63

(Psa. 59-63)

Psa. 59 I have not much to say on this psalm in view of our present object in commenting on them. It refers directly to the desired judgment of the heathen. I may only note that absence of all conscience and all heart is to be expected from the world when the Lord and His saints are in question; a terrible judgment, but which these psalms, as well as experience, prove to be true. The simple refuge of the saint is in God. “God is my defense.” It is not counter-plotting, nor using human means to meet the power of the enemy. We may partially, perhaps, and for a time so succeed, but in using carnal weapons we have lost the dependence which calls God in, and the perfection of walk and testimony which waiting on Him gives. We have played into the hands of the enemy by acknowledging the power of the world as competent to settle the question of good and evil, a power which after all, till Christ comes, is in his hands, though under God's sovereign rule. The heart of the saint has to say, “the God of my mercy.” He knows Him as such. His favor is what he cares for, and he trusts His faithfulness. He expects the wickedness which has no fear of God at all. They will return heartless and impious, but the godly will sing of God's power. And not that only—mercy, tender consideration of the afflicted saint, of him who has need even of mercy through his failure, has been experienced at the hands of God. He will sing aloud of God's mercy, and that when brighter times come; for in the trouble that mercy has been shown. God is his strength too, and to Him he sings. The saint thus encouraged not only sings of God but to God. The wickedness of the wicked is viewed as pure wickedness here. As between God and the saint there may be occasion for discipline; but between the saint and the wicked, the former had given no occasion to the malice of his enemy. Still, towards God, in the sense of the power of this evil, he looks for mercy. His heart loves to turn there in the sense of weakness and nothingness. God for him is the God of his mercy.

Psa. 60 is one which we can only apply in principle to our outward conflicts with the power of evil. There God can leave us as to His government for the time to defeat and scattering. And it is the deepest kind of chastening in these conflicts. For as we serve in God's cause, we see that it is defeated on earth through our fault or failure. No doubt, in us pride may be mortified too, as we are in the conflict; still, the feeling of grief and distress is a genuine feeling, a feeling which must fill the heart of the servant of God. It is a terrible thing to see those who stand in the place of God's people and witnesses, put to the worse before their enemies, the cause of God for the moment defeated. God has given a banner to them that fear Him, to be displayed because of the truth. He has set His ensign among them, and it is terrible if with this they are defeated and driven back; if when saying Jehovah-Nissi, the enemy has the upper hand. Jehovah had war with Amalek; but if Achan was in the camp, He did not go out. For if God contends, it is in and for the exercise of His people. But when thus cast down, faith does not lose its courage though drinking the wine of astonishment. It looks to God, judges the evil if it be there, looks to God, owning there must be some if it does not discover it. But God has spoken in His holiness. The very unchangeableness of His nature, which allows no evil, gives the certainty that He will make good. His word in their favor.

To this faith looks—on this it counts. And when it has to say, Who will go out with our hosts? it says, Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? Then all is right. The one who had thus disciplined His people would be their sure and faithful deliverer and strength. Through Him, though erst scattered, the saints will do valiantly. For faith looks through everything to God, because He is faithful, and His favor better than life. This confidence is fully brought out in the psalm which follows.

Psa. 61 The soul is still removed from the enjoyment of present blessing. It is at the end of the earth, but looks to God. The heart is overwhelmed within itself. There is no resource within in the pressure of circumstances. Pride may stand up against difficulties and be haughty even in destruction, but this is not the path of the saint. Besides the fortitude which maintains itself in adverse circumstances has always some result to hope for. But in the circumstances of the saint here before us, there were none. He is driven out and no ground to hope for human deliverance, and pride is far from him. He bows to God's hand; but he has a resource—God leads him to the rock that is higher than he. Faith gets to what is above circumstances, when nature is overwhelmed by them. And if God be for us who can be against us? God takes an interest in us; we know it; He has shown it. The heart can look to Him with whom all circumstances are nothing. The heart trusts God and self disappears overwhelmed, as it may be. God is the securer and portion of the believer. All else is, then, simply nothing. It is the contrast between God and circumstances, instead of between ourselves and circumstances. God has heard the cry of distressed faith, and as it trusts now so will it abide forever in the tabernacle of God. It is the secret of all peace in trial, the rock higher than ourselves. The spies saw themselves grasshoppers. Was God so? The walls were up to heaven—what matter when they tumbled flat down.

Psa. 62 Waiting on God is the subject of this psalm. It implies dependence, confidence; and both in such sort that we abide God's time: dependence, because we cannot do anything without Him, and ought not; because what He does is what the soul alone desires; because action without Him, even in self-defense, is only the action of our own will, and so our being without God so far. Saul did not wait upon God. He waited nearly seven days; but if he had felt he was dependent, and nothing could be done without God, he would have done nothing till Samuel came. He did not; he acted for himself, and lost the kingdom. Deliverance from God is sweet; it is love; it is righteous, holy deliverance—becomes the revelation of the favor and grace of God. It is perfect in time, way, place. So where the soul waits for it, will not being at work, it meets and enjoys the deliverance in this perfectness; and we are perfect and complete in the will of God. But it implies confidence, too; for why should we wait if God would not come M? The soul is thus sustained meanwhile. And this confidence is such that we tarry the Lord's leisure. Patience has its perfect work, so that we should be perfect and complete in all the will of God. There is, too, an active reckoning upon God. But this leaves the soul absolutely and exclusively waiting on Him. It is not active for itself; it waits only upon God. (“Truly” in verse 1 and “only” in verse 5 is the same word in Hebrew.) The two points connected with it show the state of soul: “from him cometh my salvation” — “my expectation is from him.” He only is the rock and salvation; so the confiding soul waits for Him, and seeks no other refuge—looks for deliverance only from Him. Hence, in principle (in fact, in Christ), the heart is perfect in its confidence, and meets in dependence the perfectness of God—accepts nothing but that, because it is assured that God is perfect and will act perfectly in the right time. Faith corresponds thus to the perfection of God. On the other hand, there is no working of self-will at all,

no acceptance or saving of self by an intervention inferior in its nature to God Himself.

This makes patient waiting on God a principle of immense moment. It characterizes faith in the Psalms, and so Christ Himself.

But there are a few points yet to remark. “Trust in him at all times.” There is constancy in this confidence, and constancy in all circumstances. If I look morally to Him, He is always competent, always the same, does not change. I cannot act without Him, if I believe that He only is perfect in His ways. But, note, this does not suppose there is not exercise and trial of heart; or, indeed, waiting upon God would not have to be called for. But if God is faithful, and awaits the time suited to the truth and His own character, so that His ways should be perfect, He is full of goodness and tender love to those who wait upon Him. He calls upon them to pour out their hearts before Him. How truly was this the case with Christ, too! How in John 12, and above all in Gethsemane, He poured out His heart before God. God is always a refuge: He acts in the right time. He is always a refuge for the heart; and the heart realizes what He is when the deliverance is not come: and in some respects this is more precious than the deliverance itself. But this supposes integrity.

But yet another point. The effect of thus waiting on God's deliverance is to make us know that it will be perfect and complete when it does come. “I shall not be moved.” He had to wait, indeed, till God came in in perfectness; but, then, His power secured from all. Man may think there is a resource in man, or in what man possesses, or in man's strength of will; but power, faith knows, belongs to God. The last verse shows that the soul is looking to the perfect, divine righteousness of God's ways, but in the sense of integrity. The final intervention of God, the judgment He executes, will be the deliverance of the righteous. He has identified himself with God's ways on earth in heart, and waited till God makes them good, perfectly good, in power. But this will be the end of evil, and mercy to those who have sought good, and waited for God to avenge them. It will be a righteous reward to the expecting, righteous man: his waiting will be met, and the power of evil set aside. In this path we have to walk. God deals so now in government, though not in its final accomplishment; but we have thus to count and wait upon Him.

Psa. 63 supposes the full knowledge of the blessings of relationship with God, but not the full enjoyment of those blessings; on the contrary, that he who thus knows them is in a place entirely the contrary of all their blessedness. But, then, the thing sought and desired is not the blessing, but God Himself, and the revelation of His glory where He dwells. The whole being thirsts after Himself. The effect of being in the world, in the dry and thirsty land, is not complaint, nor even looking for deliverance; but thirst is thirsting after God. This sense of nature which craves after Him gives us the consciousness also that He is our God. It is the perfect delight the divine nature in us has in Him which gives the sense of this relationship. They cannot be separated. To have any knowledge of God, and not know Him as ours, is despair, or near to it as may be. And God even so is not known as the spring of delight, so that we desire Him. “My God,” and this thirst cannot be separated. It is not Jehovah and blessings, but the divine nature and God its delight; but with the dependent sense of appropriation expressed in “My God.” The soul which has the same desires in their nature as God Himself, hence (desires after Himself), feels morally and really that He is its God. This was perfectly so in Christ only; and we never lose the sense of relationship and retain this. Still, it is true in the nature of the delight, when that delight does not take the form of relationship, but of nature; when I do not say, Father, but “my God.”

But, then, this very thirst and desire after God longs to see Him possessing His full power and glory, and must. We cannot love much one we look up to, without desiring Him to enjoy all the fullness of the glory that belongs to Him, and to see Him in it. We owe our delight in Him, and feeling of indebtedness to Him; we must desire He should have all that is due to Him, and that we should see Him have it. And this feeling even Christ meets: “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” But the main desire, the spring of all this is, the desire after God Himself, and known as our God, come what will. Not only the heart can appropriate it, as has been said, but would have it so, and none else. The nature which is of God would have none but Him, and would earnestly have Him. Where God is truly known thus, and the soul identified with Him in desire, the fact that it is where there is not one drop of what can refresh it, as is the case in this world, only renders this longing after Him more intense. But it is because He is known, known as He reveals Himself in the intimacy of His own nature, in the sanctuary where He displays Himself and makes Himself known. But with this there is another thought—that is, when God is thus known. as He is in the sanctuary, His loving kindness, His grace, and favor, and goodness, are felt by the soul. The sense of them rests upon it. That is better than life. Life is life here, the present enjoyment of it in this world; and as to that, he had absolutely nothing of it—as Paul: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” There, indeed, it was more outward pressure—here the inward, necessary sense, from the life in which he speaks and feels here, that there was not the smallest thing in what was in the world which could meet and refresh that nature. So perfectly with Christ. Still, though connected with trial, this was remarkably unfolded in Paul. He rejoiced in the Lord alway, when nothing refreshed his spirit.

Hence, in the sense of this loving kindness, in a dry and thirsty land his lips praised his God. This is very sweet: and, note, it is perfect in its nature, because it is simply God; for in the land the saint is in, there is absolutely nothing. God, his God, is his desire; His loving kindness is the refreshing of his soul. Now this is perfect, divine life in one having the divine nature, but in the place of dependence, known only to the soul born of God, or in its perfection. So Christ. This gives, then, exclusively its color to life. “Thus will I bless thee while I live” (down here in the dry and thirsty land). This is all his soul lives in here. Hence, in this life he blesses God, his God. His whole life in the dry land is, in spirit, out of it. Nothing attracts his soul in it at all. It finds its refreshings, because the land is altogether such to the new nature, wholly in God. Yet he is not in the present, full enjoyment of God as present; he is still in the dry and thirsty land, but blesses while he lives, and owns and worships the God he thus knows. But there is perfect happiness and satisfaction of heart when separated from the turmoil of the world, and when nothing is there to engage the flesh's attention, which is perfect misery to the flesh, but real deliverance to the renewed spirit, the soul can mediate upon God Himself. The soul finds in God Himself the fullest and richest food. The soul is satisfied, does not want anything else, when it can be thus alone with God, in which is its delight—it is filled with it.

So in coming to Christ (only there negatively, which is what human nature in this world wanted—here positively, because it is the new nature's delight in God), “he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” There shall not be the unsatisfied cravings of men's hearts in this world. But here there is the full satisfaction. The delights of the heart are created and satisfied with the revelation of God Himself. God is essentially

delighted in and enjoyed. And as the soul is full, so it overflows in praise; the mouth praises with joyful lips. There is not the need here of weighing how far we are enabled, or entitled, to praise in the state we are in. It is the new nature finding its own proper delight in God, and thinking (as the new nature does not) of nothing else; and because thinking of Him simply, has not itself to think of, and praises because He is a source of praise. And this is true simplicity. When the eye is not single, the thought of God detects it, and comes as a claim, and forces us to think of ourselves; but when, as is here supposed, it is simply the new nature, its whole delight is simply in God, and the lips praise joyfully. This simplicity of heart is very blessed. Remark here, that while it speaks of this, the psalm supposes one exposed to the distractions of the world, and hence looks to the condition of the soul in loneliness, where, instead of feeling that, it is only delivered from distraction to delight in God.

Next, the psalm takes up not merely distractions, but adverse circumstances—the force of enemies. The soul sees God, its God, as its help, that is, as having been so. God was his joy; and his soul, in this wholly desert world, where no water is, was satisfied as with marrow and fatness. That was taking it in spirit out of the world, making it joy in God. But the Blessed One was what he needed for this world too, its conflicts and trials. And this is very gracious of God. We rejoice in the Lord always as looking to the source of our joy. But if without are fightings, and even within fears, He comforts them that are cast down. “Because thou hast been my help.” But here is described as already experienced what Paul speaks of himself as experiencing. Hence it is the aspect of the soul towards God because of tins. The soul would rejoice under the shadow of God's wings. It was the known place of refuge and confidence. There is the comfort of feeling at all times, the favor of God, and the security in which we thus dwell. I know not what may arise, but He will be there; nor this only, but the sense of His goodness and active interest in the soul is a source of sweet joy to it. The soul rejoices in having this divine favor its refuge, and actively interested in securing it. Thus the soul's condition is this: in its activities it follows hard after God. It would follow Him, come to Him, enjoy His presence; and it had the sure certainty that His right hand upholds it. The latter verses are the judgment on the enemies of the godly men, according to the government of God, and particularly the enemies of Christ. But our present object is the former part. Still, as we have often seen, God does govern, and we may reckon so far upon His interference as is needed for securing the blessing of His people who depend upon Him, though it may not be at the moment our nature could desire. On the whole, the psalm shows us simple faith, the soul making God Himself its joy, and rejoicing in the sure care of the Lord, whose favor protected it as a shield. If we compare this psalm with psalm 84, which in many respects resembles it, it will be seen that there the present enjoyment of covenant blessings is in view, and the way up to them; here, more what God Himself is, as away from them in the dry, thirsty land, and His protection and care in the difficulties and dangers we are in there. If we think of the remnant driven out, which is the character of this book prophetically, it makes this view easily intelligible.

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 64-77

(Psa. 64-77.)

Psa. 64 shows a peculiar course of things in the world, yet one with which every one exercised in the service of God in this world is familiar—that of the wicked, who hate righteousness, seeking to charge evil on the upright. This shows the universality and power of conscience, and another truth too—that the principles of those who trust God and confess His name are expected to produce what is purely good. This is really the strongest witness to the principles of faith on the one hand, and to the utter wickedness of the human heart on the other. The wicked recognize that faith ought to produce, and, as its own proper fruit, does produce, what is right and perfect, and expects it from him who walks by faith. But they show their hatred of that principle, and of those who cleave to the Lord by it, by searching out iniquity and inconsistency. This is a terrible proof of the wickedness of the world; and yet it is universal, not only found, yea, not so much found among the openly ungodly as in decent unbelievers. Here it is indeed in those who pursue iniquity willfully, not evident immorality, but wickedness, who are pursuing it in their secret counsels. Yet it is the spirit of evil in man. Plotting is characteristic of evil, but its extreme character. But there is concurrence of feeling and acting with a like mind when it has not gone so far as plotting, because a like spirit animates them. Then their tongues are the instruments of attack and injury. The saint has no outward defense or remedy; but as to this, as with regard to violence, God is his refuge. Remark, he speaks of the fear of the enemy. This malice tends to produce fear. The godly is no equal match for it, he can use no weapon against it. He leaves it to God in representing it to Him. God exercises His saints; but in result the wicked bring His judgment on their own heads, and even fear and see and own God's work. For that the godly must wait, and then joy will be complete, though their deliverance, being a divine one, must wait till the divine time of judgment arrive. So Abraham was kept a stranger and his descendants under oppression, “for the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.” It may be that the trial is not complete for us, but in all events, when God intervenes, it will be the perfect time for us. But another thing than our deliverance results. The deliverance being in God's time, and so according to His perfect judgments, His ways are displayed in it. And God's judgment being in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. That is the full accomplishment; but even in particular cases, men glorify God in the day of visitation, and own that they who trusted God were right; that God, who seemed not to interfere, only awaited in His holy righteousness, and that He does care for the righteous, and thus His ways are perfect. And this is an immense gain. God is glorified.

Psa. 65 refers directly to the blessing of this creation, and the praise and joy which will spring forth when He sets aside the power of evil, but looks, as witnesses of it, to the present effect of His goodness. It looks, for the groaning creation waits, not only for Israel as here, but much more in order to its deliverance, for the manifestation of the sons of God, for the blessing of God's people, that this universal blessing may take place; but the heart is ready, and this leads us to a general principle instructive to us at all times. The readiness of heart to praise in the midst of trial, and the almighty power which is looked to, whose nature is to give blessing. But this psalm again applies

only to the circumstances of the believer. The Christian is never, according to the Spirit, in a state of soul in which he cannot praise. His heart may have got away from God, so that the Spirit has to rebuke him and humble him, but then praise is not ready at all. Here the thought is, that though the heart be ready, circumstances do not furnish occasion to praise. Praise is silent, though there is the consciousness that praise belongs to God; the vow will be performed. This may be the Christian's case. He may say in trying circumstances, I am sure I shall yet praise and thank Him for deliverance. And this is a right spirit. As to our highest praise, this is always the case. In the heavenly courts our praise is yet silent, and we wait and long for it. Verse 4 plainly shows that is the Jewish form of it: this is the thought of the psalm. The general thought there is, We only await the blessing to be fulfilled for praise to break out. God's faithfulness and power are celebrated as assuring this. Here in judgment and for earthly blessings; but the Christian, whatever hindrances and adverse powers there may be, counts on this faithfulness and power of God to bring him into the heavenly city. Transgressions will not bar the way; through grace only, we say, “thou hast purged them away.” He hears our prayer and helps us. Further, it is a question of the necessary glory of the Lord, and even in the earthly part, but the principle is there. All flesh must come to Him. This the Jew looked to as a part of the glory. God's purposes must be accomplished to His glory, but He has in grace identified them with us. As Paul expresses it, by the Spirit, All the promises of God are in Him (Christ) yea, and in Him amen, to the glory of God by us. Hence faith, assured that God must be glorified, looks to our own glory and blessing in it. This marks faith, not believing that God is glorious, but connecting His glory with the blessing of His people. So Moses, “What wilt thou do to thy great name?” “The Egyptians will hear of it;” and so ever in his pleadings with God. What a source of security and ground for praise, that God should have thus identified His glory with our blessing and His promises to us in Christ!

Psa. 66 There is one point in this psalm as to its moral force which is of great interest to notice: the way in which, when deliverance comes, all is ascribed to God. And God is seen all through. It goes back to original redemption, the unequivocal source of all (verse 6), while the final blessing of God's people is the blessing of the world. Even when all seemed to have been darkness, it is now seen His power was above all. He rules by His power forever. His eyes behold the nations. Woe to him that exalts himself. But not only this God is seen in the trouble itself, and as the author of it; though our failures may have been the occasion of it. This is the true test of the heart being right—what is called (as to Israel, in Leviticus), accepting the punishment of our iniquity. Two things are seen in it: God brought them into the trouble; He held their soul in life through it. So with Job in both points. Nor did He suffer their feet to be moved out of the divine path of faith by the trial. Verses 10, 11, recognize this; and if instruments were employed, yet they were but instruments. The trial was, and they see and feel it, very great; but it was God's doing. Nor was this all. God has a positive purpose in this: a path, a place of love which He carries through, and of which the trial was a part to fit the soul for the place of so great blessing. “Thou broughtest me out into a wealthy place.” God sends the trouble, preserves the soul in it, purges the soul by it as silver, brightens its hope which rests more entirely on Him, and looks with purer eye for what He has promised, and then brings out into a wealthy place. But some other points come out as to the state of the soul meanwhile. The trouble had cast the soul on God. And though to us all such things as vows are wrong, yet the reference of the heart to Him, the turning of it to Him as the source of hope in a better way, though under chastisement, is just what hoping in Him produces. Have confidence in, and wait on Him when tried and chastened; till the will is broken, we cannot;

when it is, we can, though conscious the sorrow is the fruit of our fault. This supposes integrity; it issues in thanksgiving. The heart can then, too, bear testimony for God to others; it has known what He has been for itself. It cried and He heard. This, says the apostle, is the confidence we have in Him. For what is here learned through sorrow, should be the constant state of the soul without it. Still the governing feeling of the soul is its own thankfulness, and so it will be. It will turn back to that, that is, to God—to the secret of its own thankfulness to Him, which is the joy of the heart. The force of the psalm is recognizing all this after deliverance; but what it produces when received into the heart, is answering faith when the trouble is there.

On Psa. 67 I have only a remark to make. The glory of God is the spring of the desire of the heart for blessings even on His people. Then blessings flow out and praise goes up to God. This psalm explains Rom. 11:15.

On psalm 68, striking and interesting as the psalm is, I have, for our present object, little to say. A remark or two, by the by, present themselves to me. It is specially God's character as regards the Jews in grace, but in His own sovereign grace, not in covenant relationship, but as establishing them, as once in Sinai, only now in grace and power. Jah is not the same as Jehovah, I am fully persuaded. It is the absolute existence of God, not His continuous existence, so as to reckon on His faithfulness, who was, and is, and is to come. He is here, lives forever and ever. He is only called Jehovah in the psalm when He speaks of His dwelling on the mountain of Zion and His abiding. Because there He takes His covenant place and name. We have Jah, verses 4-18; but, Lord, elsewhere in the psalm, is Adonai. It seems to me to connect Christ with the restoration of Israel, to give Him the place of Lord, but more associated with His being also Jehovah than Psa. 110. Verse 18 is naturally the center of this only, where, as He is Jehovah in Zion, according to promise, here ascended, on His rejection, He receives gifts as man. He is beyond all Jewish promises. Yet it applies to Jews, the rebellious. But there it is not Jehovah, but Jah Elohim. Christ's exaltation will bring back God in sovereign grace into the midst of Israel.

Psa. 69 is so fully prophetical of Christ that I make no remark on it here. It is a full description of His sorrows in life and death. I have spoken of it fully elsewhere.

Psa. 70 calls for only one remark. The willingness to be anything—poor, needy, despised—provided the people of God be happy and in a condition which draws forth their praise. The Lord's blessing is not despised, but for it the Lord is waited for. But the heart set on the happiness and blessing of God's people—this is the true spirit of faith in the saint.

Psa. 71 will not detain us either. It rests on two points. God's righteousness—the psalmist claims nothing on the ground of his own; but God will be consistent with Himself—not desert or abandon him. Hence he counts on His faithfulness.

Psa. 72 is Christ's glory as Solomon, so as not to call for our remarking anything here on its contents.

Although Psa. 73, which begins the third book of Psalms, refers directly to the temporal judgment of God in Israel, as satisfying the anxieties of heart among the faithful; yet, as these anxieties are of all times, we shall find something to note here. We see the ungodly having their way, so that God seems to have forgotten, and the heart is envious. But it shows, in our case, too often, that the heart would yet have its portion here—at least a portion here as well as one to come. The

sorrow at the power of evil in the world is right, but it mingles itself in our minds with liking to have one's own way and judgment in setting it aside. When the will mixes itself up with the sense of the success of evil, it is either irritated or disheartened so as to give up perseverance in good. The ungodly prosper in the world. What a riddle! Where is God's government? What is the use of good? No doubt it was more directly trying where temporal blessings had been made a sign of divine favor. But Christians are seldom separated enough from this world not to feel the success of wickedness, and a desire to take vengeance on it. Mere indifference to it is utterly evil. Thus the path is narrow, and grace must work in the heart to lead us in it, to feel the evil in itself, to feel God's glory cast in the dust by it; but to bide God's time and way, as Christ did when He suffered. There is no place of learning but in the sanctuary. There the will is bowed—there God is known—there the eye is not obscured by the passions of the world, and an ignorance of how to do what God alone could not do—make allowance for any good, have perfect patience with evil, so that judgment shall be simply on evil, and be true judgment on evil without excuse. Our impatience would be nothing of this, even where the evil as such is justly judged. But in the sanctuary will is silent and God is listened to. His ways are right, and we see things with His eye. The evil is worse, the compassion right, the patience adorable, yet the judgment sure; so that the sense of righteousness is not crossed in the heart, though the will of vengeance is; for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The judgment is righteous because patience is perfect—far more terrible because there is no passion in it. It refers to God. When we desire that fire may come down from heaven, self is in it. We do not know what manner of spirit we are of. Yet, in one sense, they really deserved it. When God awakes, in His own just time, they are as a dream. Their pride, pretensions—all is as a departed image. Faith has to believe this, and leave them there.

But another blessed truth comes out here. He had been foolish, ignorant— “as a beast,” as he says, “before God;” yet there had been integrity and conscience. If he had let his thoughts loose when half disposed to say godliness was no use, he would have offended against the generation of God's children. This checked him. How beautiful to see in the waywardness of man's will these holy affections, this conscience of putting a stumbling-block in the path of the weakest of God's children, check the heart, and show where the affections really are, and that fear of God which shows He is lovingly known—that the new nature is there! It is a great mark of good that God is owned. But what he knows of himself is that he was as a beast in his heart's reasoning as it did. But, then, mark what is seen. He comes to see that, in spite of all this, while owning his folly, he was continually with God. O how the full knowledge of self, when we know as we are known, will show the patient, unvarying grace of God waiting on us all the way in adorable love and interest in us! Through all his foolishness he was continually with God, and God had holden him by his right hand. Blessed grace! God loves us, cares for us, watches over us, is interested in us; because of His sovereign love, we are necessary to His satisfaction. He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous. This is a wondrous thought of constant grace. But He is God, and not man. And so the heart here counts on Him. Up to this, through all his shortcoming in faith, he could say, “Thou hast holden:” now he says, as in communion, “Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel.” This is not merely holding up unconsciously; it is the mind and will of God guiding us in communion. Hence it is seen when he has judged himself and is in communion, it is not that God does not guide us, make us go according to His own counsels, when we are not in communion—holding our mouths with bit and bridle; for He does. But the soul does not understand it—then cannot speak, as here, in the

knowledge of His doing it by His counsel. This He does. Here we meet, in the full force of the passage, the plain distinction of the Jewish position. “After the glory, thou wilt receive me.” It has been altered to make more of it for Christian ideas, and the true meaning lost. (Comp. Zech. 2:8.) After the glory, when that is set up, Israel will be received; but in that glory we shall come with Christ. The heart is now set right by this visit to the sanctuary: “Whom in heaven but the Lord.” We, indeed, may have our thought expanded by the knowledge of the Father and the Son; still, the truth abides only better known. Who in heaven but God, the center and source and all of blessing. On earth, where, with such as we not thus fixed on God, there might be distracting desires, there is no source of delight with Him; that is, He is the only one. Singleness of eye is complete. As we are in the world, it does make us feel alone, but alone with God. So the blessed Savior. “All ye shall be offended in me this night and shall leave me alone; but I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” In one sense the heart accepts the dominancy of evil and is blessedly abstracted from all to God. See thus the blessing of this seeming evil. Were all peaceful and good, prosperous in the present and imperfect state of things, the heart would sink into that imperfect state and be really worldly; but the prevalence of evil, though pressing on the spirit, the will checked by the feeling that one cannot dissociate oneself from God's people, drives to the sanctuary of God. The heart is weaned from this world, and, in a world where evil does prevail, looks up to God, has Himself for its portion alone in heaven, and so nothing along with Him on the earth. He holds the one sovereign place in the heart. Nothing competes with Him at all as in the New Testament. “Christ is all.” But this brings in another blessing. This endures. Heart and flesh fail. Surely they do. God is the strength of my heart. He stays with divine strength and goodness and sustains the heart, and is not only a present stay, but an everlasting portion, our portion forever. This leads to a sweet and earnest conclusion. It is good for me to draw near to God. There we learn truth; there we find comfort. He has put his trust in the Lord Jehovah, in One, sovereign in power, abiding and faithful in promise. He who does will surely have to declare all His wondrous works. He will be in the place to see and experience them, have the heart to notice and understand them, the joy of testifying the faithfulness of One the heart has trusted. In verse 20 we have only sovereign power; in the last verse, covenant faithfulness also.

As to psalm 74, for our present purpose I have only one remark to make. We find in it confidence in the faithfulness of God, when as to outward circumstances, the power of the enemy seemed to make all hopeless and on the ground of confidence in Himself. But then what He is for His people. Redemption has proved His deep and profound interest in them. They are His own. He has, though taking them in sovereign grace, now bound Himself up (though in grace) with them. And the heart says, “Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.” This is very blessed. So Moses continually. “Thou halt brought them out.” Hence if the people be brought utterly low and the tumult of enemies rise higher and higher, this is only an additional motive, because it is grace, and faithful grace; and power over all things is with Him. The heart calls on God to remember the attacks and reproaches of the enemy instead of being alarmed by them, for the reproach is on His name. And this is true. For the world's enmity is really against the Lord in being against His people. Were they not His people, they would not trouble their heads much about them. God's people have to remember the same thing, and in their own weakness to remember what is in question.

Psa. 75 is the certainty and righteous government of Christ's kingdom. Only remark, faith gives thanks before it is set up, warning the presumptuous wicked, for God is the judge. Human

pretension is no use against Him. Remark, too, that when Christ takes the kingdom, all is confusion, the earth and its pillars are dissolved. Our hearts should even say, God's name (for us the Father) is near. That is all in which He reveals Himself—is close to us. So that we can ever trust and not be afraid. The ways and dealings of God are according to His name. We believe in His name of Almighty and Most High, and that He will avenge the persecuted church on Babylon and its power, but it is not God's name directly with us. That, as I have said, is Father. Hence, save of His children, it is not government. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. All the power that is in that name so displayed, or all the grace and faithfulness of it for those who are risen with Him and loved as He is, is that which is ever near to us; and that wondrous work of Christ's resurrection declares it, were death itself upon us.

Psa. 76. The general subject is still judgment executed in connection with Israel. But there is a general principle we may notice. First, that the seat of God's blessing and throne, or its manifestation on earth, low as it may fall, is more excellent than all the might and violence of man. At God's rebuke these fall and man has no strength. When God arises, what can man do? But God's execution of judgment on the earth has an immediate effect and purpose—the deliverance of the meek. He saves all the meek of the earth. His love and faithful goodness are even here in exercise. Then comes another principle, applicable at all times by faith, and an encouraging and consoling principle. God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. He turns everything to His own glory and purpose, and then stops all the rest. Where faith is in exercise, it counts on God, through all, sure that God will have the last and final word in the matter.

In Psa. 77 we have some instructive points to notice. The complaint goes further, perhaps, than that of any Christian ought to go. The seventh verse for us would be simple unbelief; whereas for the Jew, whose people are cast off as regards all their privileges, the question justly arises, as in Rom. 11, “I say then hath God cast away His people?” But if we keep this in mind, there is much to instruct us as regards the time of deep trouble, as when the pressure of very adverse circumstances, or even our own fault, may have brought the soul into deep distress, as to that which surrounds it. The subject of this psalm is that he actually and actively sought the Lord. It was a direct appeal of the heart, not merely a wish nor submission. He went with his voice to God about it. This is more important than we are apt to suppose. I do not think it altogether just, “that prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed.” I surely admit that there may be a sigh or a groan where the Holy Ghost's intercession is, and that the lifting up of the heart to God will never find repulse or coldness there. All that I admit; but there is an actual carrying a known want or trouble to God, the expression of the need we are in. The heart expresses itself in a distinct application. Thus it brings itself before God, and this is very important in our relationship with God. There is truth in the inward parts, and true confiding dependence. Up to this there was gnawing trouble, the working of the heart on the trouble, the soul refusing to be comforted. The will was at work, and could not get what it wanted. The soul thinks of God, but no comfort was there. There was but its own thoughts of Him; there was complaint, not prayer, and the spirit overwhelmed. So when awake, he cannot be occupied naturally with ordinary matters, he is silent through trouble. It is a strong picture of a thoroughly distressed soul, only fully realized when a soul, through the chastening hand of God, has lost the sense of divine favor, or does not know peace, but which in degree may be with any one. But the soul turns to God. It has enjoyed mercy and songs in the night. Would the Lord cast off forever? For the Christian this question has no place, but when the

shield of faith is down, and the fiery darts of the wicked have reached the heart—a terrible and sore chastisement. The only thing like it is when a soul has lightly received the Gospel in its mercy (without, however, being insincere), and the work of conscience goes on afterward. When, instead of communing with self and reasoning with its own misery, it looks to God, the heart sees all this is in itself, not in God. This is the turning point. But the Christian does not go back to former mercies (as the Jew would, and rightly would), because he always stands in present favor, even if Satan have got hold of his mind for a time and he returns into the sunshine of it, when the cloud that arose out of his own heart is passed. The Jews had early sovereign blessings, and are right to remember it when they had been cast off, though it be not forever. The Christian is never cast off. Hence he has not to remember but enters again into the enjoyment of divine favor which has never ceased. In the rest of the psalm the Christian learns God's way is in the sanctuary. Let His favor be ever so unchangeable, His way is always according to His own holiness, though for the very same reason—according to His own faithful love. Whenever Israel turns back, it is to sovereign grace and redemption. God's way is in the sea—untraceable and in power. All the movements and power of what seems ungovernable and not to be got through are in His hand. On the whole, the psalm is the contrast between the working of the soul in restless anxiety in thus indulging its own thoughts, and turning, when it has recollected God, to cry to Himself. If the Christian apply it interrupted favor, he is all wrong. But he may learn in respect to overwhelming sorrow when the will is at work, that there is no rest till the soul remembers God and cries to Him.

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 78-80

(Psa. 78-80)

Although Psa. 78 be evidently a recapitulation of the history of Israel, convicting them of their disobedience and unbelief—the uselessness as to their hearts of all God's dealings with them, and then, so magnificently, His turning to His own sovereign grace to bless, yet there are some of the marks of unbelief, and warnings as to it, which it will be profitable to us to note. The great principle of the psalm which I have noticed is itself of the highest interest. Sovereign grace is the only resource of God if He is to bless man. All dealings, however gracious, fail of their object. He loves His people, but He has no resource for blessing them but His own grace. If He acted on the effect of His dealings, He gives them up; they only turned aside like a deceitful bow. So ever. But when all was at the worst, He awakes in His love to His people, because of their misery and His love to them. Then He accomplishes the purpose of His own grace in His own way. “He chose the tribe of Judah.... He chose Mount Zion, which He loved.... He chose David his servant.” Such is the general instruction of the psalm. But there are the characters of unbelief which are instructive. The past mercy and faithfulness of God will not give courage for a present difficulty. God must be known by a present faith. No reasoning from former mercies will give us confidence “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? . . . He smote the rock. . . Can He give bread also?” Experience of goodness and power will not make man trust it, when some new need is there, or lust is at work. Nor was it better, though He commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them. Nor did the correction of their lusts in the matter of the quails stop this unbelieving will. When under His hand, man remembers Him. A little ease brings forgetfulness and self-will. But He was full of compassion, and stayed His hand in judgment. “They tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” —mistrust of God's power to effectuate all His grace, to do what is needed in any case for His people, and carry out His purposes for them. The moment I suppose anything cannot be for blessing, I limit God. This is a great sin—doubly, when we think of all He has done for us. The Holy Ghost ever reasons from God's revealed, infinite love to all its consequences. He reconciled; surely He will save to the end. He did not spare His Son; how should He not give all things? This, however, is goodness infinite; but doubt of power is doubting He is God. It hinders setting our hope in God. Experience ought to strengthen faith; but there must be present faith to use experience. The gracious Lord keep us from limiting God in His power, and so in His power to bless, and lead us not to remember Him only when His hand is upon us, but for His own sake, and in the midst of present blessing, because the heart is set on Him! Then, in trials, we shall be able to count upon His goodness and have no disposition to limit His power.

Psa. 79 looks for judgment on the heathen. That I leave aside here. The only point I have to notice is the way, when brought very low, the heart turns to God. It does not even here avenge itself; but—the extreme of evil being come upon it—turns to God, and thus remembers its own sins. Nor has it any plea but God's own name. “Remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us . . . Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name! Deliver

us, purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." Such is the effect of chastisement. It supposes that we know God. It produces lowliness of heart, true confession, no pretension to any title to deliverance but God's own goodness and name—what He is. Yet the soul rests on that: there is compassion—that God attends to the sighing of His prisoners; and (however strong the hand that holds them appointed to die) will act in the greatness of His power to preserve. The enemy had reproached the Lord, in injuring His people. "Where is their God?" —their confidence. And the Lord showed Himself; and this is looked for, and His people praise Him. This, too, shows another point we may often notice in Scripture—not that God simply is glorious, and must maintain His glory; but that He, having taken a people in the earth, has identified His glory with that people. Faith feels this, with deep sense of it and thankful, entering into it, and reckons on deliverance and grace. God delivers and secures His own glory. But for the very same reason God allows no evil, because His name is connected with His people, as we see in Israel: "Thee only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." Here the punishment was on them, and the name reproached. So, humbling themselves, and looking for mercy and purging, they look for deliverance, because God's people were brought low.

Psa. 80 is bold in its appeals. It passes from Egyptian deliverance to the knowledge, not of Christ, but of the Son of man. Still it looks at Him as the branch which God has made strong for Himself. It is not, "I am the true vine, ye are the branches," which makes the introduction of that 15th of John clear. Still it goes now far in owning the man of God's power, the Son of man, whom He made strong for Himself. But if, in this confidence in God, and looking to the Son of man, it speaks boldly, and refers all to grace. It is thoroughly Jewish. It refers to the order of the tribes in the wilderness. It knows God as sitting between the cherubim. Israel was His own vine; but it takes the fullest Jewish light—the Son of man. But it has no hope but God's turning them again. It is this expression, which characterizes the cry of the psalm, which we must examine a little. It is found in verses 3, 7, 19. We may find it again in the same use in Jer. 31:18, 19, and Lam. 5:21—a similar cry. This gives it much interest. Mere discipline in itself does not turn to God. It may break the will, humble where God is working, and so do a preparatory work; but it does not turn to God. So they are brought here; and in the desolations of Ephraim and Judah, when they are down to the lowest, because nothing less would do, to say, "Turn thou me," "Turn us again." It is not simply godly sorrow and the consciousness of sin. Nor is this exactly the thought or feeling here. There is the sense of belonging to God, being God's people, and the rebuke of God being upon them— "they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance." It is the dealing of God with His people, or a saint in his testimony as now, when God deals with him in it. There is the sense of being His, but God's work, which is repassed when it was carried out in blessing by God, is seen foiled and a witness of the enemy's power; but this power is not what faith rests on, but the rebuke of God. Faith turns to Him, to Him as the original source of blessing and power that wrought it; as the One whose work it is that is always interested in His people. It rests on the beauty and delight of God's work to Himself, as He had planted it, and now it was rooted up; and hence draws the conclusion of His present intervention in grace. But it looks for this first as a turning of themselves. The state they are in is connected with the ruin, though not the main thought; they cannot separate their own state from God's interposition. They needed it, but His first act must be restoring them, turning them. Blessing is their thought, but God's blessing them as He blesses; hence beginning with them and turning them. But with this God's face would shine on them, and they would be saved. How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that He may turn us, and so His face shine on us, was

to bring blessing and present deliverance on His people. It looks to God; remark, too, returning and visiting the vine, but it does not look for the restoration of the original state of things (that is not God's way), but to the setting up the branch God had made so strong for Himself. And so we now; we look to Christ's being exalted even in details. If we have failed, it does not become us to look to God's setting it right as before, as if nothing had happened—this could not be for His glory—but to the coming in of Himself to show His goodness in that which manifests His own grace, and hearing the cry of His people. “Let thy hand,” says the faith of Israel, “be on the man of thy right hand.” Here they see their strength and safety—their being kept, right. “So will we not go back from thee.” So it will be fully with Israel in the last day, and so with us practically. His presence is what keeps us. There is another thing that faith seeks. Dullness and death are in turning away from God, and going their own ways. They need, in being thus turned, to be quickened—the reviving life-giving power which calls the heart back to God. It then, with increased seriousness and new confidence, calls upon Him. It is more than the prayer which cries in trial. It is the heart confidingly calling on God, as turned again to Him. The prophetic scene is clearly the restoration of Israel. God does not hide His face from His saints now—He has from Israel: but in their work, and service, and state, as a body, they may find these ways in government.

But I would turn for a moment to the connection of this with personal turning and repentance in the similar passages to which I have alluded. In Jeremiah, we have first, “Turn thou me and I shall be turned.” First, then, we have the action of God in grace turning the sinner round, converting him. He was looking away from God, had turned his back on God, and now in heart and will turns round towards Him. Repentance comes after this— “surely after that I was turned I repented.” I set about, and as brought into the light, my heart towards God, I judged all my ways in my departure, my state of heart, and all. Instructed, then, in true blessing, having the mind of God as to good, one is confounded, one could have thoughts of such vanity and evil with desire. But another thing is brought before us in the Epistle to the Corinthians. The turning of God brings into sorrow. (2 Cor. 7) The apostle's first epistle came with the power of the Spirit to their souls. It was not yet a full judgment of their state in the light, but the will being divinely arrested, there was grief in the sense of having gone wrong: conscience, not will, began to be at work; self may have partially mixed itself with it. Still it was godly sorrow, a broken will, brokenness of heart; the feeling—I have been following my own will, I have forgotten God. The illusion of a perverse will is gone, and the effect of having to say to God, the working of God's nature in us begins. It is not with fear where rightly felt; no thought that God will impute, condemn, but sorrow and grief of heart at the perverseness and delusion of self-will having been followed. This works a far more active, deliberate judgment of evil, called repentance here. Godly sorrow worketh repentance which we shall never regret. The soul by being turned, having by the operation of God's grace been brought to grieve at having listened to will, now re-enters (or enters it at first) into the natural effect and working of the new man at liberty. It judges with spiritual energy the whole evil as God judges it in principle. The sense of fault is not gone, but what characterizes the state is judgment of the fault—of self as far as self is in it. The heart is clear of the evil when it judges it as God judges it, and separates it from itself as a thing external to itself, as God does. And this is holiness, often deeper from better knowledge of self than before. We see an example of this in Peter's address in Acts 2 Their sin was set before the people. They were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter, What shall we do? The boisterous will was gone: no more, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Sin has done its act, and can no more undo it. The folly of it comes home with distress to the heart. “What shall we do?” They are turned, have

come to distress and godly sorrow. What are Peter's words? Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins. Turned they were, grieved at heart at their folly in sinning, they had yet to repent. It is a larger, deeper, fuller thing of a soul brought into the light, and the new man exercising its judgment on what self had been. Not now as pressed on by God, and bowing in sorrow of heart to the effect of His grace and presence in the sense of the evil, but in our own spiritual rejection, with God, of the evil as such from the standing ground of the new man with God. This is accompanied with brokenness and lowliness of heart, but the soul has re-entered into its own liberty with God. True repentance is there when self is proved clear in the matter, when the new standing has possession of the judgment and will, and judges freely as a rejected thing all that the flesh delighted in and had been misled by.

Chapter 112

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 81-84

(Psa. 81-84)

From Psa. 81 I have only a few brief principles to state as to the government of God. On the restoration of blessing, the precious ways of God are considered. Had there been faithfulness, there would not only have been peace instead of trouble, but rich present blessing. Whereas the effect of not hearkening to God was, that God gave them up to their hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels and soon came under the power of their enemies, even stronger than the people of God on their own ground. God has delivered us. We have been delivered from the bondage and burden of sin. Answered by divine power when in trouble and distress under it (a power which, while manifest in its effects, had its source of operation in the secret of the divine counsels), we are, as regards present dispensed blessings, put under responsibility, yet in the place of fullest ministered blessing. “If thou wilt hearken” —truth of heart to God is that which is looked for; not merely avoidance of actual evil, but no idol in the heart. This tests the heart—truth in the inward parts with God. But God calls to this as being already our God—now we say Father—who has delivered and saved us: and calls us in the path, no doubt, of obedience; to open our mouth wide that He may fill it. It is to this we are called, to enlarge our hearts to receive blessing. God has largely and richly for us, and calls us to open our mouths wide. All His mind is to fill it from His own riches. But of blessings of grace from His own hand, the unsearchable riches of Christ are ours, and dispensed to our souls. But, alas! very often we are like Israel, “My people would not hearken to my voice.” There is then as chastisement, a giving up of the saint to eat the fruit of his own ways: a terrible judgment sometimes to be humbled and feel the bitterness of the power of the enemy; sometimes, what is worse, to think he is finally given up. This is seldom the case when the soul has really been already emptied of self and subtle self-righteousness. Still the flaming darts of the wicked are terrible to the soul. It is not at all the same thing as the legal doubts of an exercised soul, but the dread of God as now against the soul; not the uncertainty whether He will be for it, whether it can escape. This last is legal doubt; the former, despairing doubt from Satan. If the saint walks faithfully, he has surely enemies, Satan and his machinations, to contend against; but the Lord really subdues them. It is after the patience of faith, the encouraging proof that the Lord is with the believer in his way. Our adversaries are the Lord's: the consciousness of this is an immense force. Those that oppose us in the Lord's path are, at any rate in that respect, the haters of the Lord. They are found liars, and empty in their pretensions. And at peace through the Lord's power, the saint would walk in a constant path. “He that doeth God's will abides forever;” he is fed with the finest of the wheat, with the most precious knowledge of Christ; and the sweetness of divine grace refreshing and satisfying the desire of the spirit.

On Psa. 82 and 83. I have no remark to make in connection with our present object in commenting on the psalms. In psalm 82 the reader will observe that God judges the judges, especially those who in Israel had the divine law to guide them. They fall thus from wielding God's authority in the earth, into the place of responsible man, and God arising judges the earth. Here iniquity towards man, the reparation of judgment entrusted to man from righteousness, is dealt with by God. In

psalm 83 it is the way in which man is guilty of active enmity against God in his hatred against God's people, using craft, conspiracy, and violence to destroy their remembrance off the earth—the result being that Jehovah alone (the God of Israel) is the most high over all the earth; for such is the effect of man's efforts. Oppression downwards in those who represented God in the earth, rebellion upwards against God shown in hatred against God's earthly people: such are the characters of man, and the object of God's judgment on the earth.

Psa. 84 Though God be necessarily the center of all our desires, the desires of the new man, yet it is not in this psalm the desire after God as such, which is spoken of as in psalm 63 Jehovah is owned as the living God, but He is owned as a manifested God ill relationship with His people. It is not, “my soul is athirst for God;” but, “how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts.” They would not have been so, if He had not been there, if they had not been His. Still it is the enjoyed public relationship with Him, dwelling in the midst of His people, which is delighted in, not abstract delight in Himself. The tabernacles of God are a resting-place for the heart, as the swallow had a nest from God where she might lay her young. And this is just. The root and essence of personal piety is the soul's own desire after God. The secret of God is there, and the soul is kept in the holiness of His presence, and exercised it before Him. But where God displays His glory, where He is worshipped, is the just resort of the pious soul. In His temple shall every one speak of His honor. There praise is drawn out.

It is not exercise, but the soul in its piety as in the new man, alone goes forth in praise and worship where all do, where there is naught else, and with others of the same spirit also. For the altar of God is the center of the heart's desire and outgoings. There God displays Himself, and there the heart is at home from exercises and trials. Hence it is known to the heart, that there they will be still praising God. They that dwell there have naught else to do. Such is the full accomplished blessing.

But there is another thing (ver. 5 and seq.) in which blessing is known on the way thither, the way through this world, the valley of tears. The strength of him who passes with an undisturbed heart towards God's rest and dwelling-place, is in the Lord. Hence he too is blessed. If the dwelling-place of God, where His glory is manifested and fills the place, is the object of the heart, where its desires tend, the way that leads there will be in the heart too. It may be a rough one, a valley of tears, a valley where the cross is found, but it is the way there, and the heart is in it. Besides, the heart trusts God—has His love as the key to all. Hence it says, “by these things man lives, and in all these things it is the life of the Spirit.” They turn the valley of tears into a well, and find in the sorrow the refreshments of grace. For we need the will broken, the movement of will in the desires of the heart judged, that grace, that God Himself (that well of joy and blessing), may have His full place. And this the trials and exercises of the wilderness do. It is not called the valley of trial, but the valley of tears; that is, it is not merely the facts which form the well, but the exercises of heart which flow from them. No doubt the character of the valley was the source of this; but Christ perfect in His way was a man of sorrows, therein manifesting and exercising His love. We need humiliation and breaking down that we might get into this state, but this is what makes it a well to us. He had meat to eat in His sorrow as cast out, by the well of Sychar, which His disciples knew not of. But this is not all. There is direct supply and ministration of grace from above. God sends a gracious rain on His inheritance, refreshing it when it is weary. The rain fills the pools. The communications of the Spirit of God, the revelation of Christ to the soul, the

Father's love, all refresh and gladden the heart, and fill it with that which makes the world a nothing, turning the heart elsewhere. The new man is in its joys, and goes cheerfully thinking of that through the valley. It goes from strength to strength. It is not accumulated strength, though strength is increased, but never in any sense so as to diminish dependence on God, but on the contrary to increase the sense of it. Self is better known and more thoroughly distrusted; we are more simple, and have a more simple consciousness that power belongs to God. As Peter, “when thou art converted (brought back), strengthen thy brethren” —an extreme case, as to the means, but showing how self-judgment and the lesson of dependence is the way of having strength, because strength is really in Christ. “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Thus the strength we have and feel at a point where we are brought to realize the grace and presence of Christ sets us forward on our journey across the wilderness; we use it (I do not say lose it) in travel, but it is not the conscious enjoyment of deriving blessing from Him, but employing that strength in the way. This leads us to a further apprehension of our need of Christ, increased knowledge of self by what we pass through, but which is discovered not always in a judgment we form of ourselves, but in such emptying of self, and the decline of its deceptive power in our heart, as casts us more simply on Christ. We go to a further place of strength thus; Christ is more all. If there be failure, it will be in the positive judgment of self and restoring the soul. The result is our appearing before God, where no self will be at all, and in the place where He has set His blessing, and where all go up to worship and glorify Him. Even now there is a partial realization of this, but its accomplishment will be surely in glory—in the heavenly Jerusalem and the Father's house. But all this turns to supplication—supplication in the sense of divine majesty, but supplication in the consciousness of blessed relationship. He is Jehovah of hosts, but He is the God of Jacob. But it goes yet farther. Till we are actually in the courts of God, we depend on this majesty and covenant faithfulness—for us the Father's name in union with Christ—but also on God's looking on Christ; but this secures us till then—indeed, in one sense, forever. We are assured, are confident, and pray because God looks on Christ. But this confidence on the way through Baca is connected with the desire to be in the courts. “Look on Him our security; rest in Him: for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.” Better be at the threshold there, than enjoy all that the tents of the wicked can afford, with the right to abide there. God enlightens with His glorious majesty, and protects. He will give in perfect, unhindered grace all we need in the trial of the way, and in our weakness, when it is sweet to count on His help. And He will in the end, when brought home capable of enjoying it, give glory with Himself. We can count on Him for everything. He is good; nothing good will He withhold from those who walk before Him. The soul closes in the conscious feeling— “Blessed is the man that trusts in thee.” And how true it is! Nothing can disturb, nothing is beyond, His power—nothing of which His love cannot take charge for us—nothing which His wisdom does not know how to deal with for blessing. And the heart knows His love to count on it, and that “blessed is the man that puts his trust in Him.”

Chapter 113

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 85-87

Psa. 85 brings out a principle of great practical importance, the difference between the forgiveness of what belongs to our former state, and the blessedness into which the believer is introduced in the enjoyment of relationship with God. Here, of course, it is in the restoration of Israel to blessing in the laud in accomplishment of the promises of Jehovah. I shall now speak only of the principle as regards ourselves.

Forgiveness is known as the fruit of Jehovah's goodness, and His sure goodness to His people, and hence full blessing is expected. But the two are distinct. So with us, forgiveness applies to all that we are, looked at as in the old man and his deeds. We are brought back and all the fruit of the old man is put away forever by the sacrifice of Christ. We have thus full forgiveness. Wrath is gone as to it. All our sin is covered; but the distance from God and from the enjoyment of communion with Him is not removed. Fear of judgment and the Judge is gone; but the enjoyment of present blessing with God, His favor as upon those with whom is no question, and the going forth of divine favor in natural though righteous relationship, this is not entered into. Joy there has been, great joy there is, in fin ding oneself forgiven; but it applies to what we are in flesh, and is not communion with God in a nature capable of enjoying Him and none else, because coming from Him. Though forgiven, this distance, this want of enjoyment of God in the new and divine nature, is felt to be in its nature anger. It is not being brought to God. Nor can we rest without the enjoyment of His favor. For this the appeal in the psalm is made. The captivity of Jacob was brought back, but he looked for more, to be turned to God, and that all anger might cease. This is a large word; yet, knowing love and communion at least in hope, we cannot rest without it. We may have desired it, i.e., the sense of favor, but we cannot get it by progress or victory; we must get it by forgiveness and deliverance, for we are sinners. But when we have found there is redemption and pardon, there is then not merely the want of the conscience by which we must come in, but the spiritual desires of the new man. “Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?” The soul is revived by the presence of the Spirit of God, and rejoices in God Himself. So Rom. 5: we have peace with God: not only so, we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. “Show us thy mercy, O Jehovah (for it is mercy, but mercy from God known in relationship with His own—for us the Father known in Christ), and grant us thy salvation.” But the soul has learned grace and listens for the answer, because it looks for grace. It is not legal agony, but desired knowledge of God in favor. “He will speak peace. His salvation is nigh them that fear Him.”

Now this is all-important for the soul, not to rest in forgiveness (its first urgent necessity, that applies to what it is as a sinner), but to understand that it is called to the enjoyment of God, in the cloudless communion of a new nature, which being, morally speaking, the divine nature, has necessary and full delight in God, though a dependent and growing delight—we joy in God. No doubt it is and must be founded on righteousness—divine righteousness, as we shall see. It would not be God, were it not so; but it is not the settling that point with a God who is calling it in question, but enjoying God's presence, communion with Him, according to the perfectness in

which we have been placed before Him, enjoying Him in the divine nature of which we are partakers. This is thus spoken of in regard of Israel: “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” It is mercy, for it is granted to sinners in pure and sovereign mercy, but it is truth, for it accomplishes all God's promises to Israel. To us far beyond promise, for there was none of the Church; but it is a stronger case. It is being in Christ and as Christ, and so before God according to the favor in which He is before Him as risen. Righteousness seemed against the sinner and was, but through the divine righteousness it associates itself with peace to the sinner. They kiss each other. Peace answers to mercy, righteousness to truth. They have—we have—peace through mercy; but righteousness by the faith of Jesus Christ brings us into the full enjoyment of the place He is in, or it would not be righteousness. Truth springs out of the earth; i.e., for Israel all promised is accomplished there. With us, of course, it is sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It is not, glory shall dwell in our land, but we are in title and place in the glory of God on high. But in all cases righteousness looks down from heaven. It is not for Israel or for us, righteousness looking up from earth to claim blessing from heaven. He has established righteousness in the very heavens. Christ is there. He is there by the righteousness of God. The righteousness was a divine, heavenly righteousness; He having glorified God, is glorified with God, and in Him, and that is divine righteousness. Our heavenly and Israel's earthly blessings both flow from it. Then comes conferred blessing, too; and so surely it is all the produce of that heavenly country, its joys and privileges are made ours to enjoy. The last verse properly applies to earth. But there is a truth yet connected with this I have not noticed. The present government of God applies to this walking in divine enjoyment, not to forgiveness and peace. We enjoy this blessed communion, dwelling in God and God in us by the Holy Ghost given to us. If we grieve Him, we are made sorry, humbled, perhaps chastened. It is always our place, but its realization and enjoyment depend on the revelations and action of the Holy Ghost in us, and these depend on our walk, and state, and obedience. So in John 14 and 15 The enjoyment of divine favor and blessedness is made to depend on the walk of the saint. It must, if it is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; for how should we be enjoying communion in love in the midst of evil or idle thoughts? The presence of the Holy Ghost depends on righteousness—Christ's presence on high. That sheds God's love abroad in our hearts. We dwell in Him and He in us. But if evil is there, the flesh is at work, the Holy Ghost is grieved, communion is interrupted. It is not a question of title (that is, settled: Christ is in heaven), but of enjoying the blessedness I am brought into, enjoying. God. Here all our walk with God is in question (though it is by grace I do so walk aright). What I urge here is the soul's getting clear hold of. the difference between forgiveness—grace applied through Christ's work to sin and all the fruits of the old man, and our introduction in Him in righteousness into the presence and communion of God where no cloud or question of sin ever comes. We may get out of this (not out of the title to it, but its enjoyment in spirit—not that peace is destroyed with God, but communion), but in it no cloud of sin can come. We are loved as Christ is loved. All depends on His work. But one is the forgiveness of that out of which we have been brought, the application of Christ's work to our responsibility as children of Adam in flesh. In the other we are not in flesh, but in Christ, in the enjoyment of that into which He is entered—our life forever.

Psa. 86 This psalm, though it be simple enough in its expression, yet is pretty full of important practical principles, as correcting the feebleness of a soul drawn to God with His full glory and power. It finds its center, not in embracing first the extent of the glory in its feeble state, but in

being centered in God, and so praising and looking for strength and final deliverance into glory.

The ground it rests on, as looking to God to bow down His ear, is fourfold. It is poor and lowly, not of the proud of the earth; it is holy, really set apart to God; Jehovah's servant (with us the Father's name must come in here, as we have ever seen, and Christ as Lord), it trusts in Jehovah, and cries daily to the Lord. This is the state of the soul—poor and holy, set apart to the Lord; a servant, one that trusts, and the trust is not idle, it cries in the sense of need and dependence. This last is dwelt on in confidence of goodness, and a sense of the majesty of the Lord above all pretenders to power. He alone is God, is great, and does what to us is wondrous. It looks, then, to be taught God's way—has no thought to walk its own. The truth and word of God guides it. But here there is another need—the tendency of the heart to be distracted to a thousand objects, and wandering thoughts, and it prays the Lord to unite it. How we need this—to have the heart concentrated on the Lord! Here is power; here that presence of divine things which puts the mind in what is heavenly, and in' direct connection with divine sources of strength. When other thoughts come in, one is outside, in another world, from which we have to be delivered; not in the divine and heavenly one, so as to be witnesses of it. The majesty and glory of God's name had been seen (verse 9), but this does not make the soul pass into the glory as if it was at home there. In a sense it is too great for one, and this is felt. How little we are! how we know in part! but it leads the soul to seek further concentration of all its affections, poor and lowly as it is, on God. And this is right, satisfies the soul, suits it. It is in affection and adoring thankfulness at the center, through grace, of all this glory. Hence it continues— “I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart.” It is united here, and it can praise as it is called to praise, and as it sees in result will praise. We are called on to comprehend with all saints, the length and breadth, and depth and height; but we must first be thus brought to the center—Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and we rooted and grounded in love. Hence, knowing Him, we glorify His name for evermore. Our littleness has found, in His greatness, our place and our strength. We are, as I said, at the center of glory. This turns to the view the great deliverance God has wrought. It is seen supreme grace is the source of it all. It is not merely owning His grace according to nature, where all is in order, but grace, sovereign grace—the activity of God's love—Which has come down and delivered us from the lowest estate. This gives a special character to our knowledge of God. All dependent on even goodness, yet intimate in the character of our love to Him, because by our very wretchedness we know we are the objects of His love, thus known, to be infinitely great. The soul thus confiding in God and occupied for itself with Him, its first affair, sees the enmity of proud men, who fear Him not, rising up against it. It looks for God's interference. This is a great mark of faith, but, confiding in His accepting love, it looks for more. It delights in the manifestation that God is for it. This is riot only deliverance but satisfies the heart. It is all it asks—that God should show Himself for it. It is this, the sure portion of every one who trusts God, walking with Him, which the Lord looked for (Psa. 22), and had not, lower than the lowest for our sakes, but therein perfect in love, and glorifying His Father, and so higher than the highest. Therefore His Father loved Him, and He is glorified as man in a far higher way. Holpen and comforted in the trial, at that supreme moment, He was not—but there He stood alone. We trust and are delivered; He perfect above all, alone in this perfection. The Lord. give us at least to have our hearts united, undistracted to His name and in the Father's love. There is our center. We need not fear enemies there. (Phil. 1:27, 28.)

Psa. 87 God's foundation which makes all assured. It is not that her foundation is in the holy mountain that calls out the interest, or assures the heart of faith, but that the city of God rests on God's foundation—so we. The sure foundation of God abideth, and in the latter case it was when the Church was going on so very badly that the saint had to judge its state and purge himself from many in it. But God's foundation abides sure. So we say, His calling and His inheritance in the saints. But the psalm brings out another point, hard for the activity of flesh. Faith attaches more importance to God's city, than to all that man has built. The sentiment of the psalm is essentially Jewish. In writing up the people, the saints and Messiah Himself are reckoned to Zion. These are his grounds for glorifying in Zion—God's view of the city. For us, no doubt, the thing comes in a different shape, as to the Church: Christ is of it, as its Head, not as born in it. God's fresh springs are there. But, practically, when the Church of God is despised, when it is formed of people who are of no account in this world, do we make. our boast of it because they are precious in the sight of God, rich in faith? or do the grandeurs of the Egypts and Babylons, which God judges, eclipse it in our sight? Do we judge after God's mind, or after man's? Is the appearance and vain show of this world of weight with us; or does the faith of the Lord of glory lead us to estimate highly what God. esteems, what is glorious? He has people whom He counts up. Is it the spirit of the world or the Spirit of God which forms our estimate of what is vile and what is valuable? Weigh the language of James's epistle. But may our souls especially feel the value of what in those heavenly places will be counted excellent by God.

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 88-89

(Psa. 88; 89)

On Psa. 88 I have not much to say. God is known and looked to according to His revealed name as the only Savior, and it is just to this point that the soul is brought by the exercises spoken of in the psalm; cast by the pressure of all around to find it comes from God's hand, and more yet, God's judgment so as to be therein a pure and sovereign salvation from Him. Jehovah, God of my salvation, governs the psalm. The state was this: affliction was present, nature could not find its account there, acquaintance put far from him. But this was but the negative and outward part, because nature found no relief, as it could from nature's sorrows more or less. The great point that pressed on the spirit was death, and death bearing the witness of God's wrath upon it. To this, the knowledge that the revealed God of promise was the only Savior turns the heart; his life drew nigh to the grave. God's wrath lay hard upon him. Still God was appealed to. It was nature without its sustainment, nature with death pressed on it, that is, its destruction and end. And God being brought in, and faith in Him, so far there as to own that all depended on Him, His wrath was felt in it all. And this is true. This is death when seen in its truth. So Christ saw it in Gethsemane, though He would not have said all that is in this psalm. So the convinced soul sees it, whose eye is opened upon God, in its Adam state. The psalm, however, does not look beyond this life. In this it ends in nature—simple Judaism. But the faith in the revelation of God which has made it so feel what death is, as wrath from God, makes it look to Him who has inflicted it as a Savior. And this is the value of such experience. It shows us our true state, our true relationship in God to nature. Nor is there way of escape, for it is our state by judgment before God. Hence self is done with if we are delivered. This makes deliverance known as sovereign grace, as God's deliverance, and the soul rests on revelation. And until the deliverance the soul cries to God. But when deliverance is obtained, the flesh, all that it is, remains as a judged thing under wrath. There is no deception so far as to trust it really, though we may forget its evil for a moment, and even have to watch and contend with it. But its status before God is ever counted as a condemned and evil thing. The psalm is the description of the process which brings the soul to this. Sometimes the soul only reaches this on its death-bed. This ought not to be, but it explains what surprises many in godly persons. When it is not gone through really, the soul is not free. It stands on the ground of God's salvation, in spirit, not in flesh. It is not seeing this that has led many to live on experience, not on Christ. They speak of Holy Ghost work, and knowing the evil of the flesh, and the killing power of the law, which only means that they have not learned it. They are in this psalm. But they have not learned salvation and the gospel. They do not know that they are dead and risen with Christ. They are feeling death press upon them as wrath from God, according to this psalm—all well; but they have not received the sentence of death in themselves, through Christ's having died in grace for them, so as to reckon themselves dead, crucified with Christ, to be nevertheless alive, yet not they, but Christ living in them, who had died and put away all this for them. They are under the pressure of wrath for what they are in nature—all true in its place—but have not learned Christ, and through Him, that they are not in the flesh but in Christ, in that He has borne and passed

through this for them, and that now through Him they are free in the new man as risen in Him.

Psa. 89 has one remarkable character which it behooves us to notice here—reliance on the faithfulness of God according to His original word of promise, when externally all is contrary to it, but the expectation of fulfillment founded on mercy, in fact in Christ, in whom all promised mercies concentrate themselves. “I have said, mercy shall be built up forever, thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.” The accomplishment of God's promises on earth shall be a source of praise for the inhabitants of heaven. Yet we see at the end that it was as if God had made all men in vain—a sad thought—the power of evil ruling, men its willing instruments, and the good having no place but reproach and sorrow. But God is called on to remember His saints' weakness and their reproach. Still there is confidence; and whatever the state of things may be, He has wrought redemption, broken the power of the enemy; and has He not in a far better way than for Israel? His arm is mighty, His right hand high, whatever state they are in. Heaven and earth are His, though till Christ comes we cannot say, Possessor of heaven and earth. Justice and judgment are the constant attributes of His throne. Mercy and truth announce Him when He goes forth. This form of expression is beautiful. God has a throne. There everything must be brought into consistency with it. But in His active going forth tender mercy and goodness announce Him, and faithful truth will tell His people He is there when He comes forth. His activities are mercy and faithfulness, because His will is at work and His nature is love. Yet His throne still maintains justice and judgment. How truly this has been shown in Christ!—will doubtless be so in the last days in Israel—but signally so in Christ, and even then because of Him. This apprehension of God gives the sense of blessedness in the midst of sorrow. “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favor shall our horn be exalted.” All this is realized in the heart in the midst of sorrows, so that it can be as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. This gives sweet blessing to the heart of the saint. Trouble does but increase it, because it makes him feel the preciousness of the faithfulness and favor of God, and that nothing separates him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The inward revelation of divine favor makes the path of sorrow full of sweetness. So Christ Himself was a man of sorrows. Yet He could say that they might have “my joy fulfilled in themselves.” The sureness of the promises in Christ are then insisted on. Read of “thy holy One,” and remark that “holy” here is the same word as “mercies” in the first verse, not as “holy” in the 18th. Mercy, then, faithfulness, the character of the divine throne and of the divine actings, past accomplishment of redemption, what the title of God is, and the power in which He has broken the hostile power of evil, all to us known as the Father's love through the Son by the Spirit brings the Spirit in the midst of all trial into the enjoyment by faith, but the true enjoyment of the heart, of the light of God's countenance according to all the favor He bears us in Christ. In the psalm, of course, this is expressed as on Jewish ground. But Christ manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world. The Father and the Son come and make their abode with us. Joy is possessed; full, final deliverance counted on.

Chapter 115

Publishing

The BIBLE TREASURY is published by George Morrish, (late T. H. Gregg,) 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row; to whose care all letters for the Editor, Books for review, &c., should be sent. Sold also by Broom, 34, Paternoster Row, London; R. TURLEY, Wolverhampton; FREER, 2, Bridewell Street, Bristol; Jabez TUNLEY', Guernsey; SCOTT & ALLAN, Glasgow; and by order through any bookseller. Annual Subscription by post, Four Shillings

Chapter 116

On Recently Discovered Uncial MSS of the Apocalypse: Correction

The Editor of the Bible Treasury wrote lately to Professor Tischendorf, pointing out a discrepancy between his written report (in February, 1860) of Rev. 5:9 in the Sinai MS. and the printed text of the same verse, just edited by him; the former omitting, and the latter giving, ■μ■ς. The Professor replies (in a letter dated Leipzic, Sep. 8, 1863), expressing his great regret that pressure of labor at the time of his report exposed him to oversight, and confirming the representation made in his edition of the New Testament printed from the Cod. Sinait. The reader, however, will bear in mind that the mistake, now rectified by the learned critic, had no influence on the text of "the Revelation, edited in Greek," the reported readings having come too late for insertion save in the Introduction (pp. 15 - 18).

Professor T. adds the important information, that at his last visit to St. Petersburg he has found an Uncial Palimpsest, of about the eight or ninth century, and of good character otherwise, which contains the Acts, the Pauline, and the Catholic Epistles, with the Apocalypse. This, as a whole, he hopes to give next year in his "Monumenta." The following are a few of its readings, as communicated to me: Rev. 1:18, α■ωνων, without ■μηυ (like A. C. 36, 38, Erasmus); 2:2, κοπον without σου, omitting ε■μηυ also; 2:9, τηυ θλιψιν, without τα ■ργα σου. Like C., it has ■ουδαιων, 2:13, που, without τα ■ργα σου. Besides, it has neither και nor ■ν α■ς. In chap. 4:13, it reads ■μοιος (sec.), with A., &c. In chap. 4:4, it omits ■ν; 7:8 has Βενιαμειν; 11:6, τμν ■ξουσιαν; 11:10, ε■φραινονται; 11:12, ■ναβατε; 11:18, φθειροντας, as Erasmus edited; 12:6, τρεφουσιν, with C.; 12:10, α■τους; 14:4, ο■τοι (sec.), without ε■σιν, like A. C. 28, Erasmus; 14:13, ■ν χριστω, like C. He adds, 17:2, ■χοντα; but I do not understand it, and suspect some mistake.

Chapter 117

The Record

Dear Mr. Editor, in noticing, through the medium of your work, the articles of the record on the “Plymouth Brethren” as they are now reprinted and sent forth in a more permanent form, it is my intention to confine myself mainly to remarking on the untenable doctrinal positions assumed by the editor in this controversy. I had not seen all the papers, in their more fugitive character, in the newspaper, which accounts for the lateness of this attempt to reply

The importance, as to truth, of the issues at stake can hardly be over-estimated: which is my only ground for taking up my pen.

I shall pass over in silence all that takes the shape of mere attack; since whether deserved or understood on the part of those against whom it is directed, it may be left to the judgment of the Lord, and thus in due time find its own place. But the truth or error contained in these extraordinary articles is of permanent and universal importance; and I confess that their perusal has deepened in my mind the sense of that importance, and at the same time has produced a more sorrowful impression with regard to those whose sentiments they are supposed to represent than I was prepared to entertain before.

In the outset, I may be allowed to say, it is in itself a fact of ominous import that a Protestant and an Evangelical should abandon the Scriptures as the standard of appeal, in a controversy in which Scripture doctrines are avowedly in question, and which the writer himself affirms to be of the most fundamental kind. But in these articles there is the deliberate transfer of the question of truth or error, in fundamental doctrines, from the Scriptures, to creeds and formularies and the endless tomes of orthodox divines. Opinions in these forms, and even truth itself, may be more or less accurately stated, and as such may challenge from me as a Christian man a modified assent: but this is not the question. It is, by what authority is truth or error regarding doctrines of Scripture to be settled? Is it by the writings of men or by the word of God? It is not enough (for the mind that has ever felt the question, “What is truth?” of sufficient importance to rouse it to thought and inquire) to be curtly told, in the words of the Editor of the Record, “The question has been argued long ago, and long ago conclusively settled;” and then to be rudely challenged “to take up the works of any systematic divine, or any one of the hundreds of works on justification by faith and to answer that.” And then as if this shock were not enough, to be told that when I have done that my respondent will “cut me out as much work as will last me my lifetime at least.” Now I do not want a lifetime work of this thriftless kind. I am an old man, and to me especially “vita brevis est, ars est longa.” I want a shorter and surer answer to my question. I have read systematic divinity to some extent, and I have no desire to finish life in attempting to thread its mazes, or to reconcile its contradictions. The Bishop of Ossory's book “on the Nature and Effects of Faith,” which the Editor of the Record thinks there is none like, may be a very good book; and some people think the same of Bishop Warburton's book “on the Divine Legation of Moses.” But before I am entitled to a proof from Scripture that the sanctions of the law of Moses are limited to this world, and that its rewards and punishments are bounded by this life, am I to be driven to the hard necessity “to handle the

arguments of that work, and print my reply to it?" And then, as a recompense for my pains, this Editor forsooth "will promise me to do his duty faithfully as a reviewer, and say whether I have succeeded or failed in my effort?" And what then?

Is this seriousness? or is it trifling—the most arrant and indefensible trifling with truth and souls? I will not ask him, in his own language, if it is a specimen of "his dishonest tactics," or say anything about his deluded followers. What has been demanded of him is, the truth and testimony of Scripture upon the most definitely asserted and fundamental character of Christ's work, and of a believer's position before God through that work; and this, in the manner already adverted to, he was refused. Let no one be deceived. This determination to avoid the ground of Scripture is not accidental. Much less is it a proof of confidence, on the part of the Editor of the Record, that its testimony is so abundantly in favor of his doctrine that there is no need of proof. It may be assumed as an axiom that no professedly Christian controversialist ever foregoes the authority of Scripture, or even its seeming authority, so long as there is a single text that can be quoted against his opponent and in favor of himself. It is right that it should be so. The importance of the truth and allegiance to it demands that it should be so. The sanction of Scripture throws too much weight into the scale of him who has it, ever to allow that it should be lightly given up; not to say that it is of the worst possible moral effect to accustom people to acquiesce in anything short of it. Even Rome herself, little as she may feel bound by the authority of Scripture, never fails to press into her service in her missives every text of Scripture that, either in sense or sound, seems to make for her cause.

In the next place the Editor of the Record has done his utmost to prevent a calm and godly consideration of the doctrines he has denounced by attempting to prejudice the question at issue, after the example of Rome, by attributing to those against whom he is writing every kind of doctrine and absurdity which they abhor. For example, he says, in page 11 of his pamphlet, "J. N. D.'s doctrine of justification is bald and bare Socinianism." I shall attempt no refutation of this unjust, unfounded calumny, beyond placing before my reader what that doctrine is in a quotation from the very paper which the Editor says he has so laboriously studied, and from which he has at such pains brought together his extracts in order not to misrepresent Mr. Darby's sentiments. "Two systems are in presence. One [the Record's] is that we are all under law Christians and all men; that the fulfillment of the law alone is righteousness: that in vain is propitiation made that we may be forgiven. That is not the means of being justified. In order to this Christ has kept the law in our stead, and then died for our sins; but that His death is the means of pardon, but not of justification."

"The other [Mr. Darby's] is that we believers are not under law, but under grace—that Christ, while perfect under law in His own Person, did not keep it to make good our defects under it, or give us legal righteousness or justification by it—that He died for our sins and thus put them away; but that we are viewed as also being dead with Him, and no longer in the flesh at all, to which the law applied, but stand as risen in the presence of God, in the position in which He stands with all the value of His work upon us, and accepted in His person, according to His acceptance now that He is risen. That this is measured by His having perfectly glorified God in His work, and hence is glorified in and with God in heaven; and that this is our title to be in heaven and glory in due time with Him—conformed to His image—the first-born among many brethren."

I leave the Editor to point out, in this statement of the question, and in its subsequent arguing out from Scripture, “the bald and bare Socinianism” it contains, or to retire ashamed from a contest which demands such dishonest tactics. Meanwhile I re-quote from him a passage from Hooker which he has adduced in opposition to the doctrine he condemns. Speaking of the believer's position as accepted in the beloved, Hooker says, “Shall I say [he is] more perfectly righteous than if he had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the Apostle saith, t God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' Such are we in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God Himself.” Here is nothing about Christ's law-keeping as the ground of our righteousness; neither is there the thought that the believer is under the law himself; much less the impious (if it were not the ignorant) declaration, that the Lord's obedience unto death was restricted to law-keeping, and that it could only be estimated by the standard of the law. What Hooker implies is, that through redemption the believer is more perfectly righteous than if he had fulfilled the whole law. But how is this? If the Scripture is allowed to speak, on the simplest possible grounds; consequently Hooker thinks it enough to quote the passage in proof of his position— “God made Him to be sin for us [not that He kept the law for us], that we might be made the righteousness of God [not through His law-keeping for us, but] in Him.” And his conclusion is just. “Such are we in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God Himself.” It is the exact expression of Scripture (1 John 17) “As He is, καθ■ς ■κε■ν■ς ■στι [not as He was], so are we in this world.” The ground of our righteousness is that Christ was made sin for us; the position into which we are brought by this is that we are made the righteousness of God in Him. The full result before God of this is, that “as He is, so are we in this world;” or in Hooker's language, such are we in the sight of God the Father, as in the very Son of God Himself. I need not descend from this to say that, if the believer is “more perfectly righteous than if he had kept the whole law himself,” there is an end of law as the measure of his righteousness, whether kept by Christ, or by himself, to this end. And the absurdity of his being still under the law is, that in order to this, Christ Himself must be brought (though in heaven) again under the law. For “as He is, so are we in this world.” The difficulty of allowing this, and Its perfect compatibility with entire obedience to the will of Christ, lies not in the doctrine as thus stated by Hooker and the Scripture, but in that system which the Editor of the Record undertakes to defend, and which has neither Scripture nor consistency to commend it.

Though I have quoted this passage from Hooker, as the Editor's authority to prove what it expressly denies, it is not my intention to pursue the question as it is presented in the works of systematic divines, and in the formularies of the Church of England, and in the various symbols of the Reformed Churches. I have not sufficient acquaintance with them for that, even if it were desirable; and I have not sufficient respect for them as authorities to induce me to enter on a more accurate study of them. There is no difficulty in believing that conflicting and inconsistent statements may be easily extracted from so heterogeneous a mass, since the Church of England has been described as having a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Armenian clergy.

The Editor of the Record in page 6 of his pamphlet excuses himself from the necessity of presenting any farther testimony from Scripture on the plea that Mr. Darby has dealt unfairly with what he had already adduced. These are his words: “J. N. D. complains again and again, that we have quoted no Scripture. We will give our readers a sample of the way in which he deals with so much of Scripture as we did interweave with our argument.” He then complains that the passage in

his pamphlet, here alluded to, was quoted by Mr. Darby with certain omissions, which the Editor has indicated by blanks.

Now in this passage, brief as it is, the writer has been guilty of a double sophism. In the first place he assumes in his premises the question at issue; and in the next place presents that which does not follow as his conclusion. I will explain: for this is no logomachy. The writer says, “The essence of the glorious Gospel lies in this that the Lord Jesus not only bore our penalty, but did our work:” i.e., according to his argument He kept the law for us. But this is just the point which was demanded to be proved. This is the first sophism (there is no question about the Lord Jesus having borne our penalty). But in the passages of Scripture which he says he interwove in his argument, there is no ground for his conclusion, viz., “that this whole work [' his obedience unto death' comes in in the passages of Scripture I shall quote] is called in the Scriptures and proclaimed in the Gospel as the righteousness of God.” The first of the texts, which the Editor says were omitted, is Gal. 3:13. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Here, at any rate, there is nothing about Christ's keeping the law instead of us, but bearing its curse; and redemption from the curse of the law, as regarded those who were under it, is expressly declared to be by His being made a curse for them. The result to the Gentiles is added in the next verse: “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” It is plain that when the apostle says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,” he is speaking of Jews, in distinction from Gentiles, who are brought in by name in the next verse; nor do I feel disposed, at the Editor's pleasure, to sacrifice the consistency of the apostle's argument. In sum, then, redemption, whether for Jew or Gentile, is expressly declared to be by Christ's death—by the cross—by His hanging on a tree. But neither is it said that “this is God's righteousness,” as the Editor has affirmed; though, as Scripture abundantly shows, it is the ground of it. (See especially Rom. 3:26.) This first “proof-text,” then, of the Editor's does not “flatly contradict [but affirms] what Mr. Darby is teaching.” The second text is Phil. 2:8: “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Here again there is nothing about law-keeping, but Christ's obedience unto death: But the law does not demand the death of one who perfectly fulfills its requisitions; so that something infinitely higher than vicarious law-keeping is in question. But neither does this Scripture proclaim it as the righteousness of God, nor flatly contradict what Mr. Darby is teaching. The last passage is Isa. 42:21: “He will magnify the law and make it honorable.” Here there is no difficulty; and certainly no contradiction to Mr. Darby's teaching, as the following passage from his letter, which the Editor is reviewing, will abundantly show: “I hold the maintenance of the law, in its true and highest character, to be of the deepest importance, and necessary to a right and full apprehension of divine teaching. It is the abstract perfection of a creature, loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves; and this Christ most truly did in all He did. All the moral claims and teachings of the law and prophets, as the Lord declares, hang upon it.” But in this last “proof-text” of the Editor's there is no contradiction to Mr. Darby's teaching, as we have seen; nor is there in it the declaration that it is “the righteousness of God,” which was to be proved. And herein is the Editor's second sophism. He says “We beg to call the reader's strict attention to the way in which Mr. Darby quotes this passage “-i.e., of his pamphlet. I have profited by his call: and what is the result? Why that, having filled up all his blanks by the omitted Scriptures, the position is more adverse to the Editor than when by Mr. Darby they were left blanks. The Editor might have guessed, what is now so evident, that they

were so left because Mr. Darby was more anxious to seize upon the real point in question, and so not to be diverted from his argument, than to do as I have done, formally point out the fallacies of the passage from which he was quoting.

That I may not be obliged to return to the subject again, I notice another extraordinary passage at page 43 of this pamphlet. The Editor says, “It is by no mystic, no hidden, light that the Spirit leads and guides [most true]: it is by the plain letter of the law; it is by the Holy Scripture, which contains all things needful for life and salvation.” If there is any sense at all in this latter clause (for “the plain letter of the law” is but a part of Scripture, and is included in it), it is the presentation of two distinct and opposite propositions, and then assuming them to be identical. By this means “the plain letter of the law” and “Holy Scripture” are made to be terms coincident. It is one of the commonest fallacies in reasoning; but I do not follow out the consequences, and I notice it here only to show how little dependence is to be placed on the unexamined Scriptures of the Editor, and the arguments he uses.

It is not my business to defend Mr. Darby, but to examine how the Editor of the Record meets, and attempts to refute, the Scriptures and the arguments which Mr. Darby adduces. The Editor may not know him: but those who do, will think him the last man to be suspected of evading the force of Scripture, when it is brought before him, or of reasoning on it in an inconsequent manner. Whatever else the “Brethren” are accustomed to—and they are accustomed to abuse and misrepresentation of every kind—they are not yet accustomed to the neglect of Scripture, nor to the inaccurate quotation of Scripture; nor, I trust, to refuse to bow to the authority of Scripture when it is presented.

At page 13 of his pamphlet, the Editor makes a great parade about the different senses in which the particular term “law” is used in Scripture, and concludes by saying, “Now all this, which is familiar enough to most careful students of the New Testament, Mr. Darby altogether loses sight of.” In such an assertion, this writer must have calculated largely on the ignorance, or prejudice, or credulity of his readers. The knowledge which he ascribes to “careful students of the New Testament,” is that which may be possessed by every child that reads it with an ordinary degree of attention. But his object in introducing it is simply mystification. And this mystification is applied (at page 45) with a view to neutralize the whole of the apostle's reasoning on the subject of the law in the Epistle to the Gal. 1 grant that it is an awkward epistle for a man holding such views as the Editor. But does he expect one who has the least respect for the word of God, and who believes in its inspiration, will accept such a summary as he has given of this epistle? His “careful students,” bewildered by his vaporing about the different senses of the word “law,” perhaps may; but no believer, who has any just appreciation of the word of God, will. This is his abstract: “He [i.e., the apostle] there showed that he that has Christ has all that he needs—he finds obedience in Him, righteousness in Him. Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. The apostle further shows that anything added to Christ is a denial of Christ's sufficiency; that you cannot have both the shadow and the substance; that circumcision is nothing in Christ; that in Him we are complete, and have but to hold fast by Him.” This passage, which is eked out by a quotation from Isaiah, presents absolutely all that the Editor of the Record professes to see in this wonderful epistle, which so elaborately refutes all that in this matter the Record is teaching. One would have thought there was no great difficulty in determining the meaning of the term “law” in such passages as the following: “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.”

“That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident.” “The law is not of faith.” “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” “The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul.” “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain,” with many others equally clear that might have been quoted from this very epistle. It is most striking and instructive to observe how, at every point in the Editor's argument, there is the same careful, absolute avoidance of the words of Scripture. But I commend my readers to the study of the epistle itself. I have known more than one Church of England person brought into the liberty of the Gospel by its perusal when everything else had failed.

In the order of the pamphlet we come next to a series of quotations from Mr. Darby's writings, at the close of which the Editor says, “We have chosen at some trouble to ourselves [he had not to go far to collect his passages] to let Mr. Darby speak for himself.” I have read these quotations, both here and in their connections, and disjointed and fragmentary as they necessarily are, as exhibited in pages 14 to 18 in this pamphlet-giving, for the most part, but heads of arguments, which, in their place, are carefully argued out from Scripture, I still think them the redeeming feature in the Editor's work, and incomparably more fitted to help earnest and anxious souls than anything else in this controversy which he has written. I therefore cordially thank him for having done this unwitting service to the truth. These quotations will go forth with his book, and souls that are exercised about subjection to the divine word, will find in them, fragmentary as they are, that which will meet a want and a craving within, which, if it does not lead to the study of the tractates from which they are selected, will, in the mercy of the Lord, lead to a study of the Scriptures, of which they will be felt to be the faint though faithful echo.

There is one quotation so peculiar—not from its inaccuracy—that I must beg my reader's attention for a moment to it. In quoting it, the Editor says, in brackets, “the capitals are Mr. Darby's;” and so, in truth, I must confess they are. Here they are: “I AM NOT IN THE FLESH.” But this is only a passage of Scripture with a change of pronoun. Did the Editor never read the words in Rom. 8:8, “But YE ARE NOT IN THE FLESH?” And just before, “They that ARE IN THE FLESH cannot please God?” And the converse of this, “WHEN YE WERE IN THE FLESH?” But what does this mean, that a Christian writer should be so blinded by his unscriptural system, as to hold up a passage of Scripture when printed in capitals as a statement of error? But it tells a tale. It shows that in his system the Editor has no place either for the consistency of the law or the liberty of grace.

I very earnestly commend to all Christians these works, the titles of which I give below. They belong to no sect. They are the just inheritance of every Christian of every name. Truth disdains a sectarian garb; though the Editor of the Record has attempted to brand these Scriptural expositions of a Scripture doctrine with an opprobrious name, instead of answering them, as he was bound to do, from the word of God.

It is difficult to repress a feeling of indignation when the professed teachers of others so act as to compel the application of the words of the Lord, “Ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering ye hindered.”

I reserve for a future communication the consideration of the remaining points in this pamphlet. In the meantime, and at all times, may God give His people “the meekness of wisdom,” and a

supreme regard for His holy word!

Yours faithfully, Presbus

The Record

Dear Mr. Editor,

It is one of the infelicities of controversy that those who are engaged in it are too often more intent on establishing their own views and making their adversaries appear absurd, than they are in endeavoring clearly to understand what they oppose, that, at least, misrepresentation may not come in to widen the necessary grounds of dissension. Were it otherwise, half the irksomeness of controversy would be taken away, and all cause for the acerbity with which it is so often conducted. In the end, truth would be incomparably a gainer, and the grounds of difference between Christians would be restricted to that which is due to the maintenance of truth and opposition to error.

Of one thing I am assured, that if the Record reviewer had taken half the pains to understand the doctrines of “J. N. D.” and the “Brethren,” which he has to misrepresent, and make out a case against, them, his labors might have been immensely abridged. His articles would not have appeared so triumphant, but his contempt and horror might have been directed against something more real, if not more worthy of it, than the phantoms of imagination he has conjured up for his reprobation.

His assertions concerning what his opponents hold as well as what they deny are so many, and so false, on the very face of the documents that were before him, that for the truth's sake I will try to clear the ground, by a statement of what is and what is not the subject of difference in this controversy. But in doing this I accept the declaration of the Reviewer that the difference is fundamental; and emphatically repeat, “It is fundamental.”

With those then against whom the Record has thought fit to take up arms, there is no question whether Christ's living obedience on earth was perfect or not; nor whether as “made of a woman and made under the law,” he perfectly kept the law or not. The question, on this point, is whether, as the Record asserts, his perfect obedience as “God manifest in flesh” [for he was that] was restricted to the keeping of the law, and measured by it, without the possibility of any higher feeling or act than the law demanded. As to this it is asserted by the Record (p. 41), I know not whether with great rashness or impiety, that, “In the heart of Jesus there was nothing but the law of His God. It was empty of all besides—no vestige of anything but the glorious law of the glorious God!” The ground of this assertion—what is it? “There was nothing in the ark saving the two tables of stone.” Was there ever advanced so slender (not to say so false) a ground for so enormous a conclusion? and that concerning Him who, though perfect man, was nevertheless God; and of whom it is said, “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily?” Men, and Christians, alas! in the heat of controversy, say all sorts of rash things about the person of Christ (and Christ must hear them O; but I affirm that no Christian that knows who Christ is, and has been washed from his sins in the blood of Him whom he worships as his “Savior-God,” would dare deliberately to make so rash and impious an assertion. It is no question, I repeat, whether, as made under the law, the law of God was in His heart; but, bearing in mind who He was, and what relations He sustained toward God and man (for if there are two natures there is but one person), whether what was

expressed on the two tables of stone was all that was in the heart of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ? I ask, had he no thought of mercy towards sinners, of which the law speaks not one word? Had He no thought of “giving his life a ransom for many?” A thing which the law, in its very nature, could neither demand nor take cognizance of. Is it an expression of law when Christ says to His disciples, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer?” It will not do for the Record to go off in declamation about the law being “the righteous pillar on which the throne of the Eternal rests,” and a great deal more, for which the Scripture gives him no warrant. It was the law written on the two tables—the divine code of requirement—and nothing else, which was in the ark. It is this which forms the premises of this monstrous conclusion. I ask the readers of the Record to consider whether the Lord Jesus had not other thoughts in His heart than this writer will allow Him to have, when He said “therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it again:” and “this commandment have I received of my Father.” Here is obedience and here is a commandment, which will in vain be looked for in the law; and which shows the falseness of the assertion of this writer that, not only had Christ nothing in His heart but the law, but that there is no possible obedience that is not gauged by the law. Why even Paul himself had infinitely higher things in his heart than mere law-keeping, when he said, “I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh:” —emulating Moses in his love for Israel, who said, “Oh this people have sinned a great sin yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.” And alas! for that Christian who has not higher thoughts in his heart than law-keeping, when he reads, “Be ye imitators of God as children beloved: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savor.” And again “Hereby perceive we love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

But this limitation of all obedience to statutory enactments is the utter confounding of all divine, and I will add, of all human relations, from which obedience springs, on other principles than that of subjection to law. Nothing can be more faulty as reasoning, and nothing more fatal and contrary to Scripture as doctrine, than this confounding obedience, whether of Christ or the believer, which takes its spring and character from the relationships involved, with subjection to a code of definite requirements. if we take the blessed Lord Himself, His whole life was one continued act of obedience to His Father's will. Even when going to death, as already quoted, he said “this commandment have I received of my Father.” But it is demonstrable that there is no such thing as one who had perfectly obeyed the law (and this Christ did) being required by the law still to die under its curse. But Christ did this: and did it in obedience also. “He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” This, as regards Christ, is that “higher law” (which this critic in scorn asks may be written for him) to which in infinite love and grace He was subject. A's regards believers, the Lord Jesus says, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” The Apostle John, commenting on this, in his Epistle, says, “A new commandment I write into you; which thing is true in Him and in you; because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth:” i.e., its force is founded on the relationship in which the Christian stands to Christ, and vice versa. This then is the “higher law” of the Christian, written by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures, of which this writer appears so profoundly ignorant.

I ask him if there is nothing different in the obedience a wife owes to her husband, a child to its parent, and even a servant to his master, from that which a subject owes to his king or government? In a general sense, law has to do with each, that its sanctions may not be violated. But I ask if the special obedience of each is not regulated by the relationship in which each is placed? Will it be affirmed that a wife's love and obedience are regulated by Act of Parliament, instead of inhering in the very relationship in which she stands to her husband? Or that a child's obedience is ordered by a code, instead of springing from filial affection, subject to parental authority? If this would be absurd, much more absurd is it, and impossible, that the obedience which results from the relationship of the children of God to God as their Father, and to Christ as their living Head, should be regulated by law, as law. It would be a denial of Christianity, and of the position in which believers are set by grace. But Scripture is plain, and says, “If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” And further, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” And again, “As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” And still further, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” This, then, is that “higher law” which the Record demands may be put in writing, that we may read it and “test it.” Let the Record ponder it and “test it” as it may.

But I advance, and assert that it is no question with Mr. Darby and the “Brethren” (as objected against them by the Record) whether, “As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.” And I must say that it is the grossest falsehood to say that they deny it, in the face of its assertion again and again in the very pages that are pretended to be reviewed. What is denial is, first, that this obedience was restricted to law-keeping, whether personally or vicariously, as already shown. Next, it is denied that this obedience was limited to the life of Christ, because Scripture says, “He was obedient unto death,” and His death was an essential part of His obedience. Further, it is denied that His living obedience, whether measured by the law or not, apart from His death, is the ground of a sinner's righteousness, as the Record affirms. The question lies in the nature and extent of the Lord's obedience; and whether it is to be separated into active and passive, and made distributively; the one, the ground of righteousness, and the other of pardon; separating pardon and justification (which Scripture never does), and placing them on totally different grounds.

In like manner, it is no question whether all that perfectness, in which Christ glorified the Father on earth, in living obedience and devotedness, is in the most precious sense for us; or whether or not the believer has part and interest in it all. What is denied is, that a sinner can have any part in this perfectness, or association with it, except through participation, by faith in the death of Christ. Then his participation is through union with Christ risen, in life, eternal life, as the Scripture says: “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” But this is on the ground of accomplished redemption, and as being risen with Christ. The apostle says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Otherwise, Christ in living obedience and perfectness abode alone; as He says, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” When the ground of a sinner's righteousness is stated in Scripture, it is not the living obedience of Christ that is taken up at all, much less is it taken up apart from His death. It says, “He who knew no sin was made sin for us [this was in death], that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” This is confirmed by the passage in Peter (1 Peter 2:24), “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” I do not know

whether I ought to stop even to notice the attempt that has been made to disturb the force of this passage by criticism, and adduced by one of the allies of the Record. That, “bare our sins in his own body up to the tree,” is contrary to Greek usage, and contrary to the usage of Scripture, is abundantly shown in an article on the passage in Vol. 11, p. 278, of the Present Testimony, which my reader may consult. It seems to me of very little importance whether, as Mr. Cox says, Dr. Brown first presented this criticism apart from the doctrine now in question—having stumbled upon it, I suppose, in learned ignorance—or whether it was originated by the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, to sustain its dreadful doctrine of Christ's life of unatoning penal sufferings, and which the Record makes the ground of a sinner's righteousness.

Further, in apposition to the declaration of the Record, that Mr. Darby denies that we have anything whatever to do with law, I assert it is a fundamental truth with him and with the “Brethren,” that “the righteousness of the law,” τ■ δικ■ωμα το■ ν■μου, is to be “fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” And it is so because Scripture declares that “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death.” And this again, Scripture says, is because, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law,” &c. And, I add, this righteousness is to be fulfilled in us, in a walk, “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” I note this because these critics, with marvelous accuracy, tell us that the expression is not “by us,” but “in us,” which means that Christ, who is in us, fulfilled the law, and it is reckoned to us as if we had done so; cutting off even the necessity of a believer's regarding the righteousness of the law in his walk. Now, if this is the Record's doctrine, the “Brethren” are at issue with it on the score of its practical Antinomianism. But is the believer put under law, that its righteousness may be fulfilled in him? No. It is fulfilled by his not walking “after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It is fulfilled by virtue of that “higher law “which the Record thinks fit to scorn. Still it stands in Scripture, “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” “Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

But further, as to sanctification. It is no question with Mr. Darby and the “Brethren “whether sanctification has two aspects in Scripture—absolute and practical; “progressive,” if people like the term better. It may, perhaps, suit the Editor of the Record to overlook this: a prejudice is raised by it against his adversaries. But it does not subserve the interests of truth that a writer, while apparently combating what he deems an error in his opponents, should quietly state some distinction in his argument, which at once reduces him to their position. But what does this note mean (p. 25.) “Our readers of course know, that we distinguish between sanctification as God views it, in which Christ is our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30), and we are complete in him; and sanctification as it is actually and progressively wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, but which latter is denied by the Darby theology.” But this is the doctrine of the “Darby theology,” only it presents the absolute sanctification of the believer's person; “sanctified by God the Father,” in a much fuller and more Scriptural way; and it carries practical sanctification much further than the “Record theology” can allow. This is the limit of the practical sanctification of the “Darby theology,” “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What is the limit of the Record's? But I am remarking only on the accuracy of this theologian, I leave others to reflect on his honesty. At any rate, I think now that the ground at least is clear as to what, as regards the truth of God, is at issue

between the “Brethren” and the Record, and I am not concerned about anything else.

I had marked the following passages for animadversion in these extraordinary articles, as showing the desperate positions to which the Record is driven in its zeal for orthodoxy. Since, however, I began this letter, a tractate by Mr. Darby, published in Canada, has come into my hands, in which most of the points are fully taken up, so that I shall introduce them with the briefest possible notice.

In page 20 the Record says, “This lawless is to me a graceless gospel;” and then says (p. 23), “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” I know this is a quotation from Scripture; but I ask what kind of gospel is it? Is it the gospel in which the organ of the “Evangelicals” is landed, in its inconsiderate haste and zeal, in attacking the doctrine of the “Brethren” In the same page there is this passage from the work of Mr. Mackintosh: “The believer is justified, not by works, but by faith; he stands, not in law, but in grace; and he waits, not for judgment, but for glory.” As an answer to this, the Record quotes Heb. 9:28. He so quotes it as to present the destiny of men as sinners i.e., death and judgment, as if it were the only prospect of believers, with which it is expressly contrasted. The passage begins with the adverb of comparison— “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;” but it is broken off by him from its corresponding, “so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

It is the most perfect declaration of the believer's deliverance from death, through the death of Christ for his sins, at His first coming, and from “judgment,” by His second coming, “without sin unto salvation;” that is, to receive us to Himself. “That,” as Mr. Darby says, “we must all appear, or rather be manifested, before the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive the things done in the body—that every one must give an account of himself to God, is as plainly stated in the Scripture as possible; nor would any wise Christian seek to enfeeble its force.” But, I add, this is utterly distinct from the “judgment” spoken of in the passage above; and John 5:24 declares that the believer will not come into judgment, in this sense, at all. These are the words:— “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment (ε■ς κρ■σιν ο■κ ■ρχεται), but is passed from death unto life.” Who can be thankful enough that we have not to learn what the gospel is from the Record, or even from the clearest statements of it that can be made by men? I confess that these discussions have made me feel more than ever the priceless value of the word of God.

At page 24 we come upon this extraordinary statement, “According to this Darby doctrine, we are under quite a different principle from law, under quite a different head from the first Adam.” I should think it is true, and that the man who denies it denies, not the “Darby doctrine,” but Christianity. Scripture says, “Ye are not under law, but under grace.” And it further says, “The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.” And it adds, “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Nothing can be plainer than Scripture testimony that “we are under quite a different principle from law; and under quite a different head from the first Adam;” and it is this which makes it so serious a matter for the Record. It may abuse the “Brethren,” and be scathless; but it cannot despise God's testimony of grace and salvation, and remain unharmed. I pass by its confounding “the whole law of God,” “the law of liberty,” and “Christ's commandments.” It is not inaccuracy that led to this. That we are all subject to. It is simple ignorance of Christianity, as well as utter

carelessness of Scripture.

In page 38 I read the following: “Darbyism has its strength, or rather its weakness, in a denial of the law of God, as playing any important part at all in the salvation of men.” Well, and what part does it play in the salvation of men? I suppose the first requisite in “the salvation of men” is that, by some means or other, they should obtain life: unless the Record thinks it is “Darbyism” to say they are “dead in trespasses and sins.” Now, Scripture is explicit enough as to this when it says, “If there had been a law which could have given life [this was man's exigency], verily righteousness should have been by the law.” I suppose, too, they wanted righteousness also. But, then, it is said, “If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain.” But further, Scripture says, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law worketh wrath. “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law [not, according to the Record doctrine, by having kept the law for us, because we had not kept it—and still binding on us to keep it, though He kept it for us, but by], being made a curse for us [and that, not according to the doctrine of the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, by His sin-bearing life, but in His atoning death], as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Yes, my fellow Christians, let us hold fast the truth, that “now once in the end of the world [or the consummation of the ages] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

In page 40 this critic says, “We believe that the following proposition could be easily demonstrated that of all that was typical under the law of Moses we have the complete substance under Christ's gospel, and that all that was not typical in the law of Moses we have now precisely as it was first given;” i.e., the law with its imperative demand and its curse too, I suppose, notwithstanding Christ's having perfectly kept it in life, and having died under its curse. He has not put his “quod erat demonstrandum” to the proposition; so I content myself by objecting to it the Scripture which says, “All the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” (Some change at any rate was impending when Christ came.) And “The law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. “Tell me,” says the Apostle, “ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law ?” (Gal. 4:21.) And let my reader pursue his argument to its close in these memorable words: “Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.” Perhaps my opponent may retort, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” I reply, “It was added because of transgressions TILL the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” “Moreover the law entered [or came in by stealth] (παδεσ■λ■εν) that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Scripture does not confound “the offense” and “sin” in this passage; nor does it confound “sin” with “transgression” in the important argument of the Apostle in the previous verses of the same chapter. (Rom. 5:13, 14.) or does it ever say, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” This critic confounds these distinctions and makes “law” the measure of sin, on the supposed authority of the above passage, in which “law” is not found at all, nor “transgression” either. It is simply ■ ■μαρτ■α ■στιν ■ ■ωομ■α.

The next point I notice (pp. 36, 37) is the Record's estimate of the importance of a “public written creed,” which he is extremely troubled that the “Brethren” have not. He is very eloquent in his appeals to his readers about it, and shows them the fearful alternative of being without it. He says the alternative is blank infidelity, in one direction; and I know not what exactly in the other. He then tries to frighten the “Brethren” into a creed by a fearful description of the aurora borealis. You may

imagine how they feel when he has told them of its fitful gleams, and “changing colors,” “ghastly green, the deadly hue of death, and fierce red glare of destruction, and wrath to the uttermost;" and then closes by the solemn declaration, “So is Mr. Darby's creed!” But why so! Because, poor gentleman! he is reduced to such an extremity that when you ask him what he believes, he answers, “the Bible!”

Of course the Record has found the good of a “public written Creed” in the maintenance of orthodoxy and in the driving away of all error from the limits of its own communion. I suppose it must have acted like a talisman, attracting all hearts and harmonizing, all sentiments, within the pale of the Establishment at least. There is the Creed—written, public, acknowledged, and, as to its clergy, subscribed. But what of the consenting belief of the various parties in the Establishment. Do the evangelicals, who are accused of believing too little, agree with the Puseyites, who they think believe too much? Is the Record in a position to provoke a scrutiny? Does it not humiliatingly feel how much it needs to be like one of its own “invertebrates,” in order to keep its position at all? It is evident enough, to the slightest observation, that the evangelicals are becoming more and more manifestly in a false position. The Record, as their organ, may deplore the incoming (in spite of its “public, written creed”) of the tide of infidelity and popery into the Establishment; and so do I. But I am not bound, as the Record is, to defend at all costs, as the only proper ordering of God's Church, the system that allows of this deadly evil. May I not say, in its own language, that “its whole system is out of joint. It has no backbone, but goes goggling about like a mollusk?” The simile is his own.

Our critic next presents his strictures, or professes to do so, on the “Brethren's” notion on church government and discipline. With this he combines the question of gifts and ministry. I think he has now ventured on dangerous ground; but he has determined that his review of the “Brethren” shall be like the Earl of Strafford’s— “Thorough.” My reply, however, will not be long. Mr. Darby, in his Canada publication, has taken up the distinctive character of the Church, and has given the Scripture testimony on the subject. In the next place, the Record has affixed at the head of the present article a work of Mr. Darby's, entitled, “On Ministry: its Nature, Source, Power, and Responsibility,” and another by the same author, entitled, “Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ.” Of the first of these works he says nothing at all: therefore I have nothing to answer. The second he dismisses with a few sentences of badinage, and this, of course, I can neither answer nor imitate. Observing, however, the date of 1834 on the former work, he is moved to say, “It is an old story.” “We do not profess to understand it.” The reason is plain. It is taken from an OLDER STORY, with which he is little acquainted, and which he understands as little. It seems a little too bad that he should thus sail off, after the bluster of the immediately-preceding sentence: “If they do not like our representation of their doctrines, let them come out, as we have done,” &c. I certainly thought the “Brethren” had “come out” with some sufficiency on these topics at least, and that they had not been very backward on most others. I suspect their “coming out” has been in a manner that is little to the Record's satisfaction. They are men of one book. But whether the subject be doctrine or discipline, the nature of the Church, gifts, ministry, the Record (whatever it may have done in former days) most sedulously avoids an appeal to Scripture. It is an authority it dares not encounter.

This is not, however, the close of the subject. Mr. Mackintosh, in a work the title of which is also at the head of this article, has stated what he judges he has learned from Scripture on the subject of

gifts and ministry. To these statements the Reviewer presents his reply—not from Scripture, but by giving a sketch (without naming it) of a university course, of examination for orders, and of episcopal ordination. In a word, he confronts statements drawn from the New Testament on the gifts which Christ, as the Head of His Church, ascended up on high to receive, and to give for its edification, with his own ecclesiastical system. He does not deny that the gifts of Christ are essential to ministry. But, then, he says (p. 50), “CHRIST gives the gift of iron ore, the gift of skill and strength, and out of these gifts we know not what can be brought.” This, I fancy, my readers will think is “coming out.” The statement of Scripture is, “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.....And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Our Reviewer replies, “He gave the gift of iron ore,” too—and the skill to melt it, I suppose, and the strength to forge it, and the out-come of a “steam-engine or a needle!”

Still they are Christ's gifts; for He gives alike the strength of him that “smootheth with the hammer, and that smiteth the anvil;” the gift of Paul an apostle, and of “Tubal Cain, the artificer in brass and iron.” But now comes the issues of the matter. These gifts of Christ, when duly wrought and polished, and “examined thoroughly by competent men, set apart for the doing of that very work and finally, under all responsibilities, ordained to the work by men who themselves have been trained.... we listen to his word as to one who speaks with authority.” “To this height, he says, the Plymouthists, guided by J. N. D. and C. H. M. have not attained.” Not yet, I reply, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. But what is this height? Why, like the Record, to see equally in the late Archbishop of Canterbury and the present Dr. Pusey, Christ's gift to His Church. To own as “speaking with authority,” the writers of the Oxford Tracts, and the authors of the Essays and Reviews; to validate the orders, as Christ's ministers, of the quondam members of the “Sterling Club;” and to acknowledge as a chief pastor in the Church of Christ, Bishop Colenso! The “Brethren” “have not attained this height.” Nor have they learned in one breath to say, “In the end, our ministers, of whatever grade, are in simple reality the appointment of the Holy Ghost,” and yet be obliged to admit that they may be sent as plagues; so that “God for our sins and infirmities permits them for our punishment.” I do not rejoice in iniquity. God forbid. But this “turning of things upside down!” this iniquity in the place of righteousness! “How long?”

A word or two on the Record's allies and I have done. Dr. Carson, the Record says, has written “a slashing little pamphlet,” which is strongly recommended. Perhaps by this time the Editor may have learned, that weapons in the hands of unskillful combatants sometimes wound friends as well as foes. Dr. C. may also have learned the homely proverb, that “It is dangerous to play with edge-tools;” at any rate, he has “slashed” too unskillfully for his own reputation, and has cut too rudely for his clerical friends. In his zeal to brand with heresy an expression of Mr. Mackintosh, he has left his mark on one of the most prominent formularies of the Church of England, charging with “Valentinianism” an identical expression in what is called “The Apostles' Creed.” The unfounded and unrighteous nature of the attack on Mr. Mackintosh, commenced by the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, and seconded by Dr. Carson, Mr. Darby has fully shown, as well as the worth or worthlessness of Dr. C.'s pamphlet.

In Mr. Cox's pamphlet, there is nothing to require an independent consideration. In his doctrine he agrees with the Record and Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, and is the humble admirer of Mr. B. W.

Newton. Like the Record, he relies mainly on the testimony of divines, and quotes from those of the last three centuries. In the presence of the Scriptures these may stand aside. I am tempted, however, to quote a brief passage from one of them, given by Mr. Cox, that my reader may learn how men talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, when they leave the divine word and trust their own thoughts as a guide:

“From his birth, all that great ordnance of God's curses was charged with wrath, and bent against him, in order discharged, and let off upon him.” “The curse seized upon him when he was made flesh, and began to break out upon him, in the spots of human infirmities, making him all over like sinful flesh.” Mr. Cox appears to have had some misgiving about this traversing of Scripture on the most solemn point of its revelations. He adds, “While writing thus, Goodwin earnestly contended for the Godhead, glory, and perfectly sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus.” Perhaps he did. It shows the school in which Mr. Cox has studied.

Mr. Synge also is introduced, in this controversy, by the Record; for what purpose it is hard to say; for this gentleman takes especial care to purge himself from what he deems the false doctrine of the Record on the one side, Quarterly Journal of Prophecy on the other, and that of Mr. Molyneux also, with whose statement this controversy commenced. Mr. Synge says, “Before entering upon the discussion of opposite theories, I wish to guard against two notions, which are sometimes entertained about Christ's fulfillment of the law: first, we sometimes hear of Christ's obedience to the law spoken of as if it gave a title to life in heaven. For my own part I cannot believe this, for I see no connection between Christ's obedience to the law ordained for man on earth, and the obtaining a title for the same man to a place in heaven. On what principle could an earthly law give any such title? Again, the other notion I would guard against is that of supposing that Christ bore the curse or penalty of sin during His life, previous to His entering the garden of Gethsemane.” His doctrine about Christ and His work is incomparably better than his associates; and he differs more widely in his views of the law from the Record than he does from Mr. Darby. But as he gives them as theories, I have no temptation, nor disposition, to disturb them. Further study of the Scriptures may modify his views. However, as assailants of “the Brethren,” all are patted on the back by the Record, and the due weed of praise is given to each. Dr. Carson is complimented with having written “a lively little pamphlet:” which the Record “again commends to the reader.” Mr. Synge is encouraged as “one of our country clergy.” But the compliment is almost spoiled by the awkward confession, “We had almost forgotten to notice the little tractate named at the head of this article.” Mr. Cox “deserves honorable mention and has done yeoman's service.” Because, I suppose, he has been armed only with a pike, as a halberdier; while the reviewer claims for himself the honor of an ancient knight, accoutred, and lance in hand, to ride down the ranks of his foes. Alas! in the encounter, he has not taken the only weapon to which they are vulnerable— “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

I have done. I trust I have “set down naught in malice.” The importance of the truths at issue, and of endeavoring in a day like this to maintain a true witness for Christ, I have no wish to disguise. If this mercy be accorded to the “Brethren,” it is worth while to have borne ten thousand times the abuse that has been heaped upon them in consequence. And if for the slender part I have borne in this controversy I am with Mr. Darby put under the ban of these Christian Reviewers, I shall rejoice. I have left it to his pen to present the tide of Scripture testimony that sweeps away their feeble opposition, and have contented myself with indicating the falseness of the grounds they

have assumed in that opposition.

I now retire to more quiet studies, and perhaps more fitting.

Yours faithfully, PRESBUS.

Chapter 118

The Red Sea and the Wilderness

(Ex. 15)

It is easy to understand Israel's distress,—the sea before shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing, so that they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord, and said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” Although, as we see, they had cried to the Lord, they had not in their hearts reckoned on His delivering them. It must, therefore, have been a wondrous thing to them when God was so publicly manifested to be on their side. And so is it with our hearts, when thus tested with trial on every side; shut in, as it were, with trouble of one sort or another, our hearts are often found buried under the circumstances, instead of calculating upon the God who is above them either to sustain us under them or deliver from them. Israel was dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, &c., till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. Afterward, through their folly in putting themselves under the law, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In the sixteenth chapter, when they murmured for food, God gave them quails (as well as manna) without any reproach, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on the ground of perfect grace. But afterward, when they again murmured for flesh (being then under law), we read that, while it was yet in their mouths, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague. But God would first have them know how entirely bent He was on doing them good, bad as they might be.

It is well to distinguish, for our soul's profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. For a person may hear the Gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out towards Himself; but if full redemption is not known, as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not know himself to be risen with Christ, on the other side of death and judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes in and he feels his own weakness. The joy of chapter xv. is, that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt, and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. A very different thing from the joy of the Passover—being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover He had made Himself known to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the doorposts screened them from judgment; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. Had He come in, it must have been in judgment. At the Red Sea it was another thing—even God coming in strength as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from His judgment, the Red Sea from their enemies. The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He comes in. The very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation. Thus through death God delivered them from death; like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan, went down under the power of death, and rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus was there an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them forever. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt; God Himself is their salvation. He whom they had feared, and justly, as a Judge, is become their salvation. They are redeemed;

no longer were hoping for mercy, but able to rejoice that judgment was past, and to sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation—to God Himself; in the light as He is in the light; and brought there before they had taken one step in the wilderness, or fought one battle with their enemies.

There is no conflict properly till redemption is known. They did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh, but only to get away from him. They groaned under his yoke, but did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first; be the Lord's host before they can fight His enemies or their own. And so it is with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan while I am still his slave. I may groan under his yoke, and sigh to be delivered from it; but before my arm can be raised against him, I must have a complete and known redemption. The Israelites are not only happy in escaping the pursuer: it is a full, conscious redemption from Egypt and Pharaoh; and they can count on God's power for all the rest. “The people shall hear and be afraid, the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.” (Ver. 15, 16.) Their joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God's own divine power taking them up, and putting them in His own presence.

“Thou shalt plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance.” (Ver. 17.) This was yet to be done; but they were already with Him in His holy habitation—not theirs but His. And thus are we in His presence, brought to God, though not yet in the place prepared for us on high. So, in Eph. 1, the apostle prays “that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” It was God's land they were to dwell in. The Father's house in which our home shall be. It is His glory, and He will bring us into it. No fear of the enemies by the way: to faith they are powerless. Full confidence belongs to redemption. Is it, then, as men would say, all plain sailing now? In no wise. It is the wilderness, and there is no water; and, mark, it was by the Lord's command they pitched in Rephidim.

Does this make redemption uncertain ? Not at all. Yet it is a dreadful thing to have no water; it was certain death in those countries. Had He then brought them through the Red Sea and unto Himself to kill them with thirst When at length they did come to water, it was bitter. But this was to prove them, and bring out what was in their hearts. The bitter water did not show what was in God's heart: redemption had shown that; but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. They must drink into the power of death. Being redeemed forever, they must learn that there is nothing for them in the wilderness. All supply must be from God Himself. This is the very effect of redemption, and there is so much in us to be brought out and corrected. But He makes the waters sweet. We must all learn death (being redeemed we have life) and it cannot be learned in Egypt. They had no Marah in Egypt. It is wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, to one's own will; and all this is very trying. A person might be tempted to say, all this trial comes upon us because I have not redemption. Not so; it is just because you are redeemed. We may seek to avoid the bitter waters of Marah, but God will bring us to them. We must break down all that is of the old man, and then, in His own good time, He will put in that which sweetens all. But because God has brought me to Himself, He is putting His finger on everything (be it love of the world, setting up self, my own will, or whatever it may be) that hinders complete dependence on Him, or my soul's full enjoyment of Himself. But count it not strange, though it be a fiery trial which is to try you; for as surely as you are redeemed, so will He break down your own will. Yes, beloved, God will make you drink of the very thing (death) that redeemed you.

And now Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them. He gave them statutes, &c. He did not do so before He had redeemed them. They had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. This was the effect of having to do with God, and now they learn God in a new character— “the Lord that healeth.” A different thing from His promise, that if obedient He would bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They are exercised by God, but it is that they may know Him as the Healer; it is for this that the whole heart has to be brought out before God. We cannot escape it. He will so order circumstances as to bring it about. Sometimes we are humbled before men: this is very trying, very bitter water; but, then, what a wretched thing it was to be seeking to magnify oneself! As soon as the tree (the cross) is in the waters, they refresh the soul. This is joy in tribulation. Joy in redemption first, but now in the healing. First, God makes us to sing in the knowledge of redemption; and then, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption, which is the enjoyment of God Himself in our souls, the flesh, which would always hinder this, must be broken down in whatever form it works. It was to prove them. God knew what was in their hearts; but they did not, and they must learn it.

After this they come to Elim. Now they experience the natural consequences of being with God—the full streams of refreshment—as soon as they were really broken down. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of their dependence on the Lord for everything, and nature would have been unbroken. But trial produces dependence, and dependence, communion. It is only for this that He delays, for He delights in blessing His people. The numbers 12 and 70 are different figures of perfection. Perfect refreshment, perfect shelter, and all this in the wilderness, and rest then.

They must be exercised at Marah, that they may fully know and enjoy Him at Elim. Redemption brought them indeed to God, but now it is joy in God. And so it is with us. Although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself, flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. But whatever trial we are in, however deeply we may have to drink into death, there is resurrection as well as death; and when we see God's hand in it—when we see the cross of Christ in the bitter waters—we understand God's mind and purpose in them, and they become sweet to us. We cannot walk in the way of faith without faith, so we must be put to the test. Not that, for the present, tribulation seems joyous, but grievous, but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits unto them that are exercised thereby. Flesh is not faith. If I lose my trust in God for one minute, that very minute the flesh comes in, under some form or other. Whenever we feel perplexed, at a loss, the eye is not single: it shows I am out of communion, otherwise I should know what to do. If the eye were single, the whole body would be full of light. Or there is something yet to be detected in us, something we have not yet found out in our own hearts. It may not be willful sin; but there is something He will exercise our hearts about, something as to which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah-Rophi. Thus we learn to rejoice in tribulation also, and then to rejoice in God—finding springs of joy, refreshings in the wilderness in that God who brought us there. Let us, then, not count trial a strange thing; for we know its purpose, even that we may joy in God Himself.

Revelation 3:14

In the case of Laodicea, the inscription differs from the rest, inasmuch as it is the character of Christ in himself, apart from the saints, instead of his relationship to them. Christ remains the same, although the church is gone to ruin. God could put his amen on him, if the church fail ever so. And he is available for every opened ear. There is nothing owned, but he rebukes and chastens. He is outside, standing at the door, yet ready for anyone who has ears to hear. All good is shut up in him. As for the professing church, there is entire, definite, final rejection: not a hope of restoration is held out as a whole, but positive judgment is threatened, however love may work still, as with Israel of old, towards individuals

Chapter 120

The Ribband of Blue

(Num. 15:37-39; Col. 3:1)

Let me say a word on the Lord's instituting a blue ribband to be worn by the Israelites on the fringe of their garments. No Christian would suppose that this was unmeaning; or if it conveys a divine lesson, that it is not our business to seek to understand it; and more than this, to act by the grace of God accordingly.

As to the general meaning of the “blue,” which we often find in this book of Numbers, there cannot be any doubt about it. It is the color of heaven and the appropriate witness of a heavenly character. We have white used commonly for the representation of purity, as crimson or scarlet is the image of the world's glory; and the ribband of blue being the heavenly color, the thought connected with it is very simple, though of immense practical importance. The Lord would have His people, even in the commonest things of daily life, to present the constant testimony before their own, as well as others' eyes, that they belong to heaven. The effect of this we shall find to be mighty over the soul. It is not enough for us that we should simply abstain from that which is evil, or that we should cultivate godliness. No person born of God could doubt or deny our obligation to holiness, and that the children of God are bound to abstain even from the appearance of evil. But supposing all this, and that each wore his garment ever so undefiled, would this be the ribband of blue? Does it not mean the reminding our souls from day to day of the place to which we belong? The outward raiment was used to set forth that which is displayed before people—our character and ways. What God, as I think, intended by the blue on the fringe, was the intermingling in the most ordinary ways of daily life the constant token that we are heavenly, and not merely that we shall be there by and by. If we, as it were, put heaven off, making it purely a hope for the future, would not this be for the Israelite, not to wear or look upon this ribband of blue? For if we are merely treating heaven thus, we might be led to say, We may be earthly now, but we shall be heavenly by and by when we get there. But the effect of our souls taking in the truth which this type teaches is that, while we are on earth, surrounded by difficulties, heaven is before our eyes and hearts. Otherwise we shall be in the constant danger of acting simply as earthly men—godly, I will suppose, and kind and. truthful; but all that is totally short of God's will concerning us. Even to serve Christ, blessed as it is, is not the same thing as being heavenly. All that might have been, and indeed in many cases is, true in beloved saints of God, where the blue ribband is forgotten. What answers to the type, and gives it us far more fully, according to the power of the New Testament—no longer merely the shadow, but the very image—is the truth we have in Col. 3. We are there addressed as those who belong to heaven, but, of course, still upon earth, which gives rise to all the difficulties of the path of faith. There will be no difficulty in walking rightly when we are in heaven; but the fight and victory is by faith now. We are so apt to judge by the feelings of our hearts, so easily led away. And what can strengthen us against ourselves? Let us hearken to what the Lord says here: “It shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.” Is it not remarkable that the blue fringe should be used of God as an incentive to obedience? The very fact that our souls begin each day with this

memorial before us is no small thing. Supposing that we have in our business, or in anything else, to do with men, what is it that will preserve us by the grace of God? What an encouragement to us! What a remembrance that we belong to heaven! “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” Were this before us, there is nothing, small or great, that the Christian would not do according to God: there would be a felt link with heaven, and not merely a matter of necessity or of character, which is below a Christian. Of course a Christian will be honest and godly, but if I make character or necessity the reason why I do a thing, I am not walking as a Christian at all, but like many a man who is the enemy of God and His Son. Doing it as a matter of duty does not lift you above self and present things. Nay, supposing I look at the Lord simply as one strengthening me in my daily duty, it is quite true; but it is not the full measure of the truth. I may lower the Lord to be my helper upon earth merely; hut that is not the ribband of blue. But if my eyes are raised from the earth, and fixed on Christ in heaven—if I remind myself that my present association is with Christ in heaven, and that God looks for me to walk worthily of Christ now above myself, being one with Him who is there—in this you find, I conceive, the great truth that answers to the figure. And this the Lord here connects with remembering all His commandments and doing them and walking holily. He had brought them out of Egypt that they might thus walk according to Him, and that they might be His people and He their God. How often, alas! we walk merely “as men.” But if we do not rise above that standard, we are not walking according to that witness of heavenly things which the Lord set forth in type to Israel. We shall find that the power of being heavenly, is according to the measure in which our souls enter into Christ there. It is not a question of correcting this or that, or of beginning one thing and another, but of heavenly things in Christ separating our hearts from things on earth. When we look from heaven, as consciously of it, and work from heaven downwards, earthly things soon dwindle, and the praise of their disappearance returns not to ourselves in any way, but to Christ. Thus He Himself has all the glory, whatever good thing there may be wrought by the Spirit among the children of God.

Chapter 121

Divine Righteousness

God cannot do anything to make justification more perfect than it is. Any attempt of man to add to it, would be like trying to add light to the sun. Love brought Christ down, and righteousness raised Him up. The term, “the righteousness of God,” means that God is just in justifying by the faith of Christ, and has no reference to what He was under law here below. Christ suffered once, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. One part, consequently, of divine righteousness, is that Christ is raised up from the dead; another, that we who believe become the righteousness of God in Him. The “righteousness of God” is the obligation, as it were, to bless me in Christ if I look to Him for salvation. Doubtless Christ did fulfill all righteousness; it was indeed what He owed to God as an obedient, faithful man on the earth; but “the righteousness of God” is what He owed to Christ. When the idolatrous Gentiles were ready to acquit the Messiah, the Jews cried out so much the more, “Crucify him, crucify him.” And both joined therein to do the fatal deed. There was an end of the trial of man. Then, all being proved ungodly and unrighteous, a new kind of righteousness—even the righteousness of God, who justifies freely of His grace without law—comes into manifestation. He raises Christ up from the grave, after redemption. He does not set Him on the throne of David; that would be far too low an estimate of His work. But He sets Him as the glorified man on His own right hand in the heavenly places, and communicates to the joint-heirs the knowledge not only of free and full pardon through His blood, but of acceptance in the Beloved according to the power of His resurrection.

Chapter 122

Risen Christ and Our Relations to Him

(John 20:1-23.)

We all know that in ministering the word there are many applications of the truth, all of them of God it may be, as of course that which is really of the Spirit of God must be. I am merely speaking of our deductions from it, which partake of human infirmity. But it does not follow that, because the way of looking at a particular part of Scripture may be different, one view may not be just as true as another. What has been upon my own mind in hearing this chapter read, is the remarkable manner in which the Holy Ghost presents three distinct things in their due and divine order. The first is the very foundation and center of Christianity: Christ risen from the dead. And this is so sure that Paul, as we are aware, in 2 Cor. 5:16, does not hesitate to say, “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” It is not thus that we stand related to Him. It is not simply Christ as the Son of God from all eternity; neither is it Christ viewed as man in the world, but Christ risen that we belong to in an emphatic manner. Now, I am aware that there are those who do not weigh the word of God, and who merely reason from their own minds as to Scripture truth, and to them it would seem an insignificant inquiry. Supposing we have Christ, they would say, What does it matter how we view our relationship to Him? But allow me to put a case. There is one that you are attached to. Does it make no difference whether you have that person's special affections, and whether you are married to such an one or not? We may think of the loved one's worth, character, amiability, kindness, and of a thousand points that we admire. But there is such a thing, independent of all these, as entering a positive, known relationship. Now, I say that our relationship as Christians is with Christ dead and risen. And so true is this, that the Apostle Paul insists upon it that, no matter what was the blessedness of knowing Christ in all His love and power, His majesty and tenderness, as the glorious Messiah, whom prophets and patriarchs had looked for from the beginning, yet now that He was dead and risen again, there was a new and surpassing nearness of association with Him; and it is with Christ risen from the dead that we stand connected in the mind of God, by grace. Not that we lose Christ anywhere else. By grace we have Him even if we think of Him before ever he became incarnate. His thoughts were about us, His love towards us, before ever the heavens and earth were made. It was the blessed counsel between the Father and Son, and His delight even then, before a single creature was formed, that He was to share His affection with the sons of men. This we learn from Prov. 8. It was always before the Father and the Son. Then when the earth was formed, and men were called to dwell upon it, God gradually brought out His intention to have a blessed kingdom, the head of which, He showed on Adam's fall, was to be another man, the second man. This is a very remarkable expression, which it would be well to weigh. Christ was indeed man—most truly man—and so He was born, and lived, and died; but yet was He, and He only, the second man, the last Adam. All others, viewed merely as men, came under Adam, the man that fell into sin, and so came under the judgment of God. But now there is this “second man,” and He is “the last Adam.” And in what condition is He so? As risen from the dead. It is in 1 Cor. 15 that we have Him so brought out; and you are all aware that the very pith of the chapter is the resurrection. But just as

there, so here—a most mighty consequence is made to depend upon His rising from among the dead: namely, that we are brought even now, before our resurrection comes, into a heavenly position, in relationship with Him. It is not only that we are to be heavenly when we get to heaven, but “as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” It is perfectly sure that we are to bear the image of the heavenly. But more than this is true. If we are Christians at all, we are heavenly men now. And it is the weakness of our faith in laying hold of this blessed truth that accounts for many a bit of worldliness, and many a way of selfishness not yet judged. How is it that we fail to apprehend our own right and favored place? Because we so little think of Christ as He is, and weigh His glorification with such careless hearts. If there are those you have a real attachment to, do you not think of them? And if some special glory belongs to them, does not your heart ponder it? If there is an actual known relationship between you, and you discover how little you think or feel, are you riot grieved about it? It proves the feebleness of love. Just so we learn to judge ourselves. Our faith and love are proved to be most scanty by this, that we so little dwell upon what magnifies our Savior. When we do dwell there, do not our own souls reap the instant blessing? We cannot see and delight in Christ, without being ourselves filled with blessedness. This is the very thing that delivers from self and transforms us into the image of Christ. God meets us in our selfishness, and in one sense He ministers to it—at least He meets us in our deep wants, and the cry which goes up to Him about them; but then it is in order to kill self. If I ask, What must I do to be saved? it is a most suited question for a lost, sinful man; but while God stoops to me in that very want and satisfies my soul, is it to leave me there? No; but to fill my heart with the Savior to take me out of all questions about myself, and to give me an object wholly outside, and yet nearest of all to me; and that is Christ. This is specially true of the way which the Savior's love takes towards us now. He is risen from the dead, and He calls us into the closest association with Himself thus risen. But the disciples, as we find in this chapter, slowly, poorly enter into it. Why was this? Why are we, why are children of God so dull now, in laying hold of the resurrection of Christ and of their own standing in virtue of it? It is not that people deny the fact of the resurrection but they do not appreciate its glory, neither do they understand its application or results. They are like the butterfly which hovers over the beautiful flower, rather than as the bee so diligently gathering honey from it. Our right portion is to be extracting from this blessed truth that which the Lord calls upon us to draw from it. It is faith that does this. Faith is diligent in learning of, in living and feeding upon Jesus, and upon Jesus as He has to do with us, that is Jesus risen. But some will again urge, If I have Jesus at all, have I not the Son of God, the Savior? Have I not His love and life in Him? Am I not an elect one? All this may be true, but unless I see Jesus dead, risen, and that He thus stands related to me, where are my sins? You may have the love of Jesus, and the hope that you are elect of God; but you may, withal, be miserable lest you should, after all, be judged for your sins. Now, it is quite right, always right, to be humbled about our sins as long as we are here: nay, in heaven, I believe we shall have the deepest humility of all in looking back upon the past in presence of God's love and glory. But will there be any doubts in heaven? any fear of being cast down thence? Such anxieties could not enter heaven. Neither ought they to enter the heavenly man here; for that which brings us to heaven is given to us upon the earth. Why, then, should we doubt here any more than there? It is all for want of simply realizing what really is our foundation and strength before God.

What, then, is the difference, when we seize our relationship with the Lord Jesus as the one who is risen? It is this. Unless we see Him risen, the question of sin still seems to be unsettled. There is

always something to be done. And so there was till He was risen. But when He was dead and risen, all was finished. John 19 shows the fact itself; chap. 20 shows the disciples beginning to realize it. It was not a disciple, but the Savior Himself, who said, “It is finished;” and the disciples were slowly learning this grand truth which was now beginning to break through the clouds, that “it is finished.” They come to the sepulcher; they see where the Lord had lain—the linen clothes—the napkin that was about his head by itself: what calmness and peace! There was none of the hurry of men about it; no weakness trying to force through some obstacle: no sign of trick or violence in carrying off the body of Jesus. It was Himself that had been there, sleeping in the grave; and He had raised Himself. For it was not only that God raised Him; but, “destroy this temple,” He had said, “and in three days I will raise it up.” None but one who was God could say this. Others require a hand outside them to raise them: Jesus raised Himself. And now that He stands risen from the dead, what does He say? He brings the individual believer into association with His own resurrection. This is what we see here. Mary was weeping; the Lord asks her why, and makes Himself known to her. Have we ever thought of this? The true dryer-up of tears is Jesus risen. It is this alone can satisfy. It is not the thought of where they are departed whom we love, but Jesus is risen; and there I find the pledge that I shall see them with Jesus and like Jesus; that, instead of loss, it will be eternal gain and blessedness. Even here He is our portion, and we look for the day when we shall be with Jesus on high. To Mary our Lord opens this out. She was not to touch Him; she longed so to show Him all the devotedness of her affection, and her deep reverence for His person. But He was now risen, and the Christian way of knowing Christ is not by the bodily touch, or His visible presence here. Thus we find that the simplest fact of Scripture is turned to illustrate the highest truths. In the account of the resurrection given by Matthew, the women do touch Him, because the first gospel shows us Jesus as the Messiah, and, as such, yet to be known and received by Israel. They are to have His bodily presence with them by and by, reigning over them in an open manner. But we love Him whom we have not seen; “though we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” To us He is a risen unseen One. Death has entirely separated our sins, not only from Him to whom they were charged, but from us, whose they really were. He took them upon Himself, and died, and He is now risen and is bringing us into His own blessedness. Therefore He says, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” This is one errand on which He was going to heaven. It was, in truth, to bring them nearer to God, than they could have been if He had abode with them on the earth. So that there is not a single thing now but what is turned into greater blessedness than ever for us. Had Christ remained with us on the earth, we should not have been so blessed as we are. Christ, going on high, has presented us in His own heavenly privileges before His Father and our Father, His God and our God. For it results from His own place before God, founded on the putting away of our sins by His blood, that we have our place and access into the favor wherein we stand.

But that is not all. Our Lord shows us a third thing—not only that we have Himself risen, and the disciples now formally possessing this blessed place of being sons through and with the Firstborn; but, more than these, there is a circle of heavenly fellowship, of being united together as a body. And mark all well. The Holy Ghost does not consider us in a fit condition to enter into our church position until we are thoroughly established in our individual standing before God. Had this been remembered, what confusion, what ignorance, what fatal mistakes might have been hindered? It is not only that others have to watch against the snare, but such as are conversant with church truth

have specially to guard against it. Always let us bear this in mind, never to merge what we owe the Savior and what we have in Him, in that which others share. It is a great joy to think that all saints do share Christ with us; but I must have Him for my own soul. So having and enjoying Him for ourselves, we shall only so much the more be able to add to the joy and to help one another. There is a danger of forgetting this, in our coming together as an assembly and taking the sweet tokens of our Savior's death and passion for us; a danger of merely forming one out of a mass who all join in it, without first having apprehended His message to our own souls individually. All communion of joy and worship is very right in its place; we are members one of another. But, first and foremost, there is not a word to Mary Magdalene except about individual relations to the Father and God of the Lord Jesus Christ. “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Our Lord would have us enter into this—to enjoy what Christ is and what Christ has done for us as fully as if there were not another being in the world to be blessed by it. But are we to stop short there? Am I to shut myself out from the blessed interchange of thoughts and divine affections which flow from the union of Christ's body on earth? I shall have these perfectly in heaven; but I ought also to have them now: to be entering upon the joys, sorrows, obligations which result from realizing this position now. But it must be in the Lord's order. Here we find the disciples gathered together as the effect of His message, and the doors shut for fear of the Jews. There was no mingling of the world and the saints, but the most distinct separation was maintained. No veil was there, nor middle wall of partition, still less a hedge of Pharisaic pride; but there is a separation, in heavenly grace, of those that belonged to Christ from those that did not. And those that were Christ's, were wishing to make known to others the Christ they had got. And so when the Lord comes into their midst, notwithstanding that the doors were shut, He says to them, “Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” There was their own proper united joy in seeing the Lord. He had sent a word to them before they saw Him, to tell them of their blessing, and now He Himself speaks peace to them. So, when assembled together to His name, His disciples have Him still in spirit in their midst. “Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

But the Lord “saith to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father path sent me even so send I you. And when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” That is precisely what has taken place. Our Lord has sent down the Holy Ghost from heaven, and has baptized us into one body. He has put us into this place of common blessing and privilege; yet even when He is going to show, in a figure, the assembly which He has now formed by the Holy Ghost, He first establishes their souls individually. We are ever to remember this. We begin with peace, and we are to be the messengers of the peace to others that we know ourselves. This is the meaning of the two-fold message of peace. The Lord said it, first, for their own souls' fresh enjoyment; and, the second time, for the mission which they have in this world. Now let us put this question to our own hearts:—Do we bethink ourselves that we are thus sent of Christ? The Lord is not speaking here about apostles only. I maintain that every Christian has got a mission, and that our Lord shows that it is true of every saint of God in this very passage. For they were not the apostles only that were assembled here, but “the disciples” generally, whether men or women. Indeed, we know that one of the apostles was not there on this occasion—Thomas. It is not said, “Then were the apostles,” but “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” The apostles, of course, had their part in it; and I am far from denying

their peculiar privileges, authority, and responsibility, as revealed elsewhere. But in this case it is obviously not so. This I believe to be the key to the whole passage. Mark its importance. Christ risen now confers a positive personal mission upon every saint of His. With what dignity, then, it becomes us to bear ourselves! How important to bear in mind that we have this holy trust from our Lord, that we cannot be “disciples” now—cannot be Christians—without being distinctly sent of Him into the world! And how? We are only sent in as His saints, by being, if I may so say, first called out. The Lord takes us out of the world by His death and sends us into it by His resurrection; but this is as new men, heavenly men, who know the love of God as we never saw it before; who know the holiness, the righteousness, the perfect grace of God in a totally new way. “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” And then there is the power, or, at least, the witness of it. “Be breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” That breath of Christ was the breath of resurrection-life; and every Christian, no matter where he is, Churchman or Dissenter, or even a poor deluded Popish priest—if you conceive such a thing as a man being a real Christian and yet offering up mass—still, I say, are you to deny Christ sent that man? If he love Christ, if he belong to Him, assuredly he has the spirit of Christ, and a mission from Him, however much it may be obscured and misunderstood. And it is on this very ground I should appeal to him, and say, You a Christian! You a man that Christ has sent into the world to be the messenger of life, peace in Him! You to whom Christ showed His hands and side, the witness that the sacrifice was finished, and yet you offering a sacrifice over again! What a frightful contradiction! I would appeal to him solemnly, as God would give me power, and use the true mission to expel the false mission, and press on his conscience the work Christ gave him, so that he might flee from the office the devil gave him, as from the face of a serpent.

Such, certainly, is our mission—the mission of every Christian, by whatever name they may call themselves; alas! that they should call themselves by any name but that only worthy One. Let us repudiate every name but the name given them, that of Christians. We regard them as equally possessing what we take for ourselves, the blessed gift of God's grace. We look upon them as members of the same family, vested with the self-same mission. As the Father sent the Son, so the Son is not ashamed to call us brethren, and to send us into the world. And do we not need to think of this? And mark what follows. “Whomsoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” This belongs to the Church of God: it is the place in which the Lord Himself sets the Church. These disciples were already forgiven before God, and here is the mission and the application of it as regards the Church. There was no pretending on their part that they had the power to forgive men, to save them from hell, or to bring them into peace with God: nothing like the awful presumption of thinking they can open heaven and shut it at their pleasure, or inventing some other place out of their own wicked heads. I maintain that here is the Church, that is, the assembly of God, called to this. They possess life in Christ, and they stand responsible to their Lord if they know any of their number walking in sin, not to cover it over or treat it according to their own will. They are to pronounce the judgment of God upon the sins, and this is to retain them. It has nothing whatever to do with the blasphemous claim to damn or save. Salvation and judgment are the settled and sole prerogatives of Christ. But if a man, bearing the name of a brother, walks in a way that is notoriously and flagrantly evil, the church is not to own him, and the sin is retained. He is put away from the table of the Lord as a wicked person. Of whom was that word said in 1 Cor. 5? Of one who, after all, turned out a brother; but for the time being, having walked in a thoroughly evil manner, he was treated as a wicked person. It is well to

be slow in coming to a judgment; it is, in ordinary cases, becoming to entreat and show much patience, but never to be tolerant of evil in ourselves or in any other who bears the name of Christ. But supposing the case is flagrant, “put away that wicked person” is the word, and this not for our own sake so much as for Christ's. There is the retaining of sins. But the guilty Corinthian, who was put away, humbled himself, and was even in danger of being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Accordingly, the apostle in the second epistle tells them to confirm their love towards him. What! the man that had disgraced the Lord and disgraced them! Yes, even so, “lest Satan should get an advantage of us.” Thus, the retaining of sins is found in the first epistle, but in the second the remitting of sins. “Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Thus we have three weighty things to test ourselves by. Are we seeking to walk as realizing, first, Christ risen? secondly, our relationship to Him according to the power of His resurrection? and thirdly, our corporate responsibility, as forming part of the assembly in which God dwells. Every believer now pertains to it; but Satan has come in and broken it into fragments. A few souls, not one bit better than their brethren, see that they are entitled to go back to God's own word and way, and they find that He is faithful—and this is the whole matter. We have no ground to set ourselves up in a single thing: but we are bound to assert the common place of privilege in which the Lord has set every one that belongs to Him. On the other hand, on no account treat the acting upon it or not as an optional matter. I must press it upon those who are not thus acting; I must ask, Why do you not walk as members of Christ's body? Throw yourselves upon God and His word, which most clearly shows what becomes us. Let us seek to walk holily and humbly. In much, who of us has not hindered souls by daubing with untempered mortar? Some of us, at least, have taken up the truth of God in the zeal of nature, and not in the Holy Ghost, and thus have given excuses to others. Nothing, I admit, can destroy the responsibility of those that hear the word of God; but we ought to look well to it that we do not stumble the weak—that we seek to carry ourselves as becomes grace, with real lowliness of mind—with evident desire, not to have people with us, but to get all who love Christ to do His will. We must ever enfeeble the power of truth over the consciences of others, unless there be that which commends itself to them in our own ways.

Chapter 123

Scripture Query and Answer: Romans 3:23

Q. Rom. 3:23. The ambiguity of the English Version misleads many readers. Instead of understanding it to mean, “All have sinned, and do come short,” &c., they interpret it as if it were, “All have sinned, and have come short,” &c. After setting forth the true restoration of man, i.e., believing man, by the gospel, the happy counterpart to the above sad sentence is found in chap. v. 2, where we are said to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” I may add that not overlooking the right tense in ■στερο■νται contributes to make the meaning clear, i.e., all fail to obtain the glory of God, rather all have failed to exhibit it. But I invite your judgment as to the truth of this. L. C. L. B.

A. The remark is right as to the ambiguity of the English, because “come” is also the participle—have come, and the natural connection is, “sinned and come short.” But it seems to me that ■στερο■νται does not refer to exhibiting. With a genitive, and particularly in later writers, it has the sense, “destitute of,” “wanting,” “failing to have.” (See Lobeck. Phryn. 238. Valck. Schol. in N. T. ii. 472. Steph. Thes. Col. 9812, Ed. Valpy.)

Now that sin has come in, we must meet the glory of God or be excluded by it. In a state of innocency man enjoyed favor, and the question of consistency with the divine glory had not been raised. Now, we say, “All have sinned, and do come short of, fail in meeting, or standing in the presence of, the glory of God.” Christ, as Son of man, has glorified God on the cross, and human nature has a place in the glory, ο■κ ■στεπο■ται. And so we in Him. This point of meeting the glory I believe to be an important one, and to run through the Gospels. John 13 specially treats it with immense depth, though briefly. I add that ■μαρτον, the aorist, is the historic fact, which is the ground of the present state expressed in ■στερο■νται. We have sinned, and are outside of, away from, morally wanting in what meets, and gives us a place in, the glory of God.

Chapter 124

Thoughts on Romans 6

This chapter is the application of Christ dead and risen to the believer's walk, and is the proof that grace disallows sin. Hence we have here Christian practice and the ground of that practice. We are called to liberty, and not slavery, even in holiness. There is righteousness, but it is of that sort which bears fruit. There is evidently wonderful depth and value in it, as there must be in all that which comes from God. Nor is it merely the producing fruit down here (that is man's thought), but it is fruit that goes up to God; for whatever comes from Him goes up to Him. The meat-offering might be eaten, but all the frankincense went up to God. When Christ was down here, He offered Himself in His life, a sweet-savor. (Eph. 5) It comes down and goes up to God again. This is Christian morality; and where this is wanting, it is all nothing. The value is in the motive. Thus, there may be two men—the one doing everything for his own pleasure, the other for the sake of those around him: the one acting on a merely selfish principle, the other feeling aright as the father of the family. Therefore we have constantly to judge ourselves that we be not judged. The Christian, in judging himself, must be grieved when he sees how many other things come in and mix up with that which he presents to God. Self is apt to enter, and spoil the savor of the ointment—not perhaps to others, but to himself before God. We have seen that chap. iv. of this epistle brings out faith in the God who had intervened in power, and raised One who was under the power of death, and set Him at His own right hand. We, “believing on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” He had said of Himself, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” speaking of his body.

In chap. v. faith is applied to justification, and then the law comes in by the by—righteous of itself, but convicting of unrighteousness those to whom it was given; for they could not keep it. Man must be innocent or saved. If a man is innocent, he does not want the law. Adam could not have known what it meant if it had been said to him, Thou shalt not lust, and, Thou shalt not steal. Who was he to steal from? Man was addressed in the law as a sinner; and it was not given till 400 years after the promise. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, by the other's obedience many were made righteous. This seemed to make it no matter how he lived, and to meet such a thought as that we have chapter vi. The perverseness of the flesh will turn the law to a purpose quite opposed to that for which God gave it, and grace to a different purpose from that for which it was bestowed. The law, that was meant to convict man of sin, they use for self-righteousness; and grace, that is intended really to make a man holy, they turn into licentiousness.

Although it is true that souls were quickened before Christ came, in virtue of His coming, we learn this truth, that man is lost, a fallen sinner, before he is the head of the fallen family; and so Christ was the Righteous Man before He became the Head of the redeemed family. Man naturally likes unholiness; and how is he to get rid of this? Nay, “how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” The motive to a Christian life is that we have died in Christ; and we have life through a dead Christ, in whom we have died. If we have justification, we are made partakers of His life, and there is the spring of holiness. The blood of atonement was put upon the ears, hands, feet; saved by this, they had then to watch. Nothing is to be allowed in thoughts or ways that would sully the

purity of that blood. How can a man live in that to which he is dead? It cannot be. If I am dead to sin, I cannot live in sin. God forbid! There is putting your members to death, but you are not told to die—you are dead already; the cross of Christ has killed it. I can now deal with this old thing as not me; I have done with it; and I have got a new thing, by which the other is overcome.

What Christ have you a part in? A dead Christ. “Buried with him in baptism,” &c., raised up by this new power, “by the glory of the Father;” and I can rest upon that expression because it can feed the heart, and meet the subtlety of the world, and the subtlety in ourselves. There is nothing connected with the glory of the Father that was not concerned in the resurrection of Christ. There was the power of God, and the Father's love specially shown. There His own glory is concerned in it, for it is the Father's own Son who was one with Himself; and the righteousness of God is also concerned. He shall convict the world of righteousness. “Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” He was God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels—angels must be witnesses of this great work of the resurrection of the Son. There would have been a gap in heaven, if Christ had not been raised up from the dead. Now we see (I do not say realize) what this newness of life must be. Ought not I to see divine righteousness in it? Ought not I to see divine love in it? Ought not I to see the glory of His person in it? And the affections have to do with this too; for He has gone down into the depths of the earth—and how came He there? Because I was a sinner. And do I not see that He who was there so low deserved to be raised? Who was it? The person of the Son of God. When speaking to the woman of Samaria, He Himself said, “If thou knewest who it is that said unto thee, Give me to drink.” He first speaks to her conscience, after He said, “Give me to drink;” then to her understanding, “for I perceive that thou art a prophet.” Then the person of the Lord Jesus fills her heart, for she goes and tells others about Him; and that is where we are brought.

The heart follows Christ, as it were, and goes up with Him into this new life. Everything is dead below.

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith” I do not say there will be no conflict. And the heart has done with it. How very near it comes to me! “Planted together.” And this is no mere intellectual perception, but seeing that Christ was there for my sins, it is the very way in which my need is all met. “We have been planted together in the likeness of His death,” &c. It comes to me here, and for my sins. And was divine love the less because down here and not up above? It is in that I learn it, because it was for my sins. Was divine power the less? It is here I learn it. His heart followed me to be made sin, and now mine must follow Him in resurrection. We have no half Christ. We are planted together in the likeness of His death, and planted together in the likeness of His resurrection. He not only died, but is personally accepted. It was “that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we henceforth should not serve sin.” You were slaves (speaking after the manner of the country)—under the title of dominion by another—not knowing at night what they should do in the morning—naturally slaves to sin—slaves to the law. Not that the law was sin (John 8:33), where the Jews are addressed as under the law. “The servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever. If, therefore, the Son hath made you free, you are free indeed.” It is perfect liberty. He that has done with sin must be dead to it. You cannot charge a thing upon a man that is dead. Why did you do so and so “He that is dead is freed from sin.” All is gone to which it attached. Do you ask, How can that be said, when I find I am not dead? Because it is in Christ you died. Christ was put in your place: He has taken it on Him, and done with it. The

very things that distress me now are the things that put Christ to death. He has done with sin; therefore mortify it. “Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin and alive unto God.” I should not need such a word as that “reckon,” if there was no need of mortifying. It is holy liberty from sin we have, and not to sin.

“Walk in newness of life.'“ “Have your fruit unto holiness.” But the great doctrine of grace is—saved by a mediator. “Enter not unto judgment.” If judgment takes its course on me, it is all over with me. Wash yourself ever so clean, the instant you see the eye of God upon you, you see yourself as one out of a filthy ditch. Job wanted “a daysman, who might lay his hands upon both.” The more delicate the conscience is as to the sense of the least defilement, the more the need of the mediator is felt. You say, I find that which ought to be dead is still alive. Did Christ die for the sins you have not, or for those you have? The very things you are finding out are the very things He died for. The more jealousy of conscience the better: only be sure to see the grace too.

We have a new thing in Him: He is raised from the dead. Judgment cannot touch it—death cannot touch it. There is not a single thing He has not taken upon Himself. And now we are planted in a new state of existence altogether: in that we live, we live in Him, just as much as we died in Him. He died, not for Himself, but He was made sin, &c., and in everything He was put to the test. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. He went through everything—the scorn of the world, the power of Satan, even to the wrath of God. He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin. Satan never could find anything in Him. It was His meat to do His Father's will. But it is never said, He could take delight in the suffering for sin; therefore He says, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Now He lives beyond it all in resurrection. He had the spirit of holiness. All His life through this was true of Him; but He was put to the test in everything. But now we see Him in new life. He is no half Christ, then. He died to sin, but liveth to God; therefore we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

This is a very practical question. Not that you are to say, If you have not the realization of this, you cannot have the value of the blood. No; but you must know the value of the blood, and so have it in Christ, that you may live. The groundwork of living to Him is to be dead to sin in Him. That is the position— “Reckon, yourselves,” not experience yourselves, &c. “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies,” &c. It does not say, Be alive to God, and therefore reckon yourselves, &c. In the power of this, I can be living before the world as belonging to God, as I can live before God in the sense of acceptance, because justified by the blood. Live to God. How can I do otherwise than hate myself to be doing even a right thing, and not doing it to God? The worst thing possible is to be bringing corruption into the best things. “Yield yourselves to God.” Did Christ ever do anything for Himself? His was a life of love. He had not time even to eat—always living for others. He not only did things that were commanded, but because they were commanded. What a blessed thought—to have done with self! It is the best thing in the world. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” &c. Oh! but you say, It has dominion over me, and I am afraid God will not have me, What are you doing with grace? How can you come to God for anything, if you are not standing in grace? To whom can you go, if you are not in grace? Rom. 5 comes before chap. 6; and if you try to reverse them, you get into chap. 7. If because I do not love Christ as I ought (which is a higher thing than the law) I doubt whether I am His, I put myself under law—only it is making Christ the

law instead of the ten commandments. It is not realizing grace, for grace is favor to those who do not deserve it. It is the subtlety of the heart again to abuse grace.

“Ye became servants of righteousness.” A person is not to be licentious because free from the law, but he has to produce “fruit unto holiness.” What is holiness? Separation from what is evil. Adam unfallen was not holy, but innocent. God is holy, Christ is holy, so are we holy, for we hate sin and love righteousness, though we cannot do it as God does. Holiness must have God for its object. Christ never needed an object of faith, though He walked in obedience and dependence, as the Holy One of God. We must have an object: Paul had. He saw the Lord in glory, and bore “fruit unto holiness.” What fruit does sin bear? None: it brings to judgment and death. But what is meant by “fruit unto holiness?” We must like what God likes; and what is the consequence of this? We become separate from unholiness, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Not only actual fruits (that is true—a tree must be known by its fruits), but this practical bringing forth fruit is connected with the righteousness of God. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” There is constant reference to God's will. “If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light.” We have to learn God, not just slipping and getting on, but with consecration of the heart, growing up in the knowledge of God—not servants to righteousness (that would be “being righteous overmuch” —you might torture yourself, and no one give you any thanks), but “to God.” God's own character needs to be wrought in us. Christ thought it worth while to leave heaven, that we should be free to go up there, and made to bring forth fruit unto holiness down here.

There is a positive joy in pleasing God. “The gift of God is eternal life.” It is all grace; and I would rather have eternal life as the gift of God than ten lives of my own, ever so long, because it is the proof of His love to me.

May we grow up to do His will, remembering it is founded on reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thus may we live out of the world, as to separation from its evil, as He is!

Chapter 125

Fragment: A Lesson From Saul

From Saul as to overcoming. He vanquished the Ammonites; but the Philistines whom he was raised up to overcome, he never slid. If people do not discharge the duty given them, it matters little how much else they do.

Chapter 126

Scripture Queries and Answers: 1 Corinthians 15:47

Q. 1 Cor. 15:47. Does the expression, “the Second man is [the Lord] from heaven,” necessarily mean descent? That is, is it affirmed of Christ, as now on high, or of Him in incarnation? It is known that “the Lord” is expunged by the best editors. Is there any difference in meaning between “the last Adam” (ver. 45) and “the Second man?” W.

A. I do not, in reference to the question asked, attach any importance to the presence or absence of κυριος. Griesbach retains it; the more recent editors give it up, with several Uncials and other authorities. As to the question itself, I judge the ■ξ ο■ρανου to be more characteristic than relative to any “descent” from heaven, but that character to be drawn from the place He came from: origin is universally used as characteristic. Race and kind are the same word, γενος. Thus the genitive (or really generic) case, and ■κ, which express origin, are in very many (perhaps all) languages used as characteristic, and in force are adjectives. In Hebrew it is well known, as in Greek, in French, English, and other modern languages; so that it may be considered as belonging to the structure of the human mind.

This may be drawn from place or origin, or the material of which anything is composed. It so far differs from an adjective, that it is constitutive of character, not the character itself simply. Here we have’εκ γης χοικος. The former is the constitutive cause, the latter the actual character. But the cause was from origin; so with ■ξ ο■ρανου. It is characteristic, but because of the place of origin. He has not ceased to be it now; but what is expressed is not what He is now, because gone to heaven, but His character because of His origin.

It attaches to His person. He is so now, because He cannot be otherwise; because His origin was such, He was so on earth. The full display of this is when He takes the place of the ■πουρανιος; that gives the fulfilled consequent place, and, from the subject, is more than characteristic, though it be that. I judge, then, that ■ξ ο■ρανου is character from origin, or the place the Lord belonged to, as ■κ γης. Not that He came from, but that He was from, and of, and ever is. The result is, that the first is χοικος, the second ■πουρανιος. This is on high, the natural, normal, and purposed place of one ■ξ ο■ρανου, who is become a man. But still it is character and nature, though the ■πι suggests a place, I think. Hence, there is for it an abstract consequence of conformity, not a statement of what will happen. As is the χοικος, so the χοικοι - as the ■πουρανιος, so the ■πουρανιοι. Then the form, not merely character and nature and time, is brought in. It is in the second case future. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.” Thus origin, participation in nature and character abstractedly given, and then actual conformity in glory, are successively, each in its place, introduced. It will be seen that, without much affecting the question, what I have said tends to justify the omission of κυριος. If it be retained, I apprehend it should be read— “the Second man, the Lord, from heaven.”

Not that I desire to separate “the Lord” from “from heaven,” but to preserve the characteristic force of the latter.

As regards any difference in meaning in “second” and “last,” I think the Spirit of God means a different thing. “The second” contrasts Him with the first. It is not a modifying or sanctifying or setting right the first, but setting up a second (we cannot have both to continue together), One of and from heaven. “The last” declares that this is final and conclusive. There is no other afterward. If He be ■ξ ο■ρανου, that is easily conceived. In these days, both these truths are of first-rate importance—the non-restoration of man, the first man, who is set aside and under condemnation, and a new man, a second man, is brought in; and then He who is made known is the last Adam, the One, and only One, in whom blessing is to be found. Men will own Christ, even infidels now, to set up the first Adam; they will with hardihood declare Him to be the excellent in His day, but that there is progress through increasing light. Scripture, which foresees all things, declares that He is a “second,” in contrast with the first; and that He is the “last,” so that there is and can be no progress beyond Him: the perfection in which God delights, and the center and end of all His ways, to which those who are to be blest with Him must be conformed.

Scripture Queries and Answers: 1 John 1

1 John 1

Q. (1.) What is meant by “from the beginning?” (2.) Why the change from “which we have heard, which we have seen,” &c., in verse 1, to “which we have seen and heard,” in verse 3? (3.) Why have we the further words, “which we have looked upon and our hands have handled?” And (4) what is the point of the three “If we says” (ver. 6, 8, 10)?

ENQUIRER.

A. (1.) “From the beginning” is Christ in flesh, the beginning of God's ways in grace. Man, as man, was only a field for bringing this out, however real a place he had in moral responsibility for this (which assuredly he had); but as to counsel, Christ is the object. Man develops, progresses, changes. “What was from the beginning” in what God does, is perfect. This is a root-principle of Christianity, and makes the person of Christ the foundation of all—His work displaying God's moral nature for others, but the person being that in which He is; and adherence is to Himself. This cannot change. The essence of Christianity is, therefore, that there is no development in it. (1 John 24.)

The change from “heard and seen” (ver. 1) to “seen and heard” (ver. 3) is because of the manifestation, I apprehend, spoken of in verse 2. But as hearing His word was the way of knowing Him and having eternal life, Christ having given them the words the Father had given Him, and by His title the Word, hearing was the first thing. They had thus His authority, believing Him (not their sight) as groundwork. But they did see Him. He was a real, living man then. And this was all-important.

So we have “looking upon,” or contemplating, Him added. It was not a momentary vision. He was seen as a man walking amongst them. They had “'handled” Him too: He was a real man come in flesh. This was the very essence of what they had, Jesus Christ come in flesh.

(4.) Grace and privilege are always in John connected with the Father and the Son; responsibility is connected with God's nature. The first part of this chapter (ver. 1-4) gives the privilege and joy simply and fully. Verses 5 and 6 test profession by the divine nature, purity, which, as light revealing itself, detects everything. If they pretended to have the joy and were not in the light, it was a lie. The true knowledge of God, revealed in the soul such as He is in holiness and truth, must exist to have fellowship in grace. Though it is not necessarily according to the light, it is in the light—only reality is supposed, walking in the light. The next, “if we say,” is a question of truth in us. (Ver. 8.) If Christ be in me as the truth, I shall be conscious of another principle and nature in me, which in itself always has its own will and fruits. I have not the truth in me, as the life of Christ is the truth in spiritual intelligence in me, if I do not know sin, which it is conscious of and judges, because it—truth—is in me. Sin here is the whole condition of the old man, though learned by indwelling sin—specially this last. Then, if I say that I have not sinned (ver. 10), I make God a liar; for He has declared all men have sinned: Christianity is founded on it, and the death of Christ

declares it. God's word, in such a case, is not in us; for it reveals that all have sinned.

Chapter 128

Scripture Queries and Answers: Jury Duty and Question on Greek

Q. In a paper entitled, “Remarks on the Gospel of Matthew, chap. v. 17-48,” July number of the Bible Treasury, the writer considers our Lord's command, “Swear not at all,” as not referring to judicial oaths, which latter he holds that the Christian is not absolved from, the same being administered by a magistrate, in whom, he considers, the Christian is bound to acknowledge God. Now, is the Christian equally bound to obey the civil magistrate, when summoned as a juryman to try a fellow-creature in a criminal matter, and to unite with his fellow-jurors in returning such a verdict as (if found guilty) would be the means of depriving the criminal of his life? True, it is the judge, not the jury, who passes sentence on the criminal, but the verdict of the latter determines the sentence of the former.

W. B.

A. A Christian could hardly refuse to serve. It is not the same thing as to be a judge. A juryman is only called on, by authority, to state his belief of a fact; and this owns the authority, which of God has a right and is bound to inquire and bear the sword. It is of all moment that Christians should not trench on God's title to govern in the world, when pleading their Christian place. The magistrates place is not theirs, but because they know God in theirs, they are bound to own God in the place of authority in the world. There is this double sphere. They are in one, and have intelligence, and thus are called upon to own God to the other. Refusal of oaths, as such, imposed by a magistrate is unlawful, I conceive, and unchristian, though individual conscience is to be respected. The same thing that would hinder my being a magistrate (because it is another sphere of God's authority from that in which I am), would make me own that authority in that place. I do not see that the magistrate goes beyond it in calling twelve men to declare their estimate, as to a fact, of the evidence which can be produced, and this is a jury. The use made of the verdict is entirely the province of the judge.

Q. I believe there is no sufficient reason to doubt Rom. 4:25 means that Christ was raised “for” our justification. Grammatically, it is well known, “because of” is a common, perhaps the most common, force of the preposition δι■, with the accusative. But the form of the word δικα■ωσις resists such a view here; and still more does the context, especially chapter 5:1, where justification is made to depend on faith, instead of being treated as a thing already settled independently of believing. I have heard it argued, however, that δι■ τ■ν π■ρωσιν, in Eph. 4:18 (which, beyond question, means “because of,” and not for “the hardness,” &c.) sets aside the reasoning grounded on the form of the word. What think you?

X. X.

A. No doubt, π■ρωσις, being the active form of nouns, like δικεα■ωσις, may seem to raise a question; but if adequately considered, the difficulty disappears. For π■ρωσις has the simple sense of a callous place, as one might say, “it is a hardening of the skin,” though the form “hardening” be active, because it was a gradual act, while it is now a state. So ν■κρωσις is applied

to Sarah's womb; and again, we are to carry about the ν■κρωσις of the Lord Jesus. But this is, I apprehend, in no way the case with justifying, or δικα■ωσις. Δι■ always means “on account of:” the question is, does it here signify previous to, or after, the resurrection of Christ? People often cite the verse, as if it meant that Christ was raised on account of our having been already justified before He rose. This, I am convinced, would require some such phrase as δι■ τ■ δικαιωθ■ναι ■μ■ς, which essentially differs from that which Paul employs. In the present case, there would be no process like that of π■ρωσις, or ν■κρωσις (which words express a state as result), but a state existing by the simple act of another, a relationship in virtue of an act done. This, the active form, does not, I believe, express; an effect to be produced it can express. The great doctrinal mischief of the alleged rendering, “because of,” is, that it excludes faith from justifying; which is Calvinism, or ultra-Calvinism, but wholly unscriptural.

Chapter 129

Scripture Queries and Answers: Old Testament Knowledge of Christ

1

Q. How far did the Old Testament saints understand the types, and offerings, and sacrifices; and what was the extent of their knowledge of Christ; and did they see Him in those types, &c.?

A CONSTANT READER.

Q. As regards the estimate which the Old-Testament saints formed of the sacrifices and types of the Old Testament, no one can speak definitely.

That estimate was as various as we now see the estimate of renewed souls as to the value of Christ's work is, if by value is meant the intelligent estimate of it. All that anyone could speak of now is what the Old Testament afforded them, so that the Holy Ghost could act by the Word upon those who had spiritual intelligence according to the measure of that day. Now I know of no fact in Christ's history which is not testified of in the prophets—His birth, His sufferings (even the details), His ascension, His sitting at the right hand of God, His coming again, and all the glories that should follow his sufferings. The only truths, that I am aware of, which were not revealed were the Church and His present intercession at the right hand of God—truths, it is remarkable, equally omitted in John, chap. 1, in the catalog of the glories of Christ there given, as well as (but for another reason) the fact that He was the Christ. Hence, the only question is, when they had the prophets, how far they were spiritual enough to connect these revelations with the types in order to understand them?

This depended on individual spirituality and divine teaching; only we must remember it could not be said, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things.” They had not the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth to guide into all truth. This makes all the difference as to intelligence. Further, it was not the intention of God, while the veil was unrent, to put the consciences of saints in the position in which the rending of it was to set them; so that their consciences once purged should have no more conscience of sin. Alas! many Christians are in a Jewish state in this respect. Had this been the case, the free admission of the Gentiles by faith on the same footing would have been the consequence, as this was not intended. On the other hand, there was the thought that the time was coming when the nation's sins and iniquities would be remembered no more, and this faith could look forward to, as to the then rejoicing of the Gentiles with his people, and a heavenly portion for the departed saints. This leads back to the original promise of the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head; and it, again, held out to faith a full restoration of man from the ruin, which though vague might have been complete in expectation. The clothing with skins, and Abel's sacrifice and Noah's, point to covering and acceptance through a sacrifice; Isaac's, to the faith of resurrection. But when sacrifices were legally instituted and the law given, hopes of forgiveness and restoration in peace in a coming age, but no purged conscience, save occasional at the present time, marked the condition of the worshipper. Before that time it was a larger expectation of restoration and goodness, and founded on sacrifices and covering iniquity and nakedness

before God; but though larger and more complete, more vague, of course, by the seed of the woman, resurrection and heavenly things coming in. For this both Enoch and Abraham, and even Job, furnish evidence. Under the prescription of the law the conscience was more brought under the yoke, present occasional forgiveness by a sin-offering more definite, but it was narrowed into present occasional clearing, and the hope of deliverance put into the age to come and connected with Messiah, as we know also it will be.

With all this was connected a feebler estimate of sin and of the need consequently of divine righteousness, though this was prophetically intimated, but also in the age to come. There was sense of sin, of being shapen in iniquity, but no intelligence of a conflict between flesh and spirit, and thus as a present thing righteousness looked for in the Lord; but, before the law, divine favor and the averting a curse by sacrifice; under the law, a definite sin-offering meeting the actual sins of the individual or of all, and a general sense of maintenance of heart in divine favor by the day of atonement—the state as I have said in which most Christians are.

Chapter 130

Scripture Queries and Answers: the Last Trump

Q. 1 Cor. 15:52. Are We Necessarily to Connect “The Last Trump” With the Seventh Trumpet in Rev. 11, or With 1 Thess. 4? W

A. The seven trumpets of the Apocalypse are, in my judgment, entirely outside the trump mentioned in the Epistles, or even that which occurs in Matt. 24 and the Jewish Prophets. The Apocalyptic trumpets are symbolic, and must be interpreted in keeping with the rest of the book and their own context, as indeed the other occurrences must be also. Thus Paul speaks solely of the risen and changed saints, and the trump must be limited by his subject. And our Lord connects, as does Isaiah, the trumpet with the ingathering of the elect of Israel. The seven trumpet-blasts of the Revelation occur in the interval after the former and before the latter, unless the seventh be thought to synchronize with the summons to scattered Israel.

I am still of opinion that “the last trump” of 1 Cor. 15 is an allusion to what was then a most familiar sound in the Roman world—the final signal given for the march, after all the previous intimations for breaking up the camp had been made and complied with. The archangel's shout, as being a word of command, confirms this, I think.

Chapter 131

Scripture Queries and Answers: Translation of Acts 20:28

Q. Sir, -I have read, with the interest it deserves, the reply of J. N. D. to the question put to him by A. B. C. in your July number.

On the former of the two points discussed in his remarks I have little to say. All who, through grace, believe and know the truth will readily admit that the divinity of Christ rests upon a far broader basis than the testimony of any single text. Most Christians, also, will agree in giving a deferential hearing to Athanasius on any point of Trinitarian doctrine; subject, however (as J. N. D. allows), to the final decision of the word. But, as he admits, 'reasoning is not criticism:' and it may be added (with reference to the second point in question), textual criticism is not syntax.

Accepting, as J. N. D. does, the now usually received reading, Θεο■, in Acts 20:28, the question as to the words which follow is simply one of constructive usage and propriety. J. N. D. assures himself and his readers that, in rendering δι■ το■ α■ματος το■ ιδιου into the English phrase—"by the blood of his own" —he gives a translation incontrovertibly sound; and in support of this view he cites Michaelis, Dcederlein, and Meyer. In reply to this, I venture to say that such a rendering is so contrary to usage, as to require some positive authentication by other instances or examples to establish it. Such a construction as that of J. N. D. is not impossible, but it is (as far as I have searched) unknown.

Have either of the Germans above named, or has any other scholar, adduced a single passage from any quarter, classical or otherwise, in support of the proposed version?

The remarks of J. N. D. on the meaning assignable to τ■ ■διον are scarcely in point. Such a use of the neuter adjective is not very rare in ordinary Greek, especially when expressive of appropriate fondness; but the real question is, Does the Holy Spirit ever thus speak of Christ? I surely think not. J. N. D. makes an incidental reference to Rom. 8:32, in support of what no one can doubt, viz., the appropriative force of ■σιος. I shall lay the same passage before your readers as a ready means of enabling them to estimate the measure of probability which attaches to the proposed version of J. N. D.

Let it be remembered that Paul, who speaks in Acts 20:28, writes in Rom. 8:32. His words in the latter passage are, ■ς γε το■ ■δ■ου ο■κ ■φε■σατο, κ. τ. λ. Now, it may be safely affirmed, that, had the apostle omitted the word υ■ο■ from this passage, there would not have been the slightest ambiguity in his language. But he adds it, not, as I imagine, to avoid ambiguity, but in order to give truth its fitting emphasis, by expressing that distinctive Name in which the brightness of the divine glory is ever manifested to the eye of faith (Heb. 1:1, 2). To suppose, therefore, that the apostle meant us to understand his words in Acts 20:28 in the sense preferred by J. N. D., is to ascribe to him a needless departure both from the ordinary use of the Greek language, and from his own accustomed mode of speech when speaking of the Son of God, and to represent him as gratuitously adopting an ambiguity of phrase at a time and in circumstances when explicit clearness and precision of speech were more than usually called for. That the apostle so acted is

quite beyond my belief.

Considerations of sentiment, and even analogies of doctrine, though of much interest and importance in their place, can hardly be allowed to rule decisively a point of grammar. Until, therefore, some more convincing reasons to the contrary are alleged, I must continue to accept the ordinary translation, “by his own very blood,” as the natural and necessary translation of δι■ τοο■ α■μ τ. ■δ.

I think it right to say also that the moral difficulty stated by J. N. D., toward the close of his remarks, does not by any means affect my own mind. He thinks it singularly inapposite to speak of the blood as that which was peculiarly God's own in contrast to all other.' Presently he adds, It does seem to me that such a contrasted use of God's blood, as distinguished from all other, is irreverent and somewhat shocking.'

By the mercy of God I am, I believe, as far from Paterpassianism as truth is from error; but I must confess myself unable to sympathize with J. N. D. in the feeling he here expresses. Let us first consider what the real aim of the Spirit was in leading Paul to speak as he does in this remarkable passage. Was it not (in view of the mischievous effects of human willfulness such as he immediately afterward predicts) to recall to the minds of his brethren the solemn and ever-blessed truth of the divine mystery, that natural presumption and inconsiderate self-seeking might be warned of the sort of ground on which they sought to tread?

It is but rarely, and always on some special and impressive occasion, that the proper Godhead of the Redeemer is emphatically asserted. Much oftener, as J. N. D. justly remarks, it is assumed or implied in the language of the Spirit. Believing, then, as I do, that Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders was one of these occasions, I see nothing either unnatural or objectionable' in the supposition that he sought to impress upon his fellow-workers in the truth, that the Church which God had made His own He had redeemed by blood, and that the price of that rich purchase was 'his very own.'

“God was in Christ.” The child of Jewish birth was also the everlasting God. It would be an assertion both gratuitous and at variance with Scripture to affirm that the blood of His mother was all that flowed in Immanuel's veins. He was indeed made of a woman, but he had a Father also, whose divinity pervaded truly but ineffably the entire person of the child. (Col. 2:9.)

I am unwilling to extend this letter, and will close it by an unfeigned expression of sorrow at what appears to be the growing spirit of verbal controversy in the Church of God. That this spirit commonly waxes and wanes inversely to the true power of godliness is but too well known to all who have reflected on the history of man, whether in the present or preceding dispensation.

May our hearts, filled with Christ through faith, be ever the teacher of our lips!

Yours in the hope of His appearing, X. Y. Z.

A. As you have kindly communicated the above criticism, I send you at once the following brief reply.

It seems to me that my critic admits that the translation of Acts 20:28 is grammatical. “It is not,” he says, “impossible” —that is, it cannot be denied to be Greek. Only, he asks an instance of the Holy

Ghost's thus speaking of Christ, Allow me to turn the question. Can he give me an instance of the Scripture speaking of the blood of God? Is it not far more contrary to the mind and analogy of the word than the special recognition of Christ as God's own? The use of ■διος in the plural for this appropriating way is incontrovertible. I need hardly cite instances. It is found, too, in the LXX. I have given an example of the singular in “the world would love its own.”

I do not follow my critic on the extremely dangerous ground he has thought proper to enter on as to Christ's blessed person—far more dangerous, I humbly think, than verbal criticism. All the rest is argument, in which I do not see any force.

As the translation is not denied to be grammatical, we have made a distinct step in the matter. What is according to the mind of the Holy Ghost in the passage, I am quite content to leave to the judgment of spiritual persons. No doctrine is in any way in question.

Yours in the Lord, J. N. D.

Chapter 132

Scripture Queries and Answers: Translation of Hebrews 1:2

Q. Sir, - Seeing a translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews, published by the same printer as your journal, I think it not improbable you may allow me to communicate with the author through your medium. My only claim is for the truth's sake. So thoroughly do I approve and value the translation, that I venture to ask the translator why he has not found the difficulty of the word αιωνας in chap. 1, 2 and 11:3. There is a note which attaches the sense of “universe” to the word “worlds.” But how can that word αιωνας be construed into universe? It may be you can cite a learned authority somewhere to justify such a translation as “worlds;” but is there not eccentricity and elasticity enough in learning to admit of this and yet prove nothing?—for what is one among so many? With all deference to the judgment of the author of the translation, I believe the Spirit of God there, as well as in chap. xi. 3, uses that word to show that age is the sense, and the marked sense, in which God would have us understand His mind in the passage. God spoke during the dispensations preceding the coming of Christ in various ways—by the fathers and in the prophets, but now at last by the Son; and that was the Word of God which constituted those periods, the ages. It is not the word spoken by angels or fathers or prophets that made the ages; but the word spoken by the Son. This follows from the Son being made or placed Heir of all things, and that the heir constitutes the ages such, which were to roll on, until the dispensation of the fullness of times, the times of restitution of all things; the full manifested display of the glory of Christ, in the heading up of all things which are in heaven and on earth in Him, as Heir of all things, with co-heirs associated with Him in the glory.' I believe we are to distinguish the Word that created, which was with God and was God, and the Word of the Son and Heir, that made the ages. Christ as Creator is one revelation (see 1 John), and again verse 10; the Son, who was heir of all things, made the ages, as Heb. 1:2, is another. Surely it is the same Jesus who, as Son of God, is passed through the heavens, as the Living Word, the First and the Last—He that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, even to the ages of the ages, and who has the keys of death and Hades. But the word αιωνας in Heb. 1:2 has the special signification I have tried to explain.

In Heb. 11:3 it is more emphatic still. There we are taught that the ages were thoroughly furnished, or framed completely, by the word or utterance of God, intelligible only to the man of faith; and this in connection with faith as the” substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. These ages and their significance do not spring out of the six days' work in creation, which the natural man could in a measure understand. His natural power of mind could enter into them and reason upon them; but the man of faith alone understood how the ages were made by the Son as the word of God, so as to begin, continue, and end in that Son as Heir of all things.

We have a remarkable illustration of this truth in the case of the writers of “Essays and Reviews.” They think by searching to find out God. Well, they talk and write backwards and forwards about this, that, and the other; but they never understand God beyond the Creator. As to what God really is, they are as dark as some of the heathen poets; and though they have more to say and more to write about, they never get beyond Socrates in the understanding of God. And why? Is it not plain to the man of faith? They do not believe God's word—His αυτος εφη. How, then, can they find out

the Almighty to perfection? And, alas for them! there is no substance of things hoped for, no evidence of things not seen. “Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word?” Only believe that word and all is plain and intelligible enough.

I add that the break in those ages is filled up by the mystery concerning which silence was kept during their running on, up to the coming of the Son, as well as to a marked epoch in their career, viz., the casting off of Israel for a time, until they begin again to wend their way to their final destination.

That mystery is the Church of God which is now being formed while the Son is quiescent at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This break answers to Adam's sleep and Eve's formation.

Apologizing for the length my pen has run, may I ask you, Sir, whether you think the insertion of this letter in your Bible Treasury might help to further the spread of the truth? The translator of the epistle might think it worth his serious, calm consideration, and perhaps give us his matured spiritual judgment in reply.

I remain, Yours sincerely in Christ, A SINNER SAVED.

A. I am not disposed to reject Alford's view; that is, so far as it accepts a course or plan of God in the idea-world. But no person can have entered into the spirit of the Epistle to the Hebrews and seen its connection (i.e., the way it meets the Rabbinical and Philonic views, giving God's thoughts on the subjects they were speculating on), and not see that αιωνας is not merely “ages” or “epochs.” It is ■■■■■■■■, or more specifically ■■■■■■■■, the Creator of the worlds. You may see Bleek, Delitzch, De Wette, Lu■nemann, Schleusner, Schirlitz, Wahl—not that I accept all they say, but for the use of the word. Scheetgen (Hor. Hebrews) says it is so common, that it is useless to quote examples. Further, Heb. 11:3 seems to me to leave no possible doubt, because it continues, “so that the things which are seen were not made of the things which do appear” —distinctly intimating that he speaks of visible creation. I do not see how it is possible to overlook this, or after it to call the interpretation in question. Hρ■ τ■ν α■■νων shows, I think, the connection of the two. The critics refer to Eccl. 3:11, as proving the same use of ■■■■■■. Heb. 11:3, and the evident and constant use of the words in Jewish literature of the time, and the character of the epistle, leave no doubt of the meaning on my mind.

The notion of the Son, in connection with His being placed heir, I should demur to. That it was the Son who spoke when it is said, “He spike, and it was made,” I have no objection to whatever; but the Heir constituting the ages I cannot accept here, because the statement is, “God spoke” —■ν ■ι■. For ■ ■ε■ς λαλ■σας...■λ■λησεν....■■ηκε....δ■ ο■ κ. τ, α■■νας ■πο■ησεν is one phrase with one subject; and He who spoke is He who established the Heir of all things. So that I do not see how there is any possibility for the interpretation sought to be given; otherwise there is much I agree with.

Chapter 133

Scripture Queries and Answers: Zechariah 14:6-7; Matthew 16:22-23

Q. What Is the Meaning of Zech. 14:6, 7?

A. First, there will not be the mixture of light and darkness, as now, but a special character as fixed of the Lord for the great change of dispensation, “the day of the Lord.” Next, there is not to be the ordinary succession of night and day; for when the time of evening arrives, light shall prevail instead of darkness.

Q. Matt. 16:22, 23. - Did Christ really call Peter Satan? or did He speak to Peter, but answer Satan? Yours, &c.,

A. It is plain, I think, that the Lord so called Peter; not saying, “Get thee hence,” as He did to the enemy personally (Matt. 4:10), but “Get thee behind me.” This last in Luke 4:8 is an interpolation equally opposed to external and to internal evidence; for there the clause is necessarily omitted, and has been clearly the mere work of scribes, designedly or not. It is most instructive to observe how the Lord treats the flesh in a saint assuming in kindness to claim superior grace over the Spirit. We may and ought to treat it as Satan's work, as the Lord did in Peter.

Chapter 134

Second Coming of Christ

Before the Savior went to the cross, He left as a parting promise to the disciples these words of love" Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 14:1-5.) Thus, the Christian hope is not the spread of the knowledge of the Lord throughout the world, nor is it our own departure by death to be with Christ, but it is His return to receive us unto Himself, that we may be with Him, the Son, in the Father's house. Blessed, heavenly hope!

Accordingly, when the apostles on Olivet looked after their ascended Lord, "two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10, 11.) Well they knew that it was a real, personal departure of their Master; just as certainly will His return be real and personal. Jesus shall come again from heaven. Incredulity may deny it; but not even incredulity will assert that it is a secondary matter. It will change at once the face of the Church, the world, and all things. Is this secondary?

Hence, in Acts 3:19-21, Peter calls on the Jews to repent and be converted, in order to the blotting out of their sins; so that seasons of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, and He might send forth Jesus that was fore-appointed to them, whom heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God had spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets since the world began. Though the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the Holy Ghost given in unprecedented power, and never had the world beheld such unselfish love among thousands of believers as at that moment, yet the apostle shows that the full blessing of Israel and of the earth depends on the future coming of Christ from heaven. It is His mission, not that of the Spirit, to restore all things according to the prophetic word, though no doubt the Spirit will be at the same time poured out upon all flesh. Further, Christ will be sent, according to these testimonies, not for the destruction, but for the restitution, of all things. And this exactly agrees with the vision in Rev. 19; 20, where Christ is represented as coming from heaven, reigning with His risen saints, and, when this glorious kingdom closes, and the earth and heaven are fled away, only then judging the dead before the great white throne.

The Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse, all converge on the same point. Not death, nor the destruction of Jerusalem, is the revealed hope, but the return of Jesus. The Christian, the Church, has the Holy Ghost, and has to wait for Christ.

Those who put off His coming find their prototype in the evil servant of Matt. 24:48. Arid what our Lord said unto the early disciples He says unto all, "Watch:" and this in view, not of death, but of His own coming, the conqueror of death. (Mark 13:33-37.) For, in truth, it is only the Lord who is the Bridegroom; and our calling, as set forth in the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25), is to go forth to meet Him. Such was the uniform expectation formed by our Lord's own teaching. Its moral bearing

we find in Luke 12:35 and seq.; and this as the constant hope of the heart—sure He is coming, not sure when, but, ever looking out for Him from day to day. “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.”

Need I dwell on the righteous wisdom of God in this? It was the Word who was made flesh, not the Spirit; it was here that Jesus suffered for sins, and by the grace of God tasted death for every one. He is glorified in heaven, but as truly as Jehovah lives, all the earth shall be filled with His glory, and not merely hear the message of His grace. Hence the counsel of God (Eph. 1:10) is to gather up again all things in Christ, the things that are in heaven and the things that are on earth. The Holy Ghost is meanwhile a witness only, and not the accomplisher: He is the seal of the redemption which Christ has effected by His blood, and the earnest of the inheritance which we shall share with Christ at His coming.

Hence, from Rom. 8, we learn that the creation itself, ruined by the sin of the first Adam, is destined to be set free by the victory of the last Adam. Meanwhile it groans, and so do we, albeit heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; and none the less because we have the firstfruits of the Spirit— “even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Our souls already have redemption in Christ, the forgiveness of sins; our bodies wait for redemption when He comes again; and when we are manifested with Him (Col. 3:4), the very creation around, if it be necessarily incapable of profiting like us by grace, shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

But though we find the coming of Christ bound up with the walk, the joys, the sorrows, the worship, the service, and the hopes of the saints throughout the Epistles of Paul (as in Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 1:7, 8; 3:13; 4:5; 5:5; 6:2, 3; 11:26; 15:23-55; 2 Cor. 5; Phil. 1:10, 11, 16; 3:20, 21; 4:5; 1 Tim. 6:14, 15; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 10:25-37), yet is it in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians that we have the subject most fully developed. Is the coming of Christ too high a theme, too abstruse, for the young and uninstructed? 1 Thess. 1, on the contrary, proves that it should blend into the work from our conversion. “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven.” Again, if there are sorrows in serving the saints, and Satan's hindrances too, what is the laborer's crown of rejoicing? Some present reward or memorial? Nay, “Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (Chap. 2:19) Moreover, if an apostle prays for the saints, he desired their growing exercise in love, that they might be confirmed unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. (Chap. 3) How near such a prayer brings that day, casting its light upon the present walk and its responsibilities! Then, again, were they grieving as if any brethren deceased from among them might miss their part in the coming of Christ, and in being caught up to meet Him on high? 1 Thess. 4 fully dispels the dark shade of unbelief, and shows that the true hope is not the separate state of bliss above, but association with Christ when He comes again: for the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we, the living, which remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. As

to the world, rejecting the only Deliverer from wrath, its portion must be the day of the Lord coming as a thief by night. (1 Thess. 5) “The day” is the manifestation of Christ's coming in judgment; and as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. (Luke 21) But Christians are sons of light and day, and that day shall not overtake them as a thief. Accordingly he prays, not only that the God of peace Himself might sanctify them wholly, but that their whole spirit and soul and body might be preserved without blame in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ver. 23.)

2 Thessalonians sets the soul right touching fears for the living saints, as the first epistle had corrected the error as to the dead. The Lord's revelation from heaven will be retributive—rest for His saints, and tribulation for their troublers. (Chap. 1) Why, then, be afraid of the false rumor, whatever the fictitious authority claimed for it, that the day of the Lord was come with its terrors and snares? He beseeches them, therefore, by the coming of the Lord, which is to gather the saints to the Lord above, not to be alarmed by the notion that His day was present. For, in truth, that day could not come till the evil was thoroughly ripe and manifest, with which judgment is to deal. (Chap. 2) Finally, in chap. 3, the apostle prays the Lord to direct their hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ. How blessed the thought that if we are waiting for His return, we have communion with His patience! We wait with Him, if we wait for Him.

It need hardly be added, that the epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude do but confirm, enlarge, and enforce the same doctrine, interweaving it also into the practical life of every day. Sec James 5:7-9; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 2:12; 4:5, 7; 5:1, 4 Peter 1:19; 3 John 28; Jude 14-24.

The Revelation impresses upon the whole its most emphatic seal. In the introduction (chap. 1:7) we read, “Behold he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” How suitable to visions of judgment! Equally in keeping is the conclusion (chap. 22:17): “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” Such is the expression of the heart from the individual saint and from the Church. What else, indeed, could the Bride say in answer to Him who announces Himself as the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star? Observe, too, that the Spirit, the divine Comforter who dwells in her, sanctions and leads the call to the Bridegroom. If you, dear reader, have heard the quickening voice of the Savior, take up the same. You may have followed Jesus only yesterday or today; nevertheless, fear not: “Let him that heareth say, Come.” But if you have never known His voice, listen now, ere it be too late, to these gracious words: “Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Are you deeply conscious of your wants, your misery, your sins—are you athirst I If so, you cannot say to Him, Come; but you may yourself come to Him and welcome. Yea, if most of all you feel your lack of feeling, if you only desire from Him what you want and can get nowhere else, “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20.) It follows from this, the true hope of the Christian, that the expectation of seeing the world gradually filled with blessing, or even the semblance of it through the profession of the gospel, before the return of Jesus, is altogether unwarranted. He will have the glory of reducing all opposing powers, and of ushering in at His second advent that acceptable year of Jehovah which he proclaimed at His first coming. But the day of vengeance, which in His humiliation was left out

(compare Luke 4:19, 20 with Isa. 61:1-3), will be the immediate effect of His appearing again, followed by His reign of peace and glory. See Isa. 11:4-9; 17; 18; 30; 32; 35; 60 - 66; Jer. 31-32; Ezek. 36-47 Daniel is very explicit on this head. “Thou sawest,” says the prophet to the King, “till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” The divine interpretation (ver. 44, 45) need leave no doubt as to the meaning. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hall made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” Other Scriptures, too, furnish more light, especially Matt. 21:42-44. “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?, Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

Thus, if it be clear that Christ is the stone, it is equally clear that at His first coming He was the despised and rejected stone. He is now become the head of the corner, glorified at God's right hand. He will by and by return in judicial power; and as surely as those who stumble at His humiliation have been broken, so, when He descends in judgment, shall His adversaries be ground to powder. When He first came, far from falling on the Roman Empire (or iron power of Nebuchadnezzar's image), the representative of the Empire crucified Him; but when He returns in glory, He will execute judgment upon that empire in its final state of division into separate kingdoms. It is only after this destructive blow that “the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” Dan. 7; 11:12; Rev. 17; 19:20, corroborate this and supply further detail. But the general truth is as distinct as it is practically momentous. Christendom, far from progressing in good or purging out evil, is to end in a widespread apostasy, like Judaism since the law, and mankind at large before and since the flood. Compare Matt. 13:30; Luke 17:26-30; Rom. 11; 1 Thess. 5; 2 Thessalonians; 2 Tim. 3; 1 John Peter 2,; Jude. After the Lord, at His coming, has judged the professing Christian body, as well as the Jews, and the Gentiles (Matt. 24; 25), He will cause the days of heaven to dawn upon the earth, His bride being manifested with Him on high, and Israel, the ransomed of the Lord below, His earthly center, with the Gentiles abundantly blessed around them. The Lord will hasten it in His time.

Chapter 135

Scripture Query and Answer: Sentence of Death

Q. 2 Cor. 1:9. - Does the sentence (answer) of death, spoken of by the apostle, mean nature's death, that is, the penalty of death? or does it mean that, by the cross, we have the sentence of death, so as to have no more hope or expectation in ourselves? W. H. G. W.

A. The whole of the beginning of 2 Corinthians is founded on the circumstance that the apostle had just been in a violent persecution, in which it seemed impossible to escape with life. The sentence referred to declares that this outward danger of being put to death had no power over him whatever, because within he held himself for a dead man, and trusted in Him that raiseth the dead. What was killing a dead man who only looked for the power of resurrection to be exercised? Αποκριμα I take to be a judicial sentence, not an answer, though it has this sense also. He held himself as a child of Adam under sentence of death. It was a condemned, sentenced, nature. But he says more than this; he had this in himself—he held himself for dead. His own life was condemned for himself. As far as the natural man moves and wills it it is flesh; but holding the flesh as actually dead in one's own mind is holding the body to be dead, as far as any mental sentence can go. If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; and the Spirit is life.

Chapter 136

Scripture Query and Answer: Sin Offering of the Fruit of the Earth?

Q. Lev. 11. - What way are we to understand Lev. 5:11, which speaks of the offerer bringing a sin offering of the fruits of the earth (without any sweet savor it is true)? We know “without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” in chapter 4:28, we have a female offered—why? U. O

A. This is an important ordinance. First, there is tender compassion for the poor in the things of God. Next, as to the sacrifice itself, weighty principles are contained in it. No sin could be forgiven without a sacrifice or offering for sin. This particularly characterizes this part of the instructions as to sacrifice. If one failed to discover what he knew, when adjured, to hide sin; or touched, without even knowing it, what was unclean, when he was aware of it, he was guilty. No poverty could bring compassion into play without an offering. Let one be ever so dull in the apprehension of sin, or, consequently, of atonement, still guilt was there if evil was touched. On the other hand, if truth of purpose was there in owning it, and owning it in such sort that the need of atonement before God was felt, which alone consequently is recognized as owning sin, the poverty of apprehension does not hinder the perfect forgiveness. That rests on the value of the sacrifice; only Christ must be seen as a sacrifice for sin as one rejected, a sin-bearer for us. The fact, of its being fine flour without blood hardly affects the principle of blood-shedding. It comes where blood shedding is universally required for sin, and is only an exception in view of poverty, to show that, in no case, without a sin-offering, is there forgiveness, and carries as an exceptional case the character of blood along with it as the principle. It is not that one kind of sin requires blood and another not; but incapacity by poverty puts this in place of a bloody offering, and it is so accounted. Only if a real sense of needed atonement be there, the want of apprehension of the full import of sin and death, that is of Christ's death and blood shedding, will not present the getting the benefit of that death and blood-shedding.

The female sacrifice was accounted of less value. In Lev. 5, it begins with a female. It was not in the first instance a bad conscience in doing it.

Chapter 137

On the Spirit's Action in Gift: Part 1

I begin by admitting that what is called open ministry has given occasion to the flesh. But I do not think the remedy for it is to deny the presence and operations of the Spirit of God. Further, while I admit that the flesh has taken occasion from spiritual liberty to take license to itself, as God has warned us it would, and while I think that flesh acting thus ought, as in every other case, to be judged by the Church, if the individual does not judge it for himself, I have no hesitation in saying that I have found spiritual devotedness, and spiritual intelligence, and brotherly joy, unequivocally inferior, and a very carnal following of particular ways of thinking taking their place, wherever teachers (with a comfortable opinion of themselves, because able by natural qualifications to be acceptable to many, without denying they might have gift), have absorbed into their own hands the ministry of the Word. It is and has been in all ages one of the first symptoms of spiritual decline in the Church. Another consequence is that sisters lose a most blessed place which God has given to them in the Church, and take one which He has not given and which is really a dishonor to them before God.

Moreover, I would press upon every heart, and especially upon those who would act on the deplorable and unchristian principle of “having a right to speak,” that grace is swift to hear and slow to speak, and that while faithful in the exercise of what God has given, one must ever be ready to esteem another better than oneself. But I believe that the love of power is to be dreaded in those who can gratify the ears and minds of many (and that is not edification), as much as the love of doing in those who can please but few: and this especially where spiritual power is on the decline, and teaching is looked to in order to stimulate, instead of the Lord enjoyed in grace. The consequence is, you will find more or less the teacher take the place of the Lord. Seemly flesh is not more pleasant to God than rude flesh, though it pave the way more easily for the Church's contentedly leaving God and forgetting His presence. Teaching, precious as it is, is not His presence. I dread much when I hear people saying, “dear Mr. Such-an-one.” It may be accompanied with grace in other ways; but l do not think they would have so spoken of Paul or Apollos, when the grace and holy power which puts the conscience in the presence of Christ was in its energy, though they would have esteemed them very highly in love for their work's sake.

You may perhaps think I am blaming others: I am not. I have seen the same spirit working as regards myself; but I think I may honestly say I have struggled against it, though this in the feebleness of the Church as to laborers is not easy; but in trusting God for this, I have found that blessing has followed, whatever the danger seemed. I believe that the Holy Ghost dwells in the Church. This will never make man careless in watching over the saints for their good—quite the contrary; but the belief of it will hinder his taking the Spirit's place. God will be respected in the Church, and His Spirit in the whole body and in the least of its members. And those that honor Him, He will honor.

I do not suppose that you can force, so as to be profitable, the speaking of those who have little gift or but a few words to say. The forcing a member to act may not restore the tone of the body,

want of which has disabled the member from acting; but to take this state as the healthful one, because the acting of the member made the body in its sickly state ill at ease, is a great mistake. This is the progress of the thing: when real and fresh joy in the Lord is there, and the saints think much of the Lord, a few words spoken about Him recall Him, and they are full of joy and happy. If another speak largely of His grace (though in fellowship this would to me be exceptional), they feed: Christ is still thought of, His glory present, and the soul perhaps carries away subject for meditation at another moment. The speaker and the hearers together think of Christ. Where the Lord is much less thought of, the few very same words would not recall Christ, scarcely at all, to the heart, because He is not there in the same way, and they are wearisome, they do not stimulate; and he who was wont so to speak, thinks himself and his gift despised. Perhaps, too, some defect of education or the like has accompanied these few words: it was quite, or almost, overlooked when Christ was very present; but now it is very evident and displeasing. If sometimes he went beyond what the Spirit gave, this, though perceived and (if there was faithfulness) mentioned in grace, with the recognition of Christ in all the rest, now that Christ is not the source of the same blessing, has not the same place in the hearer, becomes remarked and offensive, because what man is, is now much more prominent. Hence the more accomplished. teacher, who does not offend the ear and taste, becomes necessary—a dreadful snare to himself and to the whole assembly, But when this comes to be insisted on as the right thing, and those who have educational qualifications come to insist on this state of things as the right state, it is very sad. Failure, and building on failure to sanction the position which the flesh would assume for its ease because of failure, are very different things. The first, man has to confess; the last is assuming his ease in it, and setting aside God and his own responsibility, at once. And I do avow I have a little distrust of this coming always from those who take the whole matter to themselves on this ground. I think, if the history of the Church be examined, it will be found that the decline of any revival always took this road.

One word more of general remark. I do not at all say that, in any assembly where such is the state of things, those who can edify very little, or not at all, are to force themselves on the assembly, or to be encouraged in that state of things to speak. If it does not edify, it can be of no use. The point is that all should feel what the state of things is, and above all, not sanction as right what is the proof of failure and decay. I have no hesitation in saying that worse spiritual decline is always the consequence.

First, let us remember this, that the presence of gift did not in the smallest degree hinder the working of the flesh in speaking; it was at full work, to the marring of edification, and that in the grossest shape (for men were speaking what nobody understood at all), when the gifts were undeniable. It is not the presence of real gift that is any check to this fleshly confusion. It was the most undeniable utterance—gifts, tongues for example, when there could be no mistake as to the Spirit's power, which were the occasion of carnal confusion.

This is of the last importance; because the assertion is that persons speaking without gift, on the assumption that they have it, produce confusion; and the remedy is that they should recognize that there is no gift now! and thus the ministry be left to persons, gracious persons, no doubt, who by their human attainments are capable of satisfying in general the demands of the flock for instruction. Now the answer at once is that all this is without foundation. The edification of the flock had to be watched over against the license of the flesh where there were gifts, as much as on the

assumption that there are none. The question does not lie there at all: the ground of the argument is all a mistake. It lies much more in the spiritual grace, which can maintain the edification of the body.

And just see where this reasoning places me. It destroys absolutely the applicability of Scriptural direction to the assemblies of the saints; so that I have no scriptural rule nor guidance in ordering their edification. I admit that there is a great difference in fact as to gifts. The Church is shorn of well-nigh all, if not all, her glory and ornament, and well has she deserved it. Hence there is a necessary modification in the application: I cannot regulate the speaking of tongues where there are none. But if the principle of ministerial education be different, if the thing regulated by the Scripture does not exist at all in any shape, then the rules for order and edification of the assembly are gone with them. I have a teaching without the operation of the Spirit, and without the regulation of the Spirit. It is not “edification by gift” only that is in question, but it is the existence of any assembly on this principle. It is a new sort of assembly that is proposed, to which the Scriptural directions do not apply—such as have been already formed in the Establishment, and among the Dissenters, and which I have left because they are not Scriptural. Now I am told that it is all a mistake to take these Scriptures and apply them at all, as they are based on the existence of that which exists no more!

It is in vain to say, We meet as brethren, and the ministry is a distinct question. I admit we meet as brethren; but at the same time we meet in the unity of the body where God acts by the members, and it is the Holy Ghost acting in the unity of the body by its members which is called in question; for these members are what are called gifts in Corinthians, and in the use of another word in Ephesians too. It is this that makes the question serious. That the flesh has used liberty for license I do not doubt: the gifts did not hinder that. It may be, too, that in a given assembly there may not be a teacher at all; this is very possible, because the gifts are in the unity of the whole body, not in a single assembly. The state of the Church may make our weakness very apparent in this respect; but if we are humbled, we shall accept this position and be blessed. The attempt to restore gift by, or rather to substitute for it, the quietness which decent human attainments may give, is just to avoid the holy, humble, God-owning confession of the state we have brought the Church to. It is building again (and worse) the things which we have destroyed. It is, after being awakened, refusing to acknowledge and bow our heads, on account of the sorrowful state of the Church; and this I see fast growing in many a mind because of the blessing which God, in His sovereign goodness, deigned to bestow on those who did so own, and humbled themselves on account of that state. The Lord keep us lowly and keeping the word of His patience.

And now as to the arguments based on a certain explanation of the word χ■ρισμα, to show as briefly as I can (and it will not require many words), that the reasoning is without foundation, the statement unscriptural, and the principle the denial of the Holy Ghost's operations in the Church.

If I might be allowed to suppose a case so very simple that all might understand it (yet in the plainest seriousness), I would say, I mean by “boots” coverings for the feet and ankles, drawn on, without strings and being tied; and I affirm that there are no boots made at Stafford at all. It is replied to me, Why the town lives by making boots, and sends them all over the world. No, I say, there are none made there: that is what a boot really means—at any rate, what I mean by a boot. Would it not be evident that my statement was good for nothing at all, because it was founded

upon a meaning which I had attached to the word which did not exist in reality, though some boots might be so made? The reasoning was based on a false ground, and therefore was all invalid. The question is, Are there gifts according to Scripture? If I attach a meaning to the word “gift” which is not scriptural, and then use it to prove, as to the present fact and time, that there are no scriptural gifts, the total fallacy of such a proceeding is evident.

But I shall at once be stopped short by the remark that I must prove that it is not scriptural. This is just what I proceed to do; and from the only possible source of reasoning on it—an examination of Scripture itself. Here is the writer's statement of what gift is. “Χ■ρισμα, or gift, I look upon as quite distinct from everything of man's doing—distinct from the natural ability or talent he may possess of God—distinct from the improvement and sanctification of that talent; and alike distinct from any attainment he might make by the diligent use of means. It is the Holy Spirit's giving in distinctness to anything we see in man. It is that giving when the power of the Spirit is manifestly seen using the creature indeed, and yet clearly to be distinguished from the creature; as, for instance, we see in the gift of tongues, &c.... So I believe it was of all gifts of the Spirit, &c.... Such I believe to be (of?) the true nature and meaning of gift; and I am not aware that there is any passage in the New Testament in which χ■ρισμα, or gift, can be shown to be something different from this.” This statement is constantly referred to, and, in substance, repeated. We shall find that it involves the whole question of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body, the Church; because He must act in some way if He be there—act in the body. I say, “the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body” —not His merely acting in grace in individual minds. This question is entirely overlooked in the writer's statements.

But as to the word “gift” itself, χ■ρισμα, or gift, is the Holy Spirit's giving, &c. Now, I should not have made any difficulty as to the expression, “gifts of the Spirit,” as a general human expression, sufficiently exact to convey historically what was meant; but when this is insisted on as a definition, it is important to notice that there is no such term in Scripture; and the Holy Ghost is never spoken of as “giving.” Nor do I apprehend that this distinction is without intention on the part of the Divine Spirit. At any r ate, on a very important and delicate subject, it is well, when we are defining, not to speak otherwise than the Word speaks.

Next, that χ■ρισμα is free gift, or a something freely, given, and not attained by man's labor, is evident: the word means it. But, then, it is quite beside the mark to speak of the word meaning “the Spirit's giving.” First, it is used independently of all question of the Spirit's giving in several passages. In Rom. 5:15, 16; 6:23, it is the free gift of God unto justification and eternal life; in chap. xi. 29, it is used in the most general way possible, and applied to God's purposes as to the Jews. This the writer recognizes in the latter passage. It is very doubtful whether the statement made there as to χαρ■σματα θεο■ could be applied to what are called spiritual gifts. At any rate, the word by these passages is proved not to have any particular application to the Spirit's giving in its meaning. “Free gift” is the meaning, and whatever is free gift may be called χ■ρισμα. Now, here there was nothing of the Spirit being seen, manifestly seen, using the creature, and yet clearly to be distinguished from the creature. This life was, “I live: and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” So that free gift was not necessarily (in the case to which the writer compares it, and which is called effectively χ■ρισμα) what he affirms in the same place it must be, as the only true meaning of the word: so much the contrary, that in the case alluded to a man could say, “I, yet not I,” and “the life which I live.” That

is, precisely the contrary was the case: χ■ρισμα, or gift, is not what is asserted.

Further, in cases of spiritual gift, properly speaking, I suppose when the apostle preached at Athens when in the synagogues he spoke as a Jew to Jews, he did so in the exercise of his apostolic gift; and yet there is no appearance of such a distinction, before the heathen and the Jews, of “the creature” and “the gift.” That there was great power in what he said, and thus demonstration of the Spirit, I doubt not; but it has no appearance at all of an utterance, as it is called, which attracted supernaturally the attention of the hearers— “the Spirit seen using the creature, and yet clearly to be distinguished from the creature.” Again, I suppose the Epistle to the Hebrews (if it be allowed to be what Peter alludes to as Paul's epistle to the Jews—and at any rate it is the inspired production of the Holy Ghost, as every other epistle) is really by the gift of the Holy Ghost: it is, according to the wisdom given to him, a gift, the writer insists—indistinctly. Yet there is nothing but a spiritual mind developing certain great truths by the Word—by inspiration, by gift, I doubt not; but how in a way clearly distinguished from the creature?—i.e., distinguished evidently from spiritual attainment, however sanctified, on the face of it, as “tongues, working of miracles, healing,” &c. That it is real gift and real inspiration, I have not the smallest doubt: that is just what I insist upon; but I do not see anything of this miraculous form of utterance or power, so distinct from any improvement and sanctification of talent he possesses of God, or attainment he might make by the diligent use of means. I do not see that this distinction was so strong in the apostle's mind when he says, “when for the time ye might to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you,” &c.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 138

On the Spirit's Action in Gift: Part 2

I know not whether the writer would allow the Holy Scriptures to be written in virtue, or in exercise, of a gift: if not, all his statements are of little importance; for in that ease it is evident that the most important communications from God, and that inspired ones too, are not gifts. But if we are allowed to consider them as such (and for this I refer to 2 Peter 1:20, 21 for the principle), then I beg the reader to consider the beginning of Luke 1 (1-4), and say how far, in this case, gifts are distinguished sensibly from what man is capable of by spiritual attainment. So Paul in the Corinthians. I suppose it will hardly be denied that these were the fruits of apostolic gift, “though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent.” Is there anything in this so clearly distinguished from the creature? For my own part, that which to me so exquisitely distinguishes the general character of the New Testament inspiration and gift is, that the Holy Ghost, instead of, as in the old prophets, giving oracularly certain revelations, with “thus saith the Lord,” enters (as come down in the unity of the body, as dwelling in the creature, and associating Himself with all its affections, sorrows, and feelings, helping its infirmities), into all the sympathies, and acts in all the affections which redemption has created and left room for, and which become the unity of one body, and binds it all together. “He who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God.” I cite this, not as a gift, but as the expression of the way in which the Holy Ghost introduces Himself into the sorrows and sufferings of the body, as being still connected with the creature. What a marvelous sympathy of God in and with the creature! “He who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God.” And were the gifts not of this sympathy and unity? Let any man read the epistles of Paul, and say. Let him read Philippians, Philem. 1:2 Timothy, Corinthians, or indeed any; and yet surely, apostolic gift, prophetic gift, doctoral gift, were in exercise here. I do not deny that there is sometimes a distinct enunciation of positive fresh revelations: the book of Revelation is a clear case of this, and so are many passages of Paul's epistles. “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” and so on. But will the writer of the tract be bold enough to say, that when the apostle wrote thus, he was exercising his gift) and that all found with it in the same epistles is not the exercise of gift but spiritual attainment merely, though addressed as from an apostle? But if not, his view of gift is surely completely falsified; and it is manifest he has confounded gift with another immediate action of the Holy Ghost—with new revelations. Not that God keeps infallibly now as He did in forming the written word; but this is not the point—it is to know whether He works now so as to give competency, and to guide in speaking, and to lead to speak or to be silent. We have seen that when the apostle was not at the same height of spiritual apprehension and power, he repented having written a letter which we have as an inspired epistle.

Nor can I see that the fact that certain gifts were evidently supernatural, as miracles and signs (which are by the apostle declared to be inferior to others, and as tongues, said to be signs to unbelievers, as indeed miracles were also, to confirm the word), should exalt such form of gift above that which edified the Church or converted souls, but which had not necessarily any such

form, and whose power was seen only in the conviction of a sinner's conscience, or the edifying of a believer's soul.

In a passage of 1 Peter, we have a principle very important indeed on this subject, which seems to me to preclude altogether the reasonings of the tract. “As every man hath received the gift, let him so minister the same, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Thus, whatever the manifold grace may be, it is to be ministered as a χ■ρισμα; for the simple fact is, whatever χ■ρις (grace) gives is a χ■ρισμα no matter what. “If any man speak, let him speak as oracles of God; if any man minister (i.e., serve in any way), let him do so as of the strength God supplieth.” That is, he sums up the whole matter into general parts which embraced the general good of the Church, as in ordinary exercise, speaking, and serving.

If any man speak, he must do it from God, as expressing what God gave him; if he served, as of the ability which God gave him; that God in all things may be glorified. All was to be presented as coming directly from God, that God might be glorified. Now this is the very thing set aside. It is perfectly clear that the reasoning of the apostle is null, if it be translated “according to the oracles.” Besides, this is not what is said. It is “as oracles,” not even as “the” oracles. What the apostle is speaking of is the source to which it is to be attributed, in order that this source may have the glory, and not man's attainment. That is, χ■ρισμα is the source of speaking (χ. being simply the expression for all that the manifold grace gives); and it is forbidden to speak in any other way—it is to be ascribed to the gift of God. And I apprehend that if saints, one and all, were honestly thus to wait upon God, there would be a great deal more real gift, and gifts of less human attainment would be better appreciated; while many a person would be kept in healthful silence, because he could not say that he spoke as of God; and if this were demanded, the flesh would be more easily detected, if he pretended to do so. At any rate, such is, I have no hesitation in affirming, the only true meaning of the apostle.

Further, I proceed to show that, as regards the distinction of gift from diligence in the use of means, though the gift be not thus acquired, the writer is wrong; and further, that while gift is really gift, inasmuch as God gives it, yet God prepares the vessel, so that suitability is God's way of acting in this.

First, as to diligence in the use of means, the statements of Scripture show the notion of using the creature independently of such diligence to be entirely false. In 1 Tim. 4 the apostle thus addresses his beloved son in the faith, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon (or occupy thyself with) these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.” Is the possession of gift so contrasted here with the use of means, so that profiting should appear Again, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. . . . That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.” The whole of these directions prove that the possession of x(ipecrita was to be accompanied by the use, the diligent use, of means, so that profiting should appear; and that the writer's confined use of it is entirely a false one.

Further, as to being distinct from natural endowment, the writer instances tongues. I really cannot say as to this: it may have been so; but the general rule in gifts for edification is otherwise. The principle of Scripture, of the Lord, is—natural endowment, gift, and diligence through confidence in His love. The two last we have seen in Timothy—, while in Peter we have been guarded from the abuse of it, into which the writer has fallen. In Matt. 25 we have the express statement of the Lord, that when He went away, He called His servants, and gave to each of them according to his several ability; and they then traded with the talents as His given money. So Paul was a chosen vessel as well as the receiver of a gift; and I think no one can doubt the remarkable qualities which preceded his call. Nor in reading the history of Peter, James, and John, “who seemed to be pillars,” can any one doubt that the Cephas and Boanerges of the Lord had qualities before the day of Pentecost, which the Lord had, in divine wisdom, prepared and chosen for the purpose for which He employed them by His gift. And, while equally apostles, it is clear that all were not alike in this respect. Is it unnatural with God to do thus? Or, when He chooses, before He gives the gift (as we know He did both with Paul and the others), are we to suppose that He chooses without display of wisdom, or without a fitness which He Himself has prepared in His instrument? That it is not what would have appeared in man's eyes may be very true, for God seeth not as man seeth: still He seeth, and in some fair and ruddy youth, who is taken from following the ewes great with young, or in some poor fisherman of Galilee, He may have prepared a chosen vessel which will put man to shame, but glorify the profound wisdom of God in His poor creatures; while in the learned and free-born Jew of Tarsus He may show, in an energy which God alone could have sustained, what it was to count those things which were gain loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord, whose very name he had once sought to destroy. The Lord chooses the vessel, and He chooses it in the wisdom which has prepared it for His use. And it is not the substitution of mere spiritual attainment for the creative wisdom which has prepared it, and for the divine grace which has filled the vessel with His own gift, which will put either God or man in his place.

Let us turn to Rom. 12 The apostle, after exhorting every man to think soberly of himself, according as God had dealt to every man the measure of faith, for that we are all members of one body (a point we will touch on presently), adds, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, on ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.” Now I ask, is it possible, if the apostle had the idea of gift which the writer has, that such a passage would have been found I Could he have spoken of ministry—not of the word properly, but of any service to the saints—teaching, exhorting, giving, and ruling, and then pass on to what are fruits and the walk of grace, heading all with the word “gift” (χ■ρισμα), “Having then gifts differing” —if such a thought had been in his mind as the writer insists on? It is quite evident that, while some gifts bore externally the stamp of supernatural power, or, if believed, having the character of new revelation, were necessarily assumed to be such; the piety, and, I apprehend, the enlightened and scriptural piety of the saints whose record is in the word, recognized everything as a gift (χ■ρ■σμα); and as the Holy Ghost, and He only, did everything in the Church that was good, it was attributed to Him, not as His gift but as His working. (To say otherwise would be to confine His working to signs or revelations, which is clearly false.) And hence the lists of gifts are altogether diverse (according to the subject of the writer), and none of them complete as if it was a

regular enunciation of certain known things, because all that was done for God, God was the doer of it; and that doing was gift to the Church, in him in whom it was accomplished; and Peter forbids its being done in any other way.

The service of ministry which we have (I have no doubt in 1 Peter, but certainly in Rom. 12) as gift, being by Peter contrasted with speaking, and indeed in Rom. 12, too. It is clear that exhortation and evangelizing were neither signs nor fresh revelations, yet they were gifts. Indeed, receiving the word (not on the ground of signs, but) by faith in the conscience is the only true receiving of it; and the fact of signs accompanying it is just the proof that it was not a sign itself. And now see what we have lost as coming from God; we may have it, it seems, as man's sanctified qualities and attainments, but not as a gift from God!"

Further, either there were in the primitive church two sorts of ministry—one which came as a gift from God, and one which did not (which I leave anybody to believe that will, and which I have no doubt Peter forbids expressly)—or else the ministry which is now sought to be set up is altogether different, and is not recognized in Scripture at all; and this is a very serious point, the proper operation of the Spirit being hereby absolutely excluded—His will in sovereignty, in distributing, but, above all, His operation. The individual, it seems, may be sanctified. in this as in everything, but the Holy Ghost never operates in the Church. He may work in a soul for its good, but He never works in the Church. And this is very important, because it goes a great deal farther than a personal question of gifts, even to the living existence and functions of the body, which I beg may be carefully remarked. These gifts are always treated by Paul as membership of the body—the Holy Ghost animating the whole and acting in the parts. There must be no body, then, or, at any rate, no members of the body. I admit freely that this is a figure; and I do not pretend to say such a member is such a gift; but the figure means something. It means that the Holy Ghost is dwelling in and making one the body of Christ, and acting by every one of the members in one way or another, His actings being called χαρ■σματα in the members. It is quite true, that some of these may be ostensibly and evidently the power of God. Still, all that is done must come from the same source, according to what is given to each; if not, it comes from the mind and flesh of the individual, and is good for nothing. And, though certain gifts were before, and operated for the gathering of the body, yet, being of it by the then union of all together, they are all treated by the apostle as members of the body. And it is important to remark here, that gifts are never treated as separated, isolated things, though in responsible individuals; as complete in the individuals, as a separate acting of the Holy Ghost in him; but as the consequence of the Holy Ghost acting in the body, of which they were members, and they acting merely as members of the body.

And the apostle is so far from presenting that which is adorned with the outward ostensible sign, as being the most valuable and important gifts, that he states exactly the contrary—distinguishing the two kinds. Comeliness, says he, is put upon what is less comely; for our comely parts have no need: but God has thus tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked.

Let us (passing over for the present the passage of Peter, which forbids speaking save as the oracles of God) consider now the passages of Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians.

I add Ephesians, though the word be not χ■ρισμα. There may be a shade of idea: substantially they are the same thing: δ■μα is not more human attainment than χ■ρισμα; there is no difference in this respect. That is, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, were gifts, properly speaking (spoken of in a different point of view, I admit, but not the less gifts) in the fullest and highest sense of the word—the consequence of Christ's exaltation; and (with the exception of pastor, which is here identified as the same person, not gift, with doctor) declared elsewhere to be distributions of the Holy Ghost, who is not, as we shall see, left out here. The Church had been declared to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. And they are engaged to walk worthy of this calling. There was one body, they are told, and one Spirit, but to every one of us is given grace (χ■ρις) according to the measure of the gift (δωρε■ς) of Christ. Christ had ascended up on high: He had given gifts to men, and He gave some apostles, &c.

The principle stated is that there is a unity of the body in one Spirit; but that to every one of us grace (χ■ρις) is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ (the χαρ■σματα in Peter are said to be received according to the manifold χ■ρις); that it is Christ who fills all things, who being ascended up, and so head of the Church (and this is the doctrine of the whole epistle), has given in particular those gifts. Every one has received as a member of the body; but these notable gifts are particularly marked out, which especially minister of the fullness of Christ, for the gathering or nourishment of the body, that we might grow up to Him in all things, who is the head. They come from the head (to the Church over all things) that we may grow up to the head: of 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 one part (■υ■ς ■κ■στου as before) maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.

Is all this to be given up? For surely (call them δ■ματα or χαρ■σματα) these were no sanctified human attainments; they are gifts which Christ ascended has given, according to the power of the one Spirit in the body, so that each member should work severally in his place, to the edifying of the body in love. Is all unity and membership gone? Or are the members dead? Or are they now to work on some other principle than the living power of the one Spirit in the body, which animates each member in its place, while it makes it a member in the unity of the whole body? Or will it be said that, at that time, besides the perfect corporate system of working by joints and bands, through the power flowing from the Holy Ghost as a center, there was another system, another sort of teachers, another sort of pastors besides, who were not of this perfect system of divine workmanship? If not, and there is another sort now, then not only are gifts gone, but membership, and unity, and the body are gone. Not only have we failed as to them, but they are gone as on God's part; so that my faith cannot look to them. For if they exist, then (if it be not a dead body) does the Holy Ghost work in the several living members for the good of the body, and gift in the true scriptural sense of it subsists; and blessed be God that it does. And this is the question—the existence and unity of the body in its living members.

And here a word on what is called impulse, in passing. I have no love for the word, but rather the contrary; but I am not frightened by a word either. If by impulse be meant the real present acting of the Holy Ghost leading saints to speak, and guiding them in speaking, it is surely the only thing of any value or power. If they are not so led by the Holy Ghost, they must be led by something else, which will not be, to say the least, the present acting of the Holy Ghost; and, therefore, if even very good things may be said, it will not be power, for in every sense power belongs to God. We have

already seen that organic utterance (if there be any gift which is simply such, i.e., the use of the creature without his mind) is the lowest kind, and the Corinthians are treated as children in understanding for thinking much of it. We have seen real, proper gift, or χ■ρισμα, identified, in the case of Timothy, with the diligent use of means. And I add here, that the mind using truth, and the Holy Ghost using the mind, are two different things; for God is in ONE Of them: but the Holy Ghost's using the mind is gift, properly and truly gift, and stated by the Apostle to be the superior kind of gift. Having already spoken of this I cannot be charged with any wild idea of impulse; but I do say that the acting of the Holy Ghost in, and by, man, in a member of the body (which is what the apostle calls gift), is what we are to look for by faith, and is the only thing of any real value or power. I admit that the Holy Ghost can, in another's mind, use what is not such. The testimony of Christ printed on a playbill for an oratorio may be used by the Holy Ghost in the reader's mind for conversion; and the mind's statement of the truth may be used in another's soul by the Holy Ghost for blessing; but it is not what we are to look for. It is not power in service.

Take another point. “Be not drunk with wine, but be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” I suppose, when filled with the Spirit the Holy Ghost was acting, and acting immediately—I may say, sensibly. Is all this to be laid aside, too? Is it wrong to be filled with the Holy Ghost? or, wrong to hope there may be more of it? And this “be not drunk with wine,” is wonderfully like, “these men are not drunken, as ye suppose,” when tongues were spoken. I am not adducing this to show that we are to look for tongues, but that the notion of denying gift goes much farther than is supposed; that it goes to the denying the present acting of the Spirit of God; the being filled with the Spirit as well as the unity of the membership of the Church of God; which are either dead or active by virtue of the Spirit in what is called in Scripture, gifts; and that, ■ν■ ■κ■στψ to each one, and called χ■ρισμα, too.

For, turning to Corinthians, we have the same principles as in Ephesians; only (the subject not being the exaltation of Christ over all things, as the one head of the body) the subject is approached from a different side, to suit the πνευματικ■, and the contrast of the one Holy Ghost with the many demons. But while thus taking it up on a different ground, it comes to the same statements; the same doctrine is found in it. First, that which distinguishes the Holy Ghost is that He says, in the saint, “Lord Jesus.” A demon would not. But this shows that it acted in the mind, person, and faith of the individual; as indeed the demons often did, when really such, as in an oracle. See the case of Legion: “What have I to do with thee; I pray thee torment me not;” only it was by blinding the mind, and not by light; nor do I doubt that this often happens now.

Then, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. Here I would remark by the way, that this is not calling them gifts of, or given by, the Spirit, but merely that it was not, as with demons, many, each acting by himself; but that, though the gifts were many, the Spirit was one. It was clearly the operation (■νεργε■α) of the Spirit in these gifts; but He is never said to be the giver. Of most of them (I doubt not of all), Christ is said to be the giver, as in Eph. 4; and so in Acts 2, “being by the right hand of God exalted, he hath shed forth this which ye see and hear.” But in the economy of God, the Spirit is said ■νεργε■ν,διαιρε■ν, i.e., to operate or distribute rather than to give; something like Eleazar, who had all the goods of his master in his hand, and distributed them, disposed of them, but they came from another. I say, something like, because the word “master” is irrelevant here; and the Holy Ghost being God, the operations are the operations of God: a truth carefully preserved in this chapter. To explain further this distinction, I could notice the word

employed; it is given δι■ το■ πνε■ματος, through the means of the Spirit; καρ■ τ■ πνε■μα, according to the Spirit; ■ν τψ πνε■ματι, in [the power of] the same Spirit.

But to pursue: one more point. Whatever were the manifestations of the Spirit, it was for profit, not for display; but, whatever they were, the point insisted on is, it was one and the same (τ■ ■ν κα■ τ■ α■τ■) Spirit. “For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.” And here I would ask, Is Christ so now? That man has marred and maimed this body, as regards its condition on earth, is admitted; yea, earnestly urged; but in the principle of its existence, can it be said now, So also is Christ? This, evidently, is a most serious question.

Haggai could say to Israel, on whom Lo-ammi was already written, “As in the days when ye came up out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not.” What a blessed and important consolation this! and ground on which faith could rest in its hopes, its confidence, or its labor.

For, continues the apostle, by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews, &c., and have all drank into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many, dm: but now the members are many but the body one: and after a passage above quoted, it is said, “that there may be no schism in the body, but that the members may have the same care one for another.”

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular, and God has set (ο■ς μ■ν ■θετο) in the Church, first apostles.... And seek earnestly the better gifts.”

Now what I would remark here is, the way in which the gifts, χαρ■σματα, are indissolubly knit up with the unity and membership of the body: and this is no casual idea. We have found the same connected with the headship of Christ, as δ■ματαa, in the Ephesians. Here we see the basis is stated: “by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body.” And this baptism with the Holy Ghost is what distinguishes the Church, and the ministry of Christ Himself as exalted on high in respect of it. “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Having stated the principle in chapter 12, and the excellency of charity in chapter 13, in chapter 14 he applies it to the state of the Corinthian church; and we have connected with this subject, singing, blessing, and giving thanks; and he prefers doing it with his mind. That is, the whole action of the Holy Ghost in the body is brought out in connection with this subject, whatever pre-eminent gifts might be found among them.

And further, this universality of action is assumed as a possibility in the whole body, in respect of the most public and evident gifts. When ye are gathered together in one place, if all speak with tongues, will they not say, You are mad? “But if all prophesy..... he is convinced of all, he is judged of all,” and the secrets of his heart being revealed, he falls down and confesses that God is in you of a truth; i.e., that God is in the assembly, in the saints. Is all this gone too? He does not fall down and confess that God is in such or such a gifted person; much less does he admire or look up to the spiritual attainments of an individual; he confesses that God is in the assembly, among the Christians. And is this to be lost, and not even sought, and individual attainment substituted for the presence of God in the assembly? For this is the real question: not merely, whether such individual acts on such or such a principle? but whether I am to look to God or to man—to God's presence in the assembly, or to man's competency by acquired attainments? Can I be satisfied with the latter without some very clear proof that the former is not to be sought—that God has abandoned the assembly of His saints? For, if there, is He not to make His presence known? If He do, it is a

manifestation of the Spirit in the individual who acts—it is a gift, and, if you please, an impulse. It is God acting—that is the great point.

And here I remark that the application of “the rest,” or ο■ ■λλοι, “let the rest judge,” to a certain number of recognized teachers, is entirely against the sense and spirit of the passage. That an unspiritual man, in whom the Holy Ghost's power is not, is incapable of so judging, is quite true, though “the spiritual man judgeth all things.” But what the apostle is considering is the power of the Spirit of God in the gathered assembly; so that God is confessed to be in them; so that all might speak with tongues; all prophesy, the person entering be convinced of all, judged of all. And the Holy Ghost is so acting that they might all prophesy one by one, that all may learn (a very good position for every one to be in sometimes), and all may be comforted.

Let us turn to Romans. Here again the same principle meets us. “For I say,” says the apostle, “through the grace given unto me, to every man among you, not to think highly of himself, above what he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Here again we have a very important principle: no false pretension—sober thoughts of self and gift. Χ■ρισμα (as we may see in what the apostle goes on to say) is spoken of as God's dealing to every man the measure of faith;—this is to be the ground for every man to act upon; if he goes beyond it, much or little, he is in the flesh, and in folly, let his attainments or acceptance be what they may. We want God in order to be profited, and that is according to the measure of faith, and that in every man. For as in one body, we have many members, but all the members have not the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, but each members one of another; but having different gifts, χαρ■σματα, according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith.

It is, then, in the unity of the body, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. This is the principle of gifts (χαρ■σματα): happy are we that it is so simple. That there were gifts which had a sensible miraculous character, I do not deny, and such as we have lost: but I deny that this was the necessary character or real meaning of χ■ρισμα, but the effect or prudence of χ■ρις, grace, here applied to the action of a member of the body, in service. These gifts, however, were by no means the most important ones, and their absence does not touch the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost hi the body, acting, as He is still sovereign in doing, in the unity of the body in its several members, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. I add here, I have no doubt that the object of the apostle in this passage is to confine each to his measure of faith, to think soberly of himself, and to confine himself to what God has dealt to him; first, as to the nature, and secondly, as to the measure of the gift; and I add that I do not doubt that many a brother's gift would be recognized, if he did not go beyond his measure in it. If he prophesy, let him prophesy according to the proportion of faith—all beyond that is flesh, and putting himself forward; and this is felt and his whole gift rejected; and it is his own fault, because he has not known how to confine himself to it, and therefore his flesh was acting, and his speaking is attributed to this, and no wonder. It is also true as to the nature of a gift. If a man sets about to teach, instead of confining himself—to exhorting, if he exhorts—he will not and can not edify. I humbly think—but in this I fully confess I may be mistaken, and desire that he may be blessed with every gift—that this is our brother's mistake. This tract is teaching: I believe his gift to be much more exhorting, and that it is out of the measure, if not out of the nature, of his gift—a gift in which I know he has been blessed. I do not think his estimate of χαρ■σματα is scriptural, or according to

any sober measure of teaching from God. I trust he will bear with me in saying this: we owe such a remark to each other—that I say not to the Church. I will add (to spew that I do not despise anything that comes from him, where I can trace divine teaching), that I think his suggestion on σοφ■α is of importance for the understanding of that point; and though I have not examined it fully in the word, several passages connect themselves with his remark, in my mind, which make it of interest and importance to me.

I add yet further, that I recognize fully certain gifts which we may call permanent, or perhaps more accurately attached to the person: He gave some apostles, &e. I have spoken of it elsewhere. I repeat it now, that the putting forth of another part of the subject, which is of equal (I apprehend, indeed, of much greater) importance, namely the presence of the Holy Ghost's acting in the body, should not be exclusive. The main point is the Holy Ghost's acting in the unity of the whole body, and in each several member; but in so doing, Christ constitutes certain persons as vessels of certain gifts, and gives them for the service to which he is pleased to call them. I do not believe either will be kept in their place of blessing unless graciously owning the other. But it is equally clear that the unity of the body and the presence of God in it, is of more consequence than that which ministers to the maintenance of that unity. Yet these do help to maintain the saints in that unity. But if they despise that unity manifested in the positive action of the Holy Spirit in all the members, then they become a positive and crying evil. It is the principle of Popery; which, as a practical fact, places the operation of the Spirit in the teachers, not in the body. Along with this, unity may be insisted on, as we know from Popery; but it is the unity of slavery and death.

There is no such evil in the Church as the claim of spiritual power in the Church, where it is not fully owned as really and practically acting in the members of the body. These cannot, on the other hand, by the Spirit deny his operations in special service. But it is service—a service to Christ and the saints. Christ gave Himself for the one, the body: He acts by the others, by whom He will, by the Holy Ghost.

I add one word as to the translation of 1 Peter 4:11, ε■ τις λαλε■ ■ς λ■για θεο■. ε■ τις διακονε■, ■ς ■ξ ■σχ■ος ■ς χορηγε■ ■ θε■ς. ■να ■ν π■σιν δοξ■ζηται ■ θε■ς δι■ ■. X. Is it not evident here that the question is (not of a rule according to which things should be done, but) of the source of power and capacity; so that it should be attributed to that source, even God himself, and thus He receive all the glory It is not the scriptural accuracy of what is said, but the divine source to which all is to be attributed, that the apostle is insisting on. It is quite true that, if it is not according to Scripture, it does not come from God. But this is a means of proving the thing. The literal translation of the passage is this: “If any man speak, as oracles of God; if any may serve (or minister—the word means any service not properly of a slave), as of the ability which God supplieth; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

■ς λ■για, it seems to me, cannot, by any possibility, be translated, “according to the Scriptures.”

I do not in the least pretend here to have treated the subject in full; but merely to have said what I believe is a sufficient reply to the ground our brother has taken, and to afford light to the saints on it.

Chapter 139

The Apostle Paul's General Epistles

In the Acts we read the labors of an Evangelist; in the Epistles, the instructions of a Teacher, addressed to those who have already been brought in by the evangelist.

I say this, as being the characteristic difference of the two writings; and very suitably, therefore, the Acts of the Apostles comes before, or takes precedence of, the Epistles of the Apostles.

But then, again, the epistles have their own distinction, each one of them. And in a general way, it is easy to perceive this, and as far as Paul's epistles to different churches go, this I would now do, though very briefly.

In that to the Romans we get a full and orderly writing upon the gospel, that most precious mystery or counsel and way of God, by which He has provided for wretched, self-ruined sinners, displaying His own glory, securing holiness, and excluding boasting, while putting the sinner who believes in Jesus into the highest and dearest relationship to Himself. This is done in chap. i.-viii. Then, in chap. 9-11, we have a wondrous volume on prophetic or dispensational truths; and then, to the end, moral exhortations to the saints, addressing them personally and relatively very largely.

Very suitably does this first of the epistles thus fulfill the office of a teacher. To the quickened ones already brought in, the Spirit, by Paul in this epistle, teaches the way of God more perfectly. This is the Epistle to the Romans.

In the Epistles to the Corinthians, which follow, we are introduced to corruptions in the saints, and to the reproofs, rebukes, and corrections of the Spirit in the apostle.

The Corinthians were a scholastic, reasoning people, more Sadducean than Pharisaic (if I may thus speak of Gentiles in the language of the Jews) in the tendencies of their mind. They were tempted to take advantage of the gifts they enjoyed; by them to exalt themselves, rather than to minister to the edification of their brethren. They had got into a sad state of moral relaxation and speculative discussion of doctrines, rapidly tending to ruin; and had been beguiled by some one who had advantages in the flesh, in his worldly circumstances and conditions, and who withdrawing their regards away from Paul to himself.

This state of things may be discovered in the two epistles to them. And the meeting of this state of things, and the answering of certain questions which they had sent to him (in the curiosity, it would almost seem, of a Corinthian intellect), form the materials of these epistles.

But corruption works variously. The man of God has to look forth from many a watch tower, if he would know, as he ought to do, all the approaches of the enemy. Therefore, in Galatia we see a very different form of corruption from that which we have thus seen at Corinth. There was no Judaizing at Corinth—none of the leaven of the Pharisee, as I hinted, but much of that of the Sadducee; yea, and of Herod too, which is worldliness. But among the brethren in Galatia, on the other hand, it was the leaven of the Pharisee that was working, and working powerfully.

The religion of ordinances had been revived among them. The law, in some of its subtle forms, was returned to. A fair show in the flesh was sought. Having begun in the Spirit, they would now be made perfect in the flesh. They were observing days, and months, and times, and years—the rudiments of the world, the elements of the legal economy; and the apostle is afraid of them. He has to labor again for them, that Christ may afresh be everything to them, “formed in them;” and that they may escape from the fascinations and entanglements of a carnal, worldly sanctuary.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, we have another condition of things, quite another. It is not a state of things of comparative ignorance which needed orderly instruction, as we got in the Romans; nor is it a state of moral relaxation, as is contemplated in the Epistles to the Corinthians; nor a state of doctrinal error approaching dereliction of Christ, as in Galatia. All is right and calm, and undistracted at Ephesus, as far as the epistle assumes: and, consequently, the apostle is free to unfold further and higher truths to the saints there. And this he does. He opens the prerogatives of our calling in Christ, unfolding the mystery of the Church, and addressing the saints as to their duties, and services, and virtue according to that calling, and their relationship one to another in it.

In this epistle, therefore, we rather see the prophet, the one who, under the Holy Ghost, discloses the deep things of God, and takes this place and measure amid the gifts; as we read, “And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” It was surely all inspiration, but it takes, in this epistle, the form of a prophet.

In the Epistle to the Philippians we get the pastor in Paul. There was a very loving personal link between him and them. Personally, I believe, the. Philippians were the nearest to him of any, as John had been to the Lord. Above all others, they had communicated with him, from first to last, during his preaching abroad, and now in his bonds. His heart was very tenderly affected towards them. But he had reason to fear that some breaches had begun among them, some personal jealousies, and reserves, and distances (alas, too common to this day!) and he writes to them a pastoral letter with this apprehension on his heart. But, because of his intimacy with them, and the closeness of their fellowship; because of the love that he had to them, and the grace that was in them, he writes to them with marked tenderness and consideration. In no epistle is there such fervent expression of personal attachment:

And being pastoral rather than instructive, there is no order of doctrinal thought in this epistle. It is written after a freer method.

In the Colossians, who come next, we see a people who had been, like the Galatians (in measure, at least), ensnared by Judaizing principles. But with them this was not in so gross a form as with the Galatians. These principles had been withdrawing the saints in Galatia from that simple faith in the Lord Jesus, which as sinners we must have in Him; these same principles were withdrawing the saints at Colosse from using Christ, and going on with Christ in such ways as saints are to do. The apostle, therefore, very seasonably, instructs them in the fullness of Christ; warning them (as was needed), but likewise teaching them their perfection in Him, that they wanted nothing but what they could get in Him; and that, having begun with Him, they ought to go on with Him; being rooted in Him, so ought they to be built up in Him.

This is the pastor and the teacher together (under full inspiration of the Holy Ghost), both warning and instructing. What variety! Surely these epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians, let us learn how various the need of the saints may be, how deep the subtleties of their enemy, and how many the watch-towers the Spirit has graciously erected for our use, that we may mount them, and get on vantage ground in the face of the approaches of our adversary! And they further let us learn, that if the Spirit of God be as an evangelist in the Acts, He variously imparts Himself, or fills His vessels in the epistles, as a Prophet, a Teacher; or a Pastor, according to the necessities of the saints.

We have still, however, the Epistles to the Thessalonians to consider. They stand the last in the series or succession of these general epistles of Paul, or his epistles to churches, and they have their own character, like each of the others.

In the people to whom they are addressed, we see an eminent, distinguished faith—a faith which had been tested by sufferings for the truth's sake beyond any. Accordingly, they are very encouraging. The apostle, characteristically, is an exhorter, as I may call him, and in these epistles (as Rom. 12 speaks) “waits on exhortation.” He encourages the suffering Church of the Thessalonians by speaking very much to them of the coming of the Lord, which is the due, appropriate comfort of those who suffer with Him and for His sake in this evil, revolted world. There is, accordingly, no doctrinal method in these two epistles. They are written chiefly in the spirit of sympathy, according to the grace of one who was exhorting or encouraging a tried and suffering people. But they convey instruction on this great truth of the coming of the Lord beyond what the Thessalonians had already reached; instruction, too, most fitted to carry on the comforting, sympathizing ministry of an exhorter, such as the apostle is in these epistles.

He has, however, in the midst of all this to erect a new watch-tower. He has to warn, his honored Thessalonians against allowing “the blessed hope” (the coming of the Lord) to be corrupted or abused among them. For true it is, and no uncommon thing, that the very best things, as well as the very best people (I speak as a man), are still in danger. There were no companies of saints more fresh and promising, and abundant in blessedness, than those in Galatia. They would have plucked out their eyes for Paul. But when he wrote to them, he had to rebuke them sharply, and to tell them to their face that he stood in doubt of them. So, there is no truth more precious for the saint than that which the Thessalonians held, the prospect of the Lord's coming, and the soul's longing for it. But even that was in danger, lest the flesh should take advantage of it and corrupt it, and the saints who held it and loved it become idle, and careless as to present duty and honest, needed industry. So that here, again I say, we have another watch-tower erected; and another warning-voice raised in the midst of corruptions by the Shepherd of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, but eyes His flock night and day.

I have thus taken upon me to look rather rapidly Paul's general epistles: I mean his epistles to congregations or churches of saints, and not to individuals, as Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Each of them, I may say again upon this review of them, serves a distinct purpose: but the man of God wants them all, living, as he is to do, by every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God.

The personality of the writer of these Epistles is apparent in each of them, the attitude of his soul, as I may speak, formed, no doubt, by the condition of the Church he was addressing. He is occupying the chair of a master, while writing to the Romans. He is the aggrieved spiritual father,

as he addresses himself to the Corinthians. He is the heated, and zealous, and indignant reprover, as he writes to the Galatians, rescuing and defending a prized and precious treasure which he saw was in danger from them who should have kept and guarded it. He is on high, seated in a world of glories, gazing at it and thinking of the love that brought him there, while he writes to the Ephesians. He is the earnest-hearted lover of the Philippians, fearful of the least thing that threatened to soil or disturb so loved a people. He is the anxious watchman in the midst of the Colossians. And he is the deeply interested, sympathizing counselor and comforter, as he was writing his letters to the Thessalonians.

The style and spirit that would suit these different characters, or these different attitudes of soul, may be discovered in the apostle as he thus writes. And all this surely tells us that, through the Spirit, he was alive to his subject, as well as master of it—not a mere penman, but a living one. And this casts me upon the recollection of the words of another which I have greatly enjoyed before now. Speaking of the different scribes, from Moses to John, employed by the Spirit of God for the writing of the Scriptures, he says, “We are far from being unmindful of these human features throughout impressed on the sacred writings. It is with profound gratitude and ever-increasing admiration that we regard this living, actual, dramatic, philanthropic character which shines with so much power and beauty throughout the Book of God. We have the uncultivated and sublime simplicity of John—the affecting, elliptical, soul-stirring, and argumentative energy of Paul—the fervor and solemnity of Peter—the poetic grandeur of Isaiah—the lyre of David—the ingenuous and majestic narratives of Moses—the sententious and royal wisdom of Solomon. Yes, it is all this. It was Peter, Isaiah, Matthew, John, or Moses, but it was God. It is God who speaks to us; but, cast in earthly mold, it is also man. It is man, but it is God also. How greatly does this abounding humanity, and all this personality with which the divinity of Scripture is invested, charm us, reminding us that the Savior of our souls, whose touching voice they are, Himself bears a human heart on the throne of God, although seated on high where “angels serve and forever adore Him.” And he adds, “Such ought to be the word of God; like Emmanuel; full of grace and truth; at once in the bosom of God and in the heart of man; powerful and sympathizing; celestial and human exalted yet humble; imposing and familiar; God and man.”

I much enjoy this, I own. But I will now add only one other thing, at the close of this short word on Paul's epistles to the churches.

It is after the pattern of divine grace from the very beginning, to wait in patience upon man. These Epistles are a further witness of this. The Spirit of God is waiting on the churches found, as they were, in different forms of error and danger, and seeking to recover, correct, and restore them: just as the hand of God was doing in the earlier days of Israel, as we see in the Book of Judges, and again (with the house of David) in 2 Chronicles; and also, as the Lord Jesus Himself had been doing with His generation in the Gospel by St. Matthew, waiting in patient ministry on the worship of the Lord. And thus it is in these Epistles. Evil and error are in the churches; but the Spirit by the apostle admonishes, rebukes, instructs, if haply He may restore. The digging and the dunging again goes on. But there is measure, even in the patience of God. Righteousness demands this; and so, in the Second Epistle to Timothy we may see the house, the great house (in seine sense the house of God), a ruined and disowned thing. But “the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.” The vessel is marred on the wheel in the hand of the

Potter; but the Potter, in His sovereign right over the clay, makes another vessel as it hath pleased Him.

Chapter 140

Truth, Pyrrhonism, Dogmatism, Christianity

MY DEAR BROTHER, I wish to say a few plain, commonplace, practical things, which I think I can best range under the beads, “Truth, Pyrrhonism, Dogmatism, Christianity;” and if you think them fit for your miscellany, they are at your service, and I trust may benefit your readers.

First as to the terms. By “Truth” I mean revealed truth—that record which God has, in infinite mercy and wisdom, given to us in the divine Scriptures. “Pyrrhonism” I adopt as a term expressive of doubtfulness of mind— “what is truth?” without the heart to prosecute the inquiry. By “Dogmatism” I mark the profession of truth without the practice. “They say [and say rightly perhaps] and do not.” By “Christianity” I understand the living expression of gospel-grace—the apostle's “faith, hope, charity.”

“Truth” I hold to be definite, unchangeable, and perfectly revealed in the Scriptures. These are, as regards man, the only fountain and depository of truth. As to its essence and living embodiment, it is found alone in Him who said, “I AM THE TRUTH” —happily for us, “the way and the life” also. If others hold not this, it is their loss. They have not the anchor that can be trusted in the storm. Truth, I deny not, may be matter of long and hesitating and anxious inquiry. Because truth, which is but the expression of the mind of God though perfectedly revealed, is not at once, and of necessity, perfectly understood —not even by those who are called “wisdom's children,” and are “born of God.” “We know in part, and we prophesy in part.” But truth itself in the Scriptures, is perfect, absolute, and unchangeable. There is much in the apprehension of this. It removes doubt from the pathway, and is the hinge of all true inquiry. It lays open the well, and how its living waters may be drawn. It points to the oracle, and the temper in which it must be consulted.

As to the study of truth or its investigation, it must be with intent to obey, and not to speculate. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” The disciple's place, and not the Master's belongs to every student of the truth. Moreover if success is to crown the study, truth must be sought for its own sake, or rather for its Author's. If the secret bent and purpose is to feed the imagination, or to gratify the lust of knowing, then know this, that thou shalt be “ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” On the other hand, “If thou criest after knowledge [understand thy lack of it], and liftest up thy voice for understanding[in earnest to possess it], if thou seekest her as silver with an estimation of its value], and searchest for her as for hid treasure [willing to dig the field over rather than fail in thy search], then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.” It is the heart's estimation of the truth that quickens diligence in its pursuit; and it is this also, and not the mind's dry activity, that determines the rate and measure of advancement in it.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not:” no price is too great for its purchase—no gain sufficient to repay its loss. This is no direction for this world's marketing: but it tells us plainly why so few obtain what so many profess to seek. “Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart for it?” Albeit the fool of Scripture is this world's wise man. To him, then, who would

advance in the knowledge of the truth, Paul's direction to Timothy must not stand in the letter only: “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” And he adds, “Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine: continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.”

In the communication of truth, when it is drawn directly from the divine Word, or, it may be, learned from others, and verified by that Word (for all are not alike successful diggers, in the mine, though all should alike possess a value for the ore), it is definite and determinate. When teaching ceases to be definite, it ceases to be powerful; for it ceases to be truth that is taught. All truth is definite, or it ceases to be truth. Teaching that swerves from this may not cease to be exciting or attractive, but it ceases to edify. “He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.” But he who deals out truth that is unascertained and indeterminate, first imposes on himself the chaff for the wheat, and then practices the same deception upon others. To present truth in the plainest and severest garb, and to unfold it in terms level to the commonest minds, is the plain duty of every teacher who is in earnest in what he does. But to seek to popularize truth by diluting it—to drape it so that its proportions are hidden—to adorn it by the efforts of imagination, in order to make it palatable, and so to win for it a place in minds that have no love for it, nor intention to practice it, is to “sow the wind, and to reap the east wind.” Spiritual truth can only be apprehended by the understanding becoming spiritual; and the attempt to bring it within the grasp of the unspiritual mind is at best but to leaven and corrupt the truth, instead of using it as a lever by which to bring up the soul to God. Confidence in the truth, or faith, is content to let God work, and to open His own doors for its reception. But there is a bustling activity that is ever thrusting itself forward—a running where there are no tidings prepared; which, though it may put on the guise of zeal for the truth, is in the issue no better than sowing in unploughed land. There is divine wisdom in the exhortation of the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, when he says, “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”

I speak not here against pressing the message of the gospel upon unwilling hearers; though in this, both time and wisdom, and an open door, should be sought at the hands of the Lord; and there should be care that love be never absent as the chief handmaid in the work.

But truth can never be popular in this world. Altogether apart from the testimony of Scripture, even philosophers are puzzled “to know how it is that men should love lies, where they make neither for pleasure, as with poets; nor for advantage, as with the merchant; but for the lie's sake.” And we know who has said, “Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” Truth shows men's follies and by-ends too clearly, and sheds too broad a light on the masquerading of the world, ever to be welcomed by it. It is only “he that doeth the truth [that] comes to the light.” It is a sort of twilight that men like to live in; or to walk by the light of a fire that themselves have kindled, and sparks that they have compassed themselves about with. And this they are allowed to do, as long as truth is mingled with men's thoughts and speculations, instead of shining with its own clear light. All human over-valuing, and self-conceit, and false fancies, are detected by the truth; and things that sparkle and look bright by the world's candle-light, lose their luster when brought into the light of day. This men cannot afford, for it strips the world of its glory, and shows it as a base counterfeit. Supposing the light of truth to be let in upon men and their pursuits, and their estimation of themselves (to go no further), does any one doubt that it would make them feel themselves to be poor, shrunken things, where the heart had not Christ to fill up the place of that which the truth

takes away? But it is the very province of the truth to exhibit things as they are. It is the light which makes all things manifest. There is no object, therefore, unless I would be untrue to my own ends, as they themselves will be ere long manifested in the light, in so disguising truth as to make it pass through the world unrecognized in its claims, and without accomplishing a single purpose for which it is given. But this is done when it judges neither the conscience nor the ways of those by whom it is professedly embraced. The pleasure that may be professed by such a reception of the truth, or the profit, is as nothing; and I ought to blush, if I have only gained for it a welcome on the condition that it shall be deposed from its authority. It is like making truth a harlot to minister to the lusts of the mind. God is the communicator of truth, and He has given it that the heart may be brought into subjection to His authority, as well as into acquaintance with Himself, His works and ways. If I deal with truth at all, for my own profit or the profit of others, I am bound to do it in subjection to God. Hence the apostle's declaration, “We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”

Man, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is only the interpreter of the heavenly oracles. Hence arises a limit in the service of truth. I must cease to interpret when I cease to understand. It may be the consequence of my negligence that I do not understand. Be it so. The acknowledgment of this may prove a spur to my diligence (especially if I bear in mind the word, “to him that hath shall be given”); but it is certainly no warrant to cover ignorance by the pretense of knowledge. How many expositions of Scripture are to be met with, whose contradictions amongst themselves show that it is not truth that is presented, but the uncertain and ever-varying notions of men. What, then, in writing, or in oral teaching, profits? The definiteness of truth; truth, doubtless applied by the Holy Spirit to the conscience and the heart;—still, the definiteness of truth. That there may be an effect where this is absent, I do not deny. But what is it? The effect of making people think, if they think at all, that Scripture is as vague and pointless as any exposition of its declarations. Still, I affirm that truth is definite or it is not truth. Boundless in its extent it is, and infinitely varied in its application, but always definite. Where this definiteness is not grasped, uncertainty and unpreparedness for action are the necessary result. An easy-going orthodox profession may be satisfied with vagueness and generality, nay, with vapidness and insipidity; but if the truth is to detach souls from the world, to bring into peace and liberty, and to direct to the just hope of a Christian, it must be definite.

But what of those who are impatient of whatever goes beyond their own conceptions of truth, and who imagine that the perfection of teaching lies in a perpetual ringing the changes upon known and acknowledged, but elementary truths? I say nothing of those who look rather for excitement than for building up in their most holy faith. But in regard to the question proposed, I say, let the condition of Christians generally furnish the reply. And I add, let those beware who have professedly, through the truth, escaped from that position. Especially let those who are teachers of the truth beware, for the streams will not rise higher than the level of the spring; and there is always a more or less marked) correspondence between the character and condition of the teacher and the taught. People that are caught by the imaginative, the sentimental, the shallow and wordy, as well as those who are captivated by the comprehensive and earnest, will infallibly bear its stamp. Moreover, it is not everything that is true which profits. I add, where popular effect may become a snare, the example of Philip, in Acts 8, may well furnish instruction to the heart. But

above all should be studied the way in which He, who spake as never man spake, detaches, by the truth He presents, the multitudes that were gathered around Him, from all false expectations which they might have associated with His words and mission, through carnality or a worldly mind. The sermon on the mount (Matt. 5, &c.), and John 6, stand out as prominent examples of this. It is a sore trial to our poor hearts to be obliged, by the presentation of the distinctiveness of truth, to count upon following the experience of the Master, as it is recorded in John 6:66. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” But this was only a legitimate, though sorrowful, effect of the Lord's faithfulness to His mission, as uttered in the presence of Pilate, “To this end was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world, that I should bear witness to THE TRUTH. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

For the truth's sake all imitation of others, in their modes of communicating it, should be eschewed. Wherever this folly is perceived, it prejudices the mind and often closes the door to acceptance. Moreover, it has the effect of making the message appear unreal in the hands of him who is delivering it. Simplicity of purpose and aim will stamp its own impress on the mode of communication; and the vessel will under this power be seen as God has fitted it, and not distorted by the attempt to emulate that which it may be most unlike, both in original character, and in training for the work.

“Pyrrhonism” will not require many words, nor will there be occasion, in what is here designed, to advert to Pyrrho or his philosophic system (if the term system may be applied to that which advocated universal doubt and the mind's perpetual equilibrium). But Pyrrhonism may exist without the name. And amidst the breaking up of conventional modes of thought and the felt insufficiency of the common standards of orthodoxy, if superstition does not take the place of truth, binding down the conscience to a usurped authority, that on the one hand forbids the conscience to find rest where God has placed it, even in the blood of Christ, and on the other puts a bar to the soul's direct appeal to His holy Word, there is especial danger of the mind becoming weary and indifferent in the march after what is vital, and so taking refuge in the question, “What is truth?” as if it allowed of no definite or sufficient answer. This state of mind, in degree, may infest the Church, as well as become the prevalent folly of the world. The producing causes are to be found in the very constitution of the human mind, when acted upon by the peculiar influences of the present and similar times. Besides, there are many things short of the patent dislike of the truth that may tend to keep the mind in a state of hesitating equilibrium. The real solution of many a perplexing and doubtful case is to be found in the words of Christ, “How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?” or in the sterner declaration, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” The world is in direct antagonism to the Father; and hence inasmuch as the world, in whatever form, has its hold unrelaxed upon my heart, I shall be indisposed to listen to the communications of the Father through the Son. I do not oppose; I do not disbelieve; I only doubt. I doubt the meaning here; I doubt the application there; I doubt the possibility of carrying it out in this place. But know this, O doubter! that truth will never be truth to thee nor to thy soul, until it is translated unto action! Truth appeals to thy conscience, to thine affections, to thy duty, with all the authority of the God of truth. At first it deals with thee about ruin or redemption. It next claims to be formative of thy motives, to be the guide of thine actions, the director of thy thoughts, the animator of thine hopes, the overseer of thy whole inner, as well as thine outer, life. Truth exists not for thee, if thou refuse to it thine obedience and thine heart.

By “Dogmatism” I do not mean that undue positiveness of manner in asserting the truth which is ordinarily designated by this term, but rather the condition of mind in holding the truth which endangers its becoming a matter of opinion, instead of, as the Lord expresses it concerning His words, being “spirit and life.” The first may be prejudicial to the truth by the repellant attitude it assumes; the second destroys its power by evaporating its very spirit and life. Principles, for which so many are ready to contend, and contend rightly when viewed as evolved by the vital power of truth, apart from this become worthless and deceptive, and soon degenerate into opinions only and the dogmas of a sect. It is not that grace and truth, in expressing themselves, will not assume those definite forms, which are rightly enough called principles; but if these are to be practically of any worth, it is in their being animated by the energy of the inward life. There is a form which springs from the energy of life and is self-evolved; and there is a form which is superinduced, and, if it does indicate the absence of life, is repressive of it. The Scripture speaks of both in the passage, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Truth to the dogmatist is but a mold which impresses an outward form. Truth, to the earnest Christian, ought to be, and is, what the root and sap are to the plant or tree. The apostle thus addresses the dogmatists of his day, and his words demand the attention of a willing ear in ours. “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” To these I but add the words of the Lord to His disciples, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

“Christianity.” We now leave the ground of objective testimony, or the expression of authoritative truth, and come upon that of subjective experience, or the living expression of this truth. The question now is, supposing truth to have been rightly taught and rightly received, what will be its legitimate effect? This is answered in the directest way by the apostle in the summary he gives of the effect of the gospel on the Thessalonians. He speaks of them as remembering their “work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, in the sight of God and our Father.” And this answers to his expression in Corinthians, “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three.” There is that in the revelation of the truths of heavenly grace which thus acts, by the power of God on the soul, when it is yielded up to its power. The “work of faith” is seen in its turning the heart to “God from idols,” in all the intensity of the contrast between utter emptiness and vanity, and eternal living fullness. The “labor of love” expresses itself in the outgoing of life's energies in the service of Him who, in the all-commanding and constraining power of infinite and unstinted love, makes Himself known to the soul, and by love thus enchains and leads it captive. “The patience of hope” takes the definite form of waiting for the accomplishment of the promise of Him who said, “I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Hope shows its power in the soul by sustaining the patience while “waiting for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead [with all the pregnancy of this mighty truth in power and love and grace] even JESUS, who delivered us from the wrath to come.”

Now these are presented not as the ripened fruits of long experience in the truth, but as the very first results of the reception of gospel grace: the upspringing of heavenly fruit from a virgin soil when first brought under culture by the hand of God; the well-tuned harmony of the soul touched in

its chords by the skill of infinite love. The Lord Jesus Christ was the spring and object of their faith and love and hope, and the conscious presence, to their faith, of Him who was their God and Father, gave a solemn reality to all that the truth had brought home to their hearts. “The work of faith” was there; and “the labor of love” was there; and “the patience of hope” was there. Nothing of the divine testimony was inert. Indeed, apart from this living energy, Christianity has no existence in this world. The truths by which it was first evoked remain, and the divine power remains which gave these truths their living expression; but Christianity exists only in this living expression. Many things which marked the bright course of the early Church have passed away, but these are emphatically said to remain, “faith, hope, charity, these three;” without which Christianity is not.

Should not, then, a right presentation and a right reception of the truth of the gospel be still productive of the same effects? Should we not view it as a defective gospel, either as preached or professed, if these effects be absent? God's grace must not be limited: but I am speaking of the responsibility which the truth brings to the soul. The effect of the gospel is not here limited, as it is so often now, to the heart having obtained peace by it, or even the knowledge of the possession of eternal life. If the heart rests in faith on the divine truths on which Christianity is based, must it not claim for them an energetic and a transforming power? Where God is working, I own it becomes the soul to tread softly. But in what are called “revivals,” I think I see this—on the part of God, souls awakened in an extraordinary degree, and many doubtless brought to Christ; on the part of man, nature largely acted on, often a defective gospel presented, and the mind concentrated too much on its own assured and joyous feelings. The result of this is, to a large extent, even where the work is real, the rearing of hot-house plants, which wither and show the yellow leaf when the extraneous heat and forcing influences are withdrawn. Conversion is not everything. Fervor will not stand in the place of truth engrafted in the soul. Activity is not the only sign of spiritual life and power. “I am so happy!” may be welcomed as the soul's expression of a sense of having found in Christ what it could find in nothing else. But there is another word of Christ to be heard besides “thy sins are forgiven thee:” it is, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” It is a great thing that the practical aim of Christians be not lowered. True revival I take to be the leading back of souls to see from whence they have fallen, and to repent and do the first works. The sure token of a revival in the Church (I do not mean the fact of frequent conversions) will be found in Christians being led solemnly to lay it to heart, whether the Church is in a position to meet the Lord, and whether it is a true and faithful witness for Him in His absence. There are the dangers of all times, and there are the special dangers of our own; but the fullness of the truth as communicated to us by God is sufficient to enable the simple and dependent saint to meet them all, and so to find the special blessing promised, by the lips of Him whose name we bear, “to him that overcometh.”

Ever affectionately yours, - - - -

Chapter 141

What Is the World and What Is Its End?

This is the question I would now discuss, according to the light Scripture affords us. Nor am I going to forget that the world we live in has taken a Christian form.

And first, What is the world? Men are apt to think that this world is as God made it, and that all things continue as they were from the creation, only that man has made great progress in prosperity and civilization. Now, in material comforts, none will deny it, though the men of a past age would hardly think our refinements comfort; and, while passions subsist, the difference is not so great as is supposed. Men have telegraphs, railroads, Armstrong guns, and iron-clads; but I hardly know in what respect they are the happier for it. It is a question if they have not excited the passions more than they have satisfied them. Children are not more obedient, families not more united, servants not more honest and respectful, masters not kinder, wives not more faithful. Morally speaking, I do not see what the world has gained. It thinks better of itself, and vaunts its powers: I do not know that this is any advance. Christianity, as light come into the world, has made a difference. Men do not do in light what they do in the dark. But if we look beneath the surface, even that is not much. But the world is in no sense as God made it. He overrules all, He has patience with it; but He never made it as it is. He made Paradise; and the world has grown up as it is through man's departure from God. It has been destroyed once since, because of its wickedness. It is conscious at this moment that things cannot go on long as they are; that we are in a crisis of the world's history which must result in some great disruption. Some will tell us that democracy is the evil, and it must be put down; others, that it alone can save the world. But all feel things cannot go on as they are.

I do not participate in men's judgments in this respect; but these fears, even if they magnify the apprehensions of men on one side or the other, are the flint of the restless working of some principle which man cannot control, and hence his fears; they are the confession of the instability of the order on which he relies; and they presage, and in the world's history have ever presaged, some violent disruption, because they were the expression of the consciousness of the force of what was breaking all up—that passions are stronger than what controlled them. The bonds of society are too tight or too weak. Power is not in them, but in the force which is working underneath them. Some would slacken them to give vent to the power at work; some would lighten them, hoping to break or repress it; some hope, and many more fear; none know what is to come. After all, the Deluge has become the proverbial expression of this in men's mouths—the exaggerated expression of self-importance but the accepted utterance of general fears. The Christian knows that God overrules all things, and he does not fear in this way; but for that reason he is more calm and clear-sighted, less interested in the maintenance of particular forms, and hence more interested in judging the effect of principles on them; and, if indeed taught of God in this, guided by His Word in the knowledge of what the result will be. A large number of Christians, however, add to the delusion, because, even among them, man's capacity for doing good is worshipped. Yet even these are getting uneasy at the influence Popery has acquired and is acquiring.

What is then the world? It is a vast system, grown up after man had departed from God, of which Satan is actually, though not by right, of course, the god and the prince. Man was driven out of the place in which God had set him in innocence and peace. He gave up God for his lusts, under the influence of Satan who thus got power over him. His way back to the tree of life was barred by divine power. He has indeed built a city, where God had made him a vagabond, and adorned it by the hands of artificers in brass and iron, and sought to make it agreeable by those who handle the harp and organ. But he is without God in it. Left without law, the world became so bad that God had to destroy mankind, save eight persons, by the Deluge. Under law, man plunged into idolatry from which no prophetic warnings could ultimately deliver him. God sent His Son; God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. But man would have none of Him. He was cast out of the vineyard and slain.

The world is a system sprung up from man's disobedience and departure from God in its origin, and which has turned God out of it, as far as it could, when He came into it in mercy. Hence the Lord says of it as a system, “Now, is the judgment of this world.” That is its state of sin. But it is also a system in which men have been proved in every way, to see whether they could be recalled or recovered from this state, by promises, by law, by prophets, yea, by God's own Son. Especially among the Jews was this process carried on, as represented under the figure of a vineyard, where the owner sought fruit, but no fruit was to be had. The servants, and even the only-begotten Son, were killed. And when we look now at the principles and motives of the world, are they other than the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life? Do not pleasure, gain, vanity, ambition, govern men? I do not speak of exceptions, but of what characterizes the world. When we speak of men rising in the world, getting on in the world, is it not ambition and gain which are in question? Is there much difference in what Cain did in this city, and what men are now doing in theirs? If a Chinese, who had heard a missionary speak of Christ and Christianity, came to London to see what it was, would he find the mass of men, the world, governed by other motives than what governed the mass at Nankin, or Pekin, or Canton? Would they not be seeking gain, as he would have done there, or pleasure as they do there, or power and honor as they do there? What is the world in its motives? A system in which men seek honor one after another, and not the honor which cometh from God alone. In a word, the world having rejected the Son of God when He was here in it, the Father set Him at His right hand, fruit of that solemn appeal of the Blessed One, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.” Then comes the sentence— “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

But it will be said, Yes, but now Christianity has come in; that applies to the heathen world. I answer “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not found only among heathens; if comparison is to be made—now much more among Christians. But it is important to take up Christianity as a system, because, not only does faith recognize it as the truth and true revelation of God in Christ, but it has in sum formed time world in its present condition, If I go to inquire what the world is, I cannot turn to heathens or Mohammedans: I must look to Christendom. That is what characterizes the state of the world. Now, I have already spoken of the motives none can deny which govern men in it—as pleasure, gain, ambition, vanity. They may pursue these things, preserving a good reputation before men: it is only another snare to make Pharisees of them, or without conscience. But they

pursue this, and a man is morally what he pursues: he is covetous if it be gain, ambitious if it be power, a man of pleasure if it be pleasure, and so on. But we must look at Christendom itself. At the beginning (the exhibition of the grace and power of Christ's operation by the Holy Ghost in raising men above human motives, and uniting them in the enjoyment of heavenly things with one heart, and so displaying a care for each other which the world does not know; and a deadness to the world, which is the opposite of the very principle of its existence) pure in walk and unselfish in its ways, the Church forced itself on the attention of a hostile yet admiring world;—now, and for centuries, the seat of anxious and tortuous ambition, of crimes and deceit of every kind, haughty power over others and worldly luxury and evil characterize what pre-eminently calls itself the Church. The name of its most active supports has passed in common parlance into the name of cunning, falsehood, and want of conscience. The world has been driven into infidelity by what calls itself the Church.

Take the Greek Church. Where does ignorance, reign pre-eminently? There, where its clergy sways. Where all seems fair as regards profession, infidelity reigns universally in the active-minded population of the Romanist system. As to Protestantism, every one knows, because there all is open, how it sunk into infidelity. Christianity only adds this additional feature to the world's history, that the worst corruption has come in—the corruption of what is best. The Reformation was caused mainly because the iniquity of the church was intolerable. This was predicted by the apostles; so that it confirms, instead of shaking, the faith of him who believes and reads the Word; but it teaches that reference to Christendom does not do away the proof of Satan being the prince and god of this world. He has proved it more than ever, by making that which was brought in as a witness of God to be the seat of the power of his own corruption. Taking in Christendom as a whole, what do we see? Mohammedanism has overrun the eastern part and Popery the western. The north of Europe has been delivered from the latter; and what is its state Overrun with infidelity and Popish tendencies. I do not mean to deny that the Spirit of God is active, and that good is done in the midst of this. I believe it, and thank God for it. But that is not the world, but a distinct power which works in the midst of it. In influencing the world and its government, Popery has made more progress the last 30 years than the power of truth. We may deplore it, but it cannot be denied. The world is far more guilty by having Christianity in its midst. But it has not ceased to be the world.

Remember, reader, that it was at the death of Christ that the devil received the title of the prince of this world, and, as to his religious influence, is called the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them who believe not. God did not call the devil the prince of this world till He had fully proved and tested it. But when it followed Satan wholly in rejecting His Son (the few who owned, adding confirmation to it by their fear), then the name is given to him. When God's throne was at Jerusalem, it was impossible; but, when the true ruler of it was rejected, then it was plain Satan was its prince. The intrigues for power when the empire became Christian proved, not the exclusion of Satan from the throne of the world, but his acquired dominion over what was called the church. No doubt the cross gave his power its death-blow in the sight of God and of faith, but not in the world. There it was his victory; and the Christ was called up to sit at the right hand of God till His enemies were made His footstool. Then men stumbled on the stone. When it falls in judgment, it will grind them to powder.

Now, though Satan's worse reign is his religious one, far the worst, even when the blasphemous beast is raging, as any one may see in reading the character of the second beast, yet he reigns anywhere only by the corrupt motives of man's heart. We may add, indeed, the fears of a bad conscience to his means of power. He leads men astray by their lusts, and then gives them his religion to quiet their consciences, which he cannot cleanse. He makes religiousness (characterized by certain forms which strike the imagination, and a diligent activity in what flesh can perform) minister to the power of those who rule for him, and excites the passions of men to contend for their religion, as for something in which their own interests and honor are concerned; thus making religion the activity of the flesh to sustain superstitiously or through interest a system, and capable of any wickedness to sustain it, so that wickedness becomes religious wickedness, and the conscience even thinks it is doing God service, while Satan's craft directs all this to his own ends. Still, outside all this direct system of Satan's religious power, he governs the world—the Christian world, as all the rest and more than the rest—by men's ordinary lusts. But the eager pursuit of gain is more ardent than ever, leading to less scruple in acquiring it; and pleasure holds its sway over men, in defiance of Christ, as it did when there was no such motive to restrain them; war rages as it ever did, conquest and oppression range over a wider sphere than of old; while the nominal power of Christianity, with all men's boastings, has receded to smaller limits than in the seventh century, when it ruled over known Africa, filled Asia, and was almost the established religion of China.

Such is the world which is attached to its own objects, grandeur, power, pleasure, gain—not to Christ; and thus is enslaved to him who governs the world by these motives. The external system of Christianity, instead of delivering souls from them, is the scat of the highest exercise of these worldly principles; and where it is not the sphere of the concentrated influence of them, it is sunk into philosophy and unbelief.

What, then, is its end? Judgment, speedy judgment. Of the day and the hour, no man knows. It comes as a thief in the night. The world will not get really better. The thoughts men have of its doing so, are one of the worst expressions of its evil confidence in man, man's development, man's energies. Man is to be made better. Nay, Christianity, say some now, is only a phase of man's history; and now we are to have a better. What is it to come from? What are its motives?

Commerce, we are told, civilizes. Education enlarges and improves the mind. Commerce does take away grossness and violence; but gain is its motive. Its earnest pursuit tends to destroy higher motives, and to make a moral estimate of value sink into money and selfishness. It has nowhere elevated the tone of society, but the contrary. It has not stopped wars; it has caused many. Commercial nations have, in general, been the least scrupulous and the most grasping. Excuses may be formed, but none but a commercial people would make a war to sell opium. What has education done? It enlarges the mind. Be it so; of course it does. Does it change the motives which govern the heart? In no way. Men are more educated than they were; but what is the change Is the influence of superstition really diminished? In no wise. On the contrary, the infidelity produced by dependence on man's mind has forced men, who are not personally established in divine truth, back into superstition to find repose and a resting place. One of the worst signs of the present day, and which is observable everywhere, is that deliverance from superstition and error is not now by means of positive truth; but that liberty of mind, sometimes called liberalism (which is bound by no truth, and knows no truth, but doubts all truth), is simply destructive. Go anywhere

and everywhere, to India or England, Italy or Russia, or America: deliverance from superstition is not by truth, but by disbelief of all known truth. The blessed truth of the gospel is a drop of water in the ocean of mind and error. And even Christians reckon, not on the Spirit and Word of God, but on progress, to dispel darkness. It is building up Popery, and mere church authority—without the soul knowing truth for itself—for those who dread with reason the wanton pretensions of the impudence of the human mind, which, satisfied as to its own claim to judge, has no real taste for, or interest whatever in, truth itself. On the other hand, the utter absence of truth in church pretensions, and its claim independent of godly fruits, drive even honest minds, not divinely taught and guided, into the wanton pretensions of that mind which has no truth at all. The manifest conflict of the day is between superstition and the mere pretensions of man's mind (i.e., infidelity as to all positive truth, or standard of truth, or acquired truth). Neither superstition nor infidelity knows any truth; nor have they any respect for it. One recognizes authority; the other is the rejection of it. One is the church, so-called; the other is free thought. Faith in the truth is known to neither. I appeal to every intelligent person if this is not a true description of what is going on: rest in authority; or, the mind of man is to find out truth. Where it is, no one knows; the business of man's mind being to disprove any existing claim to it. One of them is no better than the other: church authority, the most hostile to God and His people, as the judgment of Babylon shows all the blood of saints is found in her; but the other, a rising up of man against God, which will end in his destruction.

It is as needful, in referring to the state of the world, to refer to its religious aspect, as to the lower and more material motives which govern it. I do not doubt for a moment (God forbid I should!) that the Spirit of God acts for the blessing of some in the midst of all this scene; but it does not affect the state of the world. It is one of the striking phenomena of the liberal or infidel party, that where it is free (that is, where it is not itself oppressed by Popery), it prefers Popery to truth. Truth is divine, and it cannot be borne. Popery is human, and liberality will be liberal to it, not to truth. So governments, save when too rudely pressed by it, pander to Popery, because it is a strong and unscrupulous political power. Truth does not concern them. If it presses on their party, it annoys them. All this has an evident tendency—the giving power to superstition, as long as governments hold their own; but when human will grows too strong, a breaking up of all that, and the destruction of the whole system. A well-known specimen of this has been seen in the French Revolution.

If we turn to America—to what (to many) would be the most attractive part of the New World—what do we see? Large profession and religious activity, but the churches the great promoters of the dreadful conflict now going on; Christians more worldly than the world; money supreme in influence; and the world, save as partially prohibited by law, overrun with drunkenness, pre-eminent in profane swearing, and demoralized by the corruptions which follow the absence of family habits. Intelligence, activity, energy, education, reign there. None of the supposed hindrances of the Old World exist there. None can have been there and not have seen in this immense country an amazing development of human energy; but morally what is the spectacle it affords?

The world, then, has been evil from its origin, for the horrors of idolatry cannot be denied. Christianity, then, has been corrupted by man, and has not reformed the world, but is actually the seat of its greatest corruption. Commerce, a partial civilizes of men, absorbs them with the lowest of motives—money, and is wholly indifferent to truth and moral elevation; for it, a good man is a

man with capital. Education, which also frees from what is gross, has not, with all its pretensions, changed the motives, ameliorated the morals of men, nor even freed from the bonds of superstition, save as it has set aside all positive truth, and every standard of it; and thus, while wounding infidelity on one side, it has riveted the chains of superstition on the other. I appeal to facts. Is not Popery or Puseyism, on the one hand, and Infidelity on the other, what stamps the activity of England at this moment Is it not otherwise elsewhere? Will God be the idle spectator—whatever His patience with men, and how blessed soever the testimony of His grace—will He be the idle spectator without end of the enslaving power of superstition, and the rebellious rejection of truth by the pretended lovers of truth, who cast down all foundations? He may, He does, testify, as long as souls can be won and delivered. But is He to allow the power of evil forever He will not. He will allow it to fill up the cup of falsehood and wickedness; He declares that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse; but they are filling up the cup of wrath for themselves. He is patient till no more can be done. “The iniquity of the Amorites,” He says, “is not yet full;” but then He will remove the evil and bless the earth.

My object is not here to enter into any detail of prophecy. It has been amply done elsewhere. But as the course of the world's history points to judgment, the removal of the power of evil by power was the only remedy. So that the end of this scene is judgment, is as clearly as possible stated in Scripture. I do not mean the judgment of the dead and the secrets of their hearts before the great white throne, but the judgment of this visible world. God has appointed a day in the which He will judge this habitable world (such is the force of the word ο■κουμενη) in righteousness, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Jesus from the dead. Man has multiplied transgression, and will continue to do so, till judgment comes. But the central sin of the world, that by which its true character has been stamped, is the rejection and death of Christ. But whom the world rejected, Him God has raised from the dead, and to Him all judgment is committed. Every knee shall bow to Him; and the more boldly they have rejected and opposed Him, the more terrible will be their judgment. But all man's pride, and vanity, and pretensions will come down. (Isa. 2:10-22; 24:19-23; 26:21; Zeph. 3:8.) So the corrupt and idolatrous system. (Rev. 16:19; 17:1 - 6; 18:21-24.) So the haughty power and rebellion of man. (Rev. 16:13, 14; 19:11-21.) Figures these are, no doubt, but figures whose meaning is plain enough. (So Dan. 2:34, 3; 7:9-11.) Such, then, is the end of this world as it now is. The Christianity, which it professes, will have increased the severity of its judgment. They that have known their Master's will, and not done it, will be beaten with many stripes. Can we say that Christendom, as it now subsists, is the least like the heavenly state in which we see the disciples in the New Testament? True, we find there that they soon declined, and that evil came in. But the record that tells us this, tells us it would wax worse and worse, and ripen for the judgment which surely awaits it. Flee from the wrath to come.

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