BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME N2

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume N2, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

268 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume N2

Remarks on 1 John 1:1-4

Chap. 1:1-4

The apostle John was preserved to minister to the children of God after the other apostles had finished their labors, and when feebleness became more and more apparent in the churches, and enemies without and within increased— “many anti-Christs,” “many deceivers,” and “many false prophets.” To meet this state of things the Holy Spirit brought forth more prominently the truth of “life” — “eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). It was in His mind from all eternity, and, in His grace He would, by this aged apostle, set it more fully in the minds of His children. The word “life” (ζω■) occurs in his Gospel thirty-six times and in the Epistle thirteen times: while in Matthew it is found seven times, in Mark four times, and in Luke six times.

The expressed object of writing this Epistle to us is, “that ye may know that ye have eternal life, unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God” (chap. 5:13, R.V.); and, that possessing it, we may be in the enjoyment of its holy and blessed fellowship, realize its divine affections, and display here on earth, whatever the state of the church, its moral excellencies; looking forward to the perfection of all in heavenly glory. In a word it is “that our joy may be full.”

We may observe an arrangement of parts in it, so perfect that every device of the enemy to darken the Christian's path is frustrated. After the first four verses we have “a message” to be kept in mind at all times (ver. 5). How can we, conscious of proneness to evil, and of failure, stand in the presence of, and walk with, so holy a God? This occupies the first part, 1:5 to 2:2. Then, with connecting verses, we are in company with the whole family of God—2:12 to 28; and it is not difficult to find one's place among them, and the truth suited to us. In chap. 3 the world is in view, its moral state is exposed, and the contrast between the children of God and the children of the wicked one is forcibly drawn. In chap. 4:1-6, spiritual dangers are set forth. Many false prophets are at work, and we must “try the spirits” and “take heed what we hear.” Finally, in chap. 5 the important question of brotherly love is taken up, and receives important elucidation. The remaining verses certify to those who believe on the Name of the Son of God the fullness of their blessing, and the whole ends with the thrice repeated words, we know “; and “children, keep yourselves from idols,” a needed warning.

The writer of this inspired Epistle has not given his name, but scarcely any one questions that the author is John, the son of Zebedee. The fourth Gospel was also written by him, but no name is either prefixed or added: he hides himself under the happy description— “that disciple whom Jesus loved.”

In this Epistle, or Address, he enters at once on his theme, “the eternal life;” that which he had heard, and seen with his eyes, had contemplated, and his hands had handled (ver. 1). He is absorbed with what he had witnessed of the perfections of Him who had suffered him to recline on His bosom, “God manifested in the flesh.” Every inlet of his soul is engaged in receiving more and

more of Him, Who, under the guidance of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was his life-study, the spring of his fellowship, his service, everything; and his heart was filled to overflowing in the enjoyment of His love. He intimates in ver. 4 that his joy was full, and unselfishly longs that the joy of others should be so too.

What an answer to the infidel, who represents Christianity as a system of incomprehensible abstractions for the mind to work upon, and embittering many a spirit with endless controversies: and to the mere philanthropist, who gives it a cold welcome as an aid in the service of humanity, and useful as an auxiliary in the conflict with vice. Not so with this beloved apostle. The knowledge of “eternal life” he gained by beholding its excellencies and perfections in a Person, and that person Jesus Christ. “He is the true God and eternal life.” Are we surprised that John hides himself, and is nameless? How could it be otherwise in the presence of Him— “the eternal life who was with the Father and was manifested to us” (ver. 2). He is declaring Him, and Him only. And his object in writing is, that we may have fellowship with him, even with him who was one of the first disciples of the Lord, was with Him on the holy mount, stood by His cross, entered into His tomb, beheld His hands and His side in resurrection, saw Him taken up into heaven, and received the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Who brought all Jesus had said to his remembrance. “Fellowship!”

What a profound meaning the word had for him, as he added, “yea (or truly) with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (ver. 3). It was his own experience, and he longed that others should share in it. This longing was a mighty incentive to apostolic work (see the first mention of the word “fellowship” in Acts 2:42). Every convert was their care, who ever had been used in their conversion (Acts 11:22-26, Col. 2:1). They were not cruel, like the ostrich, “who leaveth her eggs in the earth,... and forgetteth that the foot may crush them” (Job 39:14, Lam. 4:3). John wrote to all believers. Our souls need time to dwell, by the Spirit, on the exalted character of the fellow ship here presented, its unreserved fullness of blessing, going back in memory to when we were without God. Did we then think of this fellowship? Did we connect fullness of joy with it?

Did the younger son, even when he came to himself, anticipate what awaited him, the love of his father, the time of rejoicing, and, (marvelous to say it) of mutual gladness of heart? Shame on us if, when brought to God at the cost of the sufferings of His Son, we ever allow anything to hinder a life of communion with Him. Have we really tasted its joy? It was when the father was on the neck of the prodigal, and kissing him, that he said, “Father, I have sinned.” The sense of the past did not hinder the joy of the present. It deepened it. He was not worthy, but he, nevertheless, had such a father. So in the case of Paul.

It was at the moment of intensest realization of the rebelliousness of his heart and ways in the past, that, he, the chief of sinners, burst forth in that grand doxology, “Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, he honor and glory forever and ever, Amen” (1 Tim. 1:15-17).

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 2

Remarks on 1 John 1:5-10

Seeing that the purpose of John's writings is that we should have this fellowship to the completing of our joy, even if we know experimentally but little of it, we are encouraged to study them. And surely we may, while doing so, plead with God that in our case he may not have written in vain. But let us remember that it is an individual thing.

Not until verse 7 do we get communion with saints; and though many have been the attempts to invert this order, and to bring about communion with saints without the individual communion of the saints, such attempts have failed and worn out; for the communion exists only in name if it exist at all.

And, after all, we are individuals. “The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy” (Prov. 14:10). Mr. Bellett tells of a young lady who, when suffering from disease and drawing near to death, said, “that at times she found such joy in the thought of Christ that she was compelled to leave off thinking of Him.” Doubtless she was physically too weak to bear it. It is probable that those who visited her knew neither what she suffered, nor the extent of her joy; yet how real were both to her! And we may surely say that this individual fellowship has cheered a countless multitude of prisoners of Jesus Christ in lengthened captivity, and of martyrs in view of torture and death. And though our lot in England is cast in easy times, there are many true saints in isolation and profound distress: the tears of God's dear children have not ceased to flow.

Blessed be God, then, for lengthening out the days of His servant, that he might minister to us that which filled his own heart with joy and delight, though the state of the churches might well fill him with distress and alarm. Great changes he had seen in the world, but he gave them not the tribute of a thought; all his concern was for his “little children.”

The truth in verse 5 should be pondered and cherished in our hearts. It is the foundation of all that follows, and is at once laid—deep, solid, immovable. The extreme malignity of the poison which the serpent instilled into Eve, his detestable wickedness and cruelty, are seen in separating her from God, and awakening in her the love of darkness rather than light; and the human race has never overcome this fatal preference. Some have fought hard to triumph over its results, and even to get out of the darkness. “Light, more light,” was the pathetic dying cry of a modern philosopher; and the touching story of the young ruler in Mark 10, whom Jesus looking on loved, are among the many evidences of its impossibility with men. But, oh! to His eternal praise, it is said, “not with God.” Paul said of himself and of all true Christians: “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Our estimate of the value of “the message that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (notice the force of the reiteration, so common with John), will increase as we go on. We shall learn that we are safe and happy as we consciously abide in His presence. Thoughts and intents

of the heart that hinder communion are there detected and nipped in the bud, and the innumerable inconsistencies are avoided of those who are Christians merely in profession. In verse 6 is supposed the case of mere profession, “If we say,” &c. The broad principle is affirmed, whoever may be the speaker, and the need of it is only too evident when unreality in the things of God prevails, saying and not doing; singing hymns expressive of fresh, bright, heart-enjoyment of the love of God and of Christ, while there is not a trace of it in the life. The word to meet this is very sharp. “If we say that we have fellowship with God and walk in darkness” (that is, as if there had been no revelation of God in Christ), “we lie, and do not the truth.” “Doing the truth” is a weighty word (see John 3:21). The force of it becomes more and more distinct to the mind, as we are more filled with the knowledge of the will of God, and patiently continue in doing it; confiding in Him, as to everything and in everything, for needed grace and timely help to do it.

In scripture “the walk” is a person's course of life, in effect what he is; and in verse 7 this is supposed to be in the presence of God fully revealed. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18), that is, hath made Him known, as He knew Him. The partial light of past dispensations is over: Judaism is left; the way into the holiest is made manifest. “He that hath seen” Jesus “hath seen the Father.” The first question for a Christian is, therefore, not how he walks, all important as it is, but where. Is he in the full peace of the finished work of Christ, the peace of His blood “which cleanseth us from all sin?” His walk may be slow and feeble; he may stumble, as indeed we all do (James 3:2); but God, who has called him to walk in His presence, knows his need, and will supply all to meet it. In this path he will not be alone, others by grace are walking in it; and nearness to God will bring such near to each other. This principle of true Christian fellowship is unfolded here. It is in the presence of God without a veil, distance over forever,

“More happy, but not more secure,

The spirits departed to heaven.”

Another saying is supposed in verse 8 in order to give a full and final decision upon it. If cleansed from every sin by the blood of Christ, has the root of evil, the sin in which we were conceived, and that dwelleth in us, been eradicated, so that we are justified in saying “that we have no sin?” We deceive ourselves if we do, and the truth is not in us; a very serious word indeed. It is said of the devil, only more emphatically, “There is no truth in him” (John 8:44). The question is not as to personal acceptance. This is declared in the fullest and most absolute terms in chap. iv. 17. Neither is it a question whether sin, though in us, has dominion over us; whether we are its slaves. No! a true Christian “is the Lord's freedman.” In the death of Christ he has died to every claim but His. He is Christ's servant, and God has given the Holy Spirit to them who obey His rule (1 Cor. 7:22; Acts 5:32). His body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in him, which he has of God, and he is not his own, he therefore keeps it under (1 Cor. 6:19, and 9:27).

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 3

Remarks on 1 John 1:9-11

1 John 1:9-2:11

Paul had to do it, and did it with delight. One has but to face the difficulty in the strength of the Lord, and it is gone. When the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water (Jordan), it fled (Josh. 3:15). But what if we yield (ver. 9)? An act or word, which would not trouble a natural man, will break the heart of a true child of God. What then shall he do? Sit down, like Lot in Sodom with a vexed soul, or rise up, like Abraham in Egypt and get back to the Lord (Gen. 13)? Jonah-like “he has forsaken his own mercies;” but “salvation is of Jehovah” (Jonah 3). God is God, let sin bring even a prophet into the lowest depths. “He is faithful and righteous” in His estimate of the work of His Son to forgive His returning child (see further in chap. 2:1, 2): then why not return speedily? The light which convicts us, reveals God thus waiting to be gracious, waiting for our confession, for the pouring out of our hearts before Him; waiting to reassure those hearts, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness: i.e. inward cleansing, a fresh, sweet, powerful sense of grace which fills the soul with peace, and makes the light beautiful, and welcome, and loved; an ever increasing joy to abide in it, and walk in it.

The last case supposed is, “If we say we have not sinned (10).” This is the expression of self-satisfaction which sets aside the word of God, the need of atonement, and the ground of all God's dealings with men in judgment. The first expression of human religiousness, recorded in the scriptures, was based on this assumption of righteousness. Cain's offering was no acknowledgment of sin, but a display of what he had wrought in the earth; and “the way of Cain” is approved of, and taken, by many a professor of Christianity who mistakes it for the path of life; and it is often coupled with hatred of those who, like Abel, confess themselves sinners, and trust only in the blood of Jesus. Solemn beyond conception will be the time when God shall deal in truth with those who have given Him the lie. “If we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Thus then the apostle opens his address. He treats profession seriously, encouraging truth, but setting all who make a profession in the full light of the unveiled presence of God, where what men say, whether in creed, in formularies of devotion, in hymns, or in religious services, is put to the test. “The very basis of communion with God is reality.” “Be not deceived, God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7).

The second chapter of the Epistle opens with a title of affectionate endearment, “My children.” All the household of God are before the apostle's mind; yet he sees them in their various stages of spiritual growth, “fathers,” “young men” and “little children” (vers. 13, 14, 18), each needing a special word to encourage, or warn, in the various details of life. But his great concern as to all is, “that they may not sin.” He uses plain words, never softening down what is so hateful in the sight of God. Still He adds, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.” The eye has wandered from Him, and the heart has followed it; the attractions of present things have overcome the man, and he has yielded to them. Grace must first, then, turn

the eye back to Christ. Where would Peter have gone, had not his eye thus met the Lord's (Luke 22:61)? The love of Jesus is as real to each of His own as to Peter, and now that He is on the Father's throne, as when He was bound a prisoner in the high priest's palace. He is ever the same, yesterday and to-day and forever: our one necessity, and our perfect sufficiency. And when we have no defense and can say nothing in our own behalf, He is our “Advocate with the Father;” and our cause is safe and must succeed, for it is in His hands.

Yet there must be exercise of soul in the one who has sinned. It is one thing to acknowledge that we have sin (chap. 1:8); it is another thing to watch and pray lest we fall into temptation and get drawn away by it. When a child of God sins, it is against light and love, known love, the love of the Father and of the Son; and all fellowship is forfeited. There is no change in the Father and the Son; the whole change is in the child. How profound then is the wisdom! how rich the grace! that begins the work of restoration by recalling the sufferings and death of Christ for sins. Truly in the short sentence, “He is the propitiation for our sins,” we have a volume of truth, the most peace-speaking, the most precious to a wounded conscience. Would that it were ever before us, engraved on our hearts! In the forsaking of Jesus and His death, our sins, each and all, met with full and final judgment; and, while it is unmingled grace to us, it is righteousness to Him, that not only should our standing in Him before God be perfect (see 2 Cor. 5:21), but that His advocacy should avail if, in our walk, we fall and sin. Indeed, there is infinite worth in the propitiation. It would meet the need of the whole world, if believed in. Hence Mark 16:15.

Thus we learn that, while provision is made in the rich mercy of God, if His child disobey, for his restoration to communion, and that in a way which thoroughly condemns his sin, yet to preserve him from such a fall is surely of the first importance. How this may be is declared in ii. 3-11. The commandments of God by Jesus Christ are set before us for the direction of our every step in life. We are not left to the pious thoughts of pious men. The authority of God is supreme, and all that is esteemed to be morally right or wrong by even good men must be tested by His word. And above and beyond all, we have set before us the perfect walk of Christ, His obedience even to death, the death of the cross (Phil. 2); and this is to rule our obedience. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (ver. 6). In immediate view of the cross, Jesus said, “That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” (John 14:31).

Love therefore, we next see, is to be with us the motive, as the commandments are the guide, or we cannot walk as He walked. What a “light of life” we have in Jesus! And how it brings into view our limited fellowship with Him, and the deep need every day of such prayer as in Col. 1:9-11! May God keep us in the sense of it.

Ver. 4 sets in a solemn light the moral condition of Christendom, boasting in its knowledge of God, yet wanting in obedience to His declared will. Where the essential characteristic of eternal life (the new nature) is wholly wanting, everyone who makes this boast is a liar. In ver. 5 we have the contrast to this, the true Christian giving to the word of God its place and authority: “a doer of the word, and not a hearer only, deceiving himself.” “In him verily is the love of God perfected,” its end and purpose is attained. Obedience to the word keeps him from going with the world, and casts him more and more on the love of God to bless him in spite of the world's opposition; and he proves His love to be perfect, and realizes his nearness also. He knows that he is “in Him.” The

fullness of this blessing is so great that the soul needs time to apprehend it: “in Him, even in His Son Jesus Christ” (chap. v. 20). “Is HIM” is the inexhaustible fountain of all blessedness, of all that is holy and good; and the effectual resource against every evil, and affliction. If we dwelt on these words as written, how it would enlarge our interest in them! They are not “light food.”

In ver. 7 we should read “Beloved,” not “Brethren;” for the writer's heart was warmly engaged in those whom he addressed, and he would have them as warmly interested in each other. It is true that our experience and walk are lower than our “standing,” but our standard is not to be lowered. Confess this, and all difficulty as to the meaning of vers. 7, 8 disappears. “The old commandment which we had from the beginning” is found early in the New Testament. The first word of our Lord, recorded in the Gospel, is “Follow me” (John 1:43), and the last is the same but more emphatic, “Follow thou Me” (21:22). The characteristic of His sheep, each and all, is that they hear His voice and follow Him (John 10). And, as to love, “He giveth us an example that we should do as He hath done to us,” and “love one another as he hath loved us” (John 13:15-34). We have examples, and bright examples, of obedience in the O. T. They shone as lights in the world in their day, but they disappear in the brightness of “the true light” (Christ) which “now shineth.” Where is there anything written which, as to moral power, can compare with Phil. 2:5-8? Obedience and love after that sort were never seen before; yet “the thing is now true in us;” for Christ is our life, and we have the supply of His Spirit. Indeed nothing short of this is true Christian obedience. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 4

Remarks on 1 John 2:8-27

1 John 2:8-27

We are one Spirit with Him; and we are loved by the Father even as He was loved. Let us then, since these things are really so, as true to-day as at the beginning, welcome the keen edge of the word. It is aimed at the heart where self struggles hard to be considered (see Heb. 4:12), but self is not Christ. It is the enemy of God, as Amalek against His people (Ex. 17:8-16). Can we then wonder at the severity of verses 9-11? They need no comment. To boast advanced light while the heart is without brotherly-kindness is a proof that, however high the doctrine, it is self that rules: there is nothing of the divine nature (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3). We should read (ver. 8) “because the darkness is passing away,” not “is past.” Every child of God was once darkness, but is now “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8). Once he comprehended not the light (John 1:5); now he loves it. It is Jesus, the true light ever shining on him, guiding, cheering, and blessing him (John 14:19, 20). Yet the joy of this, real as it is, is not complete. There is a difference between the saint and his Savior. All glorious is He, “the true light now shineth;” not so the truest saint until He come. It can be said of the holiest and the best only this— “the darkness is passing away;” there are spots in the brightest Christian; some words to recall, some steps to retrace.

In verse 12 all difficulty as to whom the apostle writes is removed. There are startling things said in the Epistle; and the question might arise, Are these things really true of me? But this verse furnishes a complete answer to those who will receive it. It is to such as the woman in Luke 7:48 that John writes; those he calls “little children” (see John 13:33). He will carefully notice the different traits which distinguish their spiritual condition; but from “the babe” to “the father,” they are alike objects of mercy: “their sins are forgiven them for his name's sake.” Dwell on these words, for there is a tendency to legality in every one of us.

Alas! this is not at all the only danger. The assurance of salvation by grace, through faith, has lulled some souls into a subtle kind of antinomianism, and their testimony has been terribly marred; but there is, in the verses that follow, a word for each conscience according to the holy principle in Psa. 130:4. To “the fathers” (ver. 13) little is said, but what a volume there is in that little! “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning” (see John 1:1-14). This knowledge “of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, of His person, His grace, His glories, stands at the head of all knowledge; and the fathers have so counted it. Paul ranks as “a father” in Phil. 2; 3 and it is the end and purpose of all true ministry (Eph. 4:13).

Such may not be “teachers"; nevertheless they do teach by their lives. They may not understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but they know the glory due to Him, and it is dear to them. They will suffer no dishonor to Him, or question or debate about Him. The “understanding” given to them is cultivated, and is fruitful with choicest fruit (see ver. 20).

The few words addressed to the “young men” (vers. 14-17) have an importance that cannot be over-rated. The personality of the devil, and the fact that he is the determined and ceaseless foe to

be overcome by all who belong to Christ, are plainly intimated. From other scriptures we know that his kingdom is now commensurate with the whole unbelieving world, and that he is not acting alone but by means of subordinate spirits, “his angels.” When Christ was here, he incited the world's hatred against Him, and directed it how to rid itself, by unparalleled violence and wickedness, from Him Who sought on the part of God to reconcile it. Such is the “wicked one” to be overcome, and the present evil world under his rule. We have to pass through it, but are not to participate with it.

“Young men” are specially liable to fail in this. With ardent minds they would be “benefactors,” and the world offers them share in authority that they may be so (see Luke 22:24, 25). But no. We have Christ's mind. He sanctifies Himself, sets Himself apart from all here, that in heavenly glory He might attract our hearts (John 17:19). He will soon give to us the glory given to Him (xvii. 22), and, what is more, give us to be with Him where He is that we may behold His glory (ver. 24). This is our proper portion and place. But the devil seeks to excite desires in the unwary in this world, at least to improve it; and even Demas, who had the advantage of Paul's example and teaching, was ensnared (2 Tim. 4:10). The apostle warns against lust, but adds, “the pride (lit. boasting) of life.”

This is to be observed, as so in harmony with what prevails in the world; boasting of one's capabilities, development, resources, energies, success, work accomplished in the world, good done—and all by the natural life and for its delight. Yet all to perish! All to pass away, even the world itself (ver. 17)! Nothing abides for the unbeliever but the wrath of God (John 3:36). Solemn truth! The contrast is great in him “that doeth the will of God, however obscure; “he abideth forever.” What will he be doing in heaven, in eternity? The will of God. The thought is precious, and will check self-will now. Let the “young men” cherish it, for even Samson's strength went from him (Judg. 16). The world has proved to be a Delilah to many a promising Christian. She was a closer enemy to Samson than all the Philistine host.

Next we are given to hear of the “little children” (a different word to that in vers. 12, 28 where “little” might be left out with advantage). They are characterized by child-like confidence in God; they “know the Father” (ver. 13), and they “have the anointing from the Holy One;” which anointing, received from Him, abideth in them (vers. 20-27). That is, they have the Holy Spirit from Jesus glorified, according to Acts 2:33-39. This fullness of blessing is at once the portion of the soul, old or young, who, hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of salvation, believes in Christ (Eph. 1:13).

We see the immediate fruits of it in the converts in the Acts (compare also Col. 1:6, and for the preachers, 1 Peter 1:12), and their simplicity and freshness of heart are delightful. They need instruction, of course, and are eager for it; and it is striking to witness the earnest care of the apostle as to this. By the word which they “heard from the beginning” God quickened them and blessed them; and nothing else will keep them; not the words of “the fathers” of the church (so called), nor of the church, nor of man at all. All living affections to Christ, all fellowship with the Father and the Son are maintained by the word as we have it in the N. T. scriptures, and not by the gleanings of others but by our own. The rain will fill pools, but we must dig our own wells. “The Anointing” which dwelt in them dictated the instructions, warnings and encouragements which the apostles ministered to them, a truth never to be lost sight of by the youngest when reading the word, and a safeguard for all when, as we here learn, “there are many anti-christs,” and “it is the last time (or hour).” Verses 18, 20, 24, 27, are all-important.

The world, having crucified Christ and resisted the Holy Ghost, will not walk in the light, as God is in the light, and gross darkness is coming on it. The boasted enlightenment of Christendom will not escape. Isa. 60:1-3 reveals that Israel will emerge from it by grace, the children of God being first caught up to meet the Lord in the air before that (1 Thess. 4:16-v. 11). This was a line of truth set before the youngest saint by the apostles: and they were preserved from the delusion that the world would receive the gospel which they had received. “Ye have heard that Anti-christ cometh” and he will be received. How little the world thinks of it! That Jesus is the Christ, in Whom all the promises of God from Gen. 3 to Rev. 21 are certain (see 2 Cor. 1:20), has brought comfort to a vast multitude of saints from an otherwise intolerable load of suffering, cares, and anxieties. “The liar” will deny this in toto (ver. 22). And yet more, as “the Anti-Christ” he will deny the revelation of the Father in and by the Son. Every ray of hope, or of blessing, that poor guilty man can possibly have in God for earth or heaven, for time or eternity, whether revealed by the prophets or by Christ Himself, will be excluded; that this man of sin may exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). It will not be piecemeal work then, as it is now by the many anti-christs, though they work on the same lines and for the same end. Few, however, feel as this aged servant of Christ; hence his intense interest in these young, bright souls, so inapprehensive of danger. As Rebecca had Eliezer only to conduct her from her home to Canaan and to Isaac, to tell of him and assure her of her destined portion when she should meet him, so have we the HOLY SPIRIT. But there is nothing “the wicked one” will not do to put us under another guidance.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 5

Remarks on 1 John 2:28-3:11

If faith in the leading of the Spirit is lost, and we desire to be led, there is nothing flatters and pleases some men more than to lead us; to be religious “superiors,” with an usurped authority which practically sets aside that of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. In verse 28 observe that the apostle does not say “you” but “we.” It is the same in his second Epistle, (ver. 8). He felt his responsibility for the sheep (so Paul in 1 Thess. 5:23 R.V. and Peter, 1 Peter 5:1-4). In 1 Thess. 2:19, we see the joy of Paul in the hope of meeting in glory those to whom he had ministered here.

John looks seriously at another possibility, and touchingly says, “And now, my children, abide in Him that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” What true pastors the apostles were! (Read Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10.) The thought of that supreme moment when the Lord Himself will give to every saint the fullest light on the things in his course that have been acceptable to Him, and on those that have not been acceptable—His final judgment on the good and the evil which each hath done, and about which there is hesitancy now—this thought leads to the third great subject of this Epistle, a very full and clear description of the two “seeds” that now are in the world and of their doings. There are those who are of God, and there are those who are of the devil (3:8, 9); and the issues of life can be only of the same nature as their source, an oft-forgotten truth.

God is righteous; the devil sinneth from the beginning, that is, from the moment of his fall he has done nothing but evil. Now “if ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that does righteousness, is horn of him.” Man by nature does unrighteousness, cover it over as he may. (See from Gen. 6:5 to Eph. 2:3 and the final and eternal judgment of the lost, Rev. 20:15.) Then let the child of God in taking a step, in doing a deed, yea in speaking a word, keep in mind that he is “born of God.” He is not indebted to “blood” (that is natural generation, however godly his parents) “nor to the will of the flesh, nor to the will of man.” For this endearing relationship to God (John 1:12, 13) is the work of God alone, and the spring of love that was in His heart, when He begat His child, is as full for that child all the way through as at first. Hence the rapturous joy with which the third chapter of our Epistle begins; surely, written by one who knew it well.

1 John 3:1. With holy delight and admiration the greatness of the love of God is set before the new affections of the quickened soul. “Behold what love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.” The personal ministry of the Lord when here was ever to this end, that His disciples should know and enjoy this manner of love (John 17:6-26); and in His absence the Holy Spirit continues the work in every believer (Rom. 8:15, 16). The disciples were not only taught the truth of it, but witnessed it livingly in Him. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father” (John 1:14), and of “the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18). They thus affirm His eternity, but equally declare that they beheld Him in the relationship and the affection which they were called to share. “My Father, and your Father” (John 20:17). With reverence we feel and

own His pre-eminence: He—infinite, divine, eternal: we—begotten in time, who were once children of wrath even as others (Eph. 2:3); and are prepared to read the remainder of our verse in the heart-cheering light of this beginning" — Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." All His goodness, His innumerable acts of mercy, did not shield Him from the world's hatred (John 15:24). He who was the well-beloved of the Father was despised and rejected of men. Can we not see the fitness of the "therefore" to follow such a "because?"

Again in verse 2 the apostle says "Beloved," addressing those whom the world knows not, many of them suffering from its hatred. He sees them in all the dignity of their relationship to God, his own enjoyed relationship far more to him than his apostleship. "Beloved, now are we children of God;" not a question, not a doubt about it. There is more than this. He looks at what we shall be when Jesus is manifested (or appears). Then all that is unlovely in us will forever pass away, "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is;" or, as expressed by Paul, we shall be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). This divine way of regarding those who believe in Jesus is important, and a study of John 17:20 to 24 will greatly help to an understanding of the verses we are considering. The desires of the Lord are, by the Spirit, very present with the apostle.

In verse 3 our practical condition is brought powerfully home to the conscience, "Every one that hath this hope (set) on Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." How feebly have we estimated His perfect purity (see John 17:19), and sought in the light of it to be separated to God from all that is evil! He was, is, and ever will be pure. As in Him, there is no spot on us (1 Cor. 6:11); but as to walk here, though clean every whit, we have need continually to have the feet washed. Contact with the world, unless cleansed as to our ways by the word, defiles us. A study of John 13:1-10 will throw much light on this, and check the proneness to rest in present attainment as well as self-complacency. When Stephen was wholly occupied with the Lord Jesus as He is, "looking up steadfastly into heaven," how closely he resembled Him when here in grace (see Luke 23:34, 46 and Acts 7:60), and how the world, yea the most religiously enlightened in it, knew him not, even as they knew not his Lord and Savior. He was full of the Holy Ghost Whom they always resisted; and while he was praying for them, they were stoning him

Now (ver. 4), it is doing sin that defileth men, and sin is—what? Not as in the A.V., "the transgression of the law" for sin was in the world when there was no law (Rom. 5:13, 14), but "sin is lawlessness" (see R. V.), and we are conceived in it. Rebelliousness is natural to us. As Paul, looking at man as man, says, "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).

John on the other hand, looking only on the life bestowed on the believer, says, "the seed of God abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (ver. 9). He, in this important statement, leaves aside the flesh which Paul affirms never does anything but sin. The Christian as a Christian, does not live after the flesh, although exposed to being drawn aside by it. These first principles of our most holy faith must be apprehended to follow the teaching of this chapter. For it deals with the fact, solemn to realize, that God sets His children in the presence of the children of the devil as a testimony for His glory, and for their blessing (see Phil. 2:15, 16); God loved the world, and sent His Son, not to judge it, but that it might be saved (John 3:17); and He is the propitiation for the whole world (1 John 2:2).

The difficulty therefore in the case of the sinner lies not in the fact of his fallen state, nor in the hopelessness of making the flesh better, nor in the powerlessness of nature to overcome the wicked one. It lies wholly in his unwillingness to look to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, for salvation from it all. When the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, the difficulty was not with the fiery serpents, however numerous; nor was it in the deadly character of the poison instilled by their bite; but whether or not the bitten would look to the serpent which Moses by God's command had lifted up, and realize in the new life given the undoing of the work of the serpents. So here in verse 5, “the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins,” and in verse 8, “to destroy” (lit. undo)” the works of the devil,” the latter as truly as the former. We are not only to rejoice in full and everlasting forgiveness —for if He shall have taken away our sins, who shall bring them back?—but the works of the devil, and all his untiring energy of evil, are overcome, and in the believer undone. The prey is taken from the mighty, the lawful captive is delivered (Isa. 49:24), and

“He owns himself the Savior's prize,

Mercy from first to last.”

Hence the ninth verse is all-important. The seed of God is not only communicated to, but remaineth in, every one that is born of Him. There is no such seed in the unbeliever. He may be accredited as having it by those who assume to be the church, but to rest on that is to build on sand. The seed of God is the new life from God by which a man becomes a partaker of the divine nature, and joys in God. Can the receiver of it lose it? Never. “It remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” Faith, strong in its simplicity, will do this word of God justice, and say with Paul, “I have been crucified (perfect tense) with Christ, yet I live; no longer I, but Christ liveth in me,” and will add, conscious of need, “that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith (the faith), which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20, R.V.).

Beyond cavil the blessing of such teaching is great, its moral power most precious, and for testimony in the world—where neither divine righteousness nor divine love exists—it is of supreme value. To manifest both, Christians are left in it (ver. 10), not righteousness without love, nor love apart from righteousness. A further “message” from the Lord is given in verse 11, (for this compare John 15:12-17): a “message” from Him Whose love passeth knowledge and never fails; and it is only by learning of Him the truth of divine righteousness and love that the learner can become a doer (see ver. 16).

Remarks on 1 John 3:12-4:6

1 John 3:12-4:6

To go back to Cain, as in ver. 12, speaks volumes. Is the contrast between the two seeds still so great? and does the professed Christian need to be warned by the course of Cain? He does (Jude 11). However an unbeliever may adopt Christian language, assume Christian forms as a member of a professedly Christian body, and even admire intellectually Christian truth; if he be not born of God, if he thus have not the seed of God in him, he is in the way of religious Cain. It is of such an one that the apostle says, “he is in darkness even until now” (2:9); “he abideth in death” (3:14), “he is a murderer” (ver. 15). Solemn language! This is the state of the world (ver. 13); and of every professor who is not a partaker of divine love, even when it is tempered and subdued, the fire of the world's hatred still burns. Persecution once permitted, the progress of the flames will be marvelous.

Have we a doubt of it as we read those verses! How suddenly some in 1555 were called to meet martyrdom and welcomed it! Ver. 16 reveals the secret of this grace. “Hereby we perceive (come to know) love, because he laid down his life for us.” The apostles never lost sight of the cross, and in serving the saints could rejoice in laying down their lives for them (Phil. 2:17). But how many there are who have not learned Christ thus, and yet are not wanting “in word and tongue” (ver. 18)!

Sentiment is valueless and worse, and the soul suffers grievous loss whenever practical sympathy is withheld from a brother in need by one able to render help. The heart itself secretly protests against such unreality, and condemns the selfishness it has manifested: the contrast to the love of Christ is felt, and the conscience will be heard. Confidence in the succor of God in its need is shaken, and prayer is hindered. How can the hands be lifted up to God in supplication that have been closed to a brother's necessities? “For if our heart condemn us (ver. 20), God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.” It is but little we can know of the deceit that lurks within us, but God is light, light that makes everything manifest; and the thought of pleasing Him, and the sweet assurance that He hears our prayers and will fulfill the holy desires of our hearts, how it exceeds in worth the possession of earthly riches, yea of the whole world! Let us never for a moment lose sight of Christ Who did always those things that pleased the Father, and was always heard by Him (John 8:29; 11:42). If He be not before us, like Israel when Moses was absent, we must have some object; and what object nearer than self, “the golden calf” that is sure to “come out” (Ex. 32:24), whatever excuses we, like Aaron, may put forth!

To every simple and true Christian, desirous to do the things that are pleasing in the sight of God, there is wonderful encouragement in the explicit statement of His holy will in ver. 23; and in ver. 24 of His gift of the Spirit to be the power of obedience. His one commandment is, “that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ” and, as flowing from this, “love one another as He gave us commandment.” Beautiful indeed is the action of the soul as here commanded—unceasing dependence, unfaltering faith on the Son of God, first for eternal salvation, and then for present, timely salvation, looking (as Jude expresses it) for His mercy all

through, the tenderness of His compassion, truly divine, yet as truly human. (Jude 21; Heb. iv. 15, with vii. 25). “With exercises of soul under the discovery of corruptions, the accusings of Satan, from the tendencies of nature, and from the wear and tear of Christian warfare,” we can never stand if our faith fail; but, as the Lord prayed for Peter, so He intercedes for us. And here we have the secret of power to love our brethren, to long after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:8), because we have experienced the tenderest affection from Him, meeting our every need and sympathizing in our every sorrow (see as to ver. 24, John 14:15, 16; Acts 5:32).

How vain to hope for love from a brother who is not consciously experiencing this love of Christ; feeling the unspeakable honor done to him, and the exceeding sweetness of the comfort given to him, by that love, he being what he was, and in himself, still is He must drink for himself before he can refresh others (John 7:37-39).

Further, let us observe in ver. 24 how near God is to us and the manner of it. “We know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.” All that is not under His guidance is not obedience. The importance of the faith of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us will be more evident as the counter working of the devil comes before us.

1 John 4.

The fourth chapter begins with exposing the subtlety of the present ways of the devil as regards what is religious. God, in giving the Spirit, has provided ministry under Christ for men (Eph. 4:7, 11-16). But here we learn that there are many false prophets who speak in the power of the spirit of error (lit. deceit). In all affection we are consequently exhorted to try the spirits. Of course we must believe that there are spirits, and that men who preach by them are in the sight of God identified with them, a fact of appalling solemnity. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (ver. 1).

Tests are therefore supplied, and the trial is thus not difficult. First, as to the Person of Christ. We see from Matt. 16:16, 17, that a true confession of Him is not the expression of human opinion, but in every case flows from the revelation made by the Father, which is the foundation truth of Christianity and specially dear to the true Christian. A true prophet seeks in every way to exalt Him, to manifest Him, to magnify Him, presenting Him as the food of God for the soul. His theme is “Jesus Christ come in flesh.”

“Our whole resource along the road,

Nothing but Christ—the Christ of God.”

The doctrine of the Epistle is that Jesus Christ is God (see ver. 20, and the many verses where the antecedent to “he” and “him,” is “God,” as 3:2); but here His coming in flesh, His holy humanity, is affirmed. He is God and man. The false prophets will not thus confess Him (ver. 3, R.V.). Their theme is the world for man, and man for the world; and how from the first, by industry and skill, he has improved it! “A whole city was built before Eden had time to wither “; and the remarkable progress of modern times may well stimulate to further exertion. This is put religiously, and “the world hears them” (ver. 5). Of future judgments coming on the world they are silent. Indeed they do not acknowledge the inspiration of the apostles. “He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us” (ver. 6). Paul, also writing to Timothy, warns against “seducing spirits,”

leading some to depart from the faith, and to hold doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4). How all this will end, is told in Rev. 18:2.

The goodness of God in uncovering this method of religiously alluring souls is great indeed. Let us never forget that there are many false prophets, many deceivers, many antichrists; and the whole heart of the aged apostle," our brother, and companion in tribulation," is in this warning, "Beloved, believe not every spirit." (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 7

Remarks on 1 John 4:7-14

Chap. 4:7-14

Having exposed these devices of the devil, working with untiring energy through his ministers, “deceitful workers” after his own type (see 2 Cor. 11:13-15), he resumes the subject of love still further to guard us against any counterfeit; for natural affection may express itself in heroic deeds, but natural affection is not love. Though the word may be applied to it, a holy and an exclusive use is claimed for it here— “Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” Adam, though created by God, and placed in circumstances and a position calculated to draw out his gratitude and affections to God, revolted from Him, and hearkened to the voice of his wife. Morally his affections were ruined. When called to account, hoping to shield himself, he became her accuser, reflecting on his Maker and hers for giving her to him (Gen. 3). It is a repulsive scene, the earliest exhibition of the human heart when ruined by sin, its deceitfulness, and its weakness. Natural affection, however, in one born of God, and directed of Him, is a tender solace in a world where so many are sinking under a load of sorrow; it is then neither deceitful nor weak, but a lovely trait of character, holier, purer, more devoted, patient and enduring, because divine love is supreme. With adoring hearts we may contemplate it to perfection in the Son of God (John 19:26, 27). In Him all is perfect.

The gift of life, and the sacrifice such a gift entailed, are then set before us as the manifestation of the love of God in the case of sinners, that is, in our case (ver. 9); an amazing gift had it been bestowed on a sinless being, for it is eternal life, indefectible, and endowed with the most exalted capacities for fellowship with the Father and the Son now and throughout eternity. Adam innocent had not this, still less Adam guilty, and his race. Life being thus a sovereign gift of love, it is evident that we were without it, and a meaning is given to “death” as found in scripture (as applied to the state of men) which it is important to grasp. With the outward aspect of physical death we are painfully familiar; the separations it makes we in some small degree understand. Have we attempted to realize what separation “death,” as found in scripture, expresses? When wasting his substance in riotous living, the prodigal was dead (Luke 15:24). The woman living in pleasure is dead while she liveth (1 Tim. 5:6). How countless then the multitude of the living who are dead, some even professing to be of the Christian brotherhood (iii. 14)! Do we thus view them? Truly even single words in scripture are volumes, but we glide over them too quickly.

The very early experience of eternal life in the receiver is the love that gave it, and it is the sweetest. “God sent His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into the world that we might live through Him.” Ver. 10 intensifies this. “Not that we loved God.” This puts our case in a positive form: not the absence of good, but the presence of evil, a state of alienation and enmity; and propitiation for our sins was needed. There will be “the day of judgment,” “the judgment to come “; for “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” But, before the day of judgment, God has sent His Son to bear our sins, to take our place in judgment. He having finished the work which God, His Father, gave Him to do, we take, as given righteously to us, His place now in blessing; and

before He comes to judge, we shall be raised in glory (cf. ver. 17 and iii. 2), as we “shall not come into judgment” (John 5:24, R.V.). If God has thus manifested His love to us, even to us who did not love Him, what have we to do but to behold it, and drive away every thought or suggestion that at any time would obscure it? Let every earthly refuge fail us, the love of God will not fail. As He is from everlasting to everlasting, so is His love; it is as enduring as eternity. Let us boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:11), for well we may.

In ver. 11 our service to our brethren, little or much, is to be in the consciousness of the love of God to us, a pure and powerful motive; and in ver. 12 such manifestation of love on our part is a testimony that God Himself “dwelleth in us “: a wonderful expression! but compare chap. iii. 24. Surely we know that we have not strength to bear with what is contrary to us in our brethren, or they with us. The realized presence of God alone will give strength, and ver. 13 explains how this can be in the weakest. “He hath given us of His Spirit” – “of His Spirit” speaks of an inexhaustible supply, for “God giveth not the Spirit by measure.” Thus as a vessel, however weak and small, we dwell in God and God in us. Amazing truth! (see ver. 15).

In ver. 14, by virtue of the indwelling Spirit our testimony goes out to the world. “We,” must not be confined to the gifted only (see Acts 8:4). It is indeed a great wrong to the unsaved to make evangelizing the work of a few. Neither office, nor gift is indispensable for this, but the Holy Spirit. There are gifts (Eph. 4:11); but all who are saved, and thus know the Savior, are (each in his or her sphere) to bear testimony— “that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” The principle is expressed in 2 Cor. 4:13, “We believe, and therefore speak.” (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 8

Remarks on 1 John 4:15-5:5

John 4:15-5:5

We have then the truly blessed place of witnesses to the world of the love of the Father in the gift of His Son; would that we occupied it more faithfully. Ver. 15 follows with yet fuller light to guard us against being betrayed into any irreverent familiarity in preaching or speaking. The name of Jesus is not to be used lightly. Though, when sent of the Father into the world, He endured from men every indignity and hid not His face from shame and spitting, though He was reviled by the basest and foulest, He was then, and always, the Son of God. Hence the solemn question for the witness is — Am I confessing that Jesus is the Son of God? Meeting man's need is right and blessed, but we cannot be trusted, we cannot trust ourselves, save as we have in view the Person Whom we preach, and exalt Him. As Paul in Gal. 1:15, 16 says, “When it pleased God... to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” No professed love for souls can palliate failure here, for the power of God is present. “God dwelleth in him” who thus, and at all times, confesses Jesus, “and he in God.” This is to dwell in love knowing and believing (note the order) the love that God hath to (in) us (ver. 16). It is not eloquence we want, but the happy realization, like the returned prodigal, that all is love at home, and God Himself is our dwelling-place. It is this that makes good, if unpopular, witnesses (whether in private or public) of a “good confession “; nothing else will. Finally, the perfection and unchanging continuance of the love of God is declared (ver. 17 R.V.) so that, in view of the coming day of judgment we may have boldness, and not fear; utterly lost as we are by nature and conduct, if God should enter into judgment with us, no man living would be justified (Psa. 143:2). Therefore the perfect love of God has taken us off that ground altogether, and by redemption has put us before Him “in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:6, 7). Not a fear is to torment our soul, not a timid or doubting thought to disturb our mind, “because as He is, even so are we in this world.” This is sure ground for confidence, the boldness of faith in God's word, faith in the blood of Christ, faith in accomplished salvation, in being before God as He is in glory, even while we are still here in this world in weakness and failure.

Faith, then, discovering this perfect unchanging love of God revealed in His Son, draws the affections to Him. “We love (him), because he first loved us” (ver. 19) and loving Him we love those who are dear to Him. The motive is both pure and powerful; indeed, it is His commandment (ver 21). It is not only happy fellowship with Him in His love, but obedience to His will, to love our brother. The ways of some may grieve us, but it is genuine love that feels the sorrow. Abraham loved Lot, and gave proof of it, but he could have no fellowship with him. The severity of ver. 20 is righteous; God would guard us against all hypocrites and all hypocrisy. It is a crushing rebuke where needed, and put in a form that challenges the conscience. “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” If that which is of God be seen in a brother and awakens no sympathy, no love, how can there be any for God?

The first and imperishable element of true abiding fellowship with one another is formed and found in the faith once for all delivered unto the saints, “faith in Jesus.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him (v. 1).” When the woman of Samaria received this truth, her first action commends itself to all who have obtained like precious faith (John 4:21-29). She at once left her water-pitcher to testify of Him to others. We think no longer of her race, her rudeness, or her past immorality. Our hearts are drawn to her more than to the timid hesitating ruler of the Jews (John 7:50-51). But now that Jesus is glorified, and the truth that He is “the Christ” is connected with heavenly glory and power, our faith in Him enlarges our understanding by the Spirit of truth, and fellowship with each other increases. The secret of lack of fellowship in modern times is the result of woeful decline of first faith, first love, and first works (Rev. 2:4, 5). Thus all that believe are not together, and are not of one heart and of one soul, as at the beginning. Alas! this state of division finds apologists, and to go on with one or another of the religious systems, which have established themselves in Christendom, is defended. Solemn and forcible is the protest of the Spirit against this in vers. 2, 3. It is not the fruit of love to God, or to the children of God. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments.” Plans and systems of man's devising are not the commandments of God, but the actings out of human will, and the giving up of the spirit of obedience. What a rebuke to this is the walk of Jesus!

“If we say that we abide in him, we ought ourselves so to walk, even as he walked” (2:6); and sanctification of the Spirit is “to obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:2). Self-will is not obedience, and is not consistent with the blood of Jesus Christ. “He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” It is thus “the blood of his cross.”

The change in ver. 4 from “whosoever” to “whatsoever” is peculiar and to be observed. The life given of God, whoever may be the recipient of it, is looked at abstractedly, as in John 3:6. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” in contrast with that which is born of the flesh. And each nature seeks its own things: the flesh, the things of the flesh; and the spirit, the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). The desires of the two natures, being opposed, are never in agreement; and the power of the Spirit is on the side of the “spirit.” The world is a system ordered by “the prince of the world” to suit the flesh (11-16). “Whatsoever is born of God” —the life given of Him— “overcometh the world,” acting on His judgment of even its best; for “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Practically and experimentally the victory is gained by faith, and here pointedly called “our faith,” not the faith of the most eminent saint before the cross. There the world was finally judged morally (John 12:31-32), as it will be judicially on the appointed day, by Him Who was hanged on it (Acts 17:31).

The mind of man is set on having the world without God. The apostle grasped this fact firmly, and continually impresses it on us. “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” (ver. 5)? For His confession of this before His judges, He was condemned to death; and the Jews, led by their rulers, insisted on His crucifixion; and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required (Mark 14:61-62, Luke 22:70; 23:24, John 19:7). John was an eye-witness of this, a competent and faithful witness, and (while seeking to maintain us in communion with the Son now risen and victorious, with the Father and on His throne) He would have us, while on earth, in spirit take our place with Him when standing by the cross (John 19:26).

Spiritually our history begins there. There God begins with us personally. It is there that we see the love that Christ has for us personally. There we, too, begin to see clearly that our very self, that which is expressed by “I” and “me” was before and on the heart of Christ when He delivered Himself up for us (Gal. 2:20). All vagueness, all uncertainty, all that is confused and mystical, vanishes. Gazing by faith— “our faith” —on the Son of God on the cross, the most sinful can truly say— “He loved ME, and gave Himself for ME.” To use the cross, as it is too often used in Christendom, as a symbol of the Divine sanction of worldly splendor, must be a dreadful outrage, in the sight of God, on the cross of Christ (see Phil. 3:18-19).

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 9

Remarks on 1 John 5:6-19

1 John 5:6-19

THERE is an apparent abruptness in the way in which the final scene on the cross is brought prominently forward in ver. 6. After saying in ver. 5, that Jesus is the Son of God, it is added, “This is he that came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood.”

The chapter is full of the truth of the new life given of God to those who believe on the name of His Son. But if a sinner is to receive life from God, His Son must die for that sinner. The testimony of the Lord to Nicodemus was clear and definite as to this (John 3:14), and (in John 19:34) the fact that blood and water flowed after death from the pierced side of Jesus is related with special emphasis. The moral necessity for cleansing the sinner and making propitiation for his sins arises from his condition. He is unclean, and he is guilty God has met both in judgment on His Son; and He sets before us (believers) these remarkable signs as abiding witnesses, with the Spirit, that He has given us eternal life in His Son.

For ver. 7 there is no sufficient authority. Read— “For they that bear witness are three: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one” (ver. 8).

The Spirit, received from Christ in glory, bears witness that Christ's death cleanses the believer from the defilement of his nature: “sin in the flesh” is condemned (Rom. 8:3). He is, in the sight of God counted as having died under judgment. He died with Christ, and is so to reckon himself, to count with God as to himself (Rom. 6) The flesh is not cleansed, but he is cleansed from it; and this, when seen in the clear light of the Spirit's witness in the Epistles, is exceedingly cheering and strengthening to the true but timid Christian. This is the meaning of the sign “water,” as interpreted by the Spirit in connection with the blood.

The blood testifies to justification from all the doings of the flesh. “Being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:9). God, the Judge of all, has set forth Jesus Christ (before the day of judgment) as a propitiation (mercy-seat) through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:23-26), and declares His righteousness in justifying him who believes in Jesus. “Christ our passover hath been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7), and God is saying, still, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex. 12:13). The combined testimony of the water and the blood, with the Spirit also witnessing, is most powerful, and deeply affecting too: the voice from the Cross and from the Throne.

In the presence of such testimony, not to believe God is to make Him a liar. How grave, how solemn, how wicked, thus to dishonor Him! seeing that in far less important matters we receive the witness of men. Is not His witness greater? And this the more so, since he that believeth receiveth in the Son what is witnessed; the cleansing, the justification, and the life are his (vers. 9-10). Unbelief dishonors God and robs man beyond measure.

The apostle presses this. Much that he had written before might be misused to lead sincere souls to look to themselves, their experience and their walk, for full assurance of having eternal life. Surely the fruits of life are to be theirs, as well as the life itself. Hence such passages as 2:5-29, 3:7-14, 18, 19, 24, 5:4. But he would not close the Epistle without making the clearest statement that the one sure ground of assurance is faith in God's testimony, not making light of the comfort flowing from other assurances. “These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, (even) you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” And remark, that here the verb “know” means conscious knowledge (chap. 5:13, R.V.). Divinely assured of the possession of eternal life, our thoughts are led to that which is proper to it—confidence in God (ver. 14). This is remarkably beautiful, because blessedly practical. We are still in the body, still in the world where we have tribulation (John 16:33); but the relationship of children to God is known, and is proper to eternal life (John 17:3). The Spirit of His Son in our hearts cries, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6), and our very groanings are heard (Rom. 8:26-27); so that in the depths, as to circumstances, we have all the resources of God. When we think of all He has done for us, how can we limit Him? He has a delight in our prayers (Prov. 15:8), and would secure to us exceeding quietness and rest of spirit, whatever the turmoil and distractions around us.

There is an “if” in ver. 14. “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us,” but an “if” we need not fear. It conveys a warning against self-confidence, as if, in any of our matters, we knew what was best. No: faith leaves all to God. It is enough to know how He careth for us (1 Peter 5:7).

“So will He by His Spirit lead

In ways unknown to us indeed,

And, our well-ordered conflicts o'er,

Bring us where sorrows are no more.”

Verse 15 will check all impatience, as ver. 14 all self-confidence. The answer may not come at once; “but we know (are inwardly conscious) that we have the petitions which we have desired of Him,” petitions for ourselves, petitions for others. Ver. 16 shows clearly that in our petitions we must not lose sight of the direct government of the Father in the family (according to 1 Peter 1:17); and, while soul prosperity is ever to be the first consideration, the health of the body is of account also (3 John 2). There is to be no prying into evil, nor suspecting it; “but if any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and (God) will give him life for them that sin not unto death.” What an honor to put upon one, perhaps of no account in the church, but one with a tender heart that enters into a brother's affliction, yet jealous for the glory of God! Precious grace! precious in the sight of Him Who is the alone witness of it. To be in haste to deal with evil in another has often made matters worse. To be brought on our knees before God for a brother is to love him with a pure heart.

“There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” Cases of extreme heinousness, as some in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:30) and Ananias and Sapphira are in point. It is a very solemn view of sickness in the family of God; and therefore the responsibility is put upon us (seeing how many of the children of God are sick) to be exercised as to what is fitting to pray for in certain cases. “I do not say that he shall pray for it” —that is, for the forgiveness of it. The apostle is clearly writing

about physical death, and the Father's dealings in discipline, not the final judgment of the last day. In all this, His glory and our brother's blessing should be very dear to us.

Now, in the sight of God “all (or every) unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death” (ver. 17), that is, not calling for that severe discipline. There is much need to be reminded of this. Every unrighteousness toward God or man is sin. We own to failures, inconsistencies, slips and mistakes; but to drop these euphemisms and to substitute “sin,” would quicken the moral sense. In how many things, even religious things, do we need to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14)!

It is quite true that all discipline is not for sin, and also, as one in sore affliction said— “The Father does not send the rod, He brings it;” but there is always a cause. The real state of the soul in the sight of God is the point. The case of Job is most instructive. The truth is, the flesh often escapes detection and must be discovered and kept down. When this was accomplished in Job, he prayed for his friends, not they for him. If the flesh escapes our observance, the wicked one is not blind to any movement of it in us; hence the truth in ver. 18, A.V.

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” In Jesus he had nothing to touch. He came to Him and found sinless perfection, infinite love, absolute obedience (John 14:30, 31). But if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (i. 8). As born of God, we enter on a life of conflict. While on earth, we are in the field of warfare. Armor and weapons are provided, the wiles of our enemy are exposed (Eph. 6:2; 1 Thess. 5:8; Rom. 13:12), and we are called to fight (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). Happy it is to serve others; but let us not forget that there is oneself to keep watch and guard over, and to see to it that, by the word of God and in His strength, the wicked one shall do us no hurt. In God our Savior there is power to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24, 25), “So fight I,” said Paul in a passage full of energy (1 Cor. 9:26, 27). All this (and more might be added) leads one to think that in this ver. 18— “keepeth himself” is the inspired reading, and not “keepeth him,” as in the R.V. The next verse discloses the power of the enemy and his success in the world. “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (or, the wicked one).”

Chapter 10

Remarks on 1 John 5:6-21

1 John 5:6-21

What must the world be in the sight of God! Jesus, born of Mary, was the display of His love for it, and in it. He sent His Son into it to be its Savior—trusted it, so to speak, with One so precious to Him, His delight, His well-beloved; and the world crucified Him! So powerful was serpent subtlety then over the wisdom of the princes of the world. Now, God displays His love to those who believe, by drawing and redeeming them out of it to His Son in heaven; and the world lies in the power of the deceiver, still boasting of its wisdom! We think of Noah and still more of Enoch. They were not of the world in their day. They were of God, and yet how few! The skill of men had advanced the world, and the arts flourished in the family of Cain. All seemed so well (Luke 17:26, 27). And all seems well now to millions; and the flock of God that will receive the kingdom, how little it is (Luke 12:32)! Do we belong to it? If there be a thought delightful to those who do, it is, that they are of God. His almighty grace has triumphed over all the blinding powers of darkness, and all the want of heart and power in them, and, however they may differ in attainments, they are confident that "He who hath begun a good work in them will perform (perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6), "God is faithful" (see 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13).

As the Epistle opens, so it appropriately closes. At the beginning John wrote, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." This, doubtless, is the apostolic "we"; but all who believed are addressed, in order that they may have their part in this eternal blessedness (1 John 1:3, 4). Now in a few words—the fullness of their meaning being truly inexhaustible—he expresses what every believer should for himself consciously know of God, and what His infinite grace has accomplished, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, (even) in His Son Jesus Christ. This ("He," or the "same") is the true God, and eternal life" (ver. 20).

The mercy bestowed upon us reveals our need. This is strikingly exhibited here. Sin has not affected our bodies only, the evil has reached, and is deeply seated in, the understanding. It is darkened (Eph. 4:18), and, naturally, "there is none that understandeth: there is none that seeketh after God." "The world by wisdom knew not God;" and no greater proof of this can there be than its ignorance of Christ. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee;" for had they known Him, they would have known His Father also (Rom. 3:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; John 17:25; 8:19). Men are not innocent, they are not pure in heart; therefore their understanding is incapable of holding a true balance. Alienated from God and enemies in their mind by wicked works, how can they know Him?

But the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and thus deliver us from the intricate system of deceit which in one way or another has caused all our race to wander from Him. Eve's innocent mind was deceived by the serpent, the devil who deceiveth the whole world (Rev. 12:9), and blinds in Christendom the minds of them which believe not the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). Sin, too, is deceitful, lusts are deceitful, riches are deceitful, the heart is deceitful. There are those who handle the word of God deceitfully, and false

teachers by good words and fair speeches deceive the simple. Innocence was no safeguard; the ablest intellects have not escaped; minds stored with knowledge have proved no protection. The abounding privileges of Nicodemus and pre-eminence in the outward service of God availed him nothing. His questions show what the natural understanding makes of divine truth (John 3). He must be born again, must have a new nature and thus a new understanding; and the Son of God was come to give it him.

But thus to know God, to have spiritual understanding to see that in Him, Jesus Christ, dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9); and not to have faith in our place in Him (ver. 10) will rob us of that full joy which God would have abound in our hearts. “We are in Him that is true, (even) in His Son Jesus Christ.” He would have His joy made ours, and this could not be if we were separated from Him for a moment. His joy is our present portion, and His glory will be ours soon: “we are complete in Him.”

But the warning of ver. 21 is needed, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” It is a warning against seeking satisfaction elsewhere than in Christ. “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37).

In N.T. language much more is meant by “idol” than the image of a god. “A covetous man is an idolater” (Eph. 5:5). “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).

An esteemed brother has written— “The true God being now revealed, let no thought of Him, no reasoning about Him, no conclusions of our own wisdom and theology arise independently in the heart. All this will but end in idolatry—refined, it may be, speculative and philosophic; but still idolatry.” W. B.

Chapter 11

Thoughts on 2 Timothy 1:13

It has been acutely remarked that forms are not necessarily useless because sometimes empty, and that the same charge might be made against barrels which are sometimes empty likewise. Nay, it is hardly too much to say that truth may become formal as soon as it becomes definite. It was by no means the most perfect state of this planet when it was “without form and void,” however interesting to the scientific student, if such an one could have been there and had some vantage ground (some πο■στ■) from which to study its phenomena.

Form is not limited to material things, but appertains to spiritual truth, and only when it degenerates into formality does it become offensive to God. It is true we must recollect that God's word is not a matter of gradual evolution, whatever part the latter may undoubtedly have played in the gradual preparation of this earth for man; though it is perhaps unnecessary to add that the writer has no sympathy with current theories as to man's origin. God speaks with authority, and it is for us to hear. Science may be, and is, laboriously built up; not so scripture, however slow our apprehension of its meaning, its unity being all the more marvelous, because it was written by so many different hands across a period of 1500 years.

Hence we find the apostle Paul bidding his son in the faith to “have an outline of sound words.” No doubt error was already creeping in which made it all the more incumbent on Timothy to preach the truth in the most definite terms, learned, as we read, from apostolic lips. For Christianity is no system of shadowy dreams. Such were the speculations of the Gnostics, even then starting into unhealthy life; who, while pretending to a more spiritual conception of truth, were really undermining and explaining away the truth itself. To them apparently such a form was naught: mystical reveries shrink from distinct and definite signification; though doubtless the same words possess implicitly a potency of meaning beyond what the most spiritual mind can fathom.

Such is divine revelation which, in its last and fullest form, comes to us embodied in language of transcendent precision. No doubt it was providentially ruled that its medium should be so copious, that it should be written in the most flexible, as it is the most beautiful, of human tongues. God of course could have molded any language to His purpose, even that massive yet child language which embodied His law. But infinite Wisdom, “unresting, unhasting,” ever has the right instrument at hand for the right work, be it the man or the tongue in which he speaks. May we esteem it a privilege so to be used, in however humble a service. R. B.

Chapter 12

Abigail Compared With Jonathan

1 Samuel

Abigail takes a much more humble place than Jonathan did, and one which, even at the time, acknowledged David much more fully. It is not a friend like Jonathan, but a submissive soul, which in spirit gives David his place according to God, taking her own place before him. It is exactly that which should distinguish the spirit of the assembly, and of the Christian. In Jonathan we see the remnant under the Jewish aspect. But Abigail enters into the spirit of God's purposes respecting David, although he was now in distress; and David, who while thoroughly submissive can act according to the faith that owns him, hears her voice and accepts her person.

Let us mark the features of Abigail's faith. All rests upon her appreciation of David (it is this which forms a Christian's judgment; in everything he appreciates Christ); his title as owned of God; his personal perfection; and that which belonged to him according to the counsels of God. She thinks of him according to all the good which God has spoken of him; she sees him fighting God's battles, where others only see a rebel against Saul; and all this from her heart. She judges Nabal, and looks upon him as already judged of God on account of this, for with her everything is judged according to its connection with David (25:26): a judgment which God accomplishes ten days later, although Nabal was at peace in his own house, and David an exile and outcast. Nevertheless the relation of Abigail to Nabal is recognized until God executes judgment. She judges Saul: he is but “a man,” because to her faith David is king. All her desire is that David may remember her. Jonathan says, when he goes out to David, “I shall be next unto thee;” and David abides in the wood, while Jonathan returns to his house. In the order of things which God had judged (a judgment which faith recognized) he remains with his family and shares its ruin. This is important to a Christian. For instance, he respects, in so far as based on God's authority, official Christianity (which in the world is the religion of God, while God bears with it) and does not stand up against it. As to faith and personal walk, this Christianity is not at all; just as Saul was only “a man” to Abigail's faith, J. N. D.

Chapter 13

The Administration of the Fullness of the Seasons—1

Christ is the true and only center of the purposes of God, as it is only by Him the Holy Ghost reveals them. Hence it is, and must be in the proportion of our Spirit-taught acquaintance with Christ, that the divine plans are understood and appreciated. When He is not steadily kept before the soul, what becomes of the study of scripture itself? It is no longer truth which sanctifies, but a barren theology which puffs up. And why has prophecy been perverted to unfruitful and injurious speculation? Because God's grand object has been lost sight of (“that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” one might perhaps apply here); and thereby the Spirit has been grieved, and has blown upon the busy exercises of man's mind. “He shall glorify me,” said the Lord, “for He shall take of mine and show it unto you” (John 16:14). The moment the view of the glory of Christ is supplanted by researches into providence for instance, important as this may be in its place, the temple of prophecy degenerates into a countinghouse of human intellect; and the tables of those who traffic in mere erudition crowd its courts, until by the just judgment of God it is left desolate. But by His grace a better sanctuary is opened for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus crowned with glory and honor in the heavens. May we have grace to draw near through the rent veil, and there by our Master's side, with unshod feet and worshipping hearts, follow His eye and finger as they rest upon the spheres of His varied but harmonious glory!

“Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.” There the Jewish prophet necessarily stopped. “But,” says the apostle (1 Cor. 2) taking up the words, “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world [or, the ages] unto our glory.” How often we hear a member of the body of Christ quoting the words, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it,” to justify an ignorance which the Spirit of God takes pains to show us is no longer excusable. The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are now disclosed. Our position is the contrast of that of the Jews. God did reveal them to us through His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. True, these depths are not the things of man, and are therefore undiscoverable by human ken. But a Christian is called no longer to walk nor to think κατ■ ■νθρωπον: if he seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. “The things of God knoweth no one except the Spirit of God.” And what is that to the Christian? Everything. “For we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” “We have the mind (νο■ν) of Christ.”

So in Ephesians, God caused grace “to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fullness of the seasons, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on the earth, in Him in whom also we obtained inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose” etc. (Eph. 1:9-11). The great and precious revelations of the Old Testament, as Moses told the Jews (Deut. 30:29), belong, in an emphatic sense, unto them and their children. Jehovah their God had reserved the secret

things unto Himself. Hence the force and importance of the verses just cited from this Epistle. His grace He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He has made known unto us the secret of His will, according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for an administration of the accomplishment of the set times. And what is this purpose of God? It is in one head, Christ, to sum up the universe, the things in heaven, and the things on the earth; in Him in whom also we were allotted inheritance. That is, the mystery of God's will consists of two great parts: first, Christ is to be the Head of all things heavenly and earthly; and secondly, the church is to be associated with Him in that inheritance. And so the apostle, having treated of the design of God to re-head all things in Christ, turns also at once to the collateral purpose of joining the church as heir with Him, first alluding to the Jewish saints brought into this relationship, and then to the Ephesians themselves, the Gentile saints whom he was actually addressing: “that we [i.e. the Jews now believing] should be to the praise of His glory who are pre-trusters in Christ; in whom ye also” [i.e. Gentile believers], &c. When they heard, they believed the gospel. For they had no previous revelation or hope like the Jews.

In the closing verses of this chapter we have the same two-fold truth, with this difference, that it is not in connection with God's future purpose respecting the heading up of all things in Christ when the appointed times are completed, but with Christ's present exaltation at the right hand of God. Nevertheless, here as before, is seen the double glory of Christ. God hath given Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. And thereupon chapter 2 enters into the manner of God's display of His grace in His kindness towards Jew and Gentile in Christ Jesus.

If we turn to Acts 3 it is clear, that the times of refreshing and the restoring of all things were no secret of God's will. Peter speaks of this restitution of all things as the familiar hope of the Jewish nation. God had spoken of this by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. It therefore must be a distinct thing from, however closely connected with, the mystery of Eph. 1:9-11. Let us take one of these prophetic testimonies, and the difference will be plain.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 14

The Administration of the Fullness of the Seasons—2

Eph. 1:10

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. 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. And I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And 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. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that pass by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I Jehovah build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate: I Jehovah have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am Jehovah” (Ezekiel 36:22-38).

This citation is the more observable, because it seems the one the Lord had chiefly in view in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). Jesus had laid down the necessity of being born afresh as the condition of seeing the kingdom of God; and to the question of the Jewish ruler, He answered, that except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter that kingdom. Flesh and Spirit admit of no modification in the nature of each, which remains distinct and unchanged. Hence Nicodemus was not to marvel if Jews must be born again in order to have part in God's kingdom; for the question is about the kingdom, and not salvation merely. When then Nicodemus still inquires, “How can these things be?” the Lord says, “Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not,

how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" Thus it is clear, that when the Lord spoke of the need of the new birth, the Jewish teacher ought to have understood; for so had the prophet Ezekiel shown.

Before Israel enjoys the earthly blessings in the promised land, Israel will be born again. Israel will be sprinkled with clean water, and will have a new spirit put within them. It is afterward they have the earthly things of the kingdom of God. "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it," etc. "And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." The important thing to notice, is, that in all this the Lord had not gone beyond the earthly things, or that which was essential to their enjoyment, i.e. the new birth. Of course, to have blessings in heavenly places a man must a fortiori be born again; but even the Jewish people, as we have seen, must be born afresh to have the earthly promises in God's kingdom. In speaking of the new birth, He had not gone beyond the range of earthly things and what a Jew ought to have learned from the prophets. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" On the latter, the Lord does not touch further than to intimate the lifting up of the Son of man, and the gift of the Son of God in God's love not to the Jews only but to the world: which things involve, as we know, the exaltation of the Lord into glory on high, and the union of the church with Him there, as the fullness of that heavenly Man. The lifting up of the Son of man was, so far as man's responsibility is concerned, the demolition (though in God's wisdom and grace the ultimate security) of all the earthly hopes of the Jews. For in Christ all the promises of God found their meeting-place; and if He had been received, they would have been made good to His earthly people. But He was rejected. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him. The promises remain to be accomplished, based as they are upon the blood of the Mediator; but before that accomplishment takes place, a new and extraordinary work goes on; namely, the formation of a body to share the glory of Christ above, when God's purpose is fulfilled of gathering all things, heavenly and earthly, under the headship of Christ, for the church shares that inheritance with Him. This, then, was the mystery of the will of God: not the kingdom of God, nor the new birth, indispensable as it is for its earthly promises. Of these the Prophets had spoken; but they were silent on the purpose of God which destined Christ and the church to rule over all things in the heavens and on the earth. The restitution of all things was not in any sense a mystery; but that was.

Be it observed by the way, that 1 Peter 1:10-12 does not at all refer to this mystery, but to other privileges which. formed the burden of many a prophetic strain. The salvation of souls was certainly no hidden secret: "of which salvation the prophets," etc. They searched, no doubt, what, or what manner of, time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify; but it is manifest that the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, testified before-hand by the ancient prophets, cannot be the mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3). Here were things testified before-hand, ministered unto us and not unto themselves; for it was so revealed to them.

But clearly these previously revealed privileges totally differ from another sphere of blessing which from the beginning of the world was kept hid in God. Nor do the Epistles of Peter once allude to our fellowship with Christ as His body. The mystery is nowhere introduced. We are regarded "as begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled... kept by the power of God" etc. We are exhorted to diligence, sobriety,

confident hope, obedience in holiness, and withal to pass the time of our sojourning in fear, knowing our redemption with the precious blood of Christ. It is not doubted that the persons whom Peter addressed were members of Christ's body; but it is certain, that the Spirit here dwells upon the blessings which spring from the resurrection of Christ; our incorruptible life in power, holy and royal priesthood, pilgrim-calling, and the like. He speaks not of our union with Christ in heaven. Hence also, when the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is referred to, it is as the power of preaching the gospel unto us, never as the One Who constituted us, Jew and Gentile, God's habitation (Eph. 2), or Who baptized us into one body (1 Cor. 12). In other words, the mystery is not treated in the Epistles of Peter, whereas it is the main subject to the Ephesians and also to the Colossians.

Chapter 15

The Administration of the Fullness of the Seasons—3

Eph. 1:10

The administration, we have seen, awaits “the fullness of times,” or the expiry of the various periods appointed by divine wisdom. All things are out of course, and waxing worse and worse, until Christ takes the reins. The only Righteous One is still an outcast from the world, though known to the church as crowned with glory and honor in heaven, while those who love the Lord of glory suffer here below. God's favored earthly people are a proverb and a by-word among all nations, and driven out from a country of which God delighted to be the landlord. And what has been, what is, the history of that people and land? Their oppressors, the Gentiles, have they walked in abasement or in pride? Have they honored the King of heaven? And how fares creation? Does not the whole of it groan and travail in pain together until now? And where is Satan? Is it on earth merely that he walks about, or is there spiritual wickedness in heavenly places? Well, there is a set time for each of these things; and these seasons shall have a full term. Satan shall lose his sway over the air and the earth; creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of God's children; the smitten Gentile image shall give place to an everlasting kingdom; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and Christ shall appear and we with Him in glory. This will be the fullness of the seasons spoken of.

When the destined fullness arrives, how great our joy, beloved, to see Him, not only as the Melchizedek blessing God and blessing man, but actual Possessor of heaven and earth, all things therein being headed up in Him Who, though He be the most High God, administers as the exalted Man; to be too ourselves so near Him and so truly one with Him, that then we shall at length forget all save His love and His glory. And yet (O wondrous grace!) is it not so now, as regards His love? Are we not here and now members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? Yet surely we may long for the day when, seeing Him, we shall be forever like Him, according to that working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Yes, all things in heaven and earth shall be headed up in Him, not things under the earth; but every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Worthily has He won such a place, that blessed One. And how true the word! “Who, subsisting in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, having taken upon him the form of a bondman, having come in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and freely gave him the name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:6-9).

It is false, utterly false, that Jesus took this place when He was born. It is true, that then was the fullness of the time come for God to send forth His Son. The very children were enslaved under the rudiments of the world, and all were shut up under sin. Man had proved himself competent to ruin himself under the law of God, only the more readily because it was good and he was bad. But

was God's business done when the Son was here, come of a woman, come under the law? By no means. The Incarnation was but the means, not the end. Redemption was the grand point to which God turned. Therefore the Son was thus sent and come “to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye [the Gentiles, who had not been under the law] are sons” &c. (Gal. 4:4-6).

Turning to the higher and larger sphere of Colossians, we hear the same truth. In the Son of God's love we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.” Is this His highest title? Is this His Divine glory? No; but founded upon it. He is the first-born of every creature, not because He partook of flesh, nor because He was the holy Man Who triumphed over all the consequences of the first Adam's sin, and conquered him that led the first man captive at his will: in a word, not because He was here below, be it the most faithful and glorious, but because He was the Creator. He is the first-born of every creature, for by (or, in virtue of) Him were all things created. Here is His right to the supremacy in question. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created through him, and for him: he is before all things, and by (or, in virtue of) him all things consist” (Col. 1:16, 17).

His primacy over all creation flows from His Divine creative power. He asserts it as man; but His title flows from another and higher source. But He is more than first-born of all creation. “He is head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead.” This, as we have seen, is the glory especially dwelt on in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Sin was here below. Man, who ought to have been the first, was the lowest morally; and creation itself, by reason of him, was steeped in the bondage of corruption. And those whom God was about to bring into the church, what were they? Alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works. Hence, though the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, though all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, even this could not meet the evil and misery of man, nor the holiness and the heart of God. The light of God was there, His love was there; in Him was life, and the Life was the light of men. Alas! it was manifest that the Jews, that all, were irreparably blind, yea, dead.

“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 hath done, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father” (John 15:22-24).

What was to be done? “Verily, verily,” saith the Lord, “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” His death could alone deliver. But this was ever before the soul of our blessed Master. “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?” “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood” (1 John 5). Hence in the Epistle to the Colossians, chap 1:20-22, we read “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens. And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now did he reconcile, in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight.”

The church is reconciled even now. To the living members of Christ it can be said, “You did he reconcile.” Creation is not so yet, though the blood of the cross is shed on which the reconciliation is grounded; it will be so in the fullness of the seasons.

At present no such administration takes place, though we here learn God's purpose that it shall. Christ is, no doubt, head of angels, of Jews, of men, of creation. But is He exercising these rights? Now it is of the administration when the periods are ripe that our verses speak. But none of these things are being yet gathered. On the contrary, there is yet to be a deeper crisis of rebellion than ever. It is now the time when all things are severed from Christ, or, if gathered, gathered only in the ruin and the wretchedness which the guile and power of Satan have introduced. It is also the time of another gathering, the gathering of the joint-heirs who shall be glorified with Christ. But this is the gathering of Eph. 2, not of Eph. 1. It is the gathering of the members of His body, not of the subjects of His rule.

Some, I know, have conceived that by “all things in heaven and earth” is meant the church. But first of all the expression “all things,” etc., forbids the thought. The church never was and never will be “all things.” And though now the calling is being effected on earth, it is not a gathering there, but out of it; and, even when complete, it is in heaven; whereas the gathering in Eph. 1:10 is a gathering, at the same time, of all things that are in the heavens and that are on the earth under the headship of Christ. Again, not only is the church an elect body, but in verse 11 we have members of it referred to as an additional thing to the heading up all things in Christ, “in whom also we obtained” etc. Further, in verse 22 we have “all things” again spoken of as put by God under Christ's feet, Who is given as head over all things to the church; which therefore, far from being merged in all things, enjoys and shares His supremacy, as His body and glorious bride.

This is entirely confirmed by the verses immediately before and after verse 10: in the one case where the mystery of God's will is made known touching all things in heaven and on earth; and in the other, because we are spoken of as having the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance. Such is what we have in the mean time: not the possession which comes at the fullness of the seasons and not before, but the Spirit meanwhile, as the earnest until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. For when that fullness arrives, it will be glory, His glory, and not as now the dealings and riches of His grace. The Lord hasten that glorious day!

Chapter 16

Are the Newman Street Teachers (Catholic Apostolic) Sent of God? 1

It is the character of heresy always to conceal itself, to cover the plain statement of the doctrine which forms its basis, or to misdirect the attention, so that the evil really introduced by the heresy may not be apparent. Heresy is not merely error; it is the power of error in seducing men's minds from the plain truth of the Spirit of God, so as to rest in, and be guided by, something besides the gospel.

The attention of many has been directed very much latterly, first to very large hopes, and then to assertion of the restoration of gifts to the church.

The destitute state of the church of God naturally gives great importance to such hopes in the eyes of those who, by Divine grace and the leading of the Spirit, are really interested as Christians in the condition of the church of God. And there are none, whose eyes are turned much upon the Lord, who do not more or less feel its need and troubled state.

The hopes press upon the mind; and they are naturally also much associated with the expectation of judgment, or at least liability to it, on the part of those whose lamps are not trimmed and their vessels full of oil. Under such circumstances the assertion, that persons are sent by God to announce that the gifts and presence of the Spirit are restored to the church, naturally awakens curiosity or interest.

But the doctrines connected with the assertion are little known, and not put forward so as to awaken the attention of those to whom the announcement of the restoration is made; while the responsibility of attending to the direct message from God is pressed strongly. Hence the conscience, not well informed, may be easily dismayed at the thought of not listening to God thus interfering in mercy, and at the judgments which will be the portion of those who refuse to hear.

But the first question is, before we listen, “Is it God that is speaking?” It is as awful and fatal an error to take that to be God speaking which is not, as to refuse to hear when He does speak.

When once we have taken it for granted that it is God who is speaking, then whatever is said we must implicitly receive. Judgment is gone; all investigation by the word of the truth of what is said ceases. We must follow implicitly everything without further inquiry. It becomes therefore a very important inquiry, Is it God who is speaking? This indeed would be a very anxious question, but that He has spoken already, and we have His word. Thus therefore I have the opportunity of trying everything that is asserted to be of God by that which I know to be of God. For the believer has many blessed truths indelibly printed on his mind by grace and the power of God's Spirit; yea, wrought into the framework of the new life, by which, if once touched, he knows that the truth upon which his soul infallibly rests is touched also.

Now I said that the doctrines with which the promises and gifts are identified are little known, and little brought forward into light. I shall state some of them; and then Christians may take the word

and their own experience (by which I mean God's truth known in their souls), to see how what is here alleged to be of God, and what they know to be of God, agree. If they find it not to agree with God's word, with the known truth of God, then they can say at once, “It is not of God; and I have done with it.” The whole question is settled.

There is another simple way of determining it. And this is, if any one thing has been stated by that which we are told is the voice of God in the church which has not come to pass, or has been falsified by the event—as prophecy, not merely a threatening of judgment averted by repentance, but a distinct prophecy which has proved untrue—we can at once pronounce it not to be the testimony of God, and we have done with it as no true light.

Thus Jehovah says, “If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet,” &c. (Deut. 13:1-3).

Because God had already claimed their allegiance as the true and only God, this could not be surrendered, whatever happened. It was a trial of allegiance to Him. So in the New Testament, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8, 9). For God had already revealed the true gospel. Now mark, if we do not know that, and what He has revealed about it, so as to have a means of judging anything else by it, we can have no hope, no knowledge, no expectation about the church at all. It is our sure knowledge of the truth of God's word that gives us any expectation about the church at all; so that those who make these promises to the church must admit this, and be content to be always tried by it, or not to be received at all.

They say, “Receive the testimony; come not judging, but willing to hear: God is speaking, and you must hear; and then you will receive light upon the scripture. What you have read and understood of it hitherto has been in the flesh.” If once I do this, I must then receive everything they say; for I admit that God says it. Take care of this. But the scriptures which they use to make me receive them are not the only scriptures I have read, nor the only ones which God's Spirit enables me to understand, nor the only ones sealed to my soul by His power; nor can they say these are the only ones you are to use. If I have read the scriptures without understanding them, whence my scriptural hope of the gifts? Is that the only scripture a Christian has understood? Well then, if not, I must hold to the rest too, and judge what is alleged to be of God by these known scriptures. One guard in the perilous times is, “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned;” the other is, “that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Nor are extraordinary gifts ever alleged as any guide at all. See 2 Tim. 3. We know that they will accompany evil. [See 2 Thess. 2:9, and Rev. 13:13-15.]

If I have been taught any of the scriptures of the Lord, then I am bound to judge that which the spirit they profess to give heed to has said, by every part of scripture which I have been so taught, by whatever scripture I know; or I despise the known word and guardianship of the Lord—I am departing from Him. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 17

Are the Newman Street Teachers (Catholic Apostolic) Sent of God? 2

The other mark I gave, besides false doctrine, was false prophecy.

“And if thou say in thy heart, how shall we know the word which Jehovah hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken; but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:21, 22).

So that, if the thing spoken follow not, Jehovah hath not spoken: we are not to be afraid. And if a sign or a wonder follow, but we are called to do or give heed to anything contrary to the revealed will and knowledge of God, we are to pay no attention to it whatever, not if it were an angel from heaven, or an apostle himself.

Let me make another remark connected with this subject. Howsoever truly we may be Christians, and whatever attainments we may have made, or gifts we may possess, Satan can use our errors in conduct—what can we do in the flesh?—to only and worse purpose than if we were not Christians at all. “Before that certain came from James, [Peter] did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” The only effect of the eminence of Peter and the influence which he had was, to enable his flesh to do more mischief when he acted in it. Dissembling Peter carried away all the Jews and Barnabas with his dissimulation. So when the flesh acts thus in a saint, though in the form perhaps of holiness, it carries away all those over whom the saint has acquired influence by his spiritual walk before. But this is not of God, but a delusion of the enemy. Paul withstood him to the face.

Now let us remember well the assertion of God's authority, upon which the present claim to be heard is founded. It is not merely particular things which the Newman Street teachers may say that are in question; their claim to be heard is the appointment and mission by the spirit which speaks in Newman Street. We are therefore to learn from them, as having authority to teach from God, which they allege that spirit to be. Now, I say again, this would be an alarming thing, if we had not already got what we know to be the word of God; and then the simple inquiry is, Do this spirit and it agree? If not, we must repudiate at once the whole thing as not of God. Blessed be our God, Who has given us His own word to try it by.

Now the doctrine sanctioned by the spirit, alleged to have sent these missionaries here, is that our blessed Lord's human nature was sinful human nature. They are now very guarded in their statements; but they have said quite enough in their most guarded statements to make one acquainted with the subject perfectly aware of their real doctrine. They refuse now to say more, on being asked, than that “Christ was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” adding, that the last clause was not meant to qualify the first. But this is the whole question. The absence

of sin did not qualify or characterize the temptations of Christ! In plain words, there was sin mixed with His temptations! for the Lord, they say, does not qualify the statement of His temptations by the latter clause, “yet without sin.”

They might have acknowledged it more unequivocally; they could not really have stated it more plainly. We say, scripture adds this qualification, this difference, in the temptations of the Lord; namely, that they were “without sin.” There was no sin mixed with them: in our case, there is continually. They say, there is no such qualification of the temptation in the sentence; it is hard then to say what the latter clause is for. If they say that it did not issue in sin in Him, then I get their mind plainly; there is no qualification as to the temptation itself. We know that our temptations are connected with sin; and according to them there is no qualification in the passage before us! Observe, “sin” is the thing in question. It is admitted on all hands, that it never produced as a fruit actual sin in the Lord. The point in which there was no difference in the temptation then is, that there was sin in the nature—sin in the human nature of Christ!

Let us see the matter stated a little more plainly by one more open and undisguised, believing it doubtless to be truth. These are the statements of Mr. Irvine, appointed by the spirit by whose authority these persons teach, the angel of the church from whence they come, and the teacher and expounder of doctrine there.

“If then Christ was made under the law, He must have been made by His human nature liable to, yea, inclined to, all those things which the law interdicted.”

“Conceive every variety of human passion, every variety of human affection, every variety of human error, every variety of human wickedness which hath ever been realized, inherent in the humanity and combined against the holiness of Him, who was not only a man but the Son of Man, the heir of all the infirmities which man entaileth upon his children.”

“If His human nature differed by however so little from ours in its alienation and guiltiness, then the work of reducing it into eternal harmony with God hath no bearing whatever upon our nature, with which it is not the same.”

“Was He conscious, then, to the motions of the flesh and of the fleshly mind? In so far as any regenerate man, when under the operation of the Holy Ghost, is conscious of them. I hold it to be the surrender of the whole question to say, that He was not conscious of, engaged with, and troubled by, every evil disposition which inhereth in the fallen manhood, which overpowereth every man that is not born of God, which overpowered not Christ, only because He was born or generated of God.”

“Manhood, after the fall, broke out into sins of every name and aggravation, corrupt to the very heart's core, and from the center of its inmost will sending out streams black as hell. This is the human nature which every man is clothed upon withal, which the Son of Man was clothed upon withal—bristling strong and thick with sin, like the hairs upon a porcupine.” “I stand forth and say, that the teeming fountain of the heart's vileness was opened on him, and the Augean stable of human wickedness was given to Him to cleanse, and the furious wild beasts of human passions were given to Him to tame. This, this is the horrible pit and the miry clay out of which He was brought.”

Now, take notice in passing, that reconciliation, in this view, is not reconciling sinners at all, but His own sinful nature, “reducing it into eternal harmony with God;” and that incarnation is being clothed upon with human nature. He was clothed with a nature bristling with sin; and so separate then was His nature from His person, His clothing from Himself, that what was in His nature was not in Him. Thus we see the way this view affects atonement and incarnation also.

But, again, Mr. Irving says, “I hold it to be most orthodox, and of the substance and essence of the orthodox faith, to hold that Christ could say, until His resurrection, not I, but sin that tempteth Me in My flesh, just as after the resurrection He could say, I am separate from sinners. And, moreover, I believe that the only difference between His body of humiliation and His body of resurrection is in this very thing, that sin inhered in His human nature, making it mortal and corruptible till that very time that He rose from the dead.”

Many such passages might be quoted, but these will suffice. I add, however, a general one. It is an “heretical doctrine, that Christ's generation was something more than the implantation of that Holy-Ghost-life in the members of His human nature which is implanted in us by regeneration.”

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 18

Are the Newman Street Teachers (Catholic Apostolic) Sent of God? 3

Now many of Mr. Irving's followers and associates have used stronger and worse expressions than these; but I do not quote them.

It is stated that the spirit rebuked him for using unguarded expressions. This may be; we reason not about expressions but about a fundamental doctrine. Perhaps some may repudiate this, where there is the professed unity of the Spirit.

It is also stated that these things were stated before the spirit was given. Now, though they were held and taught subsequently too, it is most material to see that they were taught previously; because the spirit came amongst them who taught them as the witness and sanction of the doctrine taught (just as the Holy Ghost came down as the witness of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ). And Mr. Irving honestly and expressly states, that the spirit's coming was the consequence of this doctrine, and that until this doctrine it had nothing to witness to.

This too was yet more expressly shown when Mr. Baxter left the body and wrote to Mr. Irving, stating his error in saying that the law of sin was in Christ's flesh. Mr. Irving maintained his opinions, and told him that the spirit came upon Miss E. C. declaring that Baxter had been snared by departing from the word and the testimony; that Mr. Irving had maintained the truth, and the Lord was well pleased with him for it. This was followed by another utterance from Mrs. C. and a second from Miss E. C. to the same purpose. Thus, on the point being raised, whether the law of sin was in Christ's flesh or not, the spirit thrice confirmed Mr. Irving's teaching on the subject. I do not say justified his expressions, but “confirmed his doctrine” —his doctrine previously taught. What this is, we have sufficiently seen. Is this spirit then, which has declared that Mr. Irving maintained the truth on these points, a spirit of truth? is it of God?

Mr. Irving has taught that Christ was conscious of every evil disposition which inheres in the fallen manhood; that sin inhered in the human nature; and that Christ's work in the flesh was reducing a nature, in no way different from ours in alienation and guiltiness, into eternal harmony with God.

After the gifts came, in a work entitled, “Judgment on Decisions of the General Assembly,” he says, “There is no other work of the Son in the flesh but this, that He took our nature in its fallen state, and redeemed it into the immortal state.”

“It was manhood bristling strong with sin.” To say the law of sin was not in the flesh in Jesus, was departing from “the word and the testimony,” this spirit declared. Now the scripture says, “He knew no sin” — “was made sin for us,” but knew no sin. Either therefore evil dispositions in our nature are not sin, or He was conscious of sin; for He was, they say, conscious of every evil disposition. The scripture says (that is, God has said), “In him is no sin.”

This spirit has sanctioned the doctrine that sin was inherent in His nature.

This spirit has sanctioned the doctrine that sin tempted Him in the flesh.

Scripture says, “He was in all points tempted in the likeness [of our nature] except sin.”

I cannot therefore believe this to be of God; for it contradicts what God has said, what the Spirit of God bears witness to me that God has said.

It was a “holy thing that was born” of the Virgin Mary; and I am “shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Here is therefore all the difference.

They say, if His nature differed however little in alienation and guiltiness from ours, He did nothing for reducing it into eternal harmony with God,

I have to say, “Cleanse my heart:” was Christ's heart unclean? They say the teeming fountain of the heart's vileness was opened on Him. What do they mean opened on Him? Was not His heart in Him? I read, “from within, out of the heart.” Was vileness then in Him—the heart's vileness? The Lord pardon me for using such a word. Is this the truth of God? If we receive this spirit, we must say This is maintaining truth, for it says it is; or reject this, and the spirit, and all the authority, all the promises, and all the assumptions and terrors of them sent by it, as not of God.

After this spirit was amongst them, and the General Assembly had condemned their sentiments, Mr. Irving says, “The duty, which the Christian people owe to their ministers who in the General Assembly did give their condemnation of this doctrine by which we hold the Head, is in their several parishes to go boldly in, and ask them to their face if they believe that Christ came in the flesh, and had the law of the flesh, and the temptations of flesh to struggle with and overcome; and if they confess not to this doctrine, to denounce them as denying the Lord that bought them, as wolves in sheep's clothing.”

Nothing can be clearer, then, than that the spirit which has sent the Newman Street teachers to this country has sanctioned, and is identified with, a doctrine which declares sin to have been in the nature of Christ. The teachers here, in attempting to guard their expressions, have made the matter worse. They have refused to say sin was in the nature of Christ, or use their own words on the subject. But since thus on their guard (for they were much plainer at first), they have fixed upon the statement that “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” and that the last clause is not meant to qualify the first. Now this makes it not merely dead and dormant in the nature, which was the way the doctrine used to be defended, but connected with temptation that is acted upon, and made a matter of consciousness by the temptation, so that we should have sympathy in its actings in us, in its being acted upon so as to be felt by us when we are so tempted. If this be not putting sin into Christ, I know not what is. It must at least be a question of sympathy in our own thoughts, and “the thought of foolishness is sin.”

In a word, sin dwells in Him, that is, the way it is in us, the way it is connected with our temptations, so as to be acted upon by our temptations I Their effort at securing themselves has made the matter much clearer and much worse. Sin was not only dead but active in Him: for so it is, however repressed, when temptation reaches it. It is in vain their saying they do not mean to charge sin upon Christ. The scripture calls that sin, and the believer knows it to be such (it is a distinguishing point of a believer) and therefore Christ must have been conscious of sin, and this is everything. I know that some of them would say that it is not sin till acquiesced in and acted on. This admits its

being such then, and what they mean. As to its being sin, we are directly at issue. Paul has stated it to be such, the believer knows it to be such; he would not be grieved by, and hate it, were it not. Was this in Christ?

We thus see the first mark of the false assumption of prophecy shown, if any signs or wonders come to pass; false doctrine, the undermining the foundation of Christianity, which they do by the way they meddle with the person of the Lord Jesus.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 19

Are the Newman Street Teachers (Catholic Apostolic) Sent of God? 4

The next mark was, if anything was spoken, and the thing came not to pass, the prophet had spoken presumptuously: they were not to be afraid of him.

Now multiplied prophecies have been made by the spirit that is amongst these persons, which have proved false: not merely threatening of judgments, averted by repentance, to which they have been endeavored to be compared; but prophecies of blessings and establishment of the church, and of positive definite facts about people, which have never taken place.

First, it was prophesied that, at the end of three years and a half from the beginning of the prophecy of the witnesses, Satan should take to himself the sovereignty, and stand forth in all hideous power in the person of one man, to receive the worship of all the earth. The person who should be so energized of Satan, and be set up as his Christ, was at a subsequent period declared to be young Napoleon.

At the time this latter point was prophesied, it was declared that within three years and a half, the saints would be caught up to the Lord, and the earth wholly given up to the days of vengeance.

The power came upon another at the same time, confirming the rapture of the saints within three years and a half.

Young Napoleon is dead some time.

It is now said, that the prophecy made him only a type of the man of sin. This is not the statement of those concerned in the prophecy. But, observe, it admits the prophecy, and the responsibility of those so excusing it for it, as coming from the spirit which they own and are sent by. If it were true, which it is not, from the manifest absurdity of making him a type, the explanation is worse or as bad as the thing excused. For young Napoleon, instead of being a type of hideous power in the person of one man to receive worship, died a boy of nineteen, brought up in quietude and retirement, under the care and superintendence of his grandfather in Austria; and was a type of nothing at all. It might do very well for a prophecy of what he was to be after, but to make him a type of it then was ridiculous.

Again, it was distinctly revealed in the power, and, says one who spoke in it, “I was made to utter, that the American Indians were the lost ten tribes, and that they should within the three years and a half, appointed for the spiritual ministry, be gathered back into their own land, and be settled there before the days of vengeance set in; that the chief who was now [then] in London, was a chosen vessel of the Lord to lead them back; that he should be endowed with power from on high, in all signs and mighty wonders, and should lead them back, though in unbelief—that he would receive this power here, and be speedily sent forth to them.

“On another evening, I was made in a most triumphant chant to address him as the vessel chosen of God, and to be endowed of God for the bringing back of his brethren. The chief went away an unbeliever in the work, and none of the powers have been manifested.” Now, this also they attempt to explain by news from America, that two missionaries of theirs have since been in America; that Paul Jones (the name of the American) received them, allowed them to preach to the tribe, and says, searching the records of their tribe, he believes they are the ten tribes; but what is there here of the fulfillment of the prophecy? But we must observe, there is the admission of the prophecy having been so uttered as stated.

I must now give a somewhat longer account of remarkable promises made, which, though waited for, never came.

The failure was afterward explained, and the promise renewed by the spirit itself, and failed again; and then an explanation and direction given, which contradicted the express testimony of the previous utterance.

The great subject of the hopes raised, now quite otherwise stated amongst them, was, that the baptism by fire was to be given, entirely burning out sin; and the gifts of the Holy Ghost were to follow, and miracles to be performed; and that this belonged to a period of three years and a half of ministry, the last ministry on the earth; at the end of which England was to be desolate, the saints would be caught up to the Lord, and the earth wholly given up to the days of vengeance within three years and a half; and the spiritual ministry was to commence from a given Sunday then next ensuing, and mentioned in one of the testimonies or utterances of the spirit. Subsequently to the declaration of the rapture of the saints in their three years and a half (which was itself rather inconsistent with a declaration that the baptism and gifts were reserved for the three years and a half's ministry), there were utterances telling them to enlarge their hearts, lest, through unbelief, they should stumble at the greatness of the favor. A few days afterward was an utterance, declaring that the Lord had set an individual apart for himself; that from the day that he was called to the spiritual ministry, as mentioned above, he was to count forty days; that this was now well-nigh expired; that, for these forty days, it was appointed he should be tried; that the Lord had tried him, and found him faithful; and, having now proved in him the first sign of an apostle, ‘patience,' he would give to him the fullness of them, in the gifts of ‘signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds; ' that the Lord had called him to be an apostle, and by the laying on of his hands, and the hands of the other apostles whom the Lord should call, should the baptism by fire be bestowed. On the fortieth day power should be given, the sick should be healed, the deaf should hear, the dead should be restored. Wednesday was the fortieth day. There was nothing particular on Tuesday; but on Wednesday a prophecy of how much the endowments of the apostles to be sent forth would exceed the endowments given to the twelve apostles. The day passed over, without any manifestation of the power which had been foretold.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 20

Are the Newman Street Teachers (Catholic Apostolic) Sent of God? 5

However, there were still repeated utterances of the prophecies as to the three years and a half; and the decree of the Lord was pronounced, that within three years and a half the land should be desolate.

It was fully declared also, that the spiritual church could not be fully constituted until the full powers of an apostle were given; and they were unceasing in expectation of them, the day named having passed. It was at this period the prophecy as to the American Indians was given.

However, the designated apostle returned to the country.

There it was declared to him by the spirit, that the power was not given on the fortieth day, because the church (i.e. Mr. Irving's church) in London had failed in love towards the visible church, which God had cast off. Then followed from the spirit an emphatic declaration, that, the day after the morrow, the designated individual and his wife would both be baptized with fire—the Lord joining himself to His desolate church again, by bringing forth visibly a spiritual church, with spiritual ordinances in fullness of power and gifts, &c.

The day named arrived; and in the evening an utterance in power, “Kneel down, and receive the baptism by fire.” They knelt down, lifting up prayer to God continually. Nothing, however, ensued. For six weeks he continued unshakenly to seek for it in vain. Mr. Irving wrote, saying how anxiously they looked to his return with the full powers of an apostle.

A little after, Mr. Irving again wrote, saying one of the prophetesses in London rebuked him for speaking of the time, so repeatedly put forth by the utterance in the person designated apostle—declaring the utterance to be true about it, but containing a mystery, and that the day was not known. Now, this was important, because it was the recognition (by the prophetic spirit amongst them) of the spirit which in this person had declared so many things which entirely failed. And this prophetess had been owned by the others, and one began a prophecy, and another took it up and finished it. There was another important circumstance—there was rebuke for repeating the time prophesied as a mysterious one. Now, it had been constantly explained and enforced by the spirit, and more than once the power had enjoined ministers to preach it in the flesh, though they had no gifts. Here, then, was contradiction—contradiction at a critical moment, to save the prophecy which had failed of accomplishment—the explanation and sanction by the spirit in the others attaching it, as they all themselves exultingly had done, to the whole work, and giving us a direct and unequivocal instance of a promise and prophecy failing entirely, and laboriously sought to be escaped from.

They have since, by utterance, appointed an apostle without any power at all, who ordains without any pretense of signs accompanying the ordination. I am informed that the number of apostles is now six [eventually twelve].

Let any one simply weigh the prophecies acknowledged hereby the spirit still amongst them, and by whose authority these persons come, and their entire failure, and say, “Is this the spirit whose authority we are to receive?” They attempted to explain all these prophecies about apostolic power, and the baptism by fire, by the reform bill being forty days in parliament! and its being forty years since the French Revolution! so any one may see by consulting “The Morning Watch;” and these are the persons whom we are to receive, as alone having the Spirit!

Again, one who had spoken in power amongst them was declared by the two chief prophetesses to speak by an evil spirit: but his call to the spiritual ministry had been declared by another in power, the spirit in whom had been recognized by the spirit in these same prophetesses.

Again a prophetess (whose speaking one of the above prophetesses had been made to declare in power ought to be heard, and to whom the individual so often spoken of as an apostle had spoken in power as a prophetess, and was again recognized as speaking of the Lord, and who was the first who spoke in power in the congregation at Mr. Irving's) was by the same two prophetesses charged with feigning utterances; and they pronounced in power the whole work to be of the flesh, and not of the Lord; and it was she also who had begun prophecies which these other two prophetesses had finished, and finished what they began.

I need add no more upon this head, though I could add a great deal more of announcements unfulfilled, but these are sufficient, and sufficient to connect all thus speaking together. It is well known that the great body of the work first received in Scotland as of the Lord, is by themselves pronounced to be of Satan; so that the great body of them in Scotland either entirely reject the whole matter, or decline receiving the Newman Street ordinances and authority.

I myself heard a person declare as God in the first person, not “Thus saith the Lord,” but, “I will lay on no greater burden,” and encourage to the work of a pastor a person, who, at that time, fully received it, and was designated and sent down as pastor to the place, by the spirit in Newman Street, and so continued for some time; who afterward renounced the whole thing entirely, judging it in his opinion to be a positively evil work. This was neither in Scotland, nor was it Mr. Baxter. And in that neighborhood numbers came under the influence, and made all manner of noises, animal noises, and behaved in a way too painful to go into the detail of. I know well that those who maintain the work would say, that this was Satan mixing himself with it; but I confess (though I find Satan opposing the work of the Holy Ghost in the early days), I do not find it an occasion of his mixing himself up so intimately with it, as even on their own allegation (being obliged to it by what was said) to say, that he spoke by the mouth of one of their own still recognized prophets. This is a strange way of giving us security; for how can I tell that the other spirit, which was denouncing that as Satan, was not himself speaking by an evil spirit? It had moreover been expressly declared in power, that such a thing would never be allowed.

I have now stated adequate facts on the second head, on which we are taught to reject persons coming with the assumption of God's authority, which, as said, one could abundantly multiply, but I cannot but think it needless.

It is from all this that those are sent who claim to be the only persons that come with authority directly from God, which they allege all this to be, to instruct, and inform, and to build up the church, furnished with this same spirit. Their assertions, however, on the subject now are entirely

at variance with their promises then. The spiritual ministry was fixed to begin on a given Sunday, and service was carried on in a church in England (by the individual so stating it) in the power for the greatest part. This ministry was to be for three years and a half; and then the land was to be given up to desolation, and the earth indeed to vengeance, and Satan to take all the power in one man. And the baptism by fire was to be given, as the introduction to ushering in of the apostolic gifts, by which, and their consequences, this ministry was thus powerfully to be carried on. The gifts and power of the ministry were to follow the baptism by fire. The testimonies as to the period were repeated.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 21

Are the Newman Street Teachers (Catholic Apostolic) Sent of God? 6

WE have already seen that the promise of the baptism by which the ministry was to be rendered so effectual (the period of which had already commenced) failed; but this is not the point I dwell on now. Considerably the greater part of the three years and a half of spiritual ministry are now elapsed; and the baptism by fire, instead of being an introduction to the power of the ministry, is now to be a perfecting of the body called out to be the full corn in the ear, whereupon they are, when all perfected, to be caught up to the Lord: so that not only did the prophecy fail, but the promises themselves are quite different from what they originally were.

And here let me add a contradiction in the promises even now made.

One statement they make is, that they are not at present, but to be, as a body, the full corn in the ear. First, the seed sown originally, then the long stalk of apostasy, and then, at last—which is themselves—the full corn in the ear (like the seed, Christ), for whom this baptism by fire is reserved. And when thus ripe, immediately He putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come, so that it is an awful and even fatal delusion to reject them.

Now, they also state that they are the 144,000 mentioned in Rev. 14 redeemed from the earth to sing a new song, which nobody else could learn but they; that they will not be in the judgments and the trouble under Antichrist and the beast; but that others will be saved through all these judgments and be in the harvest.

Now, I do not agree in either interpretation, but they cannot both be true. The full ear of corn cannot be ripe, and immediately the sickle be put in because the harvest is come, and also they be entirely excepted from it, and their distinction be that they will not be in the harvest at all. And it is to be observed, that between the 144,000 and the harvest, instead of immediately, there is the everlasting gospel to every nation, and people, and tongue, and language—another angel of Babylon fallen—another with warning against worshipping the beast—another of special blessing for the dead dying in the Lord—and then, after all this, the harvest, which, according to the other interpretation, was come on the ripening of them, who, on this interpretation, are the 144,000 who have been out of the way so long before.

It may be said of them who teach these things they may err; they do not say they are infallible, though the spirit that sends them is. Of its teaching we have spoken. But these are the promises, and expectations, and interpretations, by which they induce people to hear them, as especially sent by God; and their promises and expectations are themselves contradictory to one another. Who then can rely on them?

If it be asked, how then do Christians come to be deceived? I answer, by departing from the word. Beautiful things are said by these people, very attractive expressions and persuasive teaching: people are not aware of the things behind, Men perhaps of strong reasoning powers, addressed to

persons not humbly and settledly taught and grounded in scripture, and persons impressed at the time, and not comparing what is said at different times, and disobediently receiving the spirit without trying it.

These great promises are held out, and solemn warnings and threatenings, if it be not received, given; and people are told they are rejecting God. Departure from the word, and want of humility and spirituality, have been the occasion, as far as I have seen, of persons who, we had trusted, were Christians, falling into it.

The very teachers may be often unaware of the extent the system goes to. The writer of this knows, that those thoroughly initiated into the system have mocked at the doctrine and idea of substitution in Christ's sacrifice. It does not follow that all are brought to this pitch, though one taught of God, and having his senses exercised to discern good and evil will most clearly see it involved in their very first principles. I will state it in the language in which Mr. Irving himself taught it, without saying that the teachers here, at any rate, are involved so deeply in it. The consequence is obvious on the doctrine of the sinful human nature; but I state it, to show it is no arbitrary charging a consequence not drawn by others. Mr. Irving says, “The man who will put a fiction, whether legal or theological, a make-believe, into his idea of God, I have done with: he who will make God consider a person that which he is not, and act towards him as that which he is not, I have done with. Either Christ was in the condition of the sinner, was in that form of being towards which it is God's eternal law to act as he acted towards Christ, or he is not. If he was, then the point at issue is ceded; for that is what I am contending for. If he was not, and God treated him as if he had been so; if that is the meaning of their imputation or substitution, or by whatever name they call it, away with it from my theology forever.” And again, “It is no reconciliation of individuals, but a reconciliation of human nature. It is not thine, it is not mine, it is not Christ's, but it is the common unity of our being.”

And I must add, however I may indulge a hope that one of the teachers here may not be so deeply, as being more recently, involved in the doctrines of Newman Street, that he did not seek to join himself to this party, till he had learned somewhere to use the language of “the fiction of imputed righteousness;” and had published a tract, the object of which was to show that the Spirit never dwelt in us individually; and that, therefore, we had only to look for it according to the manner it was in Newman Street.

It may be well to add, that cases similar to the one before us, have occurred before, specially about 700 years ago, in which were tongues, prophecies, and more wonders than even now; but the prophecies failing in like manner; reasons given for the non-fulfillment of signs, the very opposite of all their hopes and prophecies taking place, and the whole thing came to an end; many Christians misled by it, and even more prayer, power, preaching, apparent piety, and good conduct, accompanying it. It closed (though not given up by all, for reasons for the failure were published), by a positive testimony that a given person would be raised from the dead on such a-day. They went in full expectation of it, but the dead man was not raised at all. But, while it lasted, the influence was wider and more powerful than this has been; and the language, warnings, threats, and promises, just the very ditto of those now used.

It came to nothing. Here I close the ground on which a simple mind will reject it. I add a few observations only, not meaning now to discuss the whole subject. It seems to me there are two

great motives which the evil one could have in misleading us in such a manner—first, to discredit the testimony concerning the coming of the Lord, which he cannot like, for it ends all his present power; and, secondly, to frighten the saints from looking continually for the Spirit of God, believing that He dwells in and amongst them, for fear of such consequences, or alarmed by such circumstances as these. If he did either of these, he gains great advantage over the saints. But neither rests on their testimony, but on the word of God: and two cautions I would give as to this. We find terrifying by the near approach of the day of the Lord to be part of the craft of the enemy, in 2 Thess. 2; and one way of its being done was “by spirit.” It was presented in a way calculated to trouble and confuse them.

The Spirit of the Lord never makes it the subject of terror to Christian saints, but of great joy and comfort to them—telling them it shall not overtake them as a thief—as walking in patience, separate from evil, it is the day of their comfort, and joy, and gladness, the time of their rest, when their conflicts will be over, and they will enter into the joy of their Lord, the day when they will see Christ with joy. This is a marked difference. Whenever the day of the Lord as instant and impending is brought to terrify a Christian, give no heed to that spirit or teacher. The undoubted apostle beseeches us not. And now, observe, how or by what does he beseech us? Is it by the promise of an extraordinary presence or gift, or baptism of the Spirit which is to secure us? Not at all. He beseeches them “by the coming of the Lord, and our gathering together unto him,” by which we shall be not in the day as a day of terror, but up above with Him, and appearing with Him.

Not a word about the special and extraordinary or restored presence of the Spirit; but there is of signs and wonders accompanying evil, from which they were entirely secure, and only they who had received the love of the truth—chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. Nor is there in any part of the New Testament any reference to any restored or extraordinary presence of the Spirit, as the security of the saints in the latter day. All the Newman Street promises, and the expectations they hold out, are founded on the Spirit's being restored to the church. This is a fallacious promise, there being none such; but it is accompanied with a denial, as indeed the terms and declared hopes and gifts express, that the Comforter is with us, and abideth in us, as given to the church.

In order to receive their promises of its being restored, we must set out with a denial that He dwells with us and in us. Now, the express promise of the Lord, as contrasted with His personal stay upon earth was, that it should abide with us forever. We must, therefore, deny the Holy Spirit, and the promise, and word of God, if we take their promise of its restoration. If we deny that we have the Spirit, we cannot expect to be kept from the deceits of the enemy. But this is not all; for it makes God a liar, Who says, “abideth forever,” and turns our unfaithfulness in using the gift (which we have, indeed, with shame to acknowledge) into a charge of unfaithfulness in God, in holding to His word, “abide with you forever.” “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

Thus, while it turns away the mind to something as a hope, even the gift and baptism of the Spirit (which is not what the apostle does, but the coming of the Lord, as that which shall take us out of the day), it leads us, in giving us this false hope, to deny it as a present reality; thus leading us to deny the very Spirit it professes to give, while the word of God, which professed He should “abide forever,” is made naught of. How cunningly does the enemy weave his web! To supply the deficiency of New Testament promise, new and fanciful interpretations of the Old are introduced,

and the statements of what the church was in the apostle's time produced, to show (but most falsely, I believe) what it must be now. As example of the former I bring this Isa. 40 ver. 1, is the restoration of the apostles now; ver. 3 of Prophets; ver. 9 of Evangelists; ver. 11 of Pastors. As to the latter, I would refer to Rom. 11:22. “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: to them which fell, severity; but toward thee (i.e. the Gentiles taking the place of the Jewish branches), goodness if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” This does not look like a promise of restoration.

As to the figure, baptism of the Holy Ghost, I apprehend it rather would show that it could be but once to the church, which took place, we know, at the day of Pentecost. Any extraordinary visitation after the Jews are brought back, I do not enter upon here, as not my subject; I mean not to deny this, but this is not the place for it.

I will only add, further, that the apostle Paul, or the Spirit of God, speaking of the perilous times in the last days, gives also as the security, continuing in the things learned, and the scriptures able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. So to the elders from Ephesus, He commends them to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, &c. So Peter, in an Epistle treating of apostasy, writes, that they may have these things always in remembrance. So Jude writes, and exhorts to contend for the faith once delivered. In none is any extraordinary restoration of the Spirit adverted to, as the guard or security against delusion; while in John, the actual indwelling of the Spirit in all Christians, and individually, is repeatedly insisted upon as a great distinguishing point against being seduced. Now the spirit amongst them calls knowing what is written, and keeping it in remembrance, knowing it in the flesh; and they deny the actual indwelling of the Spirit, so as that God thereby dwells in us. They upset or deny the securities God has given.

As to the test which they have so frequently applied to try, as they allege, the spirits, it is a mistranslation which, however comparatively immaterial in ordinary times, shows how little they could have been led by the Spirit, when the whole trial of the work rested on this, and they had a mistranslation which affected the whole test in the most material way. “Whosoever confesses [that] Jesus Christ [is] come in the flesh.” Leave out the two marked words and you have the sentence. The apostle, in the Epistle, had been opening out the whole value, power, and import of the Incarnation, and then stated the Spirit given us, as a distinctive means of knowledge that the Lord was abiding in us. But then, says he, aware of the danger, do not believe every spirit—try them; and he then gives various notes of them who are of God, and specially this, to try the spirits, the acknowledging Jesus Christ come in the flesh. Devils owned abundantly that He was come in the flesh, but they never owned Him, which makes an amazing difference in the matter. The government of a country would own that a pretender was landed, but they would not own him. A rebel might own, when he could not help it, that the king was come, but it was another thing to own him: this made a loyal subject.

It is, then, owning Jesus as revealed, as incarnate, and made known by the Spirit of God, not merely owning that He is come. This the Spirit amongst them had not at all done, but quite the contrary. It has sanctioned doctrine injuring the person of Christ: doctrine, part of the statement of which was, that the generation of Christ was nothing more than the implantation of that Holy Ghost-life, in the members of His human nature, which is implanted in us by regeneration. Now, this is just the opposite of the test here given. It militates against the whole truth of the Incarnation.

The language also that Christ was clothed upon with a human nature bristling with sin, like the quills of a porcupine, which, therefore, must either have been distinct from Himself, or sin must have been in Him, again militates against it. And this doctrine it was, Mr. Irving says, which this spirit was sent to witness to, and there was not the subject of its witness till this was taught. So that if this be no true account of the Word made flesh, of Jesus the Son of God incarnate, then does the test subvert the whole thing, the authority of the spirit, not establish it. With them the test became a sanction of the sinful humanity of Christ. This failing—the taking it might prove evil, not good; and accordingly, the test was put by the chief authority in one of their churches in England, and taken fully by one who was afterward proved by them to speak by an evil spirit, and confessed it.

One reference only remains. By the power, the presence of the Spirit is declared to be the security against being in the hour of temptation which shall come on all the world — this restored form of the Spirit, which was to be greater amongst them than the endowments of the twelve apostles. Now, I read thus in the word of God: “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and. no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word and has not denied my name. . . . 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 which dwell upon the earth.” There is not a word about the Spirit, but it is what the Spirit says. It says not great gifts and endowments, but a little strength. It says not of itself—the extraordinary presence of its restored power, but “hast kept my word—hast not denied my name—kept the word of my patience.” Can anything be more opposite to the hopes and promises held out? Here, it is this spirit which promises that it will be the security to those who trust in it in the hour of temptation which shall come on the world; but I read, that keeping the word is the security. See Rev. 3:10.

What then? Keep in communion with the Lord, cleave to Christ in spirit, leaning entirely upon Him. Hold fast by the word. Give no heed to doctrines which would bring Christ in any wise into the state of a sinner, except vicariously, a sinless substitute for us (that, cling to fast). But try the spirit, if need come of it, not by what they who receive them say of them, but by what they, the spirits, have already said and done. And do not receive them till you have ascertained this; for false prophets, perhaps I may say many, are gone out elsewhere, and in a little measure here. You are acting in disobedience if you do not act thus, and therefore cannot expect to be kept; for as to the appearance of the thing, Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. One word more: be not terrified if they say, Take care that you do not reject God. First ascertain if it be God; as to this, I have given you some evidence here. Nor if they say, Take care if it be the Holy Ghost, you do not call it Satan; it must be one or the other—leave them to settle that. Ascertain if it be God, or His truth; and if not, reject it, whatever it be: and be in nothing terrified by them. Simply by the help of God (as bound to do by His word, or you act in direct disobedience to Him), try the spirits by what they have said or done, before you listen to them. Listening first, and. trying after, is no way, if they have already testified to anything. It is not by the spirit directly, which they profess to speak when sent, but that they came by the authority of it. The point to be ascertained is therefore their authority; and this must be seen by what the spirit has said and done, by which they are sent. Look to that, and take and hold fast the word of God already known. J. N. D.

Chapter 22

The Blind and Dumb Demoniac

Matt. 12:22-30

Sometimes demoniacs met the Lord, as in Matt. 8:28; sometimes as here and in chap. 9:32 one was brought. This made no difference to the Savior's gracious power: He cast the demons out. In the case before he was dumb; now it is one blind and dumb, who was healed all the same. “Then was brought to him a demoniac blind and dumb; and he healed him, so that the blind [man] spoke and saw. And all the crowds were amazed and said, Is this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard, they said, This [man] doth not cast out the demons but by Beelzebub, prince of the demons. And knowing their thoughts he said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand. And if I by Beelzebub cast out the demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if by God's Spirit I cast out the demons, then hath come upon you the kingdom of God. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong [man], and plunder his goods, unless first he bind the strong [man], and then he will plunder his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth” (vers. 22-30).

Aggravated as the malady was, it only furnished the fuller occasion for the Lord Jesus. The growing rejection by Israel, and especially by their chiefs, made more clear Who He was, and what they were. It is hard at first to learn that God's people on earth may be slaves of Satan, spiritually as blind and dumb as the demoniac brought to the Lord. But He that healed the man in circumstances so desperate is yet more willing as He is able to deliver from the still deeper and worse captivity through sin and Satan's power.

“All the crowd” were amazed and said timidly, It is not the Son of David, is it? But the Pharisees repeated yet more strongly the deadly slander which they had uttered before (ix. 34), “This man doth not cast out the demons but by Beelzebub, prince of the demons.” It was not unbelief only, but its darker form, when the beneficent power of God cannot be disputed, and is imputed to the evil one as its source. Such is the inevitable lot of such as enjoy religious reputation as orthodox and righteous without living faith. If they encounter Christ, as here, they must either be subject to the testimony given to His person, or attribute the power of God's Spirit He wields to the arch-enemy. The more people know of divine things, the more fatally they sin against the truth if they brazen out in unbelief; for it then takes the shape of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which shall not be forgiven either in this age or in that which is to come.

Here the Lord pronounces the mind of God. Consciously knowing their thoughts He exposes their malicious absurdity. Whether for kingdom, city, or house, to divide against itself is ruin. If Satan therefore casts out Satan, as they said, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand? But as no Jew doubted for a moment its subsisting till Messiah come in power and glory to judge and destroy it, such a plea refutes itself as untenably inconsistent and false. The Lord did not anticipate that glorious day, but was then bearing witness that He is the destined vanquisher of

Satan by this sample of the powers of the age to come. When it comes, Satan will be cast into the abyss, as he will be into the lake of fire and brimstone when it ends. But Jesus proves Himself always opposed and superior, though it be only as then in the day of witness.

Further, the Lord appeals to the evidence of God's power in opposition to Satan in Israel; for never has He left Himself without witness. By what power did they act? “If I in [the power of] Beelzebub cast out the demons, in whose [power] do your sons cast them out? Wherefore they shall be your judges.” Their folly was as clear as their malice. Were they now and definitively to become God's enemies? “But if I in [power of] God's Spirit cast out the demons, then hath come upon you the kingdom of God. Or how can one enter into the strong one's house and plunder his goods, unless first he bind the strong one? and then he will plunder his house.”

Thus all turns on our relation to Christ. “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” Jesus is the standard. If I am not with Him as God's object and center for me, I am against Him. He is not only Messiah but God and Jehovah, yet man. Such a One could not be here below without testing all that saw or heard of Him. If I receive Him, it is salvation, for He came to seek and save the lost; and as saved by grace, I am bound to serve Him all the more, His willing bondman yet His freedman. But He is no less the center for all one seeks to gather. If it be not to Him in our service, we lack the divine center. We may be earnest and busy; but the result is only “scattering” in God's estimate, which ought surely to be ours as believers.

How is it then with your soul, dear reader? Are you with Christ? Have you heard His voice, and do you follow Him? Blessed are you if you have thus received Him. It is life eternal, as He declares.

Take care then that you have Him as your center, God's center, not only for your soul but for your work. It is on God's part for gathering to, as well as for saving. No other name but His is revealed of God for both purposes, which indeed meet in Him.

Chapter 23

The Body, the Church—1

Jesus had shed His blood, was risen, and by the right hand of God exalted. If God had been glorified in Him, He also glorified Him in Himself, and that straightway. The Son of Man ascended up where He was before. He was glorified with the Father's own self, with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

Nor was His glorification without result to others. If on earth the Son of David could not disown the higher glories of His person, but rather led on the faith of a poor woman of Canaan to that infinite source of grace beyond, which, while it brought down to a real sense of the depth of degradation and woe, abounded but the more in streams of healing mercy; if on earth, “He could not be hid,” what was the suited blessing that flowed down from the God-exalted Man, crowned with glory and honor in heaven? Were those He loved to taste no savor of His joy above? Was there to be no peculiar, no present, power of fellowship with Him, and worthy of Him Who was set at God's right hand “in the heavenly places far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come?”

On the contrary, it is precisely in this interval between His session on His Father's throne, and His coming to take His seat on His own throne, that the great mystery of Christ and of the church finds its place, development, and revelation. God, whose earthly purposes had been seemingly frustrated but really secured, though for a time in abeyance, uses the cross meanwhile as the basis of other and higher counsels (settled in His mind before the world was, but until now hidden in Himself), and thereupon exalts the crucified Lord of glory, and sends down the Holy Ghost, not only as the one and Divine witness of what and where Christ was, but as the gatherer, by His own presence here below, of an assembly from among Jews and Gentiles, brought into the participation of the heavenly glory of Christ—in a word, as the formative agent of the church, which is Christ's body, “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Beyond just question, it is in reference to this new and heavenly assembly that scripture speaks of the closest identification with Christ, of oneness with Him as His body. By such a oneness, it is not merely meant that persons here and there, few or many, had been and are objects of love and quickening power of the Son of God. Life is not, nor does it produce this oneness; abstractedly, it finds and leaves the recipients of it individuals still. Life did not set aside for this world, for those who possessed it, the remarkable characteristic and divinely sanctioned separation of Jews from Gentiles; much less did it sever externally believing Jews from their unbelieving kinsmen according to the flesh, whatever the mutual sympathies, hopes, and conferences one with another, of them that feared the Lord. If there were devout Gentiles, and there is little reason to doubt that God in His mercy raised up such (witness Cornelius), before the gospel of His grace could righteously be preached, they served Him and worshipped Him, but as Gentiles nevertheless. There was no fusion of these with the godly Jews. The faith of one might be admirable in the eyes of the Lord Himself— “so great faith He had not found, no, not in Israel.” Still it did not hinder his remaining a Gentile.

Faith therefore in itself did not, and could not, alter that, as regards this life. It was reserved not for the gift but for the Giver of faith to work a strange, unlooked-for, and total reversal of the ancient order. So as to the Jews, though they had the gifts and calling of God, if any believed, the faith of individuals wrought without a doubt a moral separation, and sufferings were the consequences; and the new life has affections as proper to it as are depraved lusts to the old life; yet were not the faithful Jews formed into a manifested holy company here below: they lived as Jews, they died as Jews. It would have been sin in them to have relinquished their prerogatives and standing as Jews, Even in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, was not abolished. It existed still—nay, had His sanction, when He forbade those commissioned in the days of His flesh to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans.

Now the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 2; 3) is that, consequent upon the cross, an entirely novel and different work of God commenced: a work which, belonging to and awaiting its perfect display in the heavenly places, has an actual existence on earth, and most momentous effects in this present time. The point is not Christ dying for the Jewish nation, nor God thereby reconciling all things to Himself. It is not Christ's death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, nor for the blessing of any Gentiles who may be saved during His future reign; none of which things perhaps would be questioned by a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. But the doctrine there enforced is that God founded upon the cross, and accomplished by the Holy Ghost thereon given, a platform and structure wholly without parallel in the millennial age, when the old outstanding differences will be resumed, as abundantly appears from the Psalms and Prophets. The apostle in Eph. 2:11-18 thus contrasts it with their previously existing relations, the one dispensationally nigh, and the other afar off.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 24

The Body, the Church—2

“Wherefore remember, that ye being at one time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands—that 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. But now in Christ Jesus ye who at one time were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that He might make in Himself of twain one new man, making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And He came and preached peace 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.”

That is, in and for the church, such fleshly distinctions are done away. Beyond a doubt, in the church's glory accomplished on high, they will be unknown. But the apostle goes farther, and particularly insists that they are, and ought to be, unknown now. No man, not even Christ, known after the flesh, is the key-note of the church: “yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” The church can rest on nothing short of death and resurrection. She rejoices in her Head glorified in heaven, and knows herself even now one with Him there. Consequently she is raised alike above the high estate of the Jew, and above the low estate of the Gentile. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior” (Phil. 3:20).

But again, if the mass of those gathered into the church were dark, outcast Gentiles; if they could not say, we are “Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever,” they received a better adoption and a more surpassing glory: not merely covenants connected with earthly things and presented by a Messiah (whatever His own personal dignity), as minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; but the unsearchable riches of Christ freely given, which it was meet for the God of grace and glory to bestow upon the far-off penury and wretchedness of those who possessed nothing!

This was “the mystery” which was specially entrusted to the apostle Paul, made known unto him by revelation, “as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.” It consists of Christ as well as of the church, she only by grace having oneness with Him Who is Head over all things.

In previous ages the Spirit had quickened souls: there was nothing strange in that. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” said the Son of God, not yet lifted up. The extraordinary thing was, that, when the Jews perverted their singular endowments to sin and insult the most aggravated against God, not aiding only but provoking and inciting the Gentiles to the crucifixion of their own Messiah, occasion was taken of the breach thus of necessity made between God and a guilty world, to introduce a secret hitherto undisclosed but now unveiled. The elect nation had consummated their corruption and violence. God's name was blasphemed among the heathen through those who were separated to be the grand depository of His oracles and the witness of His character on earth. What remained, if thus the earth and its choicest people were in rebellion? Heaven; and so, in the depths of divine compassion and wisdom and love, God began to create a new body neither Jewish nor Gentile properly, though chosen out of either, both made one, both reconciled in one body, destined for a sphere as alien from the most exalted as from the most debased of earth.

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us,” say the Jewish saints in Psa. 67, “that thy way may be made known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.” Such is the order of blessing in the world to come: the Jews in the inner circle, and in the outer the Gentiles through them glad and singing for joy, for God will govern in righteousness. The blessing of the nations was an ancient and reiterated truth; proclaimed to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), renewed to the seed (Gen 22:18), repeated to Isaac (Gen 26:4), and to Jacob (Gen 28:14). It was bound up in terms with the promises so well-known and cherished, which guaranteed the highest seat on earth to the seed of Abraham.

Is, then, a most certain and familiar pledge of Gentile blessing in the promised seed, so often and not obscurely referred to in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms—is this the mystery which has been “hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints”? Can that with propriety be said specially and absolutely to be hid, which was among the simplest and most frequently recurring household-words of the people of God, from the time of the first promise to the patriarchs? There is no secret nor silence about that which was published from age to age, and declared from generation to generation. What was made known to the fathers, and indeed to all Israel, cannot be, for this very reason, the mystery of Christ — that peculiar mystery, “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

Some, I am aware, through unbelief and a consequent lack of spiritual intelligence and heed to human tradition, have unwittingly sought to neutralize the specialty, and thereby the nature and being, of “the mystery,” by the assumption that it had been revealed from the beginning, and that it was always, though dimly, understood by the Old Testament saints. The answer is plain and direct: the apostle Paul says positively that “it was now revealed.” From the beginning of the world it was hid in God (Eph. 3:9). To the apostles and prophets it was now revealed, and to none previously — ■ς ν■ν ■πεκαλ■φθη το■ς ■γ■οις ■ποστ■λοις α■το■ κα■ προφ■ταις ξν πνε■ματι. Certainly it is not to the apostles at the present and to the prophets at a former time. It was “now” revealed, and that to persons joined together as a common class to which the revelation was then made; as the structure of the words necessarily implies to any competent to judge of such a question, shutting out therefore the idea of any prophets being referred to before

the Pentecostal mission of the Spirit. The prophets, alluded to in the text, were of the present economy as much as the apostles were; and therefore the words, far from weakening, tend directly to strengthen the distinctive character of “the mystery,” as a thing wholly unrevealed in former times. It was a new revelation. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 25

The Body, the Church—3

Col. 1:18

The character, also, of the Abrahamic blessing of the Gentiles is totally different from that of “the mystery.” “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, etc.” (Gen. 22). All the nations are to be blessed in the Seed; but they are, and are here regarded as being, distinct from it. They are no more to be confounded with the Seed, so as to form one common body, than are the enemies whose gate is to be the possession of Israel. It and the nations are assuredly to inherit a blessing. But if it be the same blessing, will any one maintain that it is after the same mode or in the same measure? If it be so—if the seed and all the nations of the earth are blessed indiscriminately and alike, where is the marked and characteristic prerogative of the seed of Abraham? Or is there, in truth, no peculiar privilege for his seed after all? If, on the other hand, it be not so, and the seed is to have its own proper promised place by divine favor, higher than all the nations who are blessed in Christ, then is the oath to Abraham most clearly distinguished from “the mystery” wherein no such differences exist, but the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.

Let it be repeated, that Eph. 2; 3 do not teach the permanent and unlimited setting aside of Jewish exaltation above the Gentile. To such a superiority in this world the Jews had a lawful title, until Christ, in rejection, ascended into heaven; and such a superiority will be theirs when He returns again. But there is the abolition of everything of the sort for that which spans the interim, in other words, for the intermediate calling of the church. Because the church is not a mere aggregate of units or of believing persons throughout all ages, but a special body gathered by virtue of the Holy Ghost, now present and dwelling in them as a temple too, for association with the heavenly glory of Christ; as the redeemed Jews in the millennium will be the nearest and most favored objects of His earthly rule, when He appears in glory.

It is, then, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, descended from heaven, which acts as the power of the unity established here below in the church: a unity not merely of life—of doctrine—of service, but of the Spirit; the unity formed and perpetuated by the Holy Ghost Himself (Eph. 4:3). The disciples, like saints before them, were believers before Pentecost; but they were then, and not before, united to Christ in heavenly places as His body. That which unites to Christ, constituting us members of His body, as Scripture so often declares, is not the faith which the Spirit communicates as He has ever done, but the Spirit Himself subsequently and personally given, as was the case at Pentecost.

Observe, it is not “unity of spirit.” This is the theme pressed upon the Philippians (Phil. 1:27): “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;” and compare chap. 3:16. Nor has the apostle forgotten

elsewhere to pray for the saints at Rome, that the God of patience and consolation would grant them to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that they might with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace as this surely is, the exhortation in Eph. 4 is of a higher order. It is not so much the spirit of themselves, or of one another that they were to think of; it is the Spirit given, the unity of the Spirit. Moreover, the apostle does not tell them to form a society by community of object, agreement of opinion, or likeness of manners. Certainly it was not an optional alliance which they were called upon to frame. The Spirit present makes the unity. Their business is, "endeavoring to keep (or, observe, τηρε■ν) it in the bond of peace." How humbling to man and exalting to God: how encouraging, wholesome, and strengthening for His saints!

To one who has entered, howsoever little, into the divine estimate of what the church is and will be in the counsels of God, or even of what the church originally was when, gazing into the heavenly face of Him Who loved her, she reflected by the Spirit somewhat of the light of God's glory which she had seen there, to the heart of such a one, grieving over the wreck of the deposit that was committed to the frail and treacherous hands of man, and humbled at his puny and ineffectual and proud efforts to repair the ruin which he can no longer disguise—to such, I say, oh! what a relief to know and feel that even here in the desert it is not "my flock," nor "our church," but the church of God, the body of Christ, the unity of the Spirit!

These are the living realities with which we have to do; and at all cost to repudiate in ourselves, or in others, corporately and individually, all that denies them. That single-eyed unflinching allegiance to the wideness of God's heart about His people must, in a time of general departure from Him, lead into an isolated path, I do not doubt, however paradoxical it may seem. That it may appear to be a severe exclusive narrowness, to those who are not weaned from the worldliness and unbelief of essays on a grand scale, is possible; but for the faithful there is no choice. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

None of course would deny that, as men, as sinners, as Jews or Gentiles, there are certain things possessed in common with others. There is a unity of mankind, as such or fallen, as under law and without law. There is a continuity in the administration of the promises dispensationally on earth, according to which Rom. 11 views, first, the Jews as the natural branches of the olive-tree; then, some of them broken off because of unbelief, and the Gentiles, or wild olive-tree, grafted among them; and afterward, upon the Gentiles not continuing in the goodness of God, the Jews grafted again into their own olive-tree. Again, there is a unity which dates higher up than the olive-tree of earthly witness—that of all the faithful, who, in the acknowledgment of common sin, look to a common Savior, as there will be a blessed and holy communion of such as have part in the first resurrection.

But all these varied groups are demonstrably distinct from "the unity of the Spirit." With the redeemed, it is true, the Spirit had to do, inasmuch as He it is Who had given souls to believe God's salvation in Christ. This therefore was not, whereas the unity of the Spirit is, a new thing; for never before had He come to abide in sinners redeemed, and thus to make them one with Christ glorified on high and one with each other here below. Satan had his union of Jews and Gentiles in the cross of the Son of God; and in that cross the foundation was laid for God's union, effected by the presence and indwelling of the Spirit in those who enjoy the exceeding riches of the grace of

God in His kindness toward them through Christ Jesus. “There is one body and one Spirit.”

Another remark, connecting itself with the foregoing, needs to be made. Those who form the church, whatever may be their distinctive endowments, share many blessings with all saints who ever have been and ever may be. Election, redemption, faith, saintship, and heirship in the kingdom are doubtless our privileges; but they are not the exclusive property of the church. They are common to all believers. So true is this, that they may be traced in the spared and blessed Gentiles of the striking scene described in Matt. 25:31-46.

There the Son of man is supposed to be already come and seated upon the throne of His glory, and He separates, among all the Gentiles (π■ντα τ■ ■θνη) gathered before Him, the sheep from the goats. The gospel of the kingdom had been preached, it may be observed, for a witness to all those Gentiles (π■σι το■ς ■θνεσι) before the end came; and the ground of the sentence is laid in the reception or rejection of those whom Jesus, as the King (for His royal rights are now enforced, displayed, and acknowledged), designates as His brethren, a class evidently distinct from, though coming in contact with, the sheep and the goats. To the sheep, set at His right hand, the King says “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” That these are believing souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ, none perhaps would dispute; and the passage affirms that the kingdom which they inherit was prepared for them from the foundation of the world: terms which differ indeed from those in Eph. 1 (which show how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world), but sufficiently decisive of the fact that God prepared a special inheritance for these living Gentiles, whatever might be the small amount of their spiritual intelligence.

But if there are blessings common to all believers of every age, the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, could not personally come down, and abide in men on earth, according to the scriptural figure springing up in them as well as flowing out, until Jesus was glorified in heaven. But when He took His seat there as the exalted head, the Holy Ghost was sent down for the purpose of gathering a body for Christ.

This and this only is called in the Scriptures “"the church of God;” and its unity, hinting upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is, as we have seen, “the unity of the Spirit.” Matt. 16:18 is the first occurrence of the word “church,” i.e. assembly, in the New Testament. It is important to observe that there it is spoken of as a thing not merely unmanifested, and unordered, but not yet existing. It was not built, nor building yet: “upon this rock I will build my church.” Secondly, the promise that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it cannot allude to the indefectibility, much less to the infallibility, of the church on earth. Thirdly, Christ's church is mentioned as altogether distinct from the kingdom of heaven, the keys of which (not of His church) the Lord promises to give to Peter. (To be continued, D. V.)

Chapter 26

The Body, the Church—4

Col. 1:18

The unity of the church as Christ's body will surely be displayed perfectly for the administration of the fullness of seasons, when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. But does not this scripture teach, that the church, if for the time on earth to itself as the heavenly witness of the grace of God, will then form part of a common system? I answer, that the passage seems, on the contrary, to keep distinct the church in her own peculiar and pre-eminent seat of the affection and glory of Christ. For, first, the apostle speaks of the heavenly things and the earthly things being headed up in Christ, which is deduced in Col. 1:15, 16, from His claims as Creator, though asserted by Him as the Firstborn of every creature; in which latter text we have His supremacy affirmed by right of creation over all things that are in heaven and that are on earth. Next, it is added, “In whom [Christ] 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 have pre-trusted in Christ: in whom ye also,” etc.

Just so we may observe, after the statement of His headship over all things, the Epistle to the Colossians turns to another headship, “And He is the head of the body, the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” Neither heavenly things nor earthly things are the church, though they are to be the inheritance she shares who is coheir with Christ. God “hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.” Instead of being included in “all things under His feet,” she enjoys and participates in His supremacy over all by virtue of being one with Him. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, she looks for an inheritance such as becomes Him Who has purchased it, and Him Who is its earnest; such as becomes (may we not add?) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “to whom be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” See also Rev. 21:2, 3.

But although it is for “the administration of the fullness of seasons” that the glory of Christ, shared by the church as His bride, will be revealed, so that the world itself shall know it, yet was there a testimony to it, produced and manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one body on earth. When the apostle spoke of the saints being “builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit,” was this unity a thing ideal, future, and only to be achieved in heaven? Or was it not an actual present fact made good here below by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? Is it not true that “now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God?” And the unity of the Spirit, which the saints should be diligent to keep, where was it if not on earth? Will the saints in heaven use their diligence to keep it there? Again, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers given of Christ (Himself ascended up far above all heavens), where were they, and where still are the gifts of Christ? Where and to what end is exercised the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ? Does the

perfecting (Kai-aprKrp.Os) of the saints, does the work of the ministry, does the edifying of the body of Christ, find their sphere in heaven? Is it there that we are in danger of being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of men's doctrine? Is it not on earth that we meet with “sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait—to deceive?” Is it not here that we “grow up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephes. 4)? It was here, in the church, that each joint of supply wrought, contributing nourishment to the whole: it was here, according to the effectual working in the measure of each one part, that the body made increase. It is in this world, and in this world only, that “all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment administered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;” as it is assuredly here that the Spirit would have the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, to the which also we were called in one body (Col. 2,3)

In writing to the saints at Rome (chap. 12.), hitherto never seen by the apostle, and therefore in man's judgment at least connected in no peculiar way with him, as was the case too with regard to the Colossians, it is just the same: “As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same function; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Evidently it is not a tie which was going to be established, but a relationship then and really existent. Membership is not with a local church but with the body of Christ; though, on the other hand, if one be not in fellowship with the assembly of Christ's members where one resides, there can be for such no fellowship with them anywhere else at the same time.

Nor can language be more explicit than that of 1 Cor. 12. “But all these worketh the one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body; so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink of one Spirit” (ver. 13). The composition of that one body depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By Him are we baptized into the body of Christ, Jews, Gentiles, bond or free; it matters not. The great fact is, that Jesus exercised His heavenly rights.

He baptized with the Holy Ghost; and they who were thus baptized became the immediate and the especial field of His presence and operations, the body of Christ, the body subsisting on earth, and acted on by the Spirit when the apostle wrote.

The diversities of gifts, of administrations, and of operations, will not be in heaven. Their province is the church on earth. It is here that the manifestation is given to every man (i.e., in the church) to profit withal. If any reasonable doubt could be harbored about the word of wisdom to one, the word of knowledge to another, and faith to a third, there can be no question in the believer's mind, that the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues, and their interpretation, are not prospectively for heaven but for earth now. It is the one and selfsame Spirit Who energized all these, distributing to each. For the many members constitute but one body; “by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.”

The importance of these last words will be better estimated on comparing with them Acts 1:4, 5; and particularly the clause, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” At the time the disciples were believers. They had life, and life more abundantly, we may say. Jesus,

the quickening Spirit, had breathed upon them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” etc. He had also opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. But none of these things is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost first beheld the accomplishment of the promise of the Father. Then, and not before, were believers baptized with the Spirit. But it is this baptism which introduces into, and forms, the one body; it is the Spirit, thus present and baptizing, Who began and organizes, as He recruits the body of Christ. Hence is it, that coincident with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we first hear in the word of God of this new body, and of membership therein. Whatever the privileges (and there were many) which existed before, that which is distinctively called in the Bible the church of God appeared here below, as the consequence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, dwelling in the disciples, and baptizing them, Jews or Gentiles, into one body, of which the ascended Christ is the Head. The church, His body, derived its being from His presence in heaven as the glorified Man, and from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit on earth.

“But, as it is, God set the members every one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they all were one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. [And] the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness while our comely parts have no need. But God tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to the [part] which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body; but that the members might have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with [it]; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with [it]. Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:18-27.

When Christ's members are together in heaven, our mortal body changed, fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself, will any “seem to be more feeble?” Shall we think any to be “less honorable” there, and, “upon these bestow more abundant honor?” That this is a present care, flowing out of the sense God gives us of the exigencies and of the preciousness of Christ's body here below, is exactly what I am contending for. Does any one believe that such will be our employment when Christ presents the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But if not, these members were members of the body then on earth, for God had tempered the body together, “having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body (in heaven there is no danger of schism); but that the members might have the same care one for another.” “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it,” this is clearly not in heaven, but on earth. “Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular:” where and when is this? Surely then on earth. Heaven is not in question. It was a subsisting fact here, though in the spiritual sphere, and fraught with blessing and responsibility of the utmost importance to Christ's glory for every one of His members.

“And God did set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Manifestly, these are gifts in the church—the whole church on earth. The apostle addresses, no doubt, the church of

God that was at Corinth; while it is very clear that the New Testament frequently speaks of assemblies in this or that locality, that is, churches (compare Rom. 15:1, 5; Gal. 1:2, 22; Col. 4:15, 16; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14, etc.). But, besides this which is not disputed, as well as the application of the term in Heb. 12:23 to the congregation of the firstborn which are written in heaven viewed as a completed thing, however anticipative faith might say, “Ye have come” to it, even as to the other components of the glory—besides in short the local and the future senses, 1 Cor. 12:28 is clearly another sense of the most important bearing, as may be seen in the Epistles of Paul: the church, as a body here below, in a breadth as extensive as the baptism of the Spirit. That entire society or corporation, wherein He dwelt and wrought, was the church in which God set apostles prophets, teachers, etc. Certainly it is impossible to say that He had set all these in the Corinthian assembly; nor will it be maintained that He is to set them in the church universal gathered on high.

There is, then, another and large sense of “the church,” in which unity is predicated of all the members of Christ existing at one time in the world, whatever might be the distance separating their bodies; and that in virtue of one Spirit baptizing them into one body. The body of Christ, like the natural one, is susceptible of increase, as scripture plainly indicates. But as in the natural body the identity subsists when the old particles have given place to new, so the body of Christ is the body still, whatever the changes in the members particularly. He Who, by His presence, imparted unity at its beginning, conserves unity by His own faithful presence. He was given to abide with the disciples forever.

In fine, by “the church” is meant not a junction of various co-ordinate (much less conflicting) societies but a body, the one body of Christ, possessing the same privileges and call, and responsibility on earth, and looking for the same glory in heaven as the Bride of Christ. If a man were baptized by the Spirit, he was thereby constituted a member of the church; if he had a gift, it was to be exercised according to the proportion of faith for the good of the whole: not ministry, not membership, pertaining to a church but to the church; each joint belonging to the entire body, and the entire body to each joint (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14; Eph. 1, 4; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 22:17). If it be God's truth, it is for the believer to act on, to walk, serve, and worship in. Divine truth without corresponding faithfulness is the shame and condemnation of him who merely owns it. “If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them.”

Chapter 27

A Call to Remembrance

In the early part of this century by grace some Christians recovered the truth that the Holy Spirit abides with and in the believers during the whole period of the absence of the Lord Jesus—that God the Spirit was as truly with them as with the apostles. And those who received the word of the truth of the gospel at their hands, brought with it a fullness of blessing, and a confession of God's will which drew them together to Christ's name. They soon found that character of worship, and power for individual growth in grace, of which they had known but little in the religious companies to which they had been attached. As they took the place marked out for all saints in the word, as they assembled themselves together to the true center according to the principles of revelation, they learned not only the actual and long continued ruin-state of the church, but what was befitting to the Lord and to themselves as calling on His name. “Holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, forever.” While humbled to the dust in realizing the common failure, they felt it important, in order to make a good confession, to “lay hold on eternal life,” a conscious and enjoyed possession of it in the Son by faith, and of their heavenly association with Him.

“They had received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things that are freely given to them of God.” They had a portion with Christ in heaven and heavenly glory, a part with Him Who deigns to wash the feet of His own. What portion then hath a believer with an unbeliever? Addressed in the Epistles as “saints,” separation to God, and separation confessed, they acknowledged to be implied in the title. This confession had to be made in the face of the enemy; and they had to suffer reproach for it, even from Christians—the reproach of Christ (Heb. 13:13). But love in the Spirit was in exercise, and made them kindly affectioned one to another. In the face of scattered saints over Christendom they walked together as one, in true comfort of love, in the fellowship of the Spirit, though ever and anon having to be reminded of failures and inconsistencies, and to be humbled because of them. Much confession was mingled with their prayers, accompanied at times with fasting.

Another marked result of the reception of this truth of Christianity and of the church was, that they read the Scriptures in dependence on the guidance of the Spirit. It was not mere saying that they did so, but prayerful watchfulness was exercised against departure from it. Each portion of the canon of truth was seen to have its characteristic aim, and no one part could be given up, or left unheeded, without loss. It was thus practically a recovery of the word; and they greatly valued it, coming together to read, and in some cases spending days in considering some portion. Much that had not been reached at the Reformation was opened up to them; especially the differences of dispensation, the scheme of prophecy, the glory of Christ as Head over all things, the peculiar calling of the church, and the place and functions of the Holy Spirit in and with them. Christ's love for the church, its union, its blessings, its joy, its hope, all made the truth exceedingly precious to them, beautiful in all spiritual and heavenly loveliness.

The truth of the kingdom also had its place, instructing them in every common duty or work of life; how to walk worthy of the Lord; how in fulfilling their respective obligations to others, to serve Him,

and to obey His commands in His absence as if He were present; “knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”

The ministration of the word to others claimed much of their regard; and the recognition of gift, where bestowed, and the purpose of God in the Lord's service, were confessed as of all importance. They desired to maintain gift in its place, and the proper place for it according to His will, believing that full provision for this was to be found in the Scriptures. The diversities of power, though less than at first, were acknowledged, and the various needs of those ministered to were felt. There were the fathers, and the young men, and the babes or little children, to be nourished in the words of the faith, and of good doctrine; the faint-hearted to be encouraged, the weak to be supported, the disorderly to be admonished; and only by the present action of the Holy Spirit in the word could these various needs be met. The teachers counted on His working (1 Cor. 12:11) both in them and in their hearers; “the mutual faith,” as Paul so affectionately writes (Rom. 1:12). Thus united in dependence, and in the desire for that blessing which is “as a dew from Jehovah, as the shower upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” They were knit together as members of the body of Christ; and nourishment was ministered by the helps provided, “the joints and bands” under Christ the Head (Eph. 4:16, Col. 2:13). Official assumption, without spiritual power, they condemned. Human arrangement of ministry they refused. Pulpit eloquence as merely swaying men's minds or feelings they distrusted. They left it to the Lord to use these things toward other as He in sovereign grace might do. His sovereignty in blessing whom He would, when Christ is preached, they unfeignedly rejoiced in (Phil. 1:15).

But did this last? What are the results? “Surely enough to break a heart of stone,” wrote one nearly fifty years ago, yet adding, “but when broken, the more fit to receive divine impression and holy impulse.” And now accumulating sorrows in the church must distress faithful hearts, while there is no promise in the word that they shall decrease. But when leaving His own in the world the Lord said, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me:” and Paul's last recorded prayer (written in 2 Tim. 4:22) is, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit,” a fitting and touching close to an affecting letter. To be grieved with all the evil is to be in sympathy with the Spirit who abides with us; and the promise is

“For yet a very little while,

He that cometh will come, and will not tarry.”

Sorrow then is right, but not despondency. “God hath not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind “: and “Fear not” is the shepherd's word of encouragement to the most timid of His flock that follows Him. God never lowers His standard, nor lessens our resources in His Son by the Holy Ghost. Human arrangement or man's wisdom can add nothing; it is want of faith and borders on presumption. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.” W.B.

Chapter 28

Christian Science: Falsely so-Called

Such is the name of a new substitute for the Personal Christ the Son of God and His redemption. It is of American growth, but not limited to the U. S., Brazil, and Canada; for it has already sent forth suckers into England and Scotland, France and Germany. This is the language in which the Rev. Geo. Tomkins, D.D. (formerly a Baptist minister), speaks of its rise— “THE REVELATION OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE [the emphasis is his own] came to Rev. Mary Baker G. Eddy in the year 1866 and its truth and power were immediately demonstrated by signs following."... “It is the perfect salvation from sin and sorrow, disease and death, which Christ Jesus came to bring. Christian Science, in a word, is the law of God—Good, Principle, Being, Life, Truth, Love, and Eternal Harmony—put into practice here and now.”

This however, and almost all else, is but tall talk and empty vapor. Coming closer, is not Christ only “Impersonal” Truth? “Once we thought that each mortal had a soul of his own, and that this soul could be divided from spirit; but in the light of Christian Science we know that there is but one soul, one Spirit, and that God; and that this two-edged sword, Truth, separates all the beliefs of mortal mind from the thoughts of divine mind."... It “boldly declares there is no personality, neither personal good, personal evil, nor personal men” Such is the use made of 2 Cor. 5:16. This awful delusion openly denies not only the Father and the Son, but also the devil and a man as persons. It is thus more daringly opposed to all truth than Judaism or even Paganism, and leaves no room for that association of the believer with God the Father, through the Lord Jesus the Son, which we know as Christians. It is one of the many antichrists against which the Epistles of John so solemnly warn us as to be in the last time.

Take another and distinct proof of its blasphemy, “This Christ-Truth is His second coming, which is mentioned and referred to in the Bible over three hundred times."... “Now He has come—IMPERSONALLY” “We consciously [? confidently] declare that Science and Health, with key to the Scriptures' was foretold as well as its author [Dr. T.'s italics], Mary Baker Eddy in Revelation x. She is the mighty angel,' or God's highest thought to this age (verse 1) giving us the spiritual interpretation of the Bible in the little book open' (verse 2).” Naturally and necessarily therefore Mrs. Eddy's little book supersedes the Bible, as Swedenborg's volumes do for the N. J. church, and Joe Smith and Pratt's impostures for the Mormonites; yet they all pretend to accept the Scriptures!!!

Alas! it is as hollow and guilty, as when a feast was proclaimed to Jehovah; but in reality Israel worshipped a molten image, having changed their glory for an ox that eateth grass.

Another of these effusions has been sent and lies before me. It is by the Rev. W. P. MacKenzie of Boston. It too is mere naturalism with the usual perversion of scripture to give a gloss of truth. “Its postulate (says he), rather should one say its axiom, is this; that by PROVING THE UNREALITY OF SIN, DISEASE AND DEATH, YOU DEMONSTRATE THE ALLNESS OF GOOD.” This is really to set aside the O. and N. Testaments, to lose the profit of repentance and the blessing of faith. Torture is done to Wiclif's version of Luke 1:77; for though he does say “science of health,” the

remission of sins which qualifies the phrase, in the original and in his translation as well as of all others, proves that the remark is baseless as well as wicked, and a mere play on words to mislead the unwary. The salvation “of souls” is there meant, as 1 Peter 1:9 says. Body-salvation is a truth which the new heterodoxy rejects; it awaits Christ's second coming, which they also deny in any true sense, as indeed the faith as a whole. But inasmuch as this debasing folly is so thoroughly infidel as to deny that each man has a soul, it is needless to speak to them of soul-salvation. If there is but “one soul, one spirit,” and that “God,” if there is no personality, good or evil, there is no need, or room, for a Savior. It is really a hideous dream of Pantheism, if not yielding to faith, assuredly to wake up for the second death, which is the lake of fire.

Chapter 29

The Christian

A Word on Acts 11:26

We need not enter into curious questions, nor even dwell over much on the word “Christian.” It was a name given by outsiders in Antioch of Syria, a city notorious for affixing nicknames. This word, we see from 1 Peter 4:16, was adopted by the Holy Spirit in writing to Jewish converts, as by men generally. On the one hand, if one be not in the new relationship, what is he but a child of disobedience! On the other hand scripture appears not to call any one a child or son of the devil, till there is a willful rejection of the Lord. Still all are alike by nature children of wrath. The most correct and amiable are included no less than the repulsive and immoral. Let us glance briefly at the bearing of the scriptures that occur at the moment. We are encouraged to confide in the gracious guidance of the Spirit, while far from the delusion of claiming exemption from mistake. What then is meant by a Christian? A professed believer since Christ's death and resurrection. This indicates his proper place and relation. He is a saint, and much more.

Now the word of God is explicit in dealing with a man in himself as a guilty sinner. Such is every child of Adam by nature. But God reveals in Christ a new blessing which the Old Testament prophets were awaiting. Israel's hope was the Messiah: “My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed” (Isa. 56:1). But the Messiah having been rejected brought in an unexpected state of things, which required a fresh body of scripture, based not on promise, but on accomplishment and heavenly blessing. The Christian has life eternal by faith as a present and known possession. When Christ comes, his body will be changed accordingly; but he is already quickened together with Christ. And as God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, it is that we should become God's righteousness in Him. Thus in the gospel is God's righteousness revealed by faith unto faith. Hence, in the Epistle to the Galatians (v. 5), we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Being already justified by faith we look for the glory which is its due result. Christ's work of redemption has such value and efficacy before God that if we believe on Him our sins are remitted, and we are justified. God is not gracious only but righteous in thus dealing. He is glorified in the Son of man as a sacrifice for sin, and will bring us into glory with Him.

But what of sin? It has been borne to God's glory in the cross of Christ. Hence is there a new and justifying righteousness (not man's works which could but condemn him; but) God's, in virtue of Christ's redemption. Again, when He rose from the dead, He rose not alone, but as the seed-corn which fell into the ground and died, bringing forth much fruit. He is the Second man and the Last Adam, the head of a new family, which derives its name from Himself. He is the Christ; we are Christians. Adam became not a father till he was a sinner. The Lord Jesus, fully proved the Righteous Servant, died for our unrighteousness and rose the Head of God's family who are to be with Christ where He is. It is therefore God's righteousness, not only to set Him at His own right-hand, but to justify now and to glorify at His coming all that believe on Him. As we are naturally in Adam, so are we spiritually in Christ; and if it was right of God to condemn the fallen

Adam and his guilty children, is it not at least equally right to justify all that believe on Christ the last Adam? It was not death that made Him cry, “My God, my God, why didst Thou forsake me?” it was the far deeper fact that there and then God made Him sin for us. For He suffered once for sins, just for unjust. He bore sins' judgment for the believer. God would have men bow in faith before His ineffable mercy and grace, and also His righteousness which can and does clear the lost who believe. We are entitled by Christ's death and resurrection to have the fullest confidence in God; as it is written, “Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” Thus the gospel is not only extrication from sin, but a new standing altogether; and this by grace produces powerful moral effects. There is now a new walk according to Christ's, which follows the communication of His life to the Christian: “not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

But scripture never mingles the responsible walk with the standing which grace gives us in Christ. How could God condemn either the work or the life of Christ? In the cross He has already executed sentence on our nature, and we are in Christ Jesus where condemnation can be no more. Compare Rom. 8:1-4.

The Christian is in Christ and thus blessedly perfect in his standing. Not only is righteousness imputed to him, so that the Lord imputes no sin, but we live of His life even now. Christ has given us life eternal, His own life to be ours.

The disciples were never said to be in Christ until He here breathed it in risen power on the day He rose, life abundantly. Again, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” 1 Cor. 6:17. This is the union of the Christian with Christ. The Holy Spirit in the day that is now, having come down, imparted to the believer the blessed consciousness of it. John 14:19, 20. Jesus was as truly man as any one; but He alone absolutely without sin. He was born “that holy thing.” Luke 1:35. If the words were “one flesh,” it might be argued that the whole world, or all mankind, is united to Christ; but it is “one spirit.” The end is worthy; we shall be like Him. In 1 Cor. 1:30 “redemption” is said last, signifying the full future deliverance of the body. Compare Rom. 8:23, which points to that conforming us to Christ. Do you oppose to this the views of some erudite men? The Bible was written, not for literary strife, but for souls who honor God in faith. Human learning is a sorry master, but may be no bad servant; and so it is with every earthly boon.

The believer is already a temple of God. Do you believe your body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit? If you doubt it, you give up a distinctive privilege of the Christian and of Christianity. Not only are we bought with a price but the Holy Spirit designs to dwell in us. No doubt we are poor and weak; but the Holy Spirit is neither. Does not the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanse us from all sin? Does not Christ wash our feet, when defiled, with the water of the word? “This is he that came by water and blood.” 1 John 5:6. The Holy Spirit takes up His abode in us consequent on our resting on God's testimony to Christ and His blood.

In 2 Cor. 1:21 God, it is said, “Stablisheth us with you in Christ.” This contrasts His certainty with man's uncertainty. There is nothing so plain and sure as the testimony of God to His child; but there is this accompaniment to heed that he must be nothing. It is but a human, sort of lowliness, to be ever occupied with thinking and speaking of my own badness. When we do wrong things, we should surely confess them. But we are privileged, forgetting ourselves, to behold Christ in God's presence, and to know our blessedness in Him.

2 Cor. 3 contrasts the Christian with the Israelite. What was engraven on stone, the law, told what the Israelite should present; but the Christian, having Christ written on his heart by the Spirit of the living God, is called to reflect Him as His epistle.

The believer is not set like the mystics and pietists striving to die. He has by faith to recognize the truth of his own death by the power of the death of Christ. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live.” It is the abiding consequence of the past act of Christ on the cross. Fallen Adam shows us our natural life; but the life we as Christians now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God; and each can say “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Hence in Gal. 5:24 it is not said, “They that are Christ's” ought to crucify, but “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Ought I, a Christian, a child of God, to be occupied with the objects of men? Has not Christ His objects? and should not His objects be ours? There are daily duties to be performed by us as serving Him; but this is quite another thing. We are sanctified to obey as He did. He was called the carpenter's son, and no doubt did the work as part of His Father's business. But duties are one thing; objects are quite another.

Having the indwelling Holy Spirit, we should not complain of lack of power; any more than of direction, as having the written word. Has not God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? Does not God see us as He sees Christ—all Christians? Every right step for a Christian is founded on his being in Christ. “Old things are passed away” to faith: it is not a question of feeling. Christ is the model, and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

We are called on condition of liberty; but it is as walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian, because he is washed from his sins in the blood of Christ.

Hence it is written in Col. 1:12, that we are to thank the Father Who made us meet to share the portion of the saints in light. Many think that the believer goes on growing gradually till he becomes fit for glory. One ought better to have learned the truth from the repentant robber on the cross. Neither walk nor service could qualify us for heaven, nothing short of what grace gives us in Christ. This is what the Christian has, and what the work of redemption has done for him. Observe too that ver. 10 just before speaks of increase by the right knowledge of God. There and thus the Christian ought to grow. But there is no growth in meetness for sharing the lot of the saints in the light. Christ's work for us is perfect, and perfects the Christian in the sight of God. “By one offering He hath perfected forever—without a break—them that are sanctified.” It is true of all real Christians. How blessed then to be a Christian! how blessed then to be a Christian! how awful to despise the Name, which by faith makes the poorest of sinners to be one! how inexcusable thus to heap up wrath against the day of wrath, in the face of the goodness of God leading to repentance!

Chapter 30

The Church

Eph. 4:4

There is “one body.” This is the church. Not that it is the whole truth of the church, which may be viewed in other aspects. We are not merely Christians, but also members of one body. Now the thoughts of Christians in general are vague as to this. They are apt to take their notions from what they have ever seen around them. But there is one unfailing standard, the word of God. A thorough acceptance of the place that God has given us according to scripture is here as elsewhere all-important.

The Son never raised the question of the church till the individual need is felt; and we find this too even in the epistle to the Eph. He says nothing about the body of Christ till we come to the last verse of the first chapter; and yet this is pre-eminently the church epistle. He develops the full blessing of the saint first. Nor is any one able to comprehend the church safely and rightly till every individual question is settled. The soul needs to be consciously delivered, and to stand in the presence of God in the full confidence of faith. When all this is clear, the Holy Spirit begins to open out the character and relations of the church.

At Caesarea Philippi, the remotest corner of the land, Christ's assembly to replace Israel on earth is first brought before the disciples; but the truth concerning Himself takes precedence. The Lord gave Himself the name of the Son of man; and in that very character He will return and take all the world to reign over it. Peter confesses Him as the Son of God, which drew out His statement, “I also say to thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (or, assembly). Thus the soul must be in the light as to Christ before the church can be a seasonable truth. The Father in this scene gives fresh knowledge of the Son's glory; and the Christian like Peter, instead of being limited to believing Israel's faith, confesses Him as the Son of the living God. It is not what He became, what He will display or what He might do, but what He is in His intrinsic and eternal title, the Son of the living God. It is His proper dignity and personal relation in the Godhead.

Here we have a rock which cannot be moved. “On this rock,” said He Himself, “will I build my church.” Even when Israel shall bewail their own guilt and that of their fathers, they will not know or confess Him as the Christian does. Thus we find their type in Thomas, who was not with the rest on the resurrection day, when Christ stood in their midst as the risen Man, and breathed on them the abundant life from Himself. They were reconciled to God by His death; again, their sins were blotted out by His shed blood; and now He brought them into their new standing in Himself. Thomas was not with them till eight days after, confessing Him as “my Lord and my God.” This is just what the Jews will do by-and-by, owning Him as their Jehovah God, rather than as Son of the living God. This as revealed by the Father suits those who were to be in relationship with the Father, as Christians now are characteristically.

Thus are prepared the individuals in order to form the church. There is a special revelation which lets the believer into that near relationship. Let us see to it that we have our thoughts formed from

scripture and truly learn what is taught us by the Holy Spirit for our own place. First the individual should be peaceful and happy in the Lord. He is an object of heavenly favor; and only when he is consciously in that condition, is he fit to inquire what the church is. In the Catholic principle which prevailed before the Reformation, the first thought was always the church. So still, where it exists, the great thing for a soul is to be in the church, as many besides Romanists would say to-day. A Protestant on the contrary likes to say, It is not the church but justification by faith and an open Bible we are now to care for: there will be one body in heaven, but not here. How beneficial the denominations are to stir up one another! Alas how sad the devious paths of error on both sides

Here the scripture gives the truth fully and without a cloud. According to it the individual, even if ever so moral and surrounded by Christian associations, is arrested in his sins, and set at rest by the faith of Christ through redemption in the sight of God. If not like the prodigal in evil walk and ways, he needs no less to feel his ruin, and be met by the Father's grace. He has to do with God about his sins, and by receiving Christ and His work enters into deliverance. Alone in both as it were, he is not alone in the communion of divine love, which is the issue. Joy can sing.

No doubt there are many elder brothers in Christendom; and it annoys them to hear of joy over any thus blessed, especially if once wretched wanderers, rejoicing in the Father's presence. It is here and now that such murmurers are found. And here too begins the divine joy of love.

The Holy Spirit shows us the church on earth. Certainly and perfectly it will be in heaven also; but it is revealed as now on earth. Your faith is small if you give this up. Scripture is plain.

What or who then founded the body here below, this heavenly corporation on earth? He that first came down from heaven to accomplish redemption, and then went up on high when there was a righteous ground, not for pardon only, but for so new and blessed a relationship. To effectuate it, Christ sent down the Spirit to dwell there as He never could before. The Spirit of God came to abide in Christ; and thus He calls His body God's temple; for the old temple was desecrated and soon to be left desolate. But the Spirit is come now to make the Christian's body a temple, and to form a body, the one body of Christ, on the earth. Believest thou this? If you doubt, search and learn. What is your standard of truth? Is it yourself or other men? It should assuredly be Christ: He only is the truth. The reason why the church of God is unknown or misunderstood is because self, in one form or another, takes the place of Christ.

By the one Spirit were we baptized into that one body. We are by Him brought as Christians into this new relationship now: and our new duties flow from that relationship. No rite could effect it, nor any act of human will. It is a divine, not a mere voluntary society. As the Head is one and a living Head, so is the body formed by the Holy Spirit. It makes an immense difference to know whether we belong to it now; for right walk, service, and worship largely depend on that fact.

God has been blessing individuals since the day of Adam, but no such body existed then. Even Abel therefore could not be of Christ's body, nor was Abraham, David or any O. T. saint. Let us cultivate subjection to the word, and give up popular as well as peculiar views. Is it not the path of faith to believe God's word?

When our Lord was about to depart, He said, “Tarry in Jerusalem, &c.” The same divine Spirit that dwelt in Christ dwells in His own, the same Spirit that anointed Him anoints them too. Gentiles or Jews, they are brought into a new and united position as the one body of Christ; for the Spirit sent

down by the ascended Head baptized them into one. Faith in Christ beyond a doubt is the first question: till this is settled in your soul before God, you have nothing to do with the church; you are still in your sins till then; and no sponsor can believe for you. The Spirit was and is “given” to believers. Of course He first operates in and by the word to make us believers. How could the Spirit come and dwell in a man yet in his sins?

Moreover, and as long as the Lord Jesus remained here, instead of ascending, there could not begin any such new and heavenly relationship. Nor could any basis be laid for it short of Christ's coming down to die atoningly before He rose and ascended to heaven. Hence we see the force of the well-known symbol of the Spirit in the oil that followed, first the water, and then the blood; as is plain enough in Lev. 8, and also in ch. xiv. Thus Christ becomes the Head there; then only begins the body. As long as He is above, the body is here; and adding to it goes on by the Spirit given.

But the Lord is coming quickly not only to receive us, but to judge the habitable earth; and all the convulsions that are and threaten around us point to this fact by the moral call for His intervention. God has revealed both beyond controversy in His word. Those that do not believe in His future are not to be depended on with regard to the past or the present. Him that does not believe in God's word you will soon find as unreliable on Genesis as on the rest of the Bible. But the Lord is coming quickly, and if we are profiting by Him in peace, other parts of revealed truth will by degrees fall into their proper places.

Are you members of that one body? Are you able through the grace of the Lord Jesus to say “Abba Father,” when alone with God? If it be so, He has fitted you to dwell in the light of glory; surely also to have communion with the saints on earth as members of Christ's body. Scripture shows us therein a clearly defined walk and worship. Never was such a unity, even while our Lord was here. It is a relationship founded on His death, resurrection, and ascension. Our Presbyterian friends like others confound the Head of the body with “the King of saints” —itself a spurious reading and false idea.—A King necessarily supposes a people governed by him and, however loyal, bound to keep their distance from him. But as members of the body united to its Head, you cannot insert the finest gossamer between; and this I fear is not really believed. It is a question of living faith in Christ and His word, whereby we understand the closeness of the tie, and live, as we are, a heavenly people, while still on earth. Let us first receive the truth as it is: then let it deal with our hearts and ways that we be not earthly-minded.

A body without a Head would be a monster; but Christ the Head gives by grace a suited character to His body, the church, and to each member in particular. Here we have the perfection, as of glory, so of grace, in meekness and humility; and God's call is that this be made good in every member of it while here on earth. No believer doubts that the Head is in heaven; but are you a member of His body? For His own glory God has formed it, and the Spirit of God draws us out in obedient walk, as also in the expression of thanksgiving and praise; and this is worship.

Long before Israel is ready to sing the Psalms, God has these songs ready for them: they have not truly sung them yet; but they will do so in the days of the displayed kingdom, which will differ widely from this actual day. But the body must be completed first, and the Lord come. There are no Psalms written for us in the New Testament, but the church can sing her own “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs"; she is already in peace and happy, and has the Spirit to give requisite power. Everything is future for Israel. Meanwhile we come in, saved and blessed to the utmost, yet

nothing but poor bankrupts in ourselves. For God has united us to Christ in heaven; and out of us flow rivers of living water, as it springs up in us unto life eternal: so the Lord promised in John 4 and 7.

Are you thus worshipping and thus bearing witness to Christ on high? Do you know what it is now to share the Father's joy? to be in communion with the Father and the Son? If sorrow of conscience likes to get alone with God, nothing so fills with divine joy as that fellowship which grace gives in Christ. To know that we are members of the body of Christ makes all the difference for our souls and our ways. Now is the time of this responsibility. Sovereign grace alone gave us to be of Him.

Chapter 31

The Cross of Christ

The more we study the Cross, the more we shall see that every question of good and evil was [therein] brought to an issue, and the immutable basis laid for perfect blessing according to what God is in righteousness and grace and majesty too, [even] for the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. We come by the blessed testimony that it meets all our wants; but, in contemplating it at peace, we see man in absolute sin, hating and rejecting God in grace and goodness; Satan's full power, the disciples fled in fear, and all the world else in his power against Christ; Man in absolute goodness, loving the Father and obedient, glorifying God in the very place of sin where it was needed, and at all cost; God in perfect righteousness against sin as nowhere else, and in perfect love to the sinner. If innocence was conditional blessing, [grace] is complete in perfectness, and its value never can change. It is everlasting righteousness. Hence the blessing of the new heavens and new earth is immutable. We have had an innocent Eden; and a sinful world; we shall have, besides the reign of righteousness, new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. J. N. D.

Chapter 32

The Day Star

Many Christians are averse from God's revelation of the future. This is to be sadly prejudiced. Having known countless theories made and explained away, they consider it wiser to seek simply the blessing of their own souls. They may be right, if they have not yet peace and liberty, as Christians are entitled to by grace. But if they are Christians, they have Christ; and all things are theirs. It is not wise or well to turn away from Him that speaks concerning the future, because men have often made mistakes. If I am to give up all that has been perverted, I am in danger of turning away from almost all the Bible.

Beyond controversy, on the other hand, not a few, who are not established in Christ, are apt to be taken up with prophecy in a light manner. They are on the alert for things to suit their preconceptions. They start in quest of the Buonapartes, of the “last” Pope in their own day, of their country's destiny, &c. They are thus liable to deceive themselves as well as others. But, if we have confidence in God, and Christ be before our hearts, we shall not fail of the Spirit's guidance, through Whom, bowing to the word, we shall get the truth of things. When we have Christ as our object, the truth shines; for He is the true Light which makes all things manifest. Self only darkens everything. The love of God and of his neighbor was put clearly before the man that asked the Lord who his neighbor was. Our neighbor is whoever wants us and our help; if our eye be single, we shall soon know; then we have a heart for God's will.

There is a great difficulty in becoming a fool in order to be wise; and this we must learn if we would go on in the things of God. No small quantity of dead matter may be unjudged, which hinders the Spirit of God. Not happiness only but every other good depends on our having Christ as the object and the standard whereby to judge. How am I to know the world? and why are people's minds so diverse with regard to it? Is it not because they have not taken their place as disciples, as learners, at the feet of Jesus? There is divine light in the Bible which stretches into eternity itself; and the simple soul can see it. But we must receive the word of God to learn of Him, instead of bringing our thoughts to it. The world is not Christ's object at present. “I pray not for the world, &c.” The Lord Jesus was born King of the Jews; but, being rejected He has since risen and gone to heaven, as truly man as God. If I valued any creed, it would be the Athanasian, which is so much disliked as it teaches Him to be God and man telling too of the judgment to befall all unbelievers. While He is at the right hand of God, He is also the Head of the church. The so-called Apostles' creed has nothing to do with the apostles; and is moreover vaguely and loosely enough put together, while the Athanasian is too scholastic. We are always called as Christians to confess the Lord Jesus; which is far beyond a merely formal way when men rise to say the creed, whether they believe on Him or not.

The Bridegroom is outside the world, while His bride is being formed from out of the world, and about to meet Him in the air. What a solemn yet blessed fact was Enoch's translation! Yet Christ's coming will be immeasurably more so. For all the saints of every age and from every land and tongue will be caught up to join the Lord Jesus. The last trump does not mean the end of the

“world,” but of the “age.” The world will be outside its sound when He comes for us, as it will have nothing to do with Him. When the New Testament was written, the Roman army was familiar to every one in the civilized earth. According to their order, several trumpets were sounded; but the “last” summons of its blast was for immediate departure. This illustrates “the last trump” of our subject. God is going to take all His children to be with Christ Who will come in person to receive them to Himself. It is not the dead saints only, nor merely those who may be then alive, but both.

Christ's “shout” in 1 Thess. 4:16 is a peculiar word. It was used for a general's call to his soldiers, an admiral's to his seamen, or even a huntsman's to his dogs. The Lord will give this shout (κ■λευσμα) to His own; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we, the living saints surviving, will be changed, and all caught up to meet Him. The creed of Athanasius so-called did not enter truly into the blessed hope, which was practically lost long before his time; indeed this creed was probably centuries after him. While the primitive Christians were hated, persecuted, and slain, the hope was bright in their souls; but truth rapidly declined till in the time of Constantine Christians were given the honored place in the Roman empire. The world seduced them from the truth; and the desire grew to remain here and enjoy earthly things. It was no longer the patient waiting for Christ. The world we are bound to view as rejected and guilty of the death of Christ. Although the outward sign of the cross meets us everywhere, what is it but profession and even profanity? For God still views it as the place from whence His Son was cast out. When a soul is delivered, it begins to find what a ruin it is.

A man naturally wishes to make a figure in the world and to make a place for his children; but the Christian is only to be as a pilgrim and a stranger, like a man in a passenger ship passing from one country to another. If we belong to Christ, we belong to heaven and are not of the world. John gives the character to the world all through his writings; Paul, the church according to God with a heavenly stamp from the beginning. For Christ is the Head of the church; and the saints should be ever expecting Him.

But now, as of old, clever and learned people encourage one another to say that the early Christians erred in their hope. Alas! what is the good of abilities that leave the possessor banished from the presence of God forever? The church ought always to be singing the songs, not of grace only, but of glory. Even Christians can be deceived by the infidel expectation of the world's improvement if not perfection. A smattering of divine things is not profitable. They who fix a date for the Lord's coming are entirely wrong. It is a matter of the Father's will concerning His Son to keep the Christian always waiting, certain that He is coming soon, uncertain when. If worldly-minded, we shall dislike waiting thus. Hence the Bride in Rev. 22:17 says, “Come;” and again “he that heareth” is invited to say, “Come.”

So the Lord in Luke 12 would have His servants on the watch, that, when He knocks, they may open to Him immediately. Figures are meant to be not loose but vivid expressions. The faithful should be as it were behind the door; that, when the Master's knock is heard, it may be opened forthwith. If Martha served, Mary waited at His feet. Martha was energetic in her way; but the work He prizes most is to begin and go on learning of Him, and in His absence to be waiting for Him. Only love can make a good servant; so Christ came in love and will return in victory. Love is intent on the good of another without a thought of self-seeking; and we best know what that is by seeing it perfectly in Him. But next to waiting is working; for love must for Him serve others in a world of

sin and misery, as He did.

But it is of the greatest moment to believe that not the church merely, but “the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” It is the Holy Ghost Who leads the church to welcome Christ. Whatever one's love to souls may be, Christ ought to be the first object. Can “the Spirit” ever make a mistake? Alas! those that expect progress and victory in the absence of Christ dishonor the Spirit, when He so distinctly inspires the Bride to say, “Come.” It is not enthusiastic fancy, it is the true hope, to be always saying, “Come.” “The Spirit” and the Bride say so; the newly converted one also, he that hears, can and is called to join in the cry, “Come.” For he has nothing to fear from the Savior. Again, the waiting one ought assuredly to be the most zealous in serving. Hence the invitation in the same verse to any sinner to “come and take life's water freely.” It is a just reproach if our hope of His speedy return does not make us more in earnest for souls, than we should have been without it.

But it is not yet a question of the world. The Lord Jesus will ask the Father for the world (Psa. 2) and will then come to reign. Israel repentant shall surely be restored to their own land. Hence, as we read in Num. 34, when He closes His present priesthood, He will surely cause the man-slayer (typifying the Jew) to come before the judge, and then be reinstated in his inheritance. No Christian should be so ignorant of scripture as to think that this earth must ever abide as it now is groaning in its ruin and misery.

Yet the apostle (2 Thess. 2) is explicit that, ere deliverance comes, all these lands which boast of their light will unite to abandon revelation and Christ in “apostasy” or open rebellion against God. Thereon shall the Lord be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and on them that obey not the gospel. The old Roman Empire is to be revived (Rev. 17:8): present changes are but preparatory to that crisis. Italy is not only to be a united kingdom, but will play a greater part than men look for who believe not the prophecies of God. Alas! the lands that have been signally favored, ungrateful as they are, must become the darkest and most daring. Thus things will become worse and worse, as the apostle warned in 2 Tim. 3, till there is a godless and total wrench from the confession of Christianity. Where did the church begin? Where was the central seat of empire when the Son of God was rejected and crucified? Apostasy will develop itself at Jerusalem, and the Beast at Rome will sustain the Anti-Christ, or willful king, in Jerusalem. Both will yet unite, as they did of old against the Lord and His Christ. (See Rev. 13; 19).

The true value of prophecy is to believe before, not after, it comes to pass. If you wait till its accomplishment, this will be your ruin. Do not occupy your mind with individual Jews returning to their own land, which is but to prepare a people for the Anti-Christ. Give the Jews the gospel. The Russian power covets the Holy Land. But we find in Ezek. 38; 39 that, instead of succeeding it, Gog, is to perish there. The Western powers will have been destroyed by the Lord Jesus even before Gog falls. Our place and privilege as Christians is to look for His receiving us to Himself for the Father's house, before He appears for the destruction of His foes wherever they be.

Chapter 33

To Depart and Be With Christ

The full purpose of divine grace is clearly made known: the believer shall be like and with Christ eternally. But if his departure takes place while the Lord Jesus is on high, scripture also plainly declares that the departed is at once with Christ which is positive gain, far beyond remaining in the body.

It is true that the coming of the Lord Jesus is the God-given hope of the Christian, who is enjoined to live and walk in this daily expectation. No less true is the intermediate blessedness, if he be summoned to be absent from the body. and present with the Lord; in the language of the same apostle, it is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. As this then is the testimony of scripture, it is important that it should be well weighed, and that its enjoyment by the Spirit of God should be cultivated in the power of the new life. Only we are called to maintain, also unweakened, that Christ, the believer's life, is his blessed hope; as we know well that until His return none can bear His heavenly likeness. The deep impression of the heart's longing to be with Christ was recently made on the writer when visiting a loved and aged saint, an honored servant of the Lord. Without weakening the precious truth of our Lord's coming, said he, “I do long to go, that I may experience the blessedness of what it is to be with Christ; though I know it will be waiting-time there, until the church shall be with, like, and for her Lord and Bridegroom.” His words, given in substance, were a challenge to the heart whether Christ have practical supremacy over everything else, as it should be with every saint and servant of the Lord. Is it so that Christ Himself is the governing object, either in living for Him or in readiness to go at His call? The associated scriptures, if calmly meditated upon, are calculated to speak to heart and conscience of the Lord's grace in salvation, life, and service. The place of the departed with Christ is mentioned in three significant scriptures. First in Luke 23 the penitent malefactor is told by the Savior, in answer to his faith, that he should be that very day with Him in paradise. Thus did sovereign grace abound over sin in extreme circumstances for a dying robber and the dying Savior. To the former it was the first death under man's hand. But the Lord Jesus died not only as the righteous martyr, but as the holy spotless victim under the hand of a sin-hating God. Marvelous the grace that could lend a ready ear to such a sinner, both saving him there and then, and fitting him to be at once with Himself. “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” It was the same sovereign grace flowing through the death of the One of Whom he who calls himself the chief of sinners could say at a later day, “The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Whilst it is truly blessed for a soul when saved to go at once to the Savior, there is the great privilege of living and suffering for Him where He is despised, rejected, and unknown. None so fully knew and proved this as the apostle Paul. He in glory Who by the revelation of Himself in sovereign grace as “Jesus” so won his heart, that He became his one absorbing object ever after. Crucified with Christ as to his former self, he could say, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;” hence to reproduce Christ in walk and ways was his grand aim.

To him by the Spirit we are indebted for the scriptures testifying to the blessedness of the disembodied state with the place it had in his own soul. In Phil. 1 (an epistle where true Christian

experience is fully given) he declares of himself, “For to me to live is Christ,” adding further, “and to die is gain.” Thus living Christ day by day is a precious reality, but to die exceeds it. His own desire was to depart and be with the One he served; but devotion to his Lord caused him to pause, saying, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ,” as the R.V. puts it, “for it is very far better.” This in no wise weakens the blessed heavenly hope. For ch. iii. ends with “Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Lord Jesus as Savior, who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.”

Thus if the hope of full likeness to Him, Who is now glorified, awakened the longing to be with Him, he in the spirit and love of his blessed Lord was willing to remain and serve Him in His saints; yea, for them it was needful. Precious the experience in heart and purpose! The resignation was to stay in the body and serve others, rather than have his personal longing gratified by going thus out of it to be thus with Christ. This truly is in character with what grace gave rise to in 2 Corinthians, where the same apostle said to the saints whom he loved and served, “Death worketh in us but life in you” (chap. iv.). His sufferings in service for their sake, though knowing the afflictions it involved, would work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We may see that it is after speaking of the earthly and heavenly body at the opening of chap. 5 that he describes three states of the Christian: clothed upon, when mortality will be swallowed up of life; at home in the body and absent from the Lord; and absent from the body and present with the Lord. Of the last he says, “We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” To be willing rather to go testified to the supreme place Christ had in the soul, above everything and person. It manifested also that Christ governed the heart as to heaven above and all circumstances below; heightened with the joy of being with the Lord even without the glorified body.

The lesson may be new to some, but had been gone through and evidently learned by the beloved saint whose experience suggested this paper; and since then his wish has been gratified, as he is now absent from the body and present with the Lord. To those left here the lesson remains, to awaken affection and devotion in deepened communion and service, willing to go or remain till He come. Meanwhile be it our aim that whether present or absent, we be well-pleasing unto Him.

God in grace grant it to every servant for His name's sake. G.G.

Chapter 34

Differences of Dispensation

These differences of dispensation are the displays of God's glory; and therefore of all importance and most essential, because a positive part of His glory. The law maintained His majesty and title to claim obedience; as the gospel displayed His grace, and gave the obedience of a child. To say that the breaking down of the middle wall of partition, and the accomplishment of the glorious work by which it was effected, produced only an official difference (because man had life, and man was forgiven, or forborne with in view of it), is to say that the display of God's glory was an unessential thing: the display of all His glorious wisdom, power, and love, in that mighty work which stands alone in heaven and earth, the object of angels' research. Was it unessential to them, who found scarce even an official difference, though doubtless it affected their position, to see Him, Who created them, nailed to the tree in that mighty and solitary hour which stands aloof from all before and after? Let us only remember that dispensations are the necessary displays of God's glory, and we shall soon feel where we are brought by what makes mere official difference out of them.

Besides, the difference is very great indeed as to man. It is everything as to his present affections, as to his life; because God puts forth power, power too which works in man through faith, according to the display He makes of Himself. And, therefore, the whole life in its working, in its recognition of God, is formed on this dispensational display. And this is the field of responsibility too. Thus, if God reveals Himself to Abraham as Almighty, Abraham is to live and walk in the power of that name; and so of the promises given to him. Israel is to dwell in the land as the redeemed people of Jehovah—their affections, ways, responsibility, and happiness, flowing from what God was to them as having placed them there. So [no less is what God is] to us, the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself being the great distinguishing fact, with the knowledge He affords. Because all this is what faith ought to act upon; and the life which we live in the flesh we live by faith, for the just shall live by faith. Hence the Lord does not hesitate to say, “This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” That could not have been the life of those before. Had they then not life? Nay, but it could not be stated in that way: their life was not that; and to undo these differences is to make a life without affections, character, responsibility—in a word, without faith. You cannot do it; for, to us, to believe is to live. The more you succeed in calling them to one thing, the more you succeed in stifling divine affections, and active human responsibility—destroying, as far as may be, divine communion, and frustrating divine grace—the more the glory and energy of faith is null, and hence God's glory in us. J. N. D.

Chapter 35

Dwellers on Earth: Part 1

It is both a happy and a safe place to be an inquirer: happy, because it keeps the soul in direct intercourse with the Lord, for we must inquire in His temple; safe, because His word will be regarded as that which is to search and guide us, rather than as a subject for the speculation of our minds. But we are naturally prone to be impatient of the place of inquirers, and readily fall in with a theory, which, though it may embody great features of truth, hinders the direct application of the truth to our consciences and affections.

Whilst we are thus impatient of inquiring in the temple in the attitude of worshippers, we are no less impatient of inquiring among ourselves. Self-confidence will lead a few to dogmatize; while, to save the trouble of thinking and judging for themselves, the many will follow on in the wake of dogmatic teaching. The result is opposing theories; and then all the help which one might afford another is lost. When Christians, with the single desire of ascertaining the mind of God, have inquired one of another, as in His presence, concerning the meaning of scriptures, how many a crude thought has been shaped! how many a precious thought has been disentangled! while some imaginative mind has perhaps been checked in carrying out a particular truth beyond its limit. Thus too have “hearts been knit together in love, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding;” all have been edified, all have been comforted. And can we only say that such things were? May the Lord, in His abounding grace over all our sin, grant to us in His own time such profit and refreshment again!

I would now desire briefly to inquire as to the expression, “they that dwell on the earth,” which so frequently occurs in the Revelation. Is it to be understood as applied universally, or within certain geographical limits, or as expressing the moral condition of a class?

The following are the passages in the Revelation in which the expression occurs:

1—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” (iii. 10).

2—And they cry with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth” (vi. 10)?

3— And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound” (viii. 13)!

4— “And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth” (11:9, 10).

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath

but a short time” (12:12).

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written, in the book of life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world” (13:6-8).

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live” (13:12-14).

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, 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” (14:6, 7).

9. — “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (17:1, 2).

10.— “And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (17:8).

In reading these passages, there is a great deal to intimate that they do express the moral condition of a class. In the original the participle is invariably used, whether our translators have rendered it “them that dwell on,” or “inhabiters of,” “the earth.” This of itself is presumptive evidence that the expression has reference to quality; i.e. that there is a certain class of persons largely introduced into the scene of the Revelation, characterized as “dwellers on the earth.” This presumption is greatly strengthened by the dwellers on earth being found in contrast with another class, also mentioned in the Revelation, “dwellers in heaven” (or literally, “tabernaclers in heaven”). “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” —literally, “tabernacle in heaven” (chap. 13:6). And then follows in verse 8, “and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written, in the book of life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world.” We have indeed in this passage heaven and earth locally contrasted; but is there not a moral contrast between the two classes also?—heaven giving its impress to those who tabernacle there, and earth its impress to the dwellers thereon.

But this is not a point to be settled philologically, which is rarely satisfactory to the spiritual mind. It will often be found at fault; when dependence on the Holy Ghost, as a present guide into all truth, will furnish the internal evidence for a solid and sound interpretation.

The expression, “inhabiters of the earth,” cannot well be regarded as universal, because we find the expression, “people, kindreds, tongues, and nations,” and in close connection, yet not synonymous, with it. “And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because those two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.” (See also xiii. 6-8; xiv. 6, 7).

(To be continued', D.V.)

Chapter 36

Dwellers on Earth: Part 2

Is the expression to be strictly limited geographically? For that there is a special local sphere, in which the closing scene of the Revelation is laid, is apparent to many. It would appear that by “the earth” in the Revelation is meant what we regard as the civilized world: that a special geographical sphere into which the light has come, and at least externally remained, however really it may have become darkness, is readily conceded. But, in allowing all this, the several passages in the Revelation, where the expression “them that dwell on the earth” occurs, will be found readily to bear a moral meaning. It is a class who, with all the outward profession of the light, acknowledging even the truth of the testimony in the word of God, both to the present grace of the gospel and to the coming judgment on the world, nevertheless have their interests exclusively on the earth. There may be an actual crisis, as undoubtedly there will be, when this will be clearly manifested; yet, as a principle, it is one of the deepest practical importance to recognize the light in which “dwellers on the earth” are regarded by God.

The two great subjects of the testimony of the Holy Ghost are the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. When these two connected truths are received into the soul by the teaching of the Spirit, they necessarily sever it from the absorbing power of earthly interests. Take the cross, for example. “They are enemies to the cross of Christ who mind earthly things.” On the other hand, take the resurrection. “If ye then be risen with Christ... set your affection (the same as “mind,” in the former quotation) on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3).

The great morale of the gospel, if I may so speak, is heaven as a present enjoyable reality, as the home of our affections, the center of our interests. This is indeed a wondrous truth; but how little do we know the power of it in our souls! The characteristic of our present calling is, that it is “heavenly.” We are addressed as “holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling.” Our true tabernacle is in heaven; our only Priest is in heaven. The Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth the heavenly worship, which faith alone can recognize in direct contrast with earthly worship, which the senses could recognize. The priest of the Jews was a visible person; the sacrifices, tangible objects; the temple, a material structure: all beautiful and orderly, and suitable to the system with which God Himself had connected them; but, to faith, they are mere shadows of glorious and abiding realities. The heart of man naturally lingers about the shadows; and the full-blown evil of the Judaizing tendency, with which the apostle dealt so sternly, is now become habitual to the thoughts of Christians, and has helped to form the characteristic of “dwellers on the earth.” Judaism has been taken as the pattern of what men call Christianity, and thus Christianity itself is regarded as a mere improvement or refinement of Judaism, instead of being regarded according to the apostle as its direct contrast. “The new piece has been added to the old garment, and the rent is become worse.” “The new wine has been put into old bottles,” and all the liquor is soon gone.

But, to turn again to our calling. We are exhorted to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called (Eph. 4:1). This implies the knowledge of our “calling.” It is a “high calling.” The word

rendered “high” is the same as that rendered “above” in Col. 3 “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” This explains its meaning: we are called of God from beneath to above, from earth to heaven. We are locally and bodily on this earth and in this world, yet we belong not to either; even as the Lord Himself said of us when here, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Hence also the pilgrim and stranger character of the saint: heaven is his home, though actually he is away from it; and oh, that we as ardently desired to be with Christ where He is, as He desires to have us with Him! So entirely is heaven regarded as our home, that the apostle, in speaking of those whom God by His grace had quickened, affirms them to be “raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” God has done this for us, however feeble may be our apprehension of its blessedness. The only place as it were, in which we can now sit down and take a calm survey of all around us, is heaven. “Our conversation,” rather our citizenship, “is in heaven “; and this is stated in a passage in contrast with minding “earthly things” (Phil. 3). It is from heaven too that we “look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

On the other hand “dwellers upon the earth” can only regard Christ as coming in the character of a judge. It must necessarily be so; because the coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth is invariably represented in scripture as coming in judgment, in order to introduce righteousness and blessing into the earth. The popular thought of Christ's coming is in judgment. This indeed is a truth, and a most important one; but it quite overlooks, and, as it were, overleaps, the great truth of Christ's coming with respect to His body the church, which will not be in judgment, but in deliverance. He comes not to the earth, but to meet the saints in the air. He comes to receive His own unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also.

We then, as “heavenly,” wait for the Savior (not the Judge) from heaven. We then “wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, that delivered us from the wrath to come.” If by faith we take our place as tabernacling in heaven, such a distinctive hope appears to us as suitable as it is blessed. But if, declining from our high calling, we settle on the earth, then Christ's coming can only be the expectation of dreaded judgment; for the great event of Christ's coming must necessarily take its character from the point from which we look at it, from heaven or from earth. The day of the Lord, so often mentioned in the Old Testament, is invariably connected with the thought of judgment on the earth.

The consideration of the peculiarity of our calling and the distinctiveness of our hope, will very naturally lead us to consider the expression, “those that dwell on the earth,” as characteristic. Moralists, philanthropists, and politicians, all recognize something valuable in Christianity, and use it as helpful to their own ends; and thus has Christianity been dragged down from its lofty eminence, till almost all that is distinctive is lost amidst so many elements which are foreign. The long continued attempt to apply Christianity to the world, merely as an aid to its civilization, has led to the loss of even the theory of the church. And if things progress in this line, I can readily believe that nothing will be so offensive to “the dwellers on the earth” as the assertion of the peculiar privileges and special hope of the church.

Erratum

In last month's B.T. p. 377, col. 2, 1. 5 for “in” read “to.”

Erratum

in last B.T. p. 4, col. 1, last line, for “own” read “work of.”

Erratum

in last No. p. 31, col. 2, line 2, read, but it treats of P. 32, col. 1, line 4 should be interchanged with 5.

Chapter 38

The Promise of the Father: Part 1

Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. Never had intercourse been so fraught with healing and joy to publicans and sinners. The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. He was come to save what was lost. Never had saints of God listened to such words of sweetness whereby was disclosed to them the bosom of His Father, which He, the only-begotten Son, knew so well. “The Word became flesh,” one of them could say, “and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten from a Father) full of grace and truth.” In the simple tale of the Gospels, we have the blessedness of the disciples in the presence of the Lord. There is no distance nor reserve. He speaks to them face to face; He calls them and treats them face to face; He calls them and treats them as His friends. And oh, what a friend was He! Blessed pattern of all meekness, of lowliness unknown, of patience that could not be wearied, of grace that flowed out the more, the more He was wounded in the house of His friends, like a sweet herb that breathes fragrance when trodden by the heedless foot of man!

It is indeed sadly true that His presence rendered more conspicuous the infirmities, the dangers, the sins, and the enemies of God's people. But never did murmur break from His lips Who had undertaken their cause—God's cause. Notwithstanding their unbelief, their pride, their insensibility, and their perverseness, never did He complain, “Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? Wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?” Instead of saying, “Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?” Jesus, the good Shepherd, looks onward through the vista of His sufferings to the day when He would say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” Instead of saying, “Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?” He, and He alone, could say, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

It was assuredly a crisis when Jesus appeared. God had given His law; but holy, just, and good as the commandment was, it could not better, and was not meant to better, the heart of man. It detected and condemned what issued thence; for through law is the knowledge of sin. Prophets, too, had been sent by the Lord God of their fathers. But what could those avail save to show the importunate love of Him Who rose up betimes and sent them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling-place? They alas! mocked and misused His prophets “until the wrath of Jehovah arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” In this state of things He appeared. Truly we may say that in the person of Jesus God brought Himself nigh to the sinner. But in vain. Jesus must suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust. So must He bring us to God. All might bear Him witness and wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; and surely had there been one pure thought in the heart of man, one feeling undepraved by sin, Jesus must have drawn it forth. But there was none—nothing Godward. His presence, therefore, could

but demonstrate, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. “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.”

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God raised up (Acts 2.).” The grand basis of blessing was laid. God's righteousness was declared not only at this time, but for the passing over of sins that were past in His forbearance.

Still, while in that death all the past dealings of God were divinely vindicated, Christ Himself, in anticipating His approaching departure, hints at a new order of things: an order consequent upon His rejection by the world, and exaltation to the right hand of God. And was it not worthy of Him, that, when Jew and Gentile joined to show their implacable enmity to God, He should then show the exceeding riches of His grace to them?

From Christ, I say, risen and seated at God's right hand on high a new and unprecedented and peculiar work of God begins. Their sins had been borne away. They were sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. They did believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. If a work of God commenced then, it was necessarily something above and beyond the blessings they at that time enjoyed, however great these might have been.

Both before His death and after His resurrection the Lord had told His disciples of the promise of the Father. He had spoken of another Comforter Whom the Father was to give them, an ever-abiding Comforter (John xiv.). In chapter xv. He speaks of the same Comforter as not yet come, One Whom He would send from the Father. In chapter xvi. we have further particulars still.

“These things (their, as well as His, sufferings from the world) I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” He had told them that He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven, and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself.

On these two truths, deeply interesting as they are, it is not my present purpose to dwell. Suffice it to observe here, how closely bound up with them is the truth of the intermediate descent of the Holy Ghost. It hangs upon the departure of Christ to the Father. So peerless was the gift, “that,” said our Lord, “it is expedient that I go away.” Wherein then was this inestimable preciousness that outweighed the presence of the Lord Jesus? For Him they had forsaken all; and more than all He had been to them. He is about to go. What could turn a loss so grievous and seemingly so irretrievable into positive gain? Was it solely that the Crucified was about to take His seat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, crowned with glory and with honor? Was it needful merely for the display of God's righteousness in vindication of His Son? “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away.” The reason, and the only reason stated here is, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” (To be

continued, D.V.)

Chapter 39

The Promise of the Father: Part 2

Luke 24:42; Acts 1:4

It is clearly impossible to lower the language of these chapters (John 14-16) to anything short of the Holy Ghost Himself. Effects and manifestations are beyond doubt enlarged on elsewhere; but such is not the theme here. It is the Spirit personally, the Comforter Himself. It is One Who could be described as a teacher, remembrancer, testifier and convicter—One Who could be said to come, hear, and speak. It is a really present and acting person Who leaves heaven when Jesus ascends there, and Who, as thus sent down, takes His place with and in the disciples, only on the footing of the accomplishment of that work to which the heavenly glory is the only adequate answer in the estimate of God, however necessary it might be to all His earthly purposes: a footing clearly impossible in the days of the Lord's flesh.

Even then, while here below, the body of Jesus was the temple of God; but this could be predicated of none else. Elizabeth and Zacharias and (from his mother's womb) John were filled with the Holy Ghost; but upon Jesus alone in that day did the Holy Ghost descend and abide. It was not so with His disciples, any more than with believers before them. They, unlike Jesus, could not righteously be the temple of God, until the blood-shedding was actually effected and accepted; even as in the consecration of the priests (in Lev. 8). Aaron is first anointed alone and without blood (ver. 12); afterward, the blood is put upon his sons and him (verses 23, 24), previous to their being all anointed together (ver. 30), for the anointing oil is the well-known symbol of the unction from the Holy One. Thus Jesus was first anointed Himself with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38); afterward being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, “He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Having borne the wrath of God, and also annulled by death him that had its power, thus removing every obstacle, He was enabled to send the Holy Ghost to dwell in the believers; so that the apostle could appeal to them, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you (1 Cor. 3:16)?”

Plainly also the miraculous conception of Jesus is totally distinct from His anointing, though both were of the Holy Ghost. As man born of the virgin, He was the Son of God. But besides this, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus baptized and entering upon His public service: in other words, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Analogously, we find as to believers, that their life and relationship to God, and their anointing by the Holy Ghost, are quite distinct. When Jesus arose, He could say, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” But they were not yet anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Later but before His ascension, He says, “Behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Waiting, they found the sure promise of the Father. The Holy Ghost was given. They were anointed then and not before. Nor was this anointing, one need hardly add, a boon conferred there and then only; for the apostle in addressing the Corinthians writes, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in

Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." These are assuredly not signs and wonders wrought by the hands or tongue, but the blessed presence and actings of the Spirit in the saints. Compare also 1 John 2:20-27.

In principle, then, the coming of the promised Spirit was contingent on the departure of Jesus; and in fact, it was when He took His seat as the glorified Man in heaven, that the Spirit was sent down. Assembled together with the disciples previous to His ascension, He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me: for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence" (Acts 1:4, 5). The next chapter records the accomplishment of the promise on the day of Pentecost. The Comforter was given. Now in them was He Who was promised to abide with them forever (John 14). The third person of the Trinity was now, and permanently, present in them, as truly as the second person had been with them before He ascended to heaven. The Holy Ghost was the abiding witness, as His presence in the disciples was the new and wondrous fruit, of the glorification of Jesus in heaven.

Are the operations of the Spirit of God from the beginning denied? In no wise. Creation, providence and redemption, all speak of Him. His energy is to be traced in every sphere of God's dealings. Who moved upon the face of the waters—strove with man before the deluge—filled Bezaleel with understanding and all manner of workmanship—enabled Moses to bear the burden of Israel, or others to share it? By Whom wrought Samson? By Whom prophesied Saul? It was by the Spirit of the Lord. And as in their early national history His good Spirit instructed the people, even so could the prophet assure the poor returned remnant, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you." Were any born anew? They were born of the Spirit; and the blessed and holy actings of faith in the elders who obtained a good report were, beyond controversy, the results of His operation. So far, the way of God is still and necessarily the same. Jesus set not aside in the least the need of the Spirit's intervention. He proclaimed its necessity as a sure irreversible truth— "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Far from weakening its place, He rather gave it a prominence never so clearly enunciated before, though of course always true.

Life, peace, and sonship (while all are communicated and known by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost), are in no sense the presence of the Comforter. We have seen that the disciples possessed these privileges before the Lord Jesus ascended. They are therefore entirely distinct from the promise of the Father, which the disciples did not possess, and which none ever did or could possess till Jesus was glorified. The presence of the Comforter is clearly the distinctive blessing since Pentecost. It was never enjoyed before, though the Spirit had wrought, and wrought savingly as regards believers at all times. The signs and powers which attested His presence at the first were extraordinary (χαρ■σματα) and even more distinct from the gift (δωρε■) of Himself to abide with the Christian forever.

Chapter 40

First Records of Thermal Springs

DR. P. JAMES is right in preferring the Revised to the A. V. of Gen. 36:24. Anah found, not “mules” but, “hot springs” in the wilderness. So the Vulgate rendered the word from early days correctly, followed by Wiclif and the Wiclifite, and in the Douay Bible. The Septuagint makes the word an unmeaning proper name, τ■ν 'Ιαμε■ν (το■ 'Ι Aq. et Sym.), having lost the sense; and later Jews were misled by the Talmud, which loved to indulge in fables about “mules,” some of them filthy as in this case. The Samaritan text for yemim has Emim as in Gen. 14:5, which as an appellative means “terrors” or the like. This seems to be the source of “giants” in the Targum of Onkelos; and so the Pseudo-Jonathan.

The word yemim is never used for “mules.” “Mule” in Hebrew is peredi or pirdah). Rechesh is also translated so, and “dromedary” too, as well as “swift beast.” Etymologically Y. is akin to “hot,” and modern philologists agree in the meaning of “hot springs.” Indeed the horse does not seem to have entered Palestine till the days of David, when we first hear also of “mules,” which were probably imported as the law forbade any such mixture (Lev. 19:19). In the N. T. we do not read of the mule, but of the ass used as in ancient times.

But any of our readers who might like to peruse this little treatise of the discovery of Thermal waters will find reliable information in Dr. J.'s pamphlet.

Chapter 41

The Force of Regeneration

"REGENERATION" (παλιγγενεσ■α, Titus 3:5) does not mean "being born again" (■ναγεννα■ω, or γ. ■νωθεν). It is used, besides the passage about "the washing of regeneration," only in the end of Matt. 19 for the millennial state. The "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is a distinct thing from the "regeneration," which last signifies a change from one state to another.

Chapter 42

Forgiveness and Positive Grace

While final judgment refers to, and is measured by, our responsibility, forgiveness cannot be separated from our entrance into the presence of God (though in experience there may be progress as to this), because it is by a work of Christ in which the veil was rent and God fully revealed. This the great day of atonement showed; for there the blood was brought in to God, and yet it was for sins, but sins as defiling God's presence as well as their being all carried away. But at the brazen altar there was both the love that gave, and the value of the sacrifices; so that divine favor and complacency were brought in: “therefore doth my Father love me” (John 10). Hence sin-offerings and burnt-offerings were offered; but they both referred to acceptance, negatively and positively; not simply to the holiness of God as the blood on the day of atonement. We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, but according to the riches of His grace.

Chapter 43

Fragment: Baptism

Baptism clearly signifies death; and it is not the baptizing but the coming out of the water which can be applied to resurrection [as in Col. 2:12]. The giving of life is in no way the sense of baptism even as a figure, but leaving the life of Adam by death (the death of Christ), and entrance through that gate into a wholly new place and position.

Chapter 44

Fragment: Light

IT was the saying of the famous Joshua Scaliger that “he who has lived to throw light on a single passage of scripture has not lived in vain.” Much more becoming and truly blessed is his place who has no pretension to throw light on scripture, but to remove the obstructions that the light divine in it may freely shine. For scripture as a whole is God's testimony to Christ, the True Light. The same faith that appreciates Him denies that real light can be had through any saint or means on earth; and those who are made light in Him would be the last to claim it as of themselves. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Chapter 45

Fragment: Priesthood and Advocacy

The High Priest has to do with our access to God; the Advocate, with our communion with the Father and His government of us as children. The Epistle to the Hebrews treats of the ground of access, and shows us to be perfected forever. The priestly intercession does not apply to sins in that respect. It brings mercy and grace to help in time of need here; but we are perfected forever before God. Yet communion is necessarily interrupted by the least sin or idle thought—yea, really had been practically, if not judicially, before the idle thought was there. Here the advocacy of John comes in, “If any one sin;” and the soul is restored. But there is never imputation of sin to the believer.

Chapter 46

Fragment: the Historical Church

The mystery of lawlessness was working (2 Thess. 2:7) in the apostles' days. Paul withstood it in the energy of the Holy Spirit; but after his departure that power was gone. The historical church never had the two great fundamental principles of Christianity, viz. perfection in Christ (“by one offering He hath perfected forever”), and the presence and leading power of the Holy Spirit down here. These were supplanted by the sacraments and the clergy. J.N.D.

Chapter 47

Fragments: Cain and Abel; Utterances of the Cross; Dying Thou Shalt Die

1. CAIN AND ABEL.

Abel’s sacrifice was not a sin-offering. Neither Cain nor Abel came before God with the conscience oppressed by a known transgression. It is the state of each of them that is in view, the state of man before God: the one owning himself driven justly out from His presence because of evil, yet drawing near to Him according to His grace; the other, the natural man insensible to sin. In God's answer to Cain (Gen. 4:7), the subject is positive transgression; and this confirms the thought that in the passage an offering for sin is meant, and not sin itself simply.

2. THE UTTERANCES OF THE CROSS.

The cross of Christ said, Man will not have God, even when He comes in grace. But it said also, God in infinite grace spared not His own Son, in order to reconcile man to Himself (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

3. DYING THOU SHALT DIE.

WHAT a horrible thing, if Adam had been able to eat of the tree of life, and to fill the world with immortal sinners, having no more fear of death than of God! But He allowed it not.

Chapter 48

Reflections on Galatians 6:3-6

Gal. 6:3-6

THE law of Christ tends to keep the soul subdued and humble in contrast with Moses' law with which the Galatians were so enamored. The sense of divine grace is then deep and real in the soul, and preserves from inflation, to which the flesh is ever prone. Hence the apostle says, “For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (ver. 3). Time was when Paul thought himself to be something. Recall his list of legal attainments and advantages as given in Phil. 3:5, 6. He then thought himself the best of men and gloried in flesh to the utmost. But how vast the change when the light of God was let into his soul! How complete the transformation after his memorable meeting with the glorified Christ! The best of men discovered himself to be the chief of sinners; for whom nothing but sovereign grace and mercy could avail. “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:12-16). Never afterward did he “think himself to be something.” The proud haughty Pharisee became the lowliest of men, the closest possible follower of a rejected and suffering Lord. Only grace can accomplish this. Law tends to puff up. It flatters flesh, or at least flesh uses it in this way. Man with the law in his hand thinks himself competent to worship God and to serve Him.

With this humility and brokenness, the apostle connects heart-searching and examination of one's ways. “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden” (vers. 4, 5). Verse 4 in no way contradicts verse 2. In the earlier verse it is a question of sympathy with one another's infirmities. We are to be helpers of each other, bearing one another's burdens (Bρη). Here it is responsibility where each must stand alone; “every man shall bear his own burden” (φορτον). Responsibility cannot be shifted to other shoulders; each individual saint will have to render his own account to God. Solemn consideration! We are apt to lose sight of the judgment-seat of Christ where all that we have done in the body will be gone into by the Lord. But to overlook it is dangerous. Grace does not do away with responsibility, but rather deepens it.

The point before the mind of the Spirit here is that everyone should look to his own ways, that in the coming day he may have rejoicing as to himself. The word is needful and wholesome beyond all doubt. The heart is so treacherous that there is always a tendency to be occupied with the ways and failings of others rather than with our own. It is perfectly possible to complain loudly of a mote in the eye of another and be quite unconscious that a beam resides in one's own. A great advantage is thus given to the enemy, which he is never slow to avail himself of, to the sorrow and shame of the saints and above all to the Lord's dishonor. Let us esteem such ways, beloved brethren. While not overlooking evil in others, let us correct our own ways, remembering that each has to answer to the Lord for himself. Beware of mounting the judgment-seat; it is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A word as to Heb. 13:17 may be useful here. There the apostle bids the saints to obey their leaders; “for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” This must not be misunderstood. The verse by no means teaches that spiritual guides are responsible for the souls placed under their care. Such an idea may suit priestly pretenders, but not the Spirit of God. Each man stands on his own responsibility to God, as we have seen. But all who serve among the Lord's saints are accountable to Him for their behavior; and this is what the apostle has before him in Heb. 13:17. The Lord will inquire by-and-by as to whether the diseased have been strengthened, and the broken ones healed. On the other hand, let those cared for look well to it that they cause no unnecessary grief to such as love and care for them for the Lord's sake.

To return to our chapter, we next meet with a word as to the temporal support of laborers. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (ver. 6). If spiritual things are freely sown, it ought not to be a great matter if the temporal is reaped in return. God looks for this from His own. It is not only the due of His servants, but His due, which He never foregoes, though all is on the ground of grace. The apostle's exhortation in this place is purposely general, not local. Suppose in a given place, the saints are served by those who need no return from them, are they free from all responsibility as before the Lord? Assuredly not. The church of God is one, and the laborers are one; in such a case the heart must find vent for its bounty elsewhere. This is an important principle for all to remember. A harvest of blessing will always be reaped where it is acted upon in faith and love.

Chapter 49

Reflections on Galatians 6:7-10

Chap. 6:7-10

God looks to see the fruit of the Spirit developed in His own in every way. He is thus glorified in His saints, while theirs is the blessing and profit of it.

The apostle goes on to show that saints in their walk on the earth are as subject to the general principles of the government of God as any. “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; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (vers. 7, 8). Our souls are apt to forget this, and to act as if, because subjects of grace, we are free from responsibility. In no wise. Grace can never be forfeited: every believer will infallibly be carried safely through the wilderness and presented in glory; but on the road the unchangeable principles of God's government touch us even as others. Flesh is not to be indulged: they that are Christ's have crucified it with its passions and lusts. It is to be treated as an evil thing—neither place nor quarter is to be given to it. This is our solemn responsibility all the way along.

Alas how many genuine saints have reaped a bitter harvest through the folly of their ways Lot is a solemn instance in the Old Testament. His harvest was unquestionably corruption in many respects, yet was he “righteous” (2 Peter 2:7, 8). Life everlasting is the blessed crown of the life of the Christian, pursued in the power of the Spirit. Eternal life is viewed here as a future thing rather than as a present possession. The latter is more John's line. In his Gospel and Epistles we are assured again and again that eternal life is ours now in Christ. Paul presents to us the other side of the matter. We shall find it in all its fullness and blessedness, without aught to hinder, in the presence of the Lord in glory.

This should encourage the heart of the believer in the midst of all the trials of the present scene. Often now the foot has to be placed on the neck of some cherished object; often has the knife to be applied to what our poor hearts naturally cling to; but the path will end presently in bliss and glory, where the divine life in us can develope itself without alloy. Thus the apostle exhorts; “and let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (ver. 9). The hands must not be allowed to hang down, however earnestly the heart may suggest it; every good work must be steadily pursued until the Lord Jesus comes. The “due season” is not far distant; then joy will crown the servant's toil. We need especially to remind each other of this now. Latter-day service for Christ is often deeply discouraging in many respects, and the worker is apt to faint on the road or give up in despair. Courage, brethren! the Lord is at hand.

The apostle proceeds to define the sphere in which we should do good, with the order in which the matter should be considered. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (ver. 10). No doubt temporal good is to the front in the exhortation of this place; but we learn nevertheless an important principle as to all service. The church of God has the first claim. It is the circle of Christ's affections and interest in

the earth; and it should be our joy and privilege to serve Him in it in any possible way.

We need to be reminded of this very much in this day. There is a growing tendency in many quarters to make everything of evangelization to the neglect and even disparagement of service amongst Christ's members. This will not do. It misses the mind of God. No doubt there are fewer difficulties in the way of evangelistic labor, and results are apparently larger; but the church of God is the first circle with God nevertheless. It should be so with us. How great the honor to be allowed of God to do good to His own! How highly is it prized in heaven, and with what joy will it be recognized and rewarded' at the judgment seat of Christ!

But our service must not stop short here; “all men” have a claim upon us for what grace has entrusted to our care. The heart of God takes in all, seeking their salvation and blessing. Herein grace differs from law, as we have already observed while examining this epistle. Law addressed one nation only, demanding righteousness from them (alas! finding none); grace on the other hand addresses all alike, offering salvation full and free to all who believe in Jesus. Such is to be the line of our service in this dark scene; first the household of faith, then, as we may be enabled, “all men.”

Chapter 50

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:1

The last chapter gave us with minute detail the new fact on the earth of the sons of Noah after their generations, in their nations, after their tongues, and in their lands. Here were traits and arrangements, unknown to the world before the deluge, and in no degree seen for some time after. Gen. 10 casts invaluable light, found nowhere else, on the rise of those families distributed on the earth, every one after his tongue. It is only in chap. 11 that we find the originating cause and occasion. The previous chapter comes in, not flowing according to historic time, but as a descriptive parenthesis between chaps. 9 and 11. It was of very great importance to give us inspired certainty where men had no adequate record, and no reliable tradition; where pride hastened to disguise or forget a divine judgment which effectually rebuked it. East or west, men set up claims to be indigenous from the first, sprung from their own soil; and if they believed that man was an outcast from Paradise, though in forms disguised by pride, setting up to speak the original language of our primeval parents.

The A. V. fails to express the two thoughts. The speech and the words were alike one. “And the whole earth was of one language (lip) and the words one” (or the same) (Gen. 11:1). The Latin Vulgate gives the literal reflection of the Hebrew text. Moses beyond doubt here goes back to the universal state of mankind for a certain period after the great catastrophe of the flood. Till then and after it, man had but one “lip” and the same words.

There had been ample space before the deluge for the development of many languages. Soon after the murder of Abel had furious Cain gone forth, an unrepentant despairing man, who failed to profit by Jehovah's patience, and dwelt in the land of Nod, away from the scene which even he could not face at ease or unabashed. There is no real ground to accept either von Bohlen's identification with India, or Knobel's with China. Enough for us to know that the land of his “Wandering,” as it means, was toward or in front of the east of Eden. Still less can we identify the city Cain built and called “Enoch” after the name of his son. But the Holy Spirit plainly intimates the rise in his line (not of a rudiment of a different tongue nor of a distinct nationality which we in our ignorance might have thought only natural, but) of science and art, and even the fine arts. The holy wisdom of God took care to apprise His people of the true origin of civic life as well as of nomad, the latter not previous but posterior, of music and its practice in stringed and wind instruments, of the working in copper and iron, of polygamy, and self-occupied verse, the first recorded song of man. It is a picture of man's skill and energy, civilization, letters, and luxury. The Pagans long after attributed these to their spurious gods but real demons. Here we have them shown to be the inventions of men far from God, vainly striving to make the earth of their exile a paradise of their own.

But here first do we learn how, when, where, and why it was that diversity of tongues superseded the “one lip” which had characterized the whole earth hitherto. The original unity of language prevailed for some time after the deluge, as uninterruptedly before it. This is an immense difficulty to such as reason from the existing multiplicity of tongues; for there are confessedly at least 900 in

possession of the earth. Of late the researches of the learned have reduced them to families or groups, and have named these Aryan, Shemitic, and Turanian. But a deeper affinity has disclosed itself to patient, comprehensive, and minute study. For these family groups, whatever their strongly marked distinctions from each other, have been proved to yield decided proofs of common relationship, which cannot be thought accidental but indicative of one source. Thus were scholars forced to the conclusion, neither expected nor desired by most, but opposed strongly to the skepticism of many, that these languages point to a time when was spoken but one and the same tongue, whence all drew those common evidences of flowing from the same fountain-head.

Such was the judgment of A. von Humboldt in treating of the prolific varieties of aboriginal American speech in his contribution to the “Asia Polyglotta,” p. 6 (Paris, 1823). Such too was the conviction of Julius Klaproth in that erudite survey itself of the Asiatic tongues. It is the more striking because the latter's incredulity is daring and undisguised. Nor was any wish more remote from his heart than testifying in result to the truth of inspired history. Yet he declared that, in his comparative tables &c., “the universal affinity of languages is placed in so strong a light that it must be considered by all as completely demonstrated. This does not appear explicable on any other hypothesis than that of admitting fragments of a primary language yet to exist through all the languages of the old and new worlds” (Vorr. § ix.).

But the believer stands on an impregnable and unchanging vantage ground. He receives the fact on the word of God, and therefore in simple faith common to all who are led of the Holy Spirit, apart from all linguistic lore, apart from all historic investigation where so much is difficult and obscure, apart from philosophical discussion where vanity revels in opposing old hypotheses and inventing new ones of the day and the man. He knows the only true God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, His sent One; living of that life eternal he delights to honor that word which is open to Jew or Greek, bond or free. But he is not displeased to note how the adversaries of revelation are compelled to bow to the force of proofs which divine mercy leaves to convince inquirers, even though pursuing their own paths without a care for His truth or glory, perhaps not afraid to gainsay Him now and then, as they are estranged from the life of God by reason of the hardness of their hearts.

Is it objected that these were investigators early in the century? Though one distrusts the childish assumption that recent men have better knowledge or judgment, for such experts are rare, let them learn that in this field no living man has greater claim to be heard than Max Muller; that he is morbidly afraid of mixing up theological arguments with his “Science of Language;” and that his real object was not at all to assert revealed truth, but to show how rash it was to speak of different independent beginnings in the history of human speech, before a single argument had been brought forward to establish the necessity of such an admission. On the contrary he endeavored to show how even the most distant members of the Turanian family (the one spoken in the north, the other in the south of Asia) have preserved in their grammatical organization traces of a former unity. So later he says, in the enthusiasm of his theme, though in terms which a believer could not endorse, “the Science of Language thus leads us up to that summit from whence we see into the very dawn of man's life on earth; and where the words which we have heard so often since the days of our childhood ‘and the whole earth was of one language and of one speech’—assume a meaning more natural, more intelligible, more convincing than they had before.” This is so doubtless to himself and others like him on natural ground; but to him who sets to his seal that God

is true, no evidences or reasonings of man can compare with the certainty, simplicity, or sweetness of God's testimony. If the child accepts it without question, the mature Christian finds in it truth which lifts him far above the summits of philology, and jarring or jealous disputes of philosophers, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth: possibility, probability, necessity are their respective idols, one as vain and unreliable as another.

Chapter 51

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:2-4

How many dialects, how many languages, have on the one hand perished practically, or have on the other sprung really into being and the most extensive use, long since the Christian era! Yet here, on the shortest reckoning for nearly as many centuries since our first parents were created, we have the fact calmly and clearly revealed, which was nowhere else made known and wholly inconsistent with human experience as well as all scientific theory of languages, that there was but one “lip” or (as we and others say) one tongue, the “words” also one and the same. This we believe, without reasoning which is here out of court, from one qualified divinely to give us certainty. For Moses was distinguished above even all other prophets, who had a vision or a dream adequate in the power of the Spirit. But to him mouth to mouth did Jehovah speak openly.

So too did the Son of God, both in the days of His flesh and after He rose from the dead, attest Moses, not only as the channel but as the writer of the Law or Five Books (John 5, Luke 20 and xxiv.). But if in presence of supernatural power sons of Israel “were not afraid to speak against” him living, we need not wonder that, in fallen yet haughty and unbelieving Christendom, professing Christians take their place with infidel Jews, in denying that he wrote aught but the merest shreds. These shreds some of these men do rather pretend (for there is no ground, but their self-sufficiency) to identify among the legends of an Elohist, and a Jehovist, with as many more imaginary hands in the patch-work as the pseudo-criticism may invent to hide its empty and naked impotence. Not that any prophet failed to give the word of God; but Moses, besides the divine authority which attached to what he wrote as well as spoke from Jehovah, had a divine intimacy peculiar to himself, the fruit of which is in no part of the Law more conspicuous or of richer consequence than in the book of Genesis.

“And it came to pass as they journeyed [lit. pulled up their tent-stakes] east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Come, let us make bricks and burn (them) thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and asphalt had they for mortar. And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, whose top [head] (may be) to the heavens; and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (vers. 2-4).

Things were no longer as before God's judgment in the deluge, when men were left, outside paradise, to their own ways without covenant or government. The law which tested innocent Adam in the garden did not apply to himself when an outcast or to his sons who were never there. As fallen men, however, they had conscience, that invaluable monitor universally possessed, which does not fail inwardly to pronounce on right and wrong, or, as scripture says, “to know good and evil.” Nor were they without revelation to and through their first father, brief indeed but of unspeakable moment to fallen man. Other divine intimations also followed, even to Cain, as well as Enoch, Lamech, and Noah: each of deep importance; all together not beyond what the fear of God in every one was bound to weigh, and fairly remember, and might fully profit by.

Only after the flood came in the great principle of divine government laid on man responsibly, never to be revoked to the eternal day. It was not creation left to itself in departure from God, but creation set under government in human hands. Noah walked with God. But Noah, preserved with his family from the destruction which befell the world of ungodly men, failed in an unwatchful hour to govern himself; as his sin and shame gave occasion to the heartless rebellious wickedness of a son, who brought on a curse narrowed to one line instead of overspreading all his seed. But the government, which from God through man abode unreversed, spite of personal flaws does still to this day. For there is no authority except what is from God; and those authorities that exist are established by God.

We have now a new development, in which not one or a few but the race displayed its state. God originally had in blessing men said, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. After the deluge, His word to Noah and his sons still was, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. But mankind, though awed by that judgment, had no care to do His will. Their mind was to keep together. And assuredly they pitched on a region, by its great rivers on either side and its exceeding fertility, eminently suited for their purpose; which was to constitute themselves a universal republic without God. Was it then for man to live by bread alone? So at least they spoke and acted: God was in none of their thoughts. It was the first joint, and public, step of the post-diluvian race. They were without excuse, not only because of the witness to God's eternal power and divinity manifested to them, but from such knowledge of God as Noah, “preacher of righteousness,” professed and testified, backed by such an intervention as the deluge itself fresh in their memory. They glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful. Into what folly in their inward reasonings this led them ere long need not be stated here. For we do not as yet hear of that new plague of Satan, idolatry; but it soon followed, as we may assuredly gather from Josh. 24:2, Rom. 1:20-23.

But we do learn their united purpose, independent of God, yea, in defiance of His will that they should fill the earth. As stone and lime were not furnished by the plain of Shinar, they none the less resolved to build a city and a tower; and they had brick thoroughly burnt for stone, and asphalt, of which abundance was there, for mortar. But their aim (for this it is that mainly determines man's acts and life)—what was their object? “Come (said they) let us build ourselves a city and a tower, whose top (may reach) to the heavens; and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” There is no need to conceive that more was meant in their aspiration, than in the depressing tone of the spies in Deut. 1:28: “the cities are great and walled up to heaven.”

Nothing was farther from their thoughts or from common sense than to rear a pile to save them from another deluge, as some have fancied for them. God had solemnly assured Noah that this was never to be again. If they had nevertheless dreaded it, the highest of lands might have been chosen with that foolish design; certainly not the low-lying plain they settled on. It was a deep-laid human scheme, ignoring God altogether, and in rebellious self-will; it was for “ourselves” throughout. It was not merely a city to live in (which had been from early days), but to “build ourselves a city and a tower,” and with high-flown pretensions. But worse still, “let us make ourselves a name.” What! poor sinners, saved by divine mercy, from the flood that swept all else away! Noah, they well knew, built an altar and offered Burnt offerings. The earth as a whole now changes all that. They sought to themselves a conspicuous center for every eye; they would make

themselves a name, though this belongs only to God, or to a head with an authority delegated of Him. What is man to be accounted, whose breath is in his nostrils?

Yet clearly had they, notwithstanding their self-sufficiency, the fear that accompanies a bad conscience; for what they sought was “lest they should be scattered upon the face of the whole earth.” But therefore it was that Jehovah scattered them. Their forebodings were more than realized in a scattering, by Him Whom they willingly forgot, which immediately and completely dispersed them and their descendants till this day.

Chapter 52

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:5-7

THESE verses are a striking example of the childlike simplicity which, as it characterized the ways of God with man in these early days, is reflected in the divine record, and nowhere more so than in the book of Genesis. There it was in the account of creation in itself (1), and in its varied relations (2). Nor was it only with Adam and Eve, innocent or fallen (3), but with wicked Cain (4) and with righteous Noah (6-9). A similar feature prevails throughout the book, as the expression on the one hand of tender interest and on the other hand of His heart grieved by perverseness and rebellion in those that were the object of His great and countless favors. We see it even with such as Pharaoh (chap. 12) and Abimelech (21), not only with Abraham (12-22), Isaac (26) and Jacob (28), but with Sarah (18:15) and Laban too (31), Hagar also (16; 7-13), and Rebekah (25:23). The same simplicity characterizes the ways as the words of God, and produced like effects on the faithful.

“And Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of Man builded. And Jehovah said, Behold, the people [are] one, and have all one language (lip); and this have they begun to do; and now they will not be hindered in all that they meditate to do. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech (lip)” (vers.5-7).

He Who is not the Creator only but the moral governor, Jehovah, came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of Man builded. No designation suited the occasion but this. For He it is Who concerned Himself with all who stood in moral relation with Him, as He had breathed into the nostrils of their first father the breath of life. In the style of the account He would also impress His people with His calm and full judicial survey of men's ways, though all was known to Him from the beginning (ver. 5). God was in none of their thoughts. They never thought of a temple to His honor being a center for themselves. They built no altar to Jehovah, as Noah did on emerging from the ark. They called not on His name, neither sought they His will. On the contrary, “let us make us a name” was their purpose; “let us build us a city and a tower, whose top [is] unto heaven,” their plan, “lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

It was Jehovah thrown off in open independency; and as He saw and said and wrought before the deluge, so did He now deliberately and righteously deal with this new and daring impiety. We may be assured that those who walked with God had no fellowship with a project of practical atheism. If they forgot Him, it is no wonder that Noah or Shem did not enter their minds. To the exclusion of God, the root of all infidelity, they would make themselves a public center and a striking rallying-place. What did it matter to them that God called man to replenish the earth? Here on this fertile plain, watered by two noble rivers, would they dwell, and construct such a visible symbol of that union which is strength as would keep them together and guard against all danger of scattering. But Jehovah had His plan wholly differing; and as they abandoned both Him and His expressed will, so He made manifest their folly, and perforce scattered them by a simple, peaceful, and effectual means which subsists to this day. How vain is human wisdom in collision with God!

How ineffectual is the prudence that trusts self and does without Him! What sin too!

“And Jehovah said, Behold, the people are one, and have all one language, and this have they begun to do; and now they will not be hindered in all that they meditate to do. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.”

The race had dared to set themselves in direct opposition to Jehovah, Who, in answer to Noah's offering of sweet savor, had guaranteed the continuance of the earth with its seasons, the ground to be cursed no more for man's sake, nor any more every living thing to be smitten as by the deluge. It was not the day for the powers of heaven to be shaken, nor for the kingdom of God to come in power and glory for the earth. But as the principle of government had been set up in Noah, so Jehovah was content to confound man's scheme of union without God, themselves the makers of a center the work of their own device and of their own hands! It was a universal socialism they sought, which Jehovah brought to naught by the confusion of tongues. This compelled them, not only to give up their godless project, but to disperse according to His will and replenish the earth:

What a contrast with God's work in the church! Therein grace gathered from every nation under heaven. There in honor of Him, the righteous Servant of Jehovah (Who suffered for our sins to the uttermost, died, rose, and ascended). His name was the God-given center; and in virtue of one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink of one Spirit. Thus was He Whom all in heaven adore made the object of worship and service for all that believe on earth: a worthy and divine center; else it would have been an idolatrous rival and a derogation from the true God. But on the contrary it is His revealed word that we honor Christ as we honor the Father, Who is only known and possessed by such as thus confess the Son. And in witness of the gracious power of God in Christ, while the government of man was left as it had been, and the effect of divine judgment in divers tongues still subsists, His love wrought in unlettered Jews, become Christians, to proclaim the wonderful works of God in all the tongues of Gentiles.

Still greater or at least wider and more conspicuous will the contrast be when the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven, dominion and glory given Him, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages shall serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Even then manifestly all the peoples, languages, and nations remain, but in blessed harmony around the true center to the glory of God the Father. Only in the eternal state will such distinctions vanish, when God shall be all in all, and His tabernacle be with men.

Chapter 53

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:5-7 (continued)

As the case of the Babel-builders is quite misconceived latterly by some of influence, it seems well to review the observations made by the late Abp. Whately in the third Preliminary Dissertation of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (ed. eighth). Here they are in extenso.

“There is reason to believe that the confusion which is recorded as having occurred at Babel afterward called Babylon, and which caused the dispersion of mankind into various countries, was in reality a dispute among them as to their worship of some god or gods. This at least is certain, that the scheme mentioned in Gen. 11 was something displeasing to God, and therefore could not have been merely the building of a tower. And it is plain also from the Bible history, that some ages after the flood mankind had very generally fallen into gross idolatry, though we are not told expressly when and how it was introduced. As for the Tower of Babel, it is said indeed in our version that a number of persons joined together to build ‘a tower whose top should reach to heaven’ (our translators meant an exceeding high tower), in order that they might ‘not be scattered over the face of the whole earth'; and that God sent on them a confusion of language, which ‘caused them to cease building the tower, and scattered them.' But it is to be observed that the word ‘reach ' is supplied by our translators, there being nothing answering to it in the original, which merely says, ‘whose top to the heavens.' And the meaning doubtless is, that the top of the tower should be dedicated to the heavens—that is, that a temple should be built on it to Bel, Belus, Zeus, or Jupiter; under which title the ancient Pagans worshipped the heavens. For we find the historian Herodotus (I. cxxxi.) who many ages later visited Babylon, expressly declaring that there was there in his time a very high tower, on the top of which was a temple to Belus; who, he says, was the same with the Zeus of the Greeks. The ancient Pagans, it is well known, were accustomed to erect altars to the Heavens, or to the Sun, on 'high places' (Num. 33:52), on the loftiest mountains. And as the land of Shinar is a very fertile plain of vast extent and quite level, it seems to have been designed to make a sort of artificial mountain on it—that is, a very high tower—and to build a temple on the top of this, to their god Belus, and so establish a great empire of people worshipping at this temple. The 'confusion' which God sent among them, and which caused the tower to be less lofty than originally designed, and dispersed many of the people into other lands, was most likely not a confusion of languages, but a dissension about religious worship. The word in the original literally signifies lip. And it is more likely that it was used to signify worship than language. A dissension as to that which was the very object of the building would much more effectually defeat the scheme than a confusion of languages. For laborers engaged in any work, and speaking different languages, would in a few days learn by the help of signs to understand one another sufficiently to enable them to go on with their work. But if they disagreed as to the very object proposed, this would effectually break up the community. As for the different languages now spoken in the world, there is no need of explaining that by any miraculous interference. For tribes who have not the use of letters, and have but little mutual intercourse, vary so much from each other in the language after even a few generations, as not to be able at all to understand each other” (165, 466).

Those who accept what has been said already on these verses will have no hesitation in pronouncing the whole statement a string of strange fancies, which supplant the truth, concluding with undisguised disbelief of scripture. Not a trace does the inspired narrative give of a dispute about worship. Not a word breathes a question about the true God, still less does it “about some god or gods.” We hear of a city and a tower. A temple was as wholly absent from their minds as God Himself. This could not but be displeasing to God.

But there was far more here. They sought only their own glory. They willfully hid from themselves His judgment of the ante-diluvian world, and His merciful preservation of a few, their own progenitors still living. They set their heart unitedly on a city, and a lofty tower which built on the plain should call attention all the more as a centralizing object in the land of their settlement. The name of God was nothing in their eyes. “Let us make ourselves a name.” Was this a peccadillo in the eyes of the archbishop? Their aim was the unity of man without God, and this avowedly in self-exaltation. What a tale it tells that a prelate should fail to understand how displeasing this must be to God! It was setting up a unity of man independently of God; it was claiming for themselves what alone can in truth belong to God, alone is due to His power and glory, to His righteousness and mercy. It was rebellion and usurpation. He alone is the rightful center.

They did not yet set up “some god or gods.” They left the true God out. They would make a name for themselves. It was not merely the building of a tower, but man's first collective effort after unity without God; to make himself a name round a self-made center, instead of multiplying and replenishing the earth. The time would soon come when they would set up other gods beside and before God. The time will at last come when a man, energized by Satan, shall sit down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. But to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; and neither of these had yet come.

It was however sad and evil enough, that, while the witnesses of a divine and universal judgment still lived to glorify God for his saving themselves through the deluge, the progeny could forsake the fountain of living water, and set themselves up, cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water. The language of Jehovah confirms all this as the truth; not a word here points to strange gods or idols. “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them—all which they purpose doing.” It was irreligious combination, not false worship. “Once hath God spoken, twice have I heard this, that strength [belongeth] unto God.” They had heeded not but forgotten Him. Their own union would be their strength, and a name of renown on earth. At the end punitive judgment must fall on the full results. But meanwhile Jehovah would bring their pride to naught, and would disperse them by a means as simple as effectual. He would there confound their language, that they should not understand one another's speech; and they would be compelled to scatter as they feared. But what mercy in their dispersion! Not a hair of their heads was lost.

It is utterly unfounded that ver. 4 can mean “a top dedicated to the heavens.” This is perversion, and one so gross that no version however faulty known to me follows it, no scholar as far as I know has ever attempted to justify it. Nor can the testimony so late in the day prove anything of the original tower, even if the site were the same. Not till afterward was the worship of the heavens, as of the sun, or of Bel. Nor had dissension about worship the least to do with the bold builders of Babel, any more than the word translated “language” and “speech” (lit. “lip”) means worship.

Indeed it is a notion destructive of the plain sense of the history. If we assume it, what folly Does Jehovah create ever so many forms of false worship? He certainly made the “one lip” to be many, even if the wonder seemed too great for Dr. W. to believe.

The tower then was not designed for religion, but as a rallying center for man in that great plain; which was thoroughly frustrated by the confusion of tongues. The Abp. talks of laborers learning signs of communication; but the sudden completeness of the divine measure overawed men too much, lest a worse thing might befall them. They had not yet learned the rationalists' lesson. The fact that all as yet spoke one language, though men had lived some seventeen or eighteen centuries, not crowded together, nor boasting the use of letters any more than much mutual intercourse, makes only the more impressive Jehovah's dealing in the immediate introduction of different tongues. Yet was it a dealing tempered with wisdom and mercy; for each tongue was spoken by the same clan. They did not part (as might easily have been if God had so willed) from their families, but spread abroad after their generations; and national history thus began in their various lands. How paltry is the misreading, how worthy is the truth!

Chapter 54

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:8-9

Thus was the scheme of human self-will brought to naught. They had left out God and at best forgotten His word. They had dared to oppose His will Who commanded that they should fill the earth. They sought on the contrary to hold together in a region well suited for union, being alike fertile in itself and peculiarly adapted to receive supplies from all sides. There they proposed not only to built a city and a tower of imposing pretension, but to make themselves a name, that they should not be scattered over the face of the whole earth. Therefore Jehovah interfered, not yet in punishment of their rebellious audacity, but by a dealing which left no doubt of His hand and compelled their dispersion according to His declared mind.

“And Jehovah scattered them thence over the face of the whole earth. And they left off building the city. Therefore was its name called Babel (confusion); because Jehovah there confounded the language of the whole earth. And Jehovah scattered them thence over the face of the whole earth” (vers. 8, 9).

Thus it was that mankind spread everywhere after the flood. It came to pass after a certain lapse of time, not willingly but under the constraint of divine power. This so thoroughly and at once confounded them, that they might well dread the issue of any further effort to disobey. Thus nationalities began, each with its peculiar tongue, in their lands, but as mercy ruled according to their families. There was no confusion in Jehovah's ordering. Chap. 11:1-9 is the key to the previous chap. 10, the moral account thus graphically of what was there given as a fact.

It is sorrowful to find the lack of simple faith even in minds not at all unfriendly to revelation. But men suffer, partly through undue heed to tradition, partly through indulging in dreams of their own. Thus Jacob Bryant, in his New System, or Analysis of Ancient Mythology (vol. iv. 34-45, 3rd edition, 1807), strives to give a very different turn to the confusion of tongues. As his learned work may weigh with some, it seems well to notice briefly what he alleges for denying the general bearing of the event, which he would limit to the Cushite, and pare down in itself to a labial failure, so that the people affected could not articulate and thus failed to understand each other.

“This I take to be the true purport of the history: from whence we may infer that the confusion of language was, a partial event; and that the whole of mankind is by no means to be included in the dispersion from Babel. It related chiefly to the sons of Cush, whose intention was to have founded a great, if not an universal, empire; but by this judgment their purpose was defeated” (37). Hence he distinguishes the scattering here as partial, from the earth divided to the nations the days of Peleg as a general event in which all were concerned. “We must therefore, instead of the language of all the earth, substitute the language of the whole country “; also “a failure and incapacity in labial utterance. By this their speech was confounded, but not altered; for as soon as they separated, they recovered their true tenor of pronunciation; and the language of the earth continued for some ages nearly the same.” For evidence Mr. Bryant sends us to M. A. Court de Gebelin's Monde Primitif Analyze et compare avec le Monde Moderne, in nine vols. 4to (17741784): an ambitious effort of no solid value, any more than this speculation of our own

countryman before us.

Now not a word in scripture belittles the fact or God's dealing as is here done. In chap. x. 8-10 we have the pride of power which a son of Cush betrayed early; but a wholly different phase is here, not individual usurpation, nor a kingdom or empire, but a sort of universal republic, as we have already remarked. In that chapter which is not chronological but descriptive we have simply the families of Noah's sons after their families and tongues, in their lands and nations. Here in chap. xi. we have the moral cause, why Jehovah scattered them contrary to their perverse resolve to hold together in the land of Shinar. We have not a word about Nimrod or any other individual here. The force lies in its universality. Attention is expressly called to the whole earth being of one lip and of words alike also. Not a hint is dropped of one land in particular. There would be nothing to surprise in one country pervaded by one tongue; but we are reminded of the state that thus characterized all the earth, in order the better to appreciate the judgment which compelled men suddenly to speak diversely, and so not to understand one another's speech.

It is then an unsubstantial dream to fancy that it was only the Cushites, however numerously followed by others. Not only is there no evidence of any specific family, but the inspired record excludes any such construction. Nimrod was subsequent to the scattering; for “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel,” other cities following. He was not afraid to start his ambitious enterprise from a city branded by divine displeasure. The scattering had already taken place. It was a new form of man's will; for there was no thought or pretense of its being ordained of God. Nor was there any such mark of God's intervention as that which dealt with their purpose to unite unholily and to make themselves a name.

But it was no mere temporary fit of labial failure as Bryant imagined, again without a scrap of divine evidence. It was Jehovah confounding their language, so that men should be no longer one, but be divided into nations henceforth, though mercy took care that the tongues should not dislocate their families. It was Jehovah's doing, not nature nor circumstances, nor development, but a manifestly judicial and a lasting dealing of divine power. And the account is exactly suited to the inspired and only reliable Book of Origins; where man's history fails, and tradition is as puerile and misleading as pretentious philosophy, spinning cobwebs from within.

Chapter 55

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:10-26—Part 1

WE are now presented with a genealogy which ends with Abram, and is followed in the next chapter with the mighty principle of grace, God's call. That prepares the way outwardly. But Jehovah shines through this dealing and revelation. Here we have the special line. It is no more an “endless genealogy” than that of Adam to Noah in chap. v. We may notice ten links in the chain of both chapters.

But there are notable differences to be noticed also. The sorrowful chime is heard throughout the earlier one, “and he died.” Not once does this sound in the later one, though as a fact all spoken of in chap. xi. did die; whereas there was in chap. v. the conspicuous exception of Enoch, “who walked with God and was not, for God took him.” Human life was so prolonged in those days, that it was all the more affecting to say of each with that exception, “and he died.” In the latter half of chap. xi. we read of the line of blessing, and we are told of each succession down to Abram, the time when the promise was made, and the years were lived; but nothing is said of death. Let who will count either accidental, the believer can hardly avoid seeing a distinct purpose in each, which may well awaken serious but happy reflections.

Again, neither is drawn in the style of formal, legal, or historical documents. Each is suited to its own place where it is placed by inspiration, and either would be strange in any book but God's. Yet are they invested with such precise information over the earliest ages, before the Deluge and after it, without a gap, that no genealogical line for that period outside of scripture can be compared with it. But over and above reliable information as to every link in the chain, a special design on God's part governs in each case. This even now earthly learning fails to see, and it has no interest for those intent on literary questions. Yet how great a thing for those whose ears are opened to the voice and teaching of God! But a divine purpose is as far as possible from casual documents or floating traditions from ancient sources, nobody knows whence, pieced together at a later date. The fact of a deep and distinct moral design pervading these lists respectively refutes the notion of any such trivial accident.

“These are the generations of Shem. Shem was a hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood; and Shem lived after he had begotten Arphaxad five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters. And Arphaxad lived thirty-five years, and begot Shelah; and Arphaxad lived after he had begotten Shelah four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. And Shelah lived thirty years, and begot Eber; and Shelah lived after he had begotten Eber four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. And Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg; and Eber lived after he had begotten Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters. And Peleg lived thirty years and begot Reu; and Peleg lived after he had begotten Reu two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters. And Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Serug; and Reu lived after he had begotten Serug two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters. And Serug lived thirty years and begot Nahor; and Serug lived after he had begotten Nahor two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters. And

Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and begot Terah; and Nahor lived after he had begotten Terah a hundred and nineteen years, and begot sons and daughters. And Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran" (vers. 10-26).

We may readily discern the specialty of this account by comparing it with what is said of the same progenitor in chap. 10:21. "And to Shem, to him also were [sons] born; he is the father of all the sons of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. The sons of Shem: Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud and Aram." Here the aim is quite of another kind in a genealogy of Noah's sons parting into their several lands, every one after his tongue, family, and nation. Even so, it wears little or no resemblance to a document such as any human object might demand. For Elam and Asshur, though, of celebrity among mankind (prominent also in the Bible and connected with Jewish story), are but named, though before Arphaxad, like Lud after him; and the apparently youngest, Aram, is introduced before Arphaxad. "And the sons of Aram: Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Mash."

Certainly the divine wisdom of the record is not at all questioned; but it is not man's fashion. Divine design is stamped on this case, as in the other lists. There is neither repetition nor oversight, still less the clashing of differing documents or writers. Not the slightest evidence of solid worth has ever been alleged to shake the fact that Moses wrote every one of them; but the truth still more precious to the believer, and most solemn for every other, is that God is the author of all. And we can perceive that the design in chap. x. was not to pursue Arphaxad's line there beyond his grandson, Eber's son Peleg, to state the deeply interesting fact of his name's reference to the division of the earth his days. Thence it branches off to his brother Joktan, and his sons who settled in the south of Arabia west and east.

Compared with his father Noah and those before him, Shem's years mark the growing diminution of human age after the flood. Yet it was given to him before he came near the end of his six hundred years to live into the days not of Abram only but of Isaac. Peleg, the fifth in this series, did not reach half the limit of Shem's term; and Nahor, the father of Terah, dwindled to a hundred and forty-five years. So that in God's providential arrangements man was coming by rapid steps to the span of years ordinary since the prayer of Moses (Psa. 90), himself an exception as there have been a few even in modern times.

Chapter 56

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:10-26—Part 2

At this point it seems well to look a little more closely into “the generations” which so frequently come before us in this book. Some remarks on them were made in looking at the verses preceding; but the matter well deserves further consideration.

No believer in God's plenary inspiration of the scriptures is under the least necessity of denying the incorporation of human documents, any more than of speeches or conversations of men who may have been godless or hostile. Thus in Acts 23 we have the letter from the chiliarch Claudius Lysias to Felix the governor; and in Acts 24 follows the speech of the rhetorician Tertullus accusing Paul. The speech was public, the letter private; but there this is, evidently just as it was written, as the Holy Spirit designed that we should know it. Yet there is no reason to imagine that the contents transpired through officers at Jerusalem or at Cæsarea friendly to Paul. He who inspired Luke to give the private document as unerringly as the open speech is in no way limited to any such means; and it is unwarrantable, when we read of such things in scripture, to cast about for some conceivable way of a natural kind to account for them. The great fact is that in a world of evil, falsehood, and vanity, scripture gives us the truth, and this in relation to God as well as to man. Thus only can we have the certainty of His mind revealed to us, though we still need the guidance of His Spirit in its apprehension and application.

If then God led Moses, in writing the book of Genesis, to make use of documents written (say) by Noah, Shem, the Patriarchs, Joseph and any others, there could be no valid objection on that score. But the unity of style and plan, which pervades each part in the face of all that petty criticism has ever alleged to the contrary, does stand adverse to any such theory. The essential condition is that God should inspire His chosen vehicle to convey to us the truth as He intended it for His own. It cannot be denied on solid ground that the alphabet even of Greece and Rome points to a Shemitic source, though it may have reached them according to the common tradition through a Phoenician or an Egyptian channel. In the days of Moses, at least in the wilderness, the Bible bears testimony that reading and writing prevailed among the Israelites, not merely in a sacred or learned class, but even largely among the rest (Deut. 9:9; 11:20; 24:1, 3). Thus from the earliest date of inspiration there was no difficulty of finding writers or readers.

Is it true then that the book of “Genesis is a compilation, and is stated so to be?” Is it the fact that these “generations” prove it to consist of so many separate documents, each beginning with this title? Let us see.

The first occurs in chap. 2:4: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah Elohim made earth and heavens.” Now it is plain that this opening verse of a new section of the book, characterized by a very special employment of the divine names in the rest of chap. 2 and in chap. 3, also sums up the salient facts of chap. 1. What went before gave creation completely. The new section does not speak of the creation of the heavens and earth. It is not a second, still less a different or discordant account, but the added revelation of man set in moral responsibility, tried by Jehovah Elohim; as he, and he only, is said

here to become a living soul by His immediate communication of the breath of life. Hence here we have the park or garden planted by Jehovah Elohim; here the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; here a simple test of obedience suited to innocence. Here too the relation of the man and the woman is given, and Adam's exercised authority over the lower creation, in contrast with his associate taken out of himself, his one meet companion, whose name he gave to mark the difference. Then in chap. 3 under the same name of the Creator in moral relationship, the Temptation and the Fall, the present result in death and ruin, but with the revelation of the Deliverer in the woman's Seed: a wholly new presentation of the truth on the moral side, and grace too rising above sin, not the platform of creation as in what preceded (ch. 1-2:3).

Who but the Supreme could have made known the majestic course of creation, and in terms as simple for the hearer as dignified for the Speaker? Was Adam, or any of his sons, the man to announce the solemn yet profound message of his trial and fall, and of the yet future triumph of the bruised Seed of the woman? These assuredly are not casual fragments or “separate documents,” but the words of the One Infinite conveying His mind on the immense foundations of divine truth, creation every whit good, and creation with its head ruined through sin and Satan till the Second man by redemption and in power vanquish the enemy, deliver those that believe, and reconcile all things to God's glory. The title is in the precisely right place. Had it been put as a heading to chap. i., it would have utterly marred the calm sublimity of the description. Where it stands, it is a suited introduction to the moral government that follows, while it seals the already accomplished grand material work, of the one true God; it shows us all coming to ruin that hung on the first man, and points to the Second and Last as the object of faith and destroyer of Satan.

Next in chap. 5 we have and here only, and most appropriately, “the book “ of Adam's generations. It says Elohim throughout, save in Lamech's prophecy where His government comes in, and therefore we hear of Jehovah. It is a summary of the ante-diluvian world. Who could have drawn it up but Himself?

Then in chap. 6:9 we read, “These are the generations of Noah:” where the fitting ground is given for his exemption from the flood, with his three sons and their wives; and “the book” of chap 5 would be out of place.

In chap. 10 we have “the generations of the sons of Noah,” but there collaterally rather than successively unless in measure and for special reason, in order to set out an entirely new thing, the separation of the nations, after their families and tongues, and in their lands. The moral cause is explained in chap. 11: 1-9; after which we find “the generations of Shem” in vers. 10-26, and those “of Terah” to complete the picture, and make way for Abram, the man of God's choice, call, and promise. Here we have, unlike any of those before, at least two genealogies side by side: the nations separate one from another, and the man separated to God with blessing and promise in him, and his seed natural or spiritual.

After Abraham's death in chap. 25, we have also two genealogies—vers. 12-18 Ishmael's, and vers. 19-26 Isaac's—of the flesh, and of promise.

In chap. 36, we have the generations “of Esau” still more pretentiously, ending in kings before there was such a ruler over the sons of Israel. Only it is untrue that the times of the Jewish

monarchy, long after Moses' day, are spoken of. The kings of Israel are not alluded to historically; but not one had reigned in Israel when Edom had been thus ruled. To say the least, the eight named may all have reigned when Moses wrote. Did he not know from God (Deut. 17) that Israel would set up a king? if so, he had to charge Israel that he should not be a foreigner but a brother.

Chapter 37:2 gives “the generations of Jacob,” with Joseph the special object of interest and a plain figure of Him Who was rejected by His brethren and separated thence, but exalted of God and wielding the power of the throne over the Gentiles. In due time His brethren are brought to repentance and humiliation before His glory, and Himself made known to them. Even a mere man, to say nothing of a believer, must be a thoughtless reader of the O.T. in the light of the New, who fails to perceive the type of Christ rejected by His natural brethren, and condemned unjustly by the Gentile, yet the Interpreter of God's mind in humiliation, then raised to be the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles outside the land, and at last owned by His own people. So in earlier days was Isaac, the beloved son, after the figure of Christ's death and resurrection (chap. 22), shown us in Canaan only, and the bride brought across the wilderness for union with the heir of promise, to whom the father gave all that he had. Yet the others had gifts; none was forgotten. Ishmael lived before God, and had his twelve sons princes, as Esau had his kings, while the chosen family passed through the furnace and were oppressed in bondage for hundreds of years, Jacob himself typifying their wanderings and sorrows before their restoration and glory.

It is freely granted then that these genealogies are wholly different from those of human pride, and their style in harmony with God's book of beginnings, which adumbrate His ways even to the end of the age and of that to come. The misconception is that God deigns to write history any more than to teach science. But He has written the scriptures to make known Himself and His ways, as well as to let man learn himself as can be nowhere else save in His Son, the center, substance, and display of all truth. To Him all scripture testifies from Genesis to Revelation. Even these genealogies, which seem strange to literary men and furnish materials for all sorts of speculation to such as lack the key of Christ for all the word, in the midst of much variety of form, testify to one and the same writer, even Moses, and bear the stamp of future purpose as on God's part. Surely it is most important, that we should not fail to recognize His wise and holy mind, but grow in grace and faith and the knowledge of Him Who is our all, but the Judge of all that believe not to their utter and everlasting condemnation. “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me” (John 5:46).

Chapter 57

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:10-26—Part 3

From the detailed comparison of the genealogies in this book, let us turn to the humbling crisis at this stage of man's sad story. Very interesting it is to note that we are indebted for it to the book of Joshua. In its last chapter we have him making a covenant with the people after his farewell charge at Shechem to the assembled tribes. Thus carefully but in our eyes peculiarly does God order His word. Is it not that we may search and cherish every part of it? Who beforehand could have looked for such important information about the father of Abraham in the book of the conquest of Canaan? Who yet more surprisingly could have anticipated in the Epistle of Jude the account of Michael's contention with Satan? The effort to reduce scripture to the merely human or historical method is vain. Its divinely inspired character is wholly inconsistent with such an aim. Man may not believe God; but he gives Him the lie at his own peril, and must justly suffer if he does not repent.

It is then in Josh. 24 we read that Joshua said to all the people, “Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt of old on the other side of the river [the Euphrates], Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.” It is the first notice the Bible affords of idolatry; and this not when it began, but when it corrupted the immediate progenitor of Abraham. There was abundant and flagrant evil in the ante-diluvian world; but of serving other gods we never hear. Nor is there any hint of its existence after the deluge till scripture thus speaks of the fathers in Terah's day, though self will wrought strangely in the race generally and in Nimrod particularly. God was in none of their thoughts. Human association only drew out dispersion; and individual energy subjugated mankind, as it had the beasts previously.

The judgment of God abides in the confusion of tongues; and man's age dwindles with comparative rapidity down to the common standard that subsists. The obedience or gathering of the peoples is reserved for Shiloh. In Him indeed it is God's purpose to head up all things, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth. The entire universe shall find in Him the true center; and we who are His shall share His exaltation Who is the Heir, as He was the Creator, of all things.

But the enemy at this point is shown to have taken a new step of daring moment. He establishes himself as God in the worship of mankind; and so successful were his wiles that, when first told of the fact, we hear of its prevalence in the fathers of Israel. Blessed, said Noah, be Jehovah the God of Shem; but now we find the sons of Shem, and in the most favored stem, serving other gods. Had Ham been thus apostate, or Canaan, Shem's bondman, it were not so astounding. But no; it was not even haughty Japheth enlarging his border and in his earthly energy forgetting the only true God. It was Shem's descendant Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor; it was they that “served other gods.” This too was the fitting moment to show how grace had shone on Abraham, when he and his brother and his father were walking thus evilly, separating him to be a witness of the true God. So the sons of Israel knew that they themselves were called to be His people and witnesses since Moses led them out of Egypt. But it is precisely therein lay their danger of

returning to what they were called out of. This Satan ever seeks as the enemy of God and man: how successfully when God is forgotten! And Joshua appreciated the danger.

Genesis simply states the fact on God's part and on Abram's, and even in this delays stating it till Terah was dead, when Abraham acted on it freely and faithfully, for he had been hindered as long as Terah lived. It is only when Joshua was near his departure that we learn the deplorable evil, to which Jehovah applied in sovereign grace the separative principle of His call, choosing Abraham to enjoy His promise, blessed and a blessing to all the families of the earth, as will yet be proved in the fullest way when Christ comes.

Let us consider the unclean thing as scripture treats it. The deluge left mankind with the strongest impression of the living God's hand. But they soon ceased to glorify Him as God and were unthankful. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and, changing the truth of God into falsehood, they worshipped the creature more than the Creator Who is blessed forever. Amen. When idolatry began, or by whom is not said, but that Terah and his sons were involved in it. Now in 1 Cor. 10:20 the apostle, citing Deut. 32:17, pronounces on what it really is, though the form may differ. The worship of the heavens and all its host, of the earth and the sea and their denizens, the serpent especially, or again of heroes and departed ancestors, or of fabulous beings and their images, soon laid hold of men's imagination, not only to shut out God but to debase their votaries to the uttermost. And no wonder. For both O.T. and New, as we have seen, declare that what they sacrificed they sacrificed to demons, not to God. Demons were in effect behind the idols. If the idols were nothing in themselves, the demons were an awful reality of subtle and malignant evil to the ruin of such as paid the idols reverence.

Man was corrupt and violent, as before the deluge. But it was an awful advance in rebellion against God, when men not only did without Him absolutely, but chose as their gods many and lords many those who were only mightier rebels than themselves. What a deadly insult to the true God!

How humbling that the lesson is lost on philosophizing linguists like Max Muller! In the second series of Lectures on the Science of Language (419425) he mildly deprecates the strong language of the Bible just cited, and misconstrues God's word in Acts 14:16 and especially in Acts 17:22-31. He admits a great amount of incontestable truth in “hard words such as idolatry and devil worship;” yet he “cannot help thinking that full justice has never been done to the ancient religions of the world (!) not even to those of the Greeks and Romans (! I) who in so many other respects are acknowledged by us as our teachers and models.” It is to be feared that a classical taste has not been acquired without the moral degradation which accompanies idolatry, and not least that of Greeks and Romans. Alas! it has ever been apt to dispose the youth of Christendom toward the not less real but more guilty idolatries of Popery and her Greek and Oriental rivals. Augustine was right in believing the inspired warning that demons exercise real mischief in connection with idol worship; he was deplorably wrong in thinking that it was better for professing Christians, as they would get drunk on feast days, thus to indulge in honor of martyrs rather than at the altars of Jove or Bacchus.

So Prof. M. contrasts the language in Acts with that in 1 Cor. 10:20, saying that the former “are truly Christian words” and that “this is the truly Christian spirit in which we ought to study the ancient religions of the world: not as independent of God, not as the work of an evil spirit, as mere

idolatry and devil-worship, not even as mere human fancy, but as a preparation, as a necessary part in the education of the human race—as a race ‘seeking the Lord if haply they might feel after him.'“ Can infatuation or perversion be more complete? Fallen man has a conscience, which refers even in a pagan to God, and vainly sought satisfaction by sacrifices to the gods of its own imagining. Of this the apostle at Athens availed himself, by an altar “to God unknown,” to proclaim the true and only God. It is too plain that this learned man failed to see the perfect consistency of seeking to win the heathen by preaching the grace and truth of Him Whom they knew not, while sternly reproving the profane levity of the Corinthians in partaking of the table and of the cup at a Gentile temple, on the plea that the idol was nothing. The same apostle declares that to do so is communion with demons, and that he did not wish them to be in communion with demons. Think of Paul wishing them or any other Christians “to study the ancient religions of the world!” and to study them “as a preparation, as a necessary part of the education of the human race!” Such is the wisdom of this age, totally insensible to what God revealed to us through the Spirit, as it is to what the cross of Christ means.

Chapter 58

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:10-26—Part 4

The verse before us is a remarkable example of the manner of scripture which men are apt to mistake. Terah, it is written, lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. So it was said, Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The father's age was stated before naming any that were begotten. In neither case also was the elder named first but last, as the examination of other scriptures proves beyond just doubt. The first place in both cases was given to mark the special and spiritual honor God put on each respectively. We have already spoken of the relative seniority of Noah's sons. Here it remains to determine from scriptural facts that of Terah's family.

Now we are told in ver. 32 that Terah lived two hundred and five years. As the birth of his eldest occurred when he was seventy, it could not have been Abram; for he was but seventy five years of age as we are told in Gen. 12:4, when he left Charan, after Terah's death. He was not begotten therefore till sixty years after the firstborn. It would seem from the history that Haran was the eldest son, born when his father was seventy. Thereby we can understand how Nahor married Haran's daughter Milcah, his niece, and (if the Jewish tradition were reliable that Iscah and Sarah are the same) Abram did also. We also apprehend more clearly how the granddaughter of Nahor became the wife of Isaac, Abraham's son. Nor is it hard to explain why Sarah should be spoken of as his sister, seeing that Lot is spoken of as his brother, though strictly his brother's son.

Nevertheless I cannot but believe that the words of Abram to Abimelech (Gen. 20:12) point more naturally to Terah as Sarah's father by a second and later wife, as she was ten years younger than her husband. Scripture does not hide the facts which were at issue with the law given at a later day; but it is easy to see that the Jews might endeavor to soften or get rid of what was discreditable by a so called tradition, and might seek to confirm their wish by any phrase of scripture which could lend it color.

Abram then, though the youngest son, took precedence in God's mind and word through the grace that was shown him. “The last was made first": a principle applied frequently in Scripture, and in the N. T. even more distinctly than in the Old, though there we see it every now and then from the earliest book to the latest. Nor need any wonder that Abram should be thus honored. We have seen ample grounds for it already, and may observe more. In him God began a new headship, not like fallen Adam of mankind universally as they are, but of the faithful. He is the one of whom it is written that “he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15). It is not insinuated that Abel, Enoch, Noah, or others did not believe God before; but in him the privilege of faith was first publicly established, being brought out in a striking manner, as exercised on a definite promise.

Abram had already been called out into separation by the appearing of the God of glory to him in Ur of the Chaldees; and it was to a very thorough separation from country and kindred and father's house. These associations might be and were the providential arrangements subsisting still, as the general rule for all mankind since the confusion of tongues, families, countries, and nations; yet

Jehovah called Abram to come out of them all. And more was added, not only in Gen. 15 but in Gen. 17, which gave him, to say this only, a unique place, as the starting-point of that line of promise and testimony, which the apostle compares to the olive tree in Rom. 11, reasoning on it at great length not in this Epistle only but in that to the churches of Galatia. For it came to light first in his seed after the flesh, who, accepting law as their tenure, and consequently their own righteousness, lost everything in the face of the patient and persevering dealings of Jehovah and all possible healing measures till there was no remedy. Even the advent of the Messiah served but to aggravate and seal their ruin on the ground of their responsibility; for they utterly rejected Him, as they do still, till in the latter day they repent and say, Blessed He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. Self will be renounced and judged; divine mercy in Messiah, all their confidence, rest, and boast. Meanwhile during the gap made by their rejection there is secondly not only the remnant according to the election of grace, but the call of Gentiles who believe and (being Christ's) become the seed of Abraham and heirs according to promise. He who was raised up to bring out that which rises far above all such hopes, the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church, the apostle of the Gentiles, is also the most careful to clear the promise assured to all the seed, not only to that which is of the law, but also to that which is of the faith of Abraham who is father of us all.

Who can be surprised then that God's word should place Terah's youngest son before his older brothers? The reader is left to search out the facts there revealed for his soul's profit, where those we find honored, who honor God, their haste confounded who doubt, and their faith confirmed who believe. How many and great are the errors of such as try to persuade themselves and others, that the Bible is to be treated like any other book! How could this if it be, as it claims to be, the word of God?

Chapter 59

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:27-28

WE have seen then the immense importance of what God was pleased to accomplish in the call of Abram. But that which accompanies it is not without its interesting instruction, as a brief notice may help to show.

“And these [are] the generations of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begot Lot. And Haran died before the face of Terah his father in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldeans” (vers. 27, 28).

The order of the three sons of Terah reverses that of nature. Abram was in no sense the head of the family after the flesh, not even when his brother Haran died. The comparison of dates and facts makes it evident that Abram was the youngest of all, and as Haran was born when his father was seventy, so Abram only when he was one hundred and thirty years of age. His foremost place therefore was due to the choice of God.

We may dismiss the traditional dream (Ant. i. 7 § 2) which Josephus was too prone to interweave with inspiration, in order to aggrandize the head of the Jewish people and to commend him in the eyes of Greeks and Romans for wisdom and knowledge, as the teacher of monotheism to the Chaldeans, as well as of astronomy and mathematics to the Egyptians. He even quotes Nicolaus of Damascus, a contemporary of Augustus and therefore not long before his own day, for Abram's reign over Damascus, whither “he came with an army out of the land above Babylon, called the land of the Chaldeans. But after a long time he got him up and removed from that country with his people also, and came into the land then called the land of Canaan, and this when his posterity were become a multitude.” Yet all this is not only without but opposed to scripture, which, brief as it may be, gives us to gather with certainty that the delay was in Charran or Harran, not in Damascus, and that Abram had no “posterity” till a much later day. The fact that he had a confidential and chief servant, Eliezer of Damascus, is a slender guarantee of any conquest there, whatever trophy of victory Dean Stanley may have fancied with others (Jewish Church i. 9).

Nor can we entertain for a moment the Jewish tradition which tells of Abram faithful to the true God from his boyhood. That Terah and his family served other gods, we know on divine authority. That Abram, when at fifty years and trusted to sell the idols which his father manufactured, took in hand the practical measure of demonstrating to Terah the sinful folly of idolatry, is a story suited for the credulity of the Jew Apella, even without the legend of Nimrod's punishing Abram in the flames, and the fountain springing up to extinguish them, with a delightful garden, wherein were seen angels sitting and Abram in their midst. Truth needs neither fables nor more miracles to exalt man. It humbles even those whom it blesses to God's glory. “The God of glory (says Stephen, Acts 7:2) appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charran.” Here is the truth of God in its simple and sure and satisfactory light. It was he that believed and acted accordingly. Of Terah we are told nothing which gives happy confidence. Of Haran, father of Lot and of Milcah, we only learn that he “died before the face of his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldeans “; he did not reach Charran, the halfway sojourn in the migration;

he died before any left their common Chaldean abode. Nahor, it is evident, did not relinquish Ur for Charran till a later day; but there he stayed, so that he made it “his city” in Aram-naharaim or Paddan-Aram.

Wholly distinct was Abram, but it was the sovereign call of God that made him so. “Look unto Abraham your father (says the prophet), and unto Sarah that bare you; God called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.” Terah was of no account in this, nor even Lot though designated a “righteous man” in his day. But Abram was called “alone,” whoever might accompany him, or share less or more the blessing which was his rich portion.

Still we do not well to confound his singularly honored place, chosen and called out by promise to be father of the faithful, with that which is now distinctively given to the Christian as in Eph. 1 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, according as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love.” The difference in character is immense. It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who blessed, not the God of any earthly father. Next, it is universal blessing and above all things of a natural sort on earth. Further, it has no connection with a land to be shown, or Canaan; it is a choice of us in Him Who is above every name. Then again it was not to meet the frightful departure of man when they gave up the true God for other gods who were nothing but puppets with demons behind them. There it was before the world's foundation, a choice not due to creature apostacy or any other evil in time, but flowing from God's own heart when no creature existed to affect it in any way. Nor was it simply to receive blessing or to be the channel for it to all families of the earth, but that we should be holy and blameless in His sight in love. He would surround Himself with partakers of His own nature and character, and this in love. Such was His choice in our ease; and this “through Jesus Christ to Himself.” What a pattern before Him “according to the good pleasure of his will unto the praise of the glory of his grace!” Could the true God rise higher than this ground and purpose?

Chapter 60

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:29-30

Not only is Haran's death “before the face of his father Terah” recorded, but the relationships the other sons contracted. We need not speculate on Haran's death. Enough for us to learn from this note of scripture how unusual it was for a son to die before his father's face in the land of his nativity. Had there been any divine lesson in the undisclosed details and facts, the goodness of our God would have given this also. It is as truly unbelief to imagine or to accept the imaginations of others, as it is to hesitate about the communications of the inspired word. Where scripture ceases to speak, let us learn to be silent. The attempt to conjecture is presumption, the refusal of it honors God and His word.

“And Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife [was] Sarah; and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, a daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. And Sarah was barren; she [had] no child” (vers. 29, 30).

God takes a beneficent interest not only in the persons who have to do with Him but in their relations, especially in that which, of all natural ties, is the most important for a human being. It may have been that those here in question on either side did not yet know Him; but He at least knew the end from the beginning and guided in His providence those who were to play an influential part in the future dealings of His grace. He registers it in that word of His which endures forever. He would thus impress its gravity on all that fear Him for their own steps here below. He would have them above all to seek His guidance, now in particular since the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For there His word assures a character of deeper intimacy than with a people chosen to be the theater of His direct government, or even with the fathers resting on His promises. Nor is it only that His word is thus adapted to our calling; for He has now also given us the Holy Spirit in the power of personal indwelling, to speak of nothing else, which could not be till sin was judged in the cross, and the Savior took His new place in heaven before God. Therefore if any one be in Christ, it is a new creation: the old things are past; behold, all things are made new. And all things are of God Who reconciled us to Himself by Christ.

Nor is this all. For the true and sound knowledge which grace gives us of God enables the Christian to vindicate Him as to the things of the old creation, instead of yielding to the teachings of demons which would put a slight on marriage or meats, as we read in 1 Tim. 4. Thus Satan may, to dishonor the Creator, affect a spurious holiness. But the truth delivers us from such reveries and insists that every creature of God is good, and that nothing is to be refused if received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Now we know every barrier gone in Christ's death: not divine compassion only come down where and as we were, but ourselves free to draw near to God in His victorious love, proved to the full, efficacious and everlasting. Unbelief may mock Christ and His work; it must another day take the bitter consequence in the face of the amplest possible evidence to convince and satisfy. But faith is entitled even now to enjoy divine goodness, both in the heavenly sphere where Christ sits, and in the scene where He was rejected, and we still are in our weakness, waiting for the appearing of His glory. The name of Abram's wife

was Sarai, of whom in due time we are told so much comparatively; and this not only in the O.T. history, but in the profoundly instructive comment of the great apostle in N.T. doctrine. Of Milcah we hear but little. She was Haran's daughter and Nahor's wife, and as Gen. 22 and 24 inform us, mother of Bethuel and seven other sons. Bethuel was father of Laban and Rebekah, of whom so much is said there or afterward. No more of Iscah is known than that she too was Haran's daughter. But it is said here that Sarai was barren; she had no child. And this remained a painful fact for many years. Yet was she destined, after long patience of faith, checkered by some impatience of unbelief to bear Abram's heir, the child of promise. In Isaac should his seed be called, type of the “Child born” and of the “Son given” in Whose name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, yea, a type of Him even received from the dead in figure. Another woman in after years was to be His immediate mother (Luke 1) and she not barren, though a virgin of David's house when David's tabernacle was fallen down. Of her it was promised centuries before that Emmanuel should be born as He was, Who will assuredly raise up that ruin with every other that is for Jehovah's glory. Highly favored was that maiden, blessed among women in good sooth. But, as He said (and His words are spirit and life) to a woman who lifted up her voice in blessing the mother, “yea rather, blessed [are] they that bear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:27, 28).

Those who affirm, or introduce anything, are bound to furnish proof. The onus probandi lies entirely on such. A single scripture would suffice. Those who deny are entitled to do so till that authority be produced which to faith is an end of controversy.

Chapter 61

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 11:31-32

The chapter concludes with the interesting though brief notice here given of Terah and his household. It would be an unbelieving error to overlook the spiritual instruction that every Christian ought to derive from these words of the Holy Spirit. How indeed can men be blessed from above by that which they deem not only human, but even and often unreliable, haphazard and inconsistent, nothing more than tesselated and ill-assorted fragments of men's traditions? If we receive them as God's word, according to the Lord's teaching and example, we are entitled to look for divine light and certain truth as from no other book.

“And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot son of Haran, son of his son, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, wife of Abram his son; and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came as far as Charan, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred [and] five years; and Terah died in Charan” (vers. 31, 32).

In order to the sure understanding of the case, we do well to avail ourselves of the light afforded in Acts 7:2-4, where Stephen interprets that which otherwise might easily be misunderstood. “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charan, and said to him, Go out of thy land and kindred, and come into the land which I will show thee. Then he came out of the Chaldeans' land, and dwelt in Charan. And thence, after his father died, he removed him into this land in which ye now dwell.” The verses with which chap. 11 close give simply the historical fact. Chap. 12:1-4 give the clue to the failure in carrying out Jehovah's mind. So we saw in chap. 11:1-9 the hidden reason why the nations were formed and distributed after their families and tongues over the earth, of which we find only the fact in chap. 10.

The call of Jehovah was not to Terah but to Abraham, who was called to go out from his kindred as well as his country. Here we learn that he failed. For “Terah took Abraham his son,” &c. This was no right answer to the call of God. The consequence was that for the time it came to nothing. “They set out together,” kindred and all, “from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan.” But into the land of Canaan they came not. “And they came as far as Charan, and dwelt there.” But Charan was no more Canaan than Ur of the Chaldeans. It was an intermediate spot, and in no way the land which Jehovah was to show, and did in due time show Abram when faithful to His word.

But as yet a serious obstacle stood in the way. Abram obeyed only in part. Far from going from his father's house, his father who was not within the terms of the call took the lead, as indeed was but natural if he came with Abram. So we read not even that Abram took Terah, but that “Terah took Abram,” thus making the word of God of none effect. Faith is no compromise; it receives and obeys the divine word. Abram was called to break from all that seemed naturally, yea from all that was naturally, dear to him. His first duty was subjection to Jehovah's call, Who would assuredly show him the land according to His promise. And so it ever must be for faith. The call of grace is paramount; and faith confides in God, It is no calculation of interest or ambition, but as Heb. 11 puts it, at length “he went out, not knowing whither he went,” assured of God's love, wisdom, and

power.

Whether Terah took up the call to Abram in his own strength, or Abram yielded to natural feeling and reason, we know not. But we do know that the attempt to unite the father's house with following the call was fatal to its effect. They might leave Ur, and reach Charan; but they got no farther. Terah died in Charan, aged two hundred and five years, Abram being now seventy-five years old. In the same year that Terah died, Abram departed out of Charan, “as Jehovah had spoken to him,” though Lot went with him.

Faith was now cleared of its drawback. “And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all the substance they had gathered and the souls they had gotten in Charan; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came” (chap. 12:5). The word of Jehovah was thus fully honored, and the result was simple, pure, and bright accordingly. For it was no longer man essaying only to hinder: God was obeyed. It is not now “Terah took Abram,” &c. but “Abram took Sarai,” &c. “They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.” It was the walk of faith, separate to Jehovah, Abram blessed and a blessing. Providence does not fail to watch over the country and the father's house left behind. But this is God's matter, not Abram's. The believer is to go out to Him that called him.

Chapter 62

The Gospel of the Glory of Christ

In the law we must remember that we have only the shadow of good things to come. The great principles of the heavenly scenes are depicted, but not the change by the rending of the veil through which we enter boldly into the holiest, Christ being in glory at the right hand of God, and that through an eternal redemption. Also, the Son not being come, the Father's name and relationship does not apply. For us the veil is rent: a very great difference; and we are children with a Father. We are accepted in the Beloved. God must raise Christ and place Him at His right hand in consideration of that which He had done in glorifying God as to sin and our sins; and we are cleared from our sins according to the perfectness of God, between Whom and Christ alone this work was accomplished. He having entered into God's presence as man in virtue of that work, since He has carried in His blood, we also, objects of His work, are through it accepted as He is. We see the glory unveiled in His face, and approach boldly; because the glory in His face is the proof of redemption and the perfect blotting out of our sins. For He Who bore these has them not on Him in the glory.

Chapter 63

Gospel Words: 19. The Guests

Luke 14:7-11

It is beautiful and blessed to mark how our Lord turns the least things of daily life to everlasting account. This we find in all the Gospels, in none more than in that of Luke; whose design under the power of the Spirit was to contrast the God of grace with fallen selfish man, that through the faith of Christ and His work he might be saved and walk accordingly. Thus it is that the Lord spoke a parable unto those that were invited i.e. as guests, noticing how they chose out the first places (ver. 7).

“When thou art invited by anyone unto a wedding, recline not in the first place, lest perhaps a more honorable than thee be invited by him, and he that invited him and thee shall come and say to thee, Give this [man] place, and then thou begin with shame to take the last place. But when thou hast been invited, go, put thyself down in the last place, that when he who hath invited thee come, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in presence of all that recline with thee. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (vers. 8-11).

It is a world of evil, and man is fallen under sin and Satan, which gives occasion to grace and its ways, as God was then displaying in Christ. This tests the heart, which naturally seeks its own things, honor or power, ease or pleasure, money therefore as the means of gratifying self, whatever may be its direction. Here it was present honor that men coveted: and it is as true now as then. The true Light, coming into the world, laid every man bare.

But He has done infinitely more. He, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, was the faithful witness, the living exemplar of all He taught, of all that pleased the Father. Who ever took the last place as He? If born in Bethlehem David's city, to mark prophetically the “ruler in Israel,” none the less was He the One “Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” Yet was He to be smitten with a rod upon the cheek (Mic. 5:1, 2), as He was born in a manger, because there was no room for such in the inn (Luke 2:7). As the parents fled with Him into Egypt from the face of the destroying king, so did they return with Him to dwell, not only in Galilee the despised, but in its most despised Nazareth; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

So it was throughout the days of His flesh. Son of the highest, and subsisting in the form of God, He did not esteem it a thing to be grasped to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself. He did not and could not divest Himself of deity, but He did of glory, taking a bondman's form, having come in the likeness of men. And who ever humbled Himself as He did unswervingly? Who but He could say, and say with absolute truth, “Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God?” Others, His servants may have done miracles as mighty, or, as He said, “Greater works than these;” but He and He alone never did His own will, always the Father's. And this is the perfect moral place of man which He took and kept to God's glory.

But more even than this had to be if God were to be glorified about sin, if men were to be saved through faith from their sins? Would He stoop down to a depth unfathomable and bear the divine judgment of evil, so that the guilty might by grace be freed? Therefore it was that having been found in figure as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, death of the cross. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for you, that you might be made God's righteousness in Christ. It was God's perfect way: no other could avail.

Do you believe this, poor soul, miserable in the sense of your guilt, weary under sin's intolerable load, despairing haply of efforts to do the law of God? Not thus, never thus, can you come to God. He waits to be gracious, He can save to the uttermost; He gives all you need without money and without price, but only through your believing on Jesus, Who only is the way, and the truth, and the life; and He is the propitiation for our sins. How could it be otherwise? Did not the prophet say (seeing the great prediction as though come, seven centuries before the great fulfillment), “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6).

Believe God's call on you to doubt in yourself, to hear Christ's word (for the law can only condemn a sinner), and believe Him that sent Jesus in love as a Savior. And what is His message to you? “Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). The bold unbeliever braves the word of God and refuses to humble himself; the serious unbeliever tries to do better, trusting himself and his powers. The true believer owns himself lost, and finds Christ a Savior in deed and in truth. Oh! look to Him and live.

To the believer Christ is life as well as propitiation; and because He lives, we shall live also. He is our life now while we are on earth. Thus only do we live to God; and we are called all through to have Him as our object, and way, our motive, strength, and end. The apostle knew, and, walking thus, could say, To me to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21). Obedience, as He obeyed, is what the believer is sanctified to, in that humility which is content to be nothing in the world as it is. Christ took the last place. Let us who love Him seek to be as near that place as grace enables each.

In the regeneration He will say to each of His own, Friend, go up higher. Then shall the poor and despised apostles sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then shall they that are Christ's, risen from the dead, reign with Him. The Corinthians sought to reign now, as do most in Christendom. But they were humbled, and by grace humbled themselves. Profit by that lesson; and God will exalt you in due time.

Chapter 64

Gospel Words: 20. The Host

Luke 14:12-14

The Son of God was the true Light, Who, coming into the world, casts light on every man. It is not that all are enlightened by Him, but that He set each in the light. So here He lays bare alike guest and host. High and low, Jew or Gentile, Pharisee or Sadducee, priest or philosopher, were far from God; according as it is written, There is not a righteous man, not even one; nor he that understandeth; there is not one that seeketh after God: there is no fear of God before their eyes. If the law spoke thus of Israel, as it did, much more palpably did it apply to the heathen with their religious abominations and their unspeakable demoralizations; that every mouth might be stopped and all the world be under judgment to God.

Man seeks his own things and his own will; nor is anything pleasanter to the natural man than to exalt himself. The Lord Jesus brings before us from first to last a mind wholly different. “For ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

Such was the mind in Him and in all its perfection only there. But it is the mind God would have in His own now; and thus it was Christ spoke as we have here. It is an entire reversal of human thoughts generally, of Jewish feeling in particular. Settled down in the earth as it is, men seek present pleasure, worldly honor, earthly advantages. What did this age give Christ? A manger when born, nowhere to lay His head, and a cross to die on. What does Christ give to him that believes? Eternal life, and everlasting redemption. Life was in Him; and He gives it in Himself. Redemption He obtained by His death, and we have it in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses. Hearing His word, and believing Him Who sent Jesus, we are thus doubly blessed. Our evil He takes away, and His good He freely imparts forever.

Thus believing we can profit by all He was and all He says. He has laid the ax to the root of the tree of self-seeking, and shown the blessing of humbling ourselves in a world quite out of course, in plain denial of a nature that seeks to be upper most. Here He opens out the beauty of unselfishness in faith, love being the spring, glory the recompence and rest.

“And he said also to him that had invited him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also invite thee in return, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, invite poor, crippled, lame, blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just” (vers. 12-14).

“It is more blessed to give than to receive,” as He Himself not only said but acted on, Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by demons. If we have not that power, as things have long been, we are called to walk, as He walked, in love, and in distinct testimony of separateness to God from the pride of the world and the selfishness of the first man. Hence His exhortation would form our hearts for His path here below, instead of walking as men according to

public opinion, which is just the spirit and course of the age. For if we are His, we are “heavenly” even now (1 Cor. 15:48, 49); as we are destined by grace to bear the image of the Heavenly at His coming.

Let our hearts then go forth to welcome the despised and suffering here below, and to show “the kindness of God” to poor, crippled, lame, blind. And the more too, in order to win their ear through the heart to hear of Him Who alone can take away the guilt and power of sin for eternity, Who alone brings through faith in Himself into the place of sons of God even now. Thus is the believer blessed himself; and those who, touched by unworldly love, receive the Savior by believing on His name. And both will have their portion, when He comes, “in the resurrection of the just.”

For scripture never speaks of one common, simultaneous, and indiscriminate resurrection. There shall indeed be a resurrection of both just and unjust. But God's word is clear and positive that the resurrection of the just differs not more in character and consequence than in time from that of the unjust. Hence the Lord calls the former a resurrection of life, the latter a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29): the one for such as have believed on Him and done good; the other for those that, dishonoring both the Son and the Father, only did ill, and are judged accordingly. In the great prophecy of the Revelation (20:4-15), we find the gap, which severs these two resurrections, to be that special reign with Christ which follows the resurrection of life before the resurrection of judgment.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Had you in your own person spiritually all the disabilities of the poor, crippled, lame, and blind, you are none the less welcome to God's feast, to the glad tidings of His grace. Listen not to the tempter, but to the Savior. Put not off His call. You are really worse than if yourself had all these bodily ailments together and with no means to alleviate them. For what state can be so awful as that of a lost sinner? And is not this actually yours? He Himself is express that He came to seek and save such. Oh, receive Him now! God's word warrants you. It is the only way a lost sinner can please Him. Doing good will follow here below, and the resurrection of the just at Christ's coming (1 Cor. 15:23). Fear not, but believe God, Who has no purpose so dear to Him as the honor of His Son. Oh, no longer dishonor Him, the Son of His love, the Savior of the lost!

Chapter 65

Gospel Words: 21. The Great Supper

Luke 14:16-24

Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, said one to the Lord. Far different is the real thought, as was shown in the parable. Grace is repulsive to nature; man shrinks from God and slights His call.

“A certain man was making a great supper, and bade many; and he sent forth his bondman at supper-time to say to those that were bidden, Come, for things are now ready. And they all at once began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, I bought land and must go out to see it; I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to prove them; I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I married a wife, and on this account cannot come. And the bondman when he came up reported these things to his master. Then the house-master in anger said to his bondman, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the bondman said, Sir, What thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the bondman, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel [them] to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper” (vers. 16-24).

The corresponding, though scarcely the same, parable in Matt. 22:2-14 is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, which gives prominence to the wedding feast for the king's son, to the dispensational difference of the Jews, and to the judgment that befell their city. Here man's moral roots are more laid bare; and where sin abounded, grace surpassed.

There was no harm in buying land, in acquiring oxen, or in marrying a wife. The evil lay in pleading these things, or any else, to set aside the call of God. The heart is at fault, which makes present interests or even duties a reason for putting God off and neglecting so great salvation. Have you, my reader, no object or pursuit, which stands between you and the knowledge of God and His Son which is life eternal? Be not deceived. Sin gives Satan the means of blinding every soul to the light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, as well as to his own ruin and exposure to the Gehenna of fire, where one's worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Your peril is extreme.

God in the gospel meets you in your need and guilt and danger. He asks nothing, He gives all things; and they are now ready. He provides a great supper; He invites freely. Oh, begin not once more to excuse yourself. Too long have you turned aside. Why should you die in your sins, lost forever? The Son of man expressly came to save the lost. But it is through faith.

Those who first had the invitation valued what was before them, forgot God's judgment for eternity. The Lord recorded their folly that you might fear God—the beginning of wisdom—that you might hear and live. He would give you another life, which is only in Himself, life eternal; and this life in Him loves the will of God, as it refuses the baits and bribes of the enemy. It begins with faith-obedience, and is sanctified by the Spirit to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus one becomes a child of obedience instead of fashioning oneself according to the

former lusts in one's ignorance. The call of God is paramount. He calls one to receive His grace in Christ. This is His commandment that we believe the name of His Son Jesus Christ. The first of rights is that God should have His rights; and He commands us to believe on the Lord Jesus.

See the activity of God's love. He is not content with gathering in the poor and maimed and blind and lame from the streets and lanes of the city. He will have His bondman go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them in importunate earnestness to come in. He insists that His house be filled. What a God is ours A just God and a Savior He is assuredly. Why then trifle, when all blessing is proffered in Christ, when all is and must be ruin where He is refused? For does He not say to you, that none of those that were bidden shall taste of His supper? Are you not bidden? Come, then; for He welcomes in the name of His Son. Come without delay—dangerous everywhere, most of all in presence of your sin and of God's everlasting judgment. Now it is all grace, grace reigning through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord. Practical love follows, and practical obedience. It is the first step that weighs. That it might be open to you, it cost the Savior all in unfathomable humiliation and the sacrifice of Himself for you and your sins. Oh, put off no more, but believe and be blessed in and with Him!

In vain men talk of a larger hope. There is no Savior but Christ, nor any way to the Father but Himself by faith. For not to believe is to give very deep insult to God and to His Son. There is another evil yet worse; the abuse of His grace, the attaching of indulged lusts and passions, of unjudged pollution of flesh and spirit, to that worthy Name. Should such men taste of His supper?

Chapter 66

Gospel Words: 22. The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:3-7

Grace, the grace of God, is hateful to man's pride. The self-righteous take offense. What is the good of their decorous behavior, of their prayers at home, of their public devotions, if they be no better than loose and open sinners? Yet the Lord (Matt. 21:31) solemnly assured the chief priests and the elders of the people, who built on their religious character, that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom before them. They are ready to repent and believe. So here the tax-gatherers and the sinners draw near to hear the glad tidings, while the Pharisees and the scribes kept murmuring, He receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

Yes, it was true; nor was He ashamed of divine love to the lost, but gloried in it, and vindicates it against all cavilers. Is God to save nobody? If He save, it can only be by His grace through faith. Let us hear the Son plead His God and Father's title to save sinners.

“And he spoke this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And having found he layeth [it] on his shoulders rejoicing, and, when come to the house, he calleth together the friends and the neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I found my sheep that was lost. I say to you, that thus joy shall be in heaven over one sinner repenting, [more] than over ninety nine righteous, such as have no need of repentance” (vers. 3-7).

Man, selfish man, is not so indifferent about his lost sheep, as he thinks God to be about a sinner. A bad conscience makes him doubt God's love, still more does bad religion. The Lord Jesus alone represents God truly and perfectly. There He was in their midst the Savior of sinners, the Son of man come to seek and save that which was lost. Did He not proclaim it from the first in the synagogue at Nazareth? Did not the prophet Isaiah predict seven centuries before, that Jehovah's Spirit should be on Him Whom He anointed to evangelize the poor, to preach deliverance to captives, and sight to blind? The miracles of His ministerial life were for the most part signs of His grace to the guilty and wretched; for this His death in atonement would give the ground of God's righteousness; as all proved His unfathomable love for us when powerless and ungodly.

He, the Lord of glory, pursued the wandering sheep till He found it. What did it not cost Him? Teaching the disciples, weaning them from Jewish elements, showing them heavenly things, forming their hearts according to God, exercising their perception to distinguish good and evil, were all blessed to the ninety nine in the wilderness; but what about the lost one? The Good Shepherd leaves the rest safe, in quest of the stray sheep. After it He goes in earnest love, as if He had none else; and having found it, He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing; and when come to the house He calls together the friends and the neighbors, that they may rejoice with Him over the lost one found. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes were we healed. For we were as sheep going astray. If we returned, as we can now say, it is only because the Shepherd

and Bishop of souls came to seek and save us.

The mere idea never dawned on Pagans of old, north, south, east or west. They admitted sympathy between God and His faithful. worshippers; but what must befall the unfaithful? What would make and keep faithful? Their gods, on their own showing, had lusts and passions, evil demons self-evidently, and deserving punishment like their adorers. The true God declared Himself in Jesus, Who came to bring God truly known into the world, and to put sin out of it, as He surely will in its season. As God is light and love, so did the Lord prove Himself to be, Whom none could convict of sin, Who died for sinners, suffered for their sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. Yes, He is the true God, and life eternal.

Why then stay longer? Are you not away from God? Are you fit for His presence? If you know you are not, what is to fit you? Christ is the way, and the only way, to the Father. But what of your sins? He, Who came in love to reconcile you to God, took the load on Himself; He alone could bear it, and bear it away forever. And God in the scriptures calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus, His Son, your Savior. God raised from the dead Him Who died for sins and sinners: does not this give you confidence?

You hesitate. Why? Do you love darkness rather than light? Alas! is it not because your works are evil, and your heart is proud, and you therefore hate the light which makes all manifest? Hear then His warning word. You cannot escape the resurrection of the unjust; you cannot escape the Judge of quick and dead. Jesus, Whom you now refuse as Savior, will judge those works of which you now boast; Jesus will prove their worthlessness to your everlasting shame, when He sits on the great white throne. What thenceforward must be your portion, if you reject Him now? “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). May you now hear and live.

Chapter 67

Gospel Words: 23. The Lost Drachma

Luke 15:8-10.

THE parable which follows the lost sheep presents the sinner's case in another form. It is not as that animal foolish and straying, but like a coin without life, a dead thing. Both are true of fallen man. As all are gone out of the way, and none seeketh after God, with destruction and wretchedness in their ways (Rom. 3), so were all dead in their offenses and their sins, by nature children of wrath one as another (Eph. 2). But grace goes forth to save and does save; not the creature's grace, but God's. This the Pharisees and scribes disliked; but the Lord demonstrates it, and draws the despised near to hear One so capable of telling out the love, of which He was the brightest witness and the richest gift. These parables are a pair, as the opening word indicates.

“Or what woman having ten drachmas, if she have lost one drachma, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently till she shall have found it? And on finding, she calleth together the friends and the neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, because I found the drachma which I lost.

Thus, I say to you, there ariseth joy in presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:8-10). Herein is a scene within the house, and a woman is active in seeking out the lost object; as in the former a man strenuous to recover the stray one without. But in both it is divine grace, grace entirely above man or woman, which the Savior sets before us so vividly; and the lost one is man or woman whom grace seeks and saves. Is it nothing to you who read these lines that you are “lost”? that you have turned your back on God? and that you are utterly hard and insensible in your alienation? Assuredly He is not cold or indifferent Who so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal (John 3). Not hard nor regardless of guilty man is He Who commends His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,-died for the ungodly (Rom. 5). Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins (1 John 4). Such is the true God Whose compassion the Lord Jesus here makes known. He here represents the painstaking of grace by a woman who spares no pains to win back her lost silver piece. She cannot rest about it. If sinners are beguiled by the enemy to disbelieve their ruin, the direct contrast is plain in her. She lights a lamp; she sweeps the house; she searches carefully till she finds it. It is not otherwise with the Holy Spirit. In the redeemed He is come to dwell, and causes the saints, however opposed in their old natural state as Jews and Gentiles, fitted together, to grow into a holy temple in the Lord, even now being builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit. Also He takes a most energetic part as well as loving interest in awakening the sinner from the slumber of death. It is He that makes the candle of the word shine into the dark recesses of the heart. It is He that probes the guilty conscience. It is He that discovers the fatal evil of darling sins in the light of God. Oh, have ye not experienced these gracious workings in your souls? Have you not felt as you read or listened to scripture, that somehow God was speaking to your conscience? Beware of turning a deaf ear to Him Who warns and would win you to Himself from all evil. If He

press home the certainty that God will have every work and word brought into judgment, He does not fail to remind you of the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. Do not longer ignore that the goodness of God leads you unto repentance? What goodness can match His spending the Only-begotten on you? What was it for the Lord of all to become Servant of all-yea, to die as a sacrifice for sinners.

Fear not to lay your hand on that infinite offering for sin. If the blood of hulls and goats could be no more than a witness by the way, if their effect could be but provisional and temporary, it is not so with the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus. By His blood peace was made for those who had been at war with God; and who can wonder? For His blood cleanses from all sin. It is God's word which so testifies to you. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? And his voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I will shake not the earth only but also heaven” (Heb. 12).

It may be remarked, that as the first of these three parables points evidently to the Lord Jesus, so does the second to the Holy Spirit, and the third yet more unmistakably to the Father. How blessed is it, that all the divine Persons of the Godhead are engaged on behalf of the lost one that he may be saved! Who can deny that this the Savior preached when here? And the Spirit has inspired the scripture for you to her and believe.

Chapter 68

Gospel Words: 24. The Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

The Savior adds a third parable to complete as well as confirm the truth of God's grace in saving the lost who repent. The first set out the heedless active straying of the sinner; the second, his insensible dead state till the Spirit works through the living word; the third uses the figure, not of a sheep or a coin, but of a man to point the fact of an inward work in the conscience, and of the reception the returning soul finds in the Father's love and the privileges of grace.

“And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to the father, Father, give me the share of the property that falleth to me. And he divided to them the means of living. And after not many days the younger son gathered all together, and went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his property by dissolute living. And when he squandered all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine; and he longed to fill his belly with the husks which the swine were eating; and no one gave him. But coming unto himself he said, How many hirelings of my father's have abundance of bread, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go unto my father and will say to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hirelings. And he arose and came unto his father. But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him much. And the son said to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and put [it] on him; and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill [it], and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead and came to life again, he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry” (vers. 11-24).

Impossible to conceive a sketch more graphically true. The younger son indicates very emphatically the sinner's path from his start in self-will and independency to open profligacy and the depths of degradation. Such were “some of you” even very far; such were most in a measure. We shall hear of another form of sin at least as evil before we have done. But this “far country” knows what extreme famine is. “No one gave him.” But as the wasteful feel the pressure of dire want, so that even swine's fare becomes desirable, God turns all for good in His grace.

O my reader, have you known such an experience? Have you ever tried to shake off parental authority, especially where pious? Have you, when you could, plunged into the pleasures of sin, the more eagerly because you were debarred under a father or a mother's eye? Have you fallen into the depths of immorality, and been “almost in all evil?” And in your misery have you learned what the world feels toward one who has lost all? “And no one gave him.” What! none of those who helped to drain the once full purse? No, not one. So the Lord describes the lost son. Are you like him in sin and misery? May you be also in repentance. For coming to himself he saw the folly, evil, and ruin of his life. His mind is made up. He must clear his burdened conscience, and confess

his iniquity. He will go to the One before Whom he had sinned, and have all out with Him, to His vindication and to his own shame.

The terror of the Lord may alarm, but the goodness of God leads to repentance as here and always. It produces true self-judgment in His sight. But whatever the hope of mercy that draws, spite of shame and self-loathing and grief at one's own sin, the grace of God much more exceeds. “While he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him much. And the son said to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill it; and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead and came to life again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.”

How incomparable is God's grace! With slow and sad steps came the prodigal, hope mingling with shame and many searchings of heart, in the rags that told the tale of ruin to the uttermost. Not so the father, who saw him a long way off, but moved with pity, ran, fell on his neck, and covered him with kisses just as he was. What was the impression made by such love? If ever such a vile son, certainly there never was such a father. The son speaks out his conscience, but not “make me as one of thy hirelings “: the father's love arrests this. Nor was it after all the humility of grace, but rather of law, drawing inferences from his past misconduct.

But in the gospel it is a question of God's love, giving Christ and resting on what is due to Him and His work, before which the sinner's evil vanishes. “Jesus was found alone,” the ground of all blessing. Therefore is it God's righteousness, not man's. The best robe is brought out and put on the repentant prodigal, a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Beyond all re-instatement, the lost son now found is blessed and honored as never before. He put on Christ, not Adam even unfallen; he became God's righteousness in Him. He feasts, and not he only but all that are of God on the fatted calf; yea God Himself rejoices in it with a joy proper to Himself and far deeper than that of all the rest put together.

In the elder son the Lord vividly portrays the self-righteous, the murmurers against grace such as the Pharisees and scribes; and they are many in every age, especially where scripture is current and men boast of religion. As he is represented returning from the fields and approaching the house, the music and dancing there struck his ear offensively, when he learned from a servant that it was his father's joy over his returned brother (25-27). He was angry and would not go in (28). And when his father went out and entreated (for what will not grace do?), he answers with self-complacency that insulted his father and the object of his compassion as much as it exalted himself. “Lo these many years do I slave for thee, and never transgressed thy commandments; yet never didst thou give me a kid to make merry with my friends. But when this thy son came that devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf” (29, 30). What an answer of patient love the father's! “Child, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and came to life again, was lost and is found” (31, 32). It is the day of grace, not judgment. He who despises grace will be judged another day.

Chapter 69

Gospel Words: 25. The Prudent Steward

Luke 16:1-13

This parable, though addressed by the Lord to His disciples, is a word of warning and instruction to all. It shows, not the way to the heavenly dwellings, but the character of those who get there.

“There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and he was accused to him as wasting his goods. And having called him, he said to him, What [is] this I hear of thee? Render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst no longer be steward. And the steward said to himself, What shall I do? because my lord is taking the stewardship from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I am resolved what I will do that when I have been removed from the stewardship, I may be received into their houses. And having called to him each one of the debtors of his own lord, he said to the first, How much owest thou to my lord? And he said, A hundred baths of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill [writings], and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another And thou, how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred cors of wheat. He saith to him, Take thy bill [writings], and write eighty. And the lord praised the steward of unrighteousness, because he did prudently. For the sons of this age are for their own generation more prudent than the sons of light. And I say to you, Make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness that, when it shall fail, ye may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. The faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and the unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye were not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true? And if ye were not faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two lords; for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (vers. 1-13).

In a general way man, especially the Jew, has wasted the goods entrusted to him, and forfeited his place. But grace gives him the opportunity of turning these earthly things to everlasting account. It is sheer folly to hold fast the brief present, regardless of the unending future. The Lord praises not the past waste any more than the selfish unrighteousness, but the prudence that sacrifices time and its passing interests in view of the unseen eternity and heavenly glory.

Christ by His infinite sufferings for sin and sinners has made this possible. The first man brought in ruin by sin; Israel made bad worse and earned a curse by his transgression and apostasy. Grace and truth came not by law but by Jesus Christ Whom God made sin for us as He bore the curse, that the guiltiest might through the faith of Him go free. He Whose grace opens the way into blessing beyond all thought has been wronged and plundered without measure. It is not the aim of this parable to show the way in which He is vindicated, and the evils of the sinner are blotted out, and His own righteousness by faith takes the place of man's righteousness sought no matter how assiduously, but always in vain. Thus it comes to pass that no flesh can glory, but he that glories truly must glory in the Lord.

It is Christ alone Who, heard in faith, gives a divinely sound judgment of ourselves and of things around us. Conscience alone is powerless to cope with temptation and blinding wiles of the enemy, ever alluring by what is in sight, seemingly fair and desirable. Without faith it is impossible to please God. To believe in Christ, the Word become flesh and dying for us, the Propitiation for our sins, that we might live of His life, how blessed for us! and how worthy of God! This is grace, this is truth. It centers in Christ, the object of faith; Who gives new eyesight to discern, and decision to abandon the sin-stained present, for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in the heavens for the faithful.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Are you setting your mind on earthly things? cleaving to the dust in quest of the unrighteous mammon, instead of making friends out of it that you may be received, when it shall have failed, into the everlasting tabernacles?

Everything like Judaism is on God's part now obsolete. It is no longer a system of earthly rewards or punishments, of a worldly sanctuary, of present ease, honor, or advantage. Heavenly things are revealed by Him Who was then rejected on earth and is now glorified on high. There alone are the true riches. The bait of Satan is the mammon of unrighteousness. This may procure the pleasures of sin for a season, and present results on the earth. But what will the end be? where must go those who in contempt of Christ lived only for that which is to fail?

The steward's prudence is a lesson for disciples. See the promptness of his course and his careful consideration of the debtors, the generosity too which gave right and left. This, and this alone in the unscrupulous steward, is commended for our imitation. What men call ours is really another's (ver. 12). It is easy to be generous with another's goods; and so faith would consider them. Such is Christ's yoke; and His yoke is easy, His burden light. To accumulate and keep or use for self is unbelief and covetousness. Faith gives freely, makes friends with what is but mammon, and turns it to everlasting account, when, faithful in a very little, we shall have much. The true riches then shall indeed be ours: for with Christ, His own Son, God will also freely give us all things. We are but stewards now, and are exhorted by the Master to the generosity of grace. It is vain, it is impossible, to serve God and mammon.

Chapter 70

Gospel Words: 26. The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

In the second half of this chapter the Lord still makes known the truth which came into evidence through His rejection. The light of eternal and heavenly things is let in on the present state and life on earth. The first man is fallen, evil and lost. If the Jew pre-eminently had been God's steward, he was unjust, and his occupation gone. Prosperity was no test of divine favor. That which is exalted among men is abomination in the sight of God. Since John, the Kingdom of God is preached: it is therefore an urgent question of pressing into it, and this on the part of “every one “; for grace opens the door to any. His death was at hand, which gives the believer even from the tribe of Judah or of Levi righteous deliverance from the law; so that there is no adultery, when one belongs to Another raised up from the dead, in order to bear fruit unto God, as the apostle wrote to the Roman saints.

How solemn and momentous the issues in the unseen world!

“Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, making good cheer splendidly day by day. And a certain pauper by name Lazarus was laid at his gate-way, full of sores and desiring to be filled with the things that fell from the table of the rich man; nay, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the pauper died and was carried away by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. And the rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades lifting up his eyes being in torments, he seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And calling he said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Child, remember that thou in thy lifetime didst fully receive thy good things, and Lazarus likewise evil things; but now here he is comforted and thou art in anguish. And besides all these things, between us and you a great chasm is fixed, so that those desiring to pass hence unto you cannot, nor those from that side may cross unto us. And he said, I beseech thee then, father, that thou wouldest send him unto the house of my father (for I have five brothers), that he may thoroughly testify to them, lest they too come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith [to him], They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one from the dead go unto them, they will repent. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, not even if one rise out of the dead will they be persuaded” (vers. 19-31),

The Savior depicts a man easy and luxurious in a world of misery, without faith in a world of sin, morally decent, outwardly religious, but living to self and practically infidel. Who did not know it in Israel? Who is not familiar with it in Christendom? Lazarus represents the contrast of the pious beggar laid hard by with none to pity his bodily sores but the dogs. The Conqueror of death lifts the veil. Then appears the truth for eternity: Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, the rich man that enjoyed himself in torments! What mattered the funeral pomp? or if the poor man had not even a grave? The angels carried the godly soul to the bosom of God's friend; the rich man left the vain and transient show of this world, and opened his eyes in the flame of Hades, aggravated by the sight of

the blessed afar off—yea, of him there who on earth awakened only his disgust. Now he implores of his father Abraham that Lazarus might allay his burning tongue with the merciful touch of water at the tip of the finger!

It is not a picture of resurrection to come, but of what instantly follows death, though expressed in figures drawn from the body through which we now derive our sensations. The believer once wretched is comforted, the godless is in anguish. Like the parable before, it reveals not the means of salvation, but the character and end, whether of the saved or of the lost. Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. If we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with Him. To try to reign now is a danger and delusion: if we endure, we shall also reign together. Even Christ is not reigning yet, but rejected by man He is waiting on the Father's throne.

The latter verses (27-31) bring out the all-importance of faith; as the Jew, long favored, is now the standing witness of ruin through unbelief. The testimony of God in His word, O.T. or N.T, is the ground of faith. Even a Lazarus sent from the grave would not avail to convince those who do not listen believingly to Moses and the prophets. In fact another Lazarus was raised by the Lord Jesus not long after; but instead of convincing the Jews, he only provoked the murderous nature of the chief priests and the Pharisees (John 11:47-53). The carnal mind is enmity against God, and rises, proudly and most of all, against His grace in Christ. Yet by grace only are any saved through faith. Hence it is by hearing the word of truth; and this is now in the richest form and fullness, the gospel of our salvation, as the apostle calls it. For God has gone beyond all thoughts and wishes of man in raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who, as He was delivered for our offenses, was raised for our justification.

It is Christ's death and resurrection which alone could save. Therefore is it God's righteousness, not man's, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.

There is no other way, no other salvation. To the poor is the gospel preached; but it had not been God's gospel, unless it were equally open to and reliable for the rich. For the truth of Christ is mighty to make the lowly boast in his elevation, and the rich in his humiliation. To Him be the praise and the glory now and evermore. Amen.

Assuredly for you, my readers, no great gulf is fixed between God and you. Christ is still speaking from heaven as a Savior that you may believe; and as faith comes by a report, so the report is by the word of God. Your guilty conscience may well dread an impassable gulf; but there is a perfect way, a safe bridge fixed between God and you; and Christ is that way. Oh! take it now, this way to the Father in the Son; for the Holy Spirit deigns and loves to proclaim the glad news to you.

Gospel Words: 27. Unprofitable Bondmen

Luke 17:7-10

One needs to be saved by Christ before one can serve Him. Salvation is of grace and by faith. It was Christ Who alone bore the burden. We contributed the sins, and nothing else; but awakened by the word and Spirit of God we repented and believed the gospel. How is it with you, dear reader? Beware of going on in dark uncertainty. The true light already shines since the Son of God came. Turn not your back on Him, lest the true character of yourself and your works should be shown as they are. Be honest Godward. Confess yourself a sinner, and your deeds evil. Receive Jesus as the one divine Savior, expressly sent by and from God to save the lost. We were indeed bondmen of sin; but set free from sin by the Savior, we would henceforth yield our members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness, each the Lord's freedman, now Christ's bondman.

We are in a world of snares, pitfalls, and evils. Christ is not only the Savior but the sole path of safety. Hence an exercised conscience, and a spirit of compassion become those who confess Christ and are saved by grace. Self-judgment is the fruit, a careful walk, and readiness to forgive. As we may not weary of well doing, so neither should we of pardoning. Stumbling-blocks abound and work mischief; woe to him through whom they come! A terrible death were better than to cause one to the least disciple. Our Lord's call is, “Take heed to yourselves.” Let fidelity to God rebuke sin; let grace forgive it to the repentant, were it seven times in the day. Do we not know it without limit in Christ? It is the kingdom and patience now. By-and-by it will be power and glory, when He reigns.

No wonder that the apostles said, “Lord, increase our faith.” All things are possible to him that believes. Were their faith minute as a grain of mustard, He would have it count on God's power that answers the call for His glory, which roots up a tree, say this mulberry, and plants it in the sea obediently. Man may be weakness itself; yet is it God's purpose in and through man to glorify Himself. Is not the Lord Jesus the sure pledge and the manifest proof of it?

Bought with a price (and what a price!) we are here to obey in all lowliness and meekness. God loves to work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. While faith is encouraged to the utmost, self-complacency is absolutely condemned and excluded. Brokenness of spirit is the fitting preparation for the energy of faith. The Christian here is simply witnessing Him Who is not here, his Lord and the Lord of all. We are not fellow-workers with God, but under Him. We are His fellow-workers, but in entire subjection to Him, in no way on a level with Him. The wording in the A. and R. Versions of 1 Cor. 3:9 and 2 Cor. 6:1 is equivocal and dangerous; if interpreted as it often has been to put God and His servants on a common plane, it is evil and presumptuous. This, scripture repudiates and the new nature surely resents. The parable which follows reduces such a claim to dust.

“But which of you, having a bondman plowing or keeping sheep, will say to him when come in from the field, Come in straightway and recline at meat? But will he not say to him, Make ready what I

shall sup on, and gird thyself and serve me that I may eat and drink; and after that thou shalt eat and drink? Is he thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? I judge not. Thus ye also, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bondmen are we; we have done what we were bound to do" (vers. 7-10).

It is a shameful perversion of serving Christ to make it either a ground of acceptance with God, or a measure of ease or rank among men. Bring in the Master, and behold every such plea exposed as evil and vanishing away. Even Christ pleased not Himself, but according as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. And the great apostle of the Gentiles loved to style himself "bondman of Jesus Christ." What an overthrow of human feeling and worldly pride for him, the free-born citizen of Rome, so to introduce himself to all that were in Rome beloved of God, saints by calling So indeed to the utmost was it with the Lord of all, Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming in likeness of men, and being found in figure as man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of [the] cross.

Here the Lord lays down the servant's place, so readily slipping out of our light hearts. He had shown what faith ever so small can do through God's power. Here He would remind us that we are His bondmen. A great honor it is for us, yet a great reality. It is fellowship with Him in what His love led Him to become.

Time was when we were enemies of God. Death and judgment were then our sure and appointed lot. He interposed and by His sacrifice changed all for those that believe. His love that made Him a bondman constrains us to the same service of love. Whatever our privileges, this is our place: servants not only of Him but for His sake. Has not grace made us debtors to all, to saints and to sinners, to countrymen and to foreigners, to wise and to unintelligent? But pre-eminently and unalienably and always are we Christ's bondmen. In this let us not forget that he who loveth his life shall lose it, and that he who hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Let us remember that the rule for anyone who may serve Christ is to follow Him, and the issue will be that where He is, there also shall His servant be, and honored of His Father.

Assuredly the Lord owes us no thanks. It is our privilege as our duty to serve Him in all things great or small, day and night, sick or well. We are His altogether and evermore. Is a master "thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bond-men are we; we have done what we were bound to do." Never did man speak like this Man, our Master. Others without an exception have thought, that it was enough to confess ourselves unprofitable when we fail to do our duty; He teaches us to say it, when we shall have done all the things ordered us.

How completely His word destroys the vain and unbelieving dream of works of supererogation! Not a single saint was other than His bondman; not a single right work done by anyone of them but was his duty to do. They were God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before prepared that they should walk in them. What short-coming themselves found in what others deemed the best! Whatever they were, they had only done what they owed to Him.

Chapter 72

Gospel Words: 28. The Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8

The closing verses of Luke 17 are occupied with the appearing of the Lord, when He comes in His kingdom and executes judgment on the quick. Hence the comparison is with the days of Noah and of Lot. It is not the heavenly hope dawning, as in Luke 12:32-38; but “the day that the Son of man is revealed” (2 Thess. 1), when the birds of prey are gathered together over the corpse.

In moral connection with His coming in personal judgment of the earth the Lord intimates the urgent value of prayer.

“And he spake also a parable to them that they must always pray and not faint, saying, There was in a certain city a certain judge, not fearing God and not regarding man; and there was a widow in that city and she kept coming unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he refused for a while; but afterward he said in himself, If even I fear not God and regard not man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me I will avenge her, that she by forever coming may not worry me. And the Lord said, Hear what the judge of unrighteousness speaketh. And shall God in no wise avenge his own elect that cry to him by day and night, and he is long suffering over them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?” (vers. 1-8.)

As God's call is the warrant of faith, so faith is exercised in prayer, and rests always on the unseen in the midst of seen experience. And when things are most trying through the prevalence of evil, those that believe are encouraged the more to cry, How long, O Lord? He puts faith to the proof; He can never deny Himself, nor disappoint His people. But endurance is to have a perfect work, that they may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The figures employed were the best possible to encourage: on the one hand a judge of unrighteousness neither fearing God nor respecting man, on the other a widow wronged by an adversary near enough to inflict so much the greater evil, because he should have been her protector. Yet her persevering cry wore out the judge's indifference. He could not stand her continual appeal, and, to escape the annoyance, he let her have justice. The Lord reveals the thoughts and motives of the judge's heart, and draws the believer's attention to the way in which even now God's providential ways act in the most reckless and unprincipled on behalf of the oppressed.

But how much more will it be when God rises up in judgment of the world, as He surely will in the person of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age. Then will He shine forth as the Judge of the earth, and the elect will have their cry by day and night at length heard, and the wicked triumph no more. They speak arrogantly now, they boast themselves. They will slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. But Jehovah will not cut off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance. For judgment, instead of diverging to the right or the left, shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. So it will be in the day of the Lord's appearing. She who had long

played Him false and sought many lovers will take by repentance the place of the desolate widow, and shall forget the shame of her youth, and the reproach of her widowhood shall He remember no more. For her Maker is her husband in that bright day; and the Holy One of Israel is her Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall He be called, as indeed He is, and she shall know. He may be long suffering over His own elect in their tribulation; but He will avenge them speedily in that day. For in His hand is a cup, and the wine foameth; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same. Surely the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them; and the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up when those of the wicked also shall be cut off. But it will be a dark hour, not only in the land but elsewhere, and faith seems then extinct as regards public profession up to that mighty intervention.

0 my reader, forget not that you still hear the gospel. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Such is His testimony to you. It is not a promise or a hope; it is the most wondrous of all facts in the grace of God; and you, if you have not already believed God as to it, are now called to believe on Christ Whom He gave and sent that you might be saved. To Him and His work of redemption does the Holy Spirit now bear witness in the gospel, which is God's glad tidings to every one that believes. Trifle not with grace so unparalleled. To put it off is to trifle with the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Can there be more glaring or guilty unbelief?

Why do you now delay? The atoning work is done. Be it known to you therefore, that through Christ is preached to you forgiveness of sins; and in virtue of Him every one that believes is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. This was no defect of His law, which indeed was God's law and must condemn, not justify, the sinner. But the gospel is from God the good news of Jesus the Lord His Son, the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost. Beware then, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe if one declare it to you.

Chapter 73

Gospel Words: 29. The Pharisee and the Tax Gatherer

Luke 18:9-14

FROM the widow's pertinacity prevailing over the injustice of the wicked judge the Lord drew the assurance of God's avenging at length the cry of the elect. Here He turns to God's pitiful estimate of a contrite spirit despised by haughty self-righteousness. What an encouragement to the poor self-judging one! What a warning to such as presume on their own fancied superiority! Both parables illustrate the moral light here cast on man as he is by the Son of man. They are characteristic of Luke who alone gives them.

“And he spoke also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all the rest at naught. Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus to himself, O God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, rapacious, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain. And the tax-gatherer standing afar off would not lift up even his eyes unto heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, the sinner. I tell you, this [man] went down unto his house justified rather than that; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (vers. 9-14).

How deeply “Jesus Christ, the Righteous,” resented the spuriousness of a sinner claiming righteousness! how He pitied the soul that really felt its sinfulness before God! He is the Savior of all that believe the gospel, the Judge of all that disbelieve. Simple yet graphic is the scene, and the sentence sound, sure, and conclusive. But in the haze that overhung the temple the Pharisee had as high a repute as the tax-gatherer had none.

There the Pharisee took a position and poured out his complacency in himself. “O God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men.” Not a word about his sins or even his need. Not a suspicion of his guilt and ruin. He is lifted up with the sense that he was not this or that, extortionate, unjust, adulterous, “or even as this tax-gatherer.” Nor that only; for he boasts his religion. “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain.” It was another Cain. Oh, the many that go in the way of Cain! They come before God as they are; they offer their fasts and their tithes, as they feel assured they are better than the rest of men. What have they done to offend God? Why should they doubt His acceptance of them?

So it is that men still deceive themselves, or even make God a liar, as the apostle expresses it. They cloak their own sins; they denounce other people's sins; but God is not mocked. His word is that all sinned, and do come short of His glory. But Abel bowed and brought his sacrifice. Fruits of the ground man labored on could not avail for sin. Death must come between God and the sinner. So Cain righteous in his own eyes had no right sense of his ruin; Abel who was righteous duly felt and owned ruin in his offering, whereas Cain's denied it. In a word Cain trusted to self, Abel to Another. Sin or death was nothing to Cain, but great to Abel's faith that looked for the Savior.

And what of the tax-gatherer? He, standing afar off, would not lift up even his eyes to heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, the sinner. It was his evil that pressed on his spirit, as he cried to God. Not a thought had he of good deeds done, of bad ones avoided. He did not dream of hiding himself in a crowd of sinners or a vague confession. He singled himself as the sinner if ever there was one. What did he know of others? or, even if he had a slight knowledge, he knew himself far better and overwhelmingly. “O God, be merciful to me, the sinner.” His light from God might be small, but it was real; and as it disclosed his own sinfulness, he owned himself the sinner. He looked out of himself to God about his condition, without a word of self-commendation, or of comparison with others, or of excuse. No, he was the sinner, and before God he lays himself as he is. On God, a God of grace, he relies in simple real acknowledgment of his ruin.

It was the fear of God, and the beginning of wisdom; and the Lord recognizes it accordingly. “I tell you, this man went down unto his house justified rather than that.” Hence the general principle follows, “because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

It was not “justified by faith '' so as to have peace with God. The Lord does not describe one who had heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. There was not, nor could be yet, the presentation of the great work of grace, Christ's work. God's righteousness in Him had yet to be manifested. But the tax-gatherer was brought where all the godly in Israel had been before him, to look away from himself to God's mercy; he was believingly taught as a sinner, where the godly outside Israel were taught to renounce self-dependence. See a saint like Job thus broken through severe discipline for his greater blessing: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5, 6).

For sinners or saints repentance there is and must be. Even he whom Jehovah commended as a perfect and upright man, that feared God and eschewed evil, needed it, as He alone turned the fiery trial to that good end. For Job thought too well and much of what grace enabled him to do, and exalted himself in consequence. The enemy failed wholly to shake him. Jehovah touched the weak point through his friends (more ignorant of God and of themselves than Job), who at length humbled himself deeply and was exalted in due time. This was when he prayed in a spirit of grace for his proud and harshly judging friends. What a contrast with the Pharisee! There the tax-gatherer was led in his measure, a case of true repentance, if not so deep as that of Job both precious in the Lord's eyes. “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than that.”

In justification through Christ's blood are found no degrees. By Him all that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13:39). Here it was faith and repentance, and hence a state morally right before God (which the Pharisee's was not), though short of the clearance and liberty which faith in the gospel brings.

Chapter 74

Gospel Words: 30. Christ's Returning to Reign

Luke 19:12-27

The disciples, little knowing God's mind, were impatient for His kingdom. They thought it was immediately to be manifested. They forgot that “first must He suffer many things” and enter into His glory. They overlooked reconciliation by blood as the basis of all: how else could God be glorified or man be saved? The Lord said therefore,

“A certain man of high birth went unto a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And having called his own ten bondmen, he gave them ten pounds (mince), and said to them, Trade till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this [man] reign over us. And it came to pass on his coming back again, having received the kingdom, that he bade these bondmen to whom he gave the money to be called to him, in order that he might know what each gained by trading. And the first came up, saying, Lord, thy pound made ten pounds more. And he said to him, Well [done], good bondman; because in a very little thou west faithful, be in authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound made five pounds. And he said also to him, And be thou over five cities. And the other came, saying, Lord, behold, thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and reapest what thou didst not sow. He saith to him, Out of thy mouth will I judge thee, wicked bondman. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping what I did not sow; and why didst thou not give my money into a bank, and I on coming should have got it with interest? And to the bystanders he said, Take from him the pound and give [it] to him that hath the ten pounds. (And they said to him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not even what he hath shall be taken from him. Howbeit those my enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before me” (verses 12-27).

Redemption by Christ's death must be first, and heaven be opened for the redeemed where He is exalted as its answer. He would receive the kingdom as all things not from man but from God. But He will surely return, having received the kingdom. Then will He take account of their service to whom He gave gifts for trading in responsibility to Him during His absence. For we are here in view, not of His receiving His own to Himself for the Father's house, but of His appearing and His kingdom. And they are rewarded according to their fidelity, one more, and another less. It is not gifts differing according to God's sovereignty, but all alike entering their Lord's joy as in Matt. 25; but here each receives alike a pound and is rewarded respectively according to the different result of their work. The two Gospels present the two sides, but are both true. Both show us also the “evil bondman,” without a particle of faithfulness. And why? Because he had no faith in his Lord's grace. On the contrary, he insulted Him Who is full of grace and truth as “an austere man,” selfish and dishonest as his own heart; and his end is accordingly.

There is reward then for work that pleases the Master, Who will be no man's debtor, but surely requites all in the coming day. Each bondman shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. But there is a foundation requisite for every one who thus builds; and other foundation can none lay than that laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is and must be faith in His grace for any one to serve Him truly. This the faithful bondmen had, and in the faith of Him they were devoted to His service. This faith the wicked bondman had not, and therefore he served not. He cared only for himself, he wronged his Master and gave the lie to His grace. But he could not escape righteous judgment, and out of his own mouth he was condemned: as those who believed in the Lord's grace receive a righteous reward in the kingdom of glory for their good works.

Take notice, my reader, that it is no question here of heathen but of professing Christians, of the service due to the absent Lord before He appears in His kingdom. Faith in Him, faith in His grace, can alone avail you Alike is the turning-point for every soul that hears His word; it is the spring of acceptable service, no less than of salvation. How could it be otherwise? The Lord is the Son of man Who came to save the lost at all cost for Himself. God will not tolerate slighting His own Son. Not to believe on Him at God's word is to dishonor both the Father and the Son; and as men thus receive not life eternal, they must come into judgment, and hence inevitably into the second death. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” O unbeliever, what bliss do you not lose? what woe do you not gain?

Then the Lord speaks of another guilty class; not the wicked servant, but His citizens sent an embassy after Him when He went on high, saying, We will not have this man reign over us. They are the Jews that hate Him, instead of professing to serve Him. When the true servants shine in the honors of the kingdom, what will be their portion, His open enemies that would not have Him, Messiah their king, reign over them? Those who repent not will fall under His destructive judgment. Bring them hither, says He in the parable, and slay them before Me. For when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all them that believed, there will also be the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Jews that hate and Gentiles that despise the Savior must suffer the due reward of their rebellious unbelief and their evil deeds. How would it be, how is it, with you that read these words? Do not assume that God is indifferent, like you.

Chapter 75

Gospel Words: 31. The Door

John 10:7-10

IN the previous verses our Lord speaks of Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep entering the fold of Israel by the door or God-appointed means.

Here, for the best reasons and the fuller display of the grace and truth which came by Him, He presents Himself as the Door of the sheep, rather than of the fold.

“Jesus therefore said to them again, Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture. The thief cometh not but that he may steal and slay and destroy; I came that they might have life, and have [it] abundantly” (vers. 7-10).

The fold is here left aside. What could Judaism avail for the saints any more than sinners? Christ is the door of the sheep. They might be cast out like the blind man whom He caused to see. Where were they to turn, and whither go? “I am the door of the sheep.” He is the entrance to the new and abiding blessings of God for His own, the entrance to the God that blessed them, yea, to the Father, as they learn in due time. He is the object of faith now more clearly than ever; as He had been truly, if dimly, since sin came into the world. All believers looked to Him that was coming, the Messiah; but now He is revealed as incomparably more.

Had any claimed the sheep? “All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them.” For God protects His own. They might boast and say that they were somebody, like Theudas; they might draw after them a people in revolt like Judas of Galilee. But they were thieves and robbers; and none followed whom the Son made free, only Abraham's seed but not his children.

In ver. 9 He describes Himself in fewer words which convey far more, “I am the door.” It is not merely “of the sheep “; it is for any. “I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture.” Can words be more precise or more full? Can blessing for a needy soul be more suited, rich, and secure? He is the door absolutely, away from all evil into all good.

It is Christianity in contrast with Judaism or any other earthly religion. To enter through the door is to believe on Jesus the Son of God. He that does is on His word assured of salvation; “he shall be saved.” This, mark it well, is given to him that enters through Christ. No such assurance attends another than the Son of God. He is the Savior, and none else. The church consists of the saved, but cannot save: only Christ can and does. A false church may set up to save; the true church repudiates such a pretension as a lie and a blasphemy. She is but the body, He is the Head; she is the bride, He the Bridegroom. She, being true, is jealous of His honor; she rejects with horror all thought of setting herself in His place as of Satan. She has the Spirit now, as He had when here;

but the Spirit does not glorify her but Him. All her privileges are in virtue of Him, and are rightly turned but to His praise.

Salvation then, as it is of God's grace, is through Christ. “Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved.” It is not for the Jew only but for the Gentile also; it is for “any one.” But he must enter through Christ. Through Me if any one enter, he shall be saved. He may be baptized and be lost; he may take the Lord's Supper, and be lost. If any one enter through Christ, he shall be saved. This He declares; and His words shall endure when heaven and earth pass away.

O my reader, do you believe His words? Do you believe on Himself? Unless He were what He is, unless He were Who He is, neither you nor any other sinner could be saved. But being the Son and becoming the sacrifice for sin, salvation is now open to the poorest of sinners who believes on Him. “Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved.” He is the door; and He tells you so. Have you heard Him and entered? Have you taken Him at His word? This is to believe. Do you then believe on the Son of God?

Nor is salvation all that He is now giving. He gives liberty: or as He says here of “any one” that enters through Him, “he shall go in and shall go out.” It is in contrast with the penned-up condition of the sheep under Judaism. The law genders bondage; it could not confer freedom. Only the truth, the Son, makes free; and “if the Son therefore makes you free, ye shall be free indeed.” So here “he shall go in and shall go out.” This is divine emancipation, to us without money or price, to God at the cost of His Son.

There is yet more. For we need now, not salvation nor freedom only, but food; and this He next guarantees. He that enters through Christ “shall find pasture.” As He had before taught, the best food is Himself not incarnate only, but dead for us, so that by faith we eat His flesh and drink His blood. This is what most nourishes the soul, communion with His death.

O my reader, turn not a deaf ear to God's glad tidings. Fear to treat such a Savior with indifference. Beware of putting off to a more convenient season. God is not mocked. To slight God's law was bad; to neglect His gospel is a great deal worse. The enemy is busy and near. “The thief cometh not but to steal and slay and destroy.” This Satan loves, and his servants are many. “I came,” says the Lord, “that they [believers] might have life, and have it abundantly.” Here He makes a brief transition to His death and resurrection, that the saved might enjoy life, as they do now, in the power of His resurrection.

Chapter 76

Gospel Words: 32. The Good Shepherd

John 10:11-18

Very direct are these words of the Lord. What blessing to receive them in faith! what guilt and ruin to despise Him and them!

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf seizeth them and scattereth. Now the hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall be one flock, one shepherd. On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again: this commandment I received of my Father” (vers. 11-18).

In Isa. 40:11, of the Lord Jehovah it is said, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom-shall gently lead those that give suck.” Here He Himself goes much farther. He proves Himself the Good Shepherd by laying down His life for the sheep: none other would, nor, if any other be conceived, could it avail with God or for man.

Rejected He was, with hatred for His love; but nothing turned Him from His purpose of grace. He was the Good Shepherd; and as such He lays down His life for the sheep. Such love bespoke itself divine; it characterized His person and God's nature, but in man, which alone made it possible. Beyond doubt only thus could they be, only thus were they, reconciled to God; but here His laying down His life is the evidence and acme of devoted love in Him Who acts freely and never was more consciously God than in His atoning death.

What a contrast with him who is a hireling and not a shepherd; whose own the sheep are not! Beholding the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees, while the wolf seizes and scatters them; and so it is, because a hireling he is and careth not for the sheep.

But Jesus only is the Good Shepherd here. Others there have been who love the sheep in their measure, and so feed and tend them. But here where He is thus introduced, they have no mention but must vanish away. They were not entitled to call theirs the sheep, which in fact are “the flock of God.” The sheep were Christ's own. Even if the wolf should catch any, not even the wolf shall catch them (the same word) out of Christ's hand. To kill the wolf would have been incomparably easier than to lay down life for them; and this He did, Who had no sin but love, no fear any more than selfish object, Who always did the things pleasing to His Father. And as the Good Shepherd He could say, “I know mine own, and mine own know me; even as my Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” It is the fullest evidence of His devotedness in love for them. His knowledge of them, and theirs of Him, He compared with the Father's

knowing Him and His knowing the Father. What can be conceived so satisfying and perfect?

Gracious and powerful is the love the O.T. reveals in Messiah for His flock, “His beautiful flock” as it will surely be. But what is even that to a loving and mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep, so intimate that it could only be matched by the Father's and the Son's knowledge of one another! In this case is absolute and intrinsic excellence beyond thought or question; in the other, oh! what and how many faults on our side! But love in Him never fails; and we are entitled to count on it in our knowledge of Him as in His of us. This is grace divine, superior to all that it finds, and everlasting.

Such is the depth of the Good Shepherd's love; but He intimates a width far beyond His disciples' thoughts. “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring [or, lead], and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become [or, be] one flock, one shepherd.”

Thus He points to the call of Gentiles by the gospel. If most of the Jews turned a deaf ear, many Gentiles have heard and do hear. For no criterion is truer than this. As He deigns to lead them also, “they shall hear my voice.”

O my reader, how is this with you? His voice is not of one crying in the wilderness like His herald. He, when here, frequented not the wilderness only but the hillside, and the riverside, and the villages, and the towns, and the cities. He preached the gospel to the poor emphatically; and when His work here was done, He charged His servants to preach the gospel to all the nations, the whole creation. Had Jerusalem been most guilty? To all, said He, “beginning with Jerusalem.”

Is not this glad tidings to you, whoever you are, whatever you may have been? Redemption depends on the Redeemer, not on the redeemed, save that they “hear His voice.” Oh! then repent and believe the gospel. Never can you truly worship or serve Him, till you receive Him, believing on His name. In vain is every other resource; nay, to trust any ordinance, in order to reconciliation with God, dishonors both the Father and the Son. When you have Him as your life, they find their place.

Of one great added privilege the Savior speaks here. “They shall (Jews and Gentiles) be one flock, one Shepherd.” It was a quite new thing from God: “one flock” (not “fold” as formerly), “one Shepherd.” Oh, how sad the change man has made and how guilty the excuse to cloak it as one flock consisting of many folds! Why do Christians thus defraud the Lord, disguise or corrupt the word, and forfeit their own fidelity and their own fuller blessing? Not so. To set up a fold now is no better than Judaizing. There is, as the Lord's will and truth, but one flock, as there is but one Shepherd in the supreme sense. And every Christian is bound to own this One and no other rival. In Him all the fullness dwells.

But let us hear also His own wondrous words. “On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” Christ here omits “for the sheep” and presents His death as in itself furnishing a motive to the Father's love. None but He could; none but His divine person. As such He declares, “no one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power [or, title] to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” None but the One Who is both God and man in one person could thus speak; and so while He speaks as divine, He does not fail to remember the place of sent One and servant He had taken. “This commandment I received from my Father.”

Gospel Words: 33. Feet Washing

John 13:1-15

The Lord was going on high. Of this He treats henceforth till the closing scenes on earth. It was an immense surprise to the disciples, who looked for His restoring the Kingdom to Israel at that time. His departure to the Father would begin that new order of things which we know as Christianity. “Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son] to betray him, [Jesus] knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel girded himself; then he poureth water into the bacon, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and saith to him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt come to know hereafter. Peter saith to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; on this account he said, Ye are not all clean. When therefore he washed their feet and took his garments, reclining again he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord; and ye say well, for I am. If I therefore the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example, that ye should do even as I also did to you” (vers. 1-15).

It was a new and profound testimony to His love—love to the uttermost: not in His work on the cross in suffering once for their sins, but in His provision for His beloved ones against every defilement by the way. In this act of washing the disciples' feet we have mystically His advocacy with the Father if any one should have sinned. Was the devil then goading on the traitor? Our Lord Jesus shows what His love would do in heaven for His failing ones. He would fulfill all the meaning of stooping to wash their feet. The glory conferred on Him, the infinite purity that returned to God as unstained as when He came out from Him, only attested His grace and adequacy to their need and what was due to divine majesty. It was a question of restoring communion interrupted by defilement; and the Lord met it by a way as unfailing for the saint, as His atoning death for the sinner. “This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.”

Here it is not blood but water. As His blood alone could cleanse us from all sin before God, so do we need what the water typifies. According to His mercy God saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Thus are we bathed or washed all over, a new creation in Christ. But this does not dispense with the need of washing for the feet, soiled by walking through this miry world. Only Christ could effect either; and He does effect both through the Holy Spirit and the word. He is the Advocate with the Father.

Saints are apt to misunderstand this, as we see Peter did; and the Lord corrected his hasty thoughts. How much had Peter to learn how much have you? The Lord's gracious work in heaven is as indispensable as His work once for all on the cross. Not that regeneration is repeated. “He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet.” Peter, who understood little as yet, soon learned what it is to defile his feet, and what it is for the Savior to wash them. For indeed He prayed that Peter's faith should not fail, though his faithfulness did deeply. But His grace restored him, and made him afterward such a strengthener of his brethren as he never was before. When Peter reached the lowest point of the mire, “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord.” What a witness to this service which the Lord now carries on above for His failing ones on earth! It is the washing of water by the word, which applies for our regeneration at the start, and for our restoration at every occasion of need. If it were not so, one could have no part with Christ; but this He secures by His constant love in washing our feet when defiled.

O my reader, are you then bathed? Are you regenerate and renewed by the Spirit? If not, there is but one door, but one way. Jesus alone can avail you. Believe God's word concerning Him. This is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. All things, says He, are possible to him that believes. Such are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Otherwise you are still in your sins. If you only profess the Lord's name, but believe not in your heart, so much the more awful is your case.

Abide no longer under the wrath of God, as you do if not subject but disobedient to His Son. He is as willing as He is able. Turn not from His grace. He refuses none, but accepts every one who comes to Him, and will raise him up at the last day. From first to last the Lord Jesus undertakes for the believer. His sheep, as He declares, shall not perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand.

How wonderful it is that we who believe are called to like grace with one another! Christ would have us wash one another's feet. Is this our way, or our desire, before our God and Father? It is vain, unless we be spiritual. Such alone can restore a fallen brother in a spirit of meekness. Be it ours thus to seek grace from our God.

Chapter 78

Gospel Words: 34. The Vine

The disciples were used to regard Israel as the vine of Jehovah's planting. He brought it out of Egypt and planted it in the land on which His eyes rested. But the Psalm (80), which tells us so, mourns its actual devastation by the wild beasts of the field, and beseeches Him to visit this vine, as He will by the Son of man. Here the Lord meanwhile sets aside Israel altogether, and substitutes Himself for that empty vine. Christ is the True Vine, and His Father is the Husbandman. This is clearly, not His office in heaven as Advocate (chap. 13), nor His coming as our Hope to place us with Himself in the Father's house (chap. 16), but His relation to His own on earth for fruit-bearing. Christ is all.

Hence we see throughout that it is the responsibility of the disciple to depend on Christ, to cleave to Him, to refer all to Him. Thus only is fruit borne to His praise, and the Father glorified. Throughout our abiding has the first place, and it is a question of “if.” The very reverse appears invariably where God presents salvation by grace.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean on account of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you: even as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither ye unless ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, he beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing. Unless one abide in me, he is cast forth as the branch and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask whatever ye will, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples to me” (vers. 1-8).

Luminous as these words are, bias has misunderstood them, Calvinists and Arminians wresting them, each to his scheme. Both start with the assumption that the figurative language means union with Christ, or membership of His body. But His body is never taught in our Gospel nor indeed by any but the apostle Paul; and though union is elsewhere, it is not here, but communion. Union is a settled fact in the spiritual realm, on the basis of Christ's death (chap. 11:52) and by the given Spirit's power (17:11, 21, 22, 23). But communion is conditional, and hence may or may not be, as it depends on abiding in Christ.

For this reason it is not a question here of believing on Christ to life eternal, but of abiding in Him and bearing fruit. Man's will for this wholly fails; the chosen people have no power more than others; the law is in vain; and so is the church. Angels, saints living or departed, the Virgin, are but sinking sand. Christ is the True Vine, Christ only. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself; apart from Him it can do nothing.

It is the responsible position of all that call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. All such have left Gentilism or Judaism for Christ. It may be a heart or a lip confession of Christ; but those that

confess Him are all branches in the Vine. He is the True Vine; but they may not be true branches. If they abide in Him, they bear fruit; if they do not, they are sooner or later taken away. They may leave Him, or, if put away, they may never be restored either inwardly or outwardly. So we read (chap. 6:66) that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. So it was going to be manifest in Judas, one of the Twelve. They were branches in the Vine; they confessed His name. But if they did not abide, they hence bore no fruit for His Father. The truest branch needs pruning, or cleansing, by the Father, that it may bear more fruit; but every branch that is true bears fruit. Those that are untrue prove it by not abiding in Christ, and hence by bearing no fruit, self-confident and active though they may be.

The Lord Jesus is life eternal to those that believe on Him. This however is not the subject which is here treated of. It is rather how to bear fruit; and abiding in Christ is its source and way. He is not only life, but the rule of life; and as He is absolutely what He also speaks, His word expresses it fully. By His word were they begotten afresh; on account of it they were already clean. To abide in Him, and have His words abiding in them, draws out in suited prayer and ensures the answer. There is thus much fruit to the glory of the Father, and Christ is not ashamed of them as His disciples. Not to abide in Him, after knowing and confessing Him, is worse than never to have heard, and leaves those who abandon Him as dried up branches of the Vine, only fit for the" burning. Such souls never had life in the Son.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Do you yearn after fruit acceptable to God the Father? Is it in your heart to serve the Lord Jesus? You cannot, unless you abide in Him. If you strive to abide in Him in order to service and fruit-bearing, it will be a failure. And the Lord here solemnly warns of failure, as He explains the secret of realizing. Begin with taking the place of a guilty and lost sinner that you may be saved through grace by believing on Christ. Thus only is life eternal given. "Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth hath life eternal." "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life eternal."

The responsibility of bearing fruit attaches to all who confess Christ. If you believe on Him at God's word, you have life in Him, and will respond to His call of abiding in Him; if it be but confessing Him on evidence satisfactory to your own mind, you will play fast and loose, and turn away on pressure or to please yourself. This is the reverse of abiding in Him, and it is the prelude to everlasting judgment.

Chapter 79

Gospel Words: 35. Christ the Bread of Life

John 6:35-51

From the sign of the miraculously multiplied bread the Lord turns those who sought Him to the true bread which the Father gives out of heaven. They had been of a mind by force to make him King; He would receive the kingdom only in due time from His Father. He therefore goes up on high meanwhile to pray. But now on the other side He explains that during Israel's unbelief it is no question of accomplishing their hope now, but of receiving life eternal for resurrection and the heaven to which He was going. It is Christianity in short, and not yet the kingdom restored to Israel.

“Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh unto me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that ye have both seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out; because I am come down from heaven, not to do my will but the will of him that sent me. And this is. the will of him that sent me that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father that everyone that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him should have life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day” (35-40).

The Bread of life is not a rite or a sacrament, but the Incarnate Word. He is the object of faith presented, that needy, famishing, souls may have life eternal. The manna in the wilderness was a witness to Hire, little as they knew who ate of it and died there. The Lord Jesus is the Bread of God that comes down out of heaven and gives life not to Israel only but to the world. Him the Father God sealed. But so it was the right time to unfold a higher and larger work as the Son of man, rejected by the Jews. Faith receives in Him this rich gift, life eternal. The unbelief of man, yea of the chosen people, only brings out more grace from God the Father in the Son.

But the blessing is only to faith. “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Nothing but coming to Himself by faith can avail. Those who saw Him without believing were no better for it but the worse. Those who resort to images of Him find only a blind. Those who lean for life eternal on any ordinance, even of Him, setup a rival to their shame. He is the object of faith for life eternal. “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent Him.” And the Father's will is that all honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: if they honor Him not by faith unto life eternal, they must in His judgment of them to everlasting perdition.

It is beautiful to see how perfectly the Son of the Highest becomes His Servant, now to save, as by-and-by to administer the glory. He chooses none for saving; He leaves all with Him Who sent Him. “All which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” On the one hand is the security of the children; on the other is the free grace of the gospel. For this has Christ come down out of heaven, Who alone could give either effect according to the Father's will, that none of that He had given should be lost, and that every one who believeth

on the Son should have life eternal, Christ raising all up in the last day. For He brings to view not the present power of the kingdom on earth, but life for the soul now, and for the body resurrection.

When the Jews murmured incredulously, the Lord urges the more the need of the Father's drawing those He Himself should raise in the last day, and cites the prophets accordingly. Then He sums up with His solemn asseveration. “Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath life eternal. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and died. This is the bread that cometh down out of heaven that one may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven: if one eat of this bread, he shall live forever” (vers. 47-51).

The Incarnate Savior thus stands before us, the food of faith in the wilderness world. Have you, dear reader, gone to Him? For He is thus revealed in the written word that you might come to Him and believe on Him. Life is in Him for sinful man, in Him only for him that believes on earth, in Him life eternal for the most guilty, untoward, and proud. So He assures us without hesitation or condition, save that we believe on Him. And this is the one thing the sinner does most of all pleasing to the Father, jealous as He is for His glory Whom man despised for His grace. “Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father either; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.” All that is good follows faith through grace.

May this be your present and everlasting portion!

Chapter 80

Gospel Words: 36. Eating Christ's Flesh and Drinking His Blood

John 6:53-58

There is a marked change in our Lord's discourse. He turns from His incarnation to His death. In both cases He speaks of eating. It is the well-known figure of scripture for appropriation or communion. He was not only the Living Bread that came down out of heaven, that one might eat and live forever. He would give His flesh for the life not of Jews only but of mankind, or as He says “for the life of the world.”

But not a trace of ordinances is in either. It is a question of Himself, first living, then dead. He only was entitled to speak of giving life to the world. He through Whom the world came into being, He could quicken the dead; and such was and is the moral condition of all through sin (John 5:24, 25). He, the new Man, is the object of faith giving life. And it is for any, for the Gentile as well as the Jew. Baptism and the Lord's supper have their place by the Lord's institution till He come; but scripture attributes quickening to Him, not to them. In Him, not in them, was life. It is a falsehood of Christendom to claim an attribute which is His for a rite in the hands of men who thereby arrogate a dignity not only unreal but profane. All through this discourse, as in all other scripture, notably in John's Gospel at large and in his great Epistle, life is in the Son; so that he who believes has the Son and has life, as he that has not the Son of God has not life.

Only now He insists on faith in Him dead. This was yet more repulsive to unbelief than faith in Him living. But the Lord did not soften the truth to make it more palatable. He presents it in pointedly strong terms, peremptorily demanding its reception. Did the Jews contend with one another, saying, How can a man give us his flesh to eat? “Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, he also that eateth me, he too shall live because of me. This is the bread that came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died: he that eateth this bread shall live forever” (vers. 53-58).

Till His death there was no atonement. Sin was not yet judged in an adequate sacrifice, nor was God vindicated, still less glorified. In the cross He was; and remission of sins could be proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ. Whosoever called on the name of the Lord should be saved. Hence faith in the Incarnate Word, wherever real, received the wondrous tidings of His death, as alone reconciling a sinful soul to God. Fallen man had no title to life eternal; and He Who was eternal life died for sin and to bear the sins of all who believed, that they might have that life without the sins blotted out by His blood. Therefore did all, who received Him incarnate from God, welcome the more deeply Him that died for sins and to sin, that every inconsistency with the new and divine life might be canceled. How thankfully did they eat His flesh and drink His blood! Those who stumbled at Him thus dead, refusing to eat His flesh and drink His blood, proved thereby that they had no

due sense of His grace nor of their own ruin by sin. Their professed faith in Him incarnate was unreal; had it been true, they would have hailed with deeper satisfaction His going down into death to do away with every effect of sin. From this they revolted, because they had no such conviction of their own evil, no such assurance of His love, even God's love.

But the Lord intimates more, and lets us know that if one has eaten His flesh and drunk His blood, he will not be content with once partaking of Him; he will continue to find in Him that best food. “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day.” For His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink (as some of the best MSS. here say). “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him.” To have thus partaken of Him dead is life eternal, but more than this: to make Him dead our habitual spiritual food is to ensure the communion of His love to the uttermost. Thus does one abide in Him and He in him; and one lives, not only through Him but on account of Him, as He lived on account of the Father, the motive and reason of being.

We may observe too how carefully the Lord in verse 58 binds together the incarnation and His death. This is quite inconsistent with a rite; it is His person living and dead, the one source of life eternal to the believer. If a rite be fancied here, it would involve the twofold and fatal error: that none who failed to partake of the Lord's supper could have life; and that he who does partake of His supper has life eternal and must rise in the resurrection of the just.

O my reader, be not deceived. The Lord's supper indeed refers to Christ's death, to which this portion of John 6 refers. But He speaks only of faith in Him Who died for sin and sinners, that they believing on Him may have life. Therefore not to the communicant as such, but to the believer is the Lord's assurance of life eternal. Turn away therefore from every substitute for Himself, Who is the only Savior, the one substitute for your sins. Sacraments are admirable signs, but ruinous when they displace Christ and faith in Him.

Chapter 81

Gospel Words: 37. Christ the Corn of Wheat

John 12:24

A very characteristic truth in the Gospel of John is the Son of God come, the Word become flesh, Who is life eternal and gives it to the believer. But nowhere have we a fuller witness to the efficacy of His death. His work is for us as necessary and as blessed in itself and in its effect as His person: God's glory is concerned most nearly in both (chaps. 1:29; 3:14, 15; 6:51-58; 8:28; 10:9-11, 15-18; 11:51, 52; 12:32).

At this point of the Gospel testimony is rendered to Him in three aspects: first, as marked out Son of God in power by resurrection, in chap. 11; secondly, as Messiah, King of Israel, David's Son and David's Lord, in chap. 12:12-16; and lastly, as Son of man with rights over all flesh, yet (as we see in our text) about to die to have others sharing His blessedness and glory. Let us consider this last particular a little more fully.

The Son of God was in the world which He had made; yet the world, boasting of its knowledge, knew Him not, the highest, best, most momentous of all knowledge. He came to His own things, for He was also Messiah, “the born King of the Jews “; yet His own people, if not so ignorant, were more guilty still than the world, and received Him not. Hence, when certain Greeks, of those coming up to worship at the feast of Passover, made known through disciples their desire to see Jesus, He answered, saying, “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say to you, Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.” The entire vista of His humiliation unto death and of its blessed result opens before Him and receives suited expression in these wondrous words.

Have you then heard Him in faith? Are you not nearly and deeply concerned? The rejection of the Son, Who is also Messiah, leads in marvelous grace to the fulfillment and disclosure of God's counsels. The Jews and the world at large were verily evil, openly proved enemies. His speaking to them as He did left them without excuse for their sin; His working among them as none other had done made other sin as nothing in comparison: for, as things were, they had both seen and hated both Him and His Father. Did the Jews by hand of lawless Gentiles crucify and slay the Lord of glory? It was by the grace of God He tasted death for every one. The greatest wrong of man confronted the love of God; which triumphed over sin and Satan in effecting redemption by His blood. Then, in being raised from the dead, He only and now is the Second man and Last Adam, by Whom all that believe are justified. Thereon, when the Jews refused the gospel of Him dead and risen, the word of salvation was sent to the nations or Gentiles. It is here for you now. He came to do God's will in His death as the perfect offering and sacrifice, which sums up yet surpasses all others. And again it is God's will that the glad tidings of remission of sins and life eternal should come to you. “Hear, and your soul shall live.” Did not God say, even of old looking onward to Him, “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters”? Be reconciled to God.

Where man saw in the cross shame, and the deepest shame, the Savior saw glory. If this was moral glory, heavenly glory is its answer: “Wherefore also God highly exalted Him.” “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” So we read in Psa. 8. If the rejected Messiah of Psa. 2; 8 go down into death (compare Heb. 1; 2), He is the Son of man also crowned with glory and honor on high, though now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we by faith see Him in heaven, the pledge that they shall be. This will be when at His coming He raises those that are His to reign with Him, as 1 Cor. 15 declares. And it agrees with what He Himself here says, “Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.” That the victims of sin might be delivered, sin itself judged, Satan vanquished for eternity, God Himself glorified in man, and His love free to bless perfectly, He, the true grain of wheat, fell into the earth and died. Without that atoning death the glory had been His alone. But now what abundant “fruit"! They that are His are cleansed whiter than snow by His blood; they live of His life; they are children of God, and shall never perish. They are sealed by the Spirit. Through Christ they have the entry by one Spirit unto the Father; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

The Greeks, like all Gentiles indeed, were apart from Christ, having no hope, and godless in the world; and it would soon be proved that the Jews, notwithstanding their great privileges, were no better but guiltier and therefore worse: all alike children of wrath. Neither living grace nor almighty power in Jesus could meet the desperate need. Nothing short of atoning death could avail. Without death He abode alone; but dying He bears much fruit in resurrection. And how scripture teems with testimony to this truth! Oh, is it not a great thing to be part of His “much fruit”? How blind, wretched, and sinful, to despise Him Who alone makes it good? What must it be to wake up to the awful evil of unbelief, when it is irretrievable?

Chapter 82

Gospel Words: 38. The Demoniac Mute

Matt. 9:32-34

This chapter as a whole shows us not only divine power in goodness displayed in Jesus as in chap. 8; but how it was received by those who had religious reputation among the Jews. The more He wrought in grace, the less acceptable was the Messiah. Did He forgive the sins of the paralytic? Scribes within themselves resented it as blasphemy. But He who read their hearts answered their wicked unbelief by bidding the man arise, take up his couch, and retire to his house.

So the call of the tax-gatherer to follow Him, and the defense of the disciples to the fault-finding followers of John and the Pharisees, vindicated God's grace. New wine needs new skins. The condition of God's ancient people was, like that of the ruler's daughter, one of death; but He Who went to raise her up, and at length did so, was open to the touch of faith which got healing at once. Two blind men that appealed to His mercy as Son of David received their sight at His hand and word. These were but samples of what He could and would do for Israel, if there had been faith; but the leaders were increasingly hostile, whatever might be the marvel of the crowds, and His fame spread in all that land.

There remained a final proof. “But as these were going out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed by a demon. And the demon having been cast out, the dumb spoke; and the crowds wondered, saying, It was never seen thus in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out the demons by [or, in the power of] the prince of the demons” (vers. 32-34).

Nothing slackened the gracious dealing of our Lord, so long as the door was open. The blind who now saw were no sooner going out, than men brought to him a man not only dumb but a demoniac. Luke 11:14 presents the awful peculiarity of the case yet more precisely: “And he was casting out a demon, and it was dumb.” It was not simply the human infirmity: a dumb demon possessed the man. This made it altogether beyond ordinary resource. A spirit evil or good has power that man cannot resist. As with the unhappy man, so with the unhappy people and especially their religious chiefs. At length the people had not a true word to utter of their divine Messiah. His great grace, and their great need, drew out first from the leaders the imputation of blasphemy. Now it reaches a lower depth still opening to devour them. For what can be more heinous than to impute to the Holy One the power of the wicked one? Blasphemers themselves they charge blasphemy against Him, and under Satan's power they impute it to the energy of the prince of demons that He cast out the demons.

Before they were carried to Babylon, Israel had totally failed as Jehovah's servant. Their witness was not to Him but to graven and molten images, to which they said, Ye are our gods. Who so blind and deaf as they to whom Jehovah had laid bare His mighty arm and from the heavens made them hear His voice as no other people ever did? And therefore Jehovah gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers. Now they had Jehovah Messiah present in their midst in the power of

beneficent goodness, and in a grace which anticipated the kingdom; and their alienation became yet more deadly. The same unbelief which sought after strange gods (only not nonentities because they were demons), rejected and blasphemed their Anointed, Who was in truth Jehovah. Where not thus active, the people were just as the demoniac mute. Under the power of the enemy they were dumb for Him Whose praise fills the heavens as it will the earth and all the creation.

How is it with you, dear reader? Are you confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus? Blessed is it, when also the heart believes on Him to righteousness; for then, and not otherwise, is confession made to salvation. He Who created man is Lord and Redeemer. God calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus shall you be saved—thus only; for there is none other name under heaven to save. Other refuge is vain. Other means are a snare and a lie. He is the true God, and eternal life. For the sinner, under Satan's power, only He can avail; but He avails at once and unfailingly. It is true that He is not here, but risen. It is true that the Jews slew Him, hanging Him on a tree; but God exalted Him by His right hand as Leader and Savior, accepting His death as sacrifice, the only efficacious sacrifice, for sins. The grace now shown exceeds; it reigns through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you speak of your subjection to Satan's power? Looking to Jesus, life is given. He also Himself likewise took part in blood and flesh, that through death He might annul him that hath the might of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who in fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In His name, then, resist the devil; and he will flee from you. He is a conquered enemy through Him Who bore your sins and brings you every spiritual good.

Believing in Him, how immense is the change! As living stones, you are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood (which Aaron's sons were only in outward form), to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What is the worth to God now of sheep or oxen? of incense, or of first-fruits? All such things had their place before He came Who makes us to see that they are no more than the beggarly elements of the world, and that the body is of Christ. The Christian is a true worshipper, he only. They all can worship the Father in spirit and truth in the hour that now is. The multitude keeping holiday, without knowing the Father, without faith in the truth, without having the Spirit, are spurious and in the dark. The true worshippers the Father seeks at this time, who must worship God in spirit and truth, for they alone walk in the light as He is in the light. Assuredly they are no longer dumb. Does any among them suffer evil? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. May this be your lot! Grace alone can make it yours, the saving grace of God which appeared in our Lord Jesus, and blesses through faith in Him.

Chapter 83

Gospel Words: 39. The Withered Hand Healed

Matt. 12:9-14

THE sabbath like everything else was turned by Jewish unbelief against the Messiah. But like everything else the sabbath only told to His glory against man's sin, shame, selfishness, and pride. At that time (Matt. 12:1) the Lord went through the cornfields on the sabbath, and His disciples, being hungry, began to pluck and eat. Seeing this the Pharisees reproached Him, but He vindicated them by David's act in 1 Sam. 21 generally, and in particular by the priests who do their work in the temple blamelessly on the sabbaths. What value had the show-bread if the anointed of Jehovah and his men were hunted for their life? Yet says He, “a greater thing than the temple is here.” Had they known too what Hos. 6:6 means, they would not have condemned the guiltless. “For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.” The rejected Christ is the Son of man about to come from heaven in judgment. They were guilty not only of transgressing the law, but of refusing Jehovah's Anointed. So He enters on a higher and larger glory which supersedes their boasts and judges their sins.

On a subsequent sabbath he exposes their evil state, hypocritical and murderous.

“And when departed thence he went into their synagogue; and, behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath? that they might accuse him. And he said to them, What man of you shall there be who shall have one sheep; and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath, will he not lay hold and raise it up? How much then doth a man exceed a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful on the sabbath to do well. Then he saith to the man, Stretch out thy hand, and he stretched it out; and it was restored sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him” (vers. 9-14).

Here it is not the authority of His person in which He will judge not the Jews only but all the nations; it is the character of Him Who is good and doeth good, let His people be as false and faulty as they may to their ruin. In vain for His people to plead the sabbath against Him Who is lord of it; still more vain to forbid on that day His active goodness for needy suffering man. The poorest Jew was not debarred by the sabbath from extricating his sheep from the pit. God had compassion, if they had none, for their brother fallen under a worse calamity; and here was He anointed of Jehovah to bind up the broken-hearted, let Pharisees rage and plot as they might. “Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God.”

Mark presents the scene yet more vividly; for he tells us that the Savior directed the man to “Stand up” before He uttered His fuller and withering questions: “Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?” And when they held their peace but with malice to the uttermost, He looked round about on them with anger, distressed at the hardening of their heart. What right had selfish murderous men against God's grace? Such they showed themselves; for they went out of the synagogue to plot, Pharisees and Herodians, deadly enemies of each other, against the Son of God, His servant among sinful and suffering men, to minister as none else could, to save souls

as well as life.

Oh! how is it with you who read these lines? Is not your case still more deplorable than his of the withered hand? Is not your heart withered Godward? Is it not active only as the source of uncleanness in every kind which defiles you? Do you love your own will and way? and what is this but sin, hateful to God and destructive to you? Yet for you Jesus, the Son of God, came; for you He died. And He died not for any imaginary good in you, but for your sins, too many and too real. Fear not then to commit yourself, just as you are to the Savior. Hide not anything of your evil from the eyes of your heart; let your conscience confess all out to God: Christ is the only meeting-place between the sinner and Him. He is all-embracing for such as come as sinners; and as surely a Savior as they are lost.

Therefore of God's word doubt not, but look to Jesus in your guilt and unworthiness. Seek only to be in the truth of your sins before God; and you will find Christ in the truth of divine grace toward your soul.

If it be so with you, this is true repentance toward God, and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The merit, the grace, the efficacy, the power are in Him. The pardon and peace, the life and blessing, are yours on believing the glad tidings of God about His Son. Till you believe on Him for life and salvation, you have nothing to do with practical love and holiness, incumbent as they are on the Christian. First be settled in faith.

Chapter 84

Gospel Words: 40. Feeding of the Five Thousand

Matt. 14:14-21

Only one Gospel connects our Lord's retirement with tidings of John the Baptist's death. The herald's lot only precedes that of Jehovah-Messiah's Whose time was not yet come. In the Gospel of Mark (6:30, 31) He would give a little rest apart with Himself to His sent workmen. Those who serve Him need not look for better things. In Luke there is no such account, but the fact of John's execution alluded to, as the effect of the report which reached Herod of the Savior's gracious power.

But Jesus was the same in the desert as in the city, the compassionate healer of the sick. Nor this only; for when the disciples at evening would dismiss the crowd to buy themselves food, He says to them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat. But looking not to Him they were powerless.

“And they say to him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. And he said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the crowd to recline on the grass, took the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven, and blessed; and having broken he gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. And they all ate and were filled; and they took up what was over of the fragments, twelve baskets full. And the eaters were about five thousand, apart from women and children” (17-21).

He was the true Solomon, though Israel did not yet sing the song of Ascent. Yet He was there, and not David's Son only, but Jehovah Who chose Zion and will there dwell. Was He not in their low estate giving the manifest testimony that He would abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread? Their unbelief might and did put off the kingdom; nevertheless He was there, the King, and no failure in Him of grace or power. How little those nearest to Him drew on either by faith! How promptly He met the need beyond all thought of men or saints!

This however is revealed for you, my reader, as it was then shown to the needy, that they and you might look to Him and be saved. Beyond doubt the soul is more than the food; and none ever pressed this so much as Himself. None warned as He to fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. But who like Him assured guilty man that God so loved the world as to give His beloved Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have life eternal?

The day comes fast when He will make good every promise, as He will also inflict the judgment which in every form the Father committed to Him, because He is Son of man. As such He was despised and rejected; as such He suffered to the utmost and is exalted on high. But if His sufferings will bring vengeance on His foes, they do also bring salvation to those who believe, and none the less, because they like all others were lost till they believed.

It is not yet the day when He will ask nations for an inheritance, and break them with iron scepter, as a potter his vessel. Then shall His name be excellent in all the earth, as well as His majesty above the heavens. But it is given now among men, and none other under heaven, wherein we

must be saved. He alone is worthy; He is God as well as Jesus Christ the righteous Man. The Word became flesh to glorify His Father and God, Son of man to save the lost. Such a sign as He then wrought was proper to show His compassion to the needy and distressed in Israel. Was it not meant to let you know who read or hear the word, that He pities your deeper need, and is no less ready to bless you with the bread of God, in order that you, believing on Him, may never hunger or thirst more?

This, His discourse to the crowd that followed after Him, as we read in John 6:1, clearly points out. It is His express application of it to you who read now as to those who then heard. Why then should you doubt that He will make good His word? He declares that the believer has life eternal; He declares elsewhere that His sheep shall never perish, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. He and the Father are not more one in divine nature than in divine love, to keep His sheep, however exposed in this world to the enemy's malice.

The grace of Christ is sufficient for you, great as is your weakness; indeed it is made perfect in weakness. Fear not therefore to trust in Him. Believe God Who sent Him, that those who receive Him may live eternally, and that those who believe not may be judged everlastingly. He is the giver of life because He is Son of God; He is the executor of judgment because He is Son of man. One or other must be your portion. He gives you life if you believe; He will judge you if you reject Him. It is unwise, it is full of danger, it is in the highest degree sinful, to reject the gracious and saving message of God in Christ to your soul.

Chapter 85

God's Promises to Abraham and His Grace to the Church: Part 1

No one denies that the promises made to Abraham flowed from the grace of God. But it is a serious mistake, affecting our faith, our communion, and our conduct, to confound these promises to Abraham with God's promise in Christ by the gospel spoken of in Eph. 3:6. It is agreed that the Abrahamic covenant involved security, acceptance, favor, and friendship with God, for its objects. The question is, whether the Epistle to the Ephesians, for instance, does not reveal a far deeper and higher purpose of grace, which was never promised to Abraham, but was intentionally kept hid until the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, consequent upon the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of God in heaven. Neither reason nor tradition will help, but hinder, the solution of the question. But, what saith the scripture? Let us compare the two things, which I affirm to be totally distinct in range and character, though both find their source necessarily in the manifold grace of God.

The call and first revelation of the promise to Abram is found in Gen. 12:1-3, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all, the families of the earth be blessed.” Subsequently, Jehovah appeared unto Abram and said, “Unto thy seed I will give this land” (ver. 7). What can be plainer? A particular land given to Abram and his seed, a great nation, and a great name; blessing from God to Abram, and he a blessing to others; God treating men as they treated Abram; and in him blessing secured to all the families of the earth. Blessings natural and spiritual to Abram and his seed, and so even to the Gentiles are, I believe, conveyed in this inalienable promise, part of which is repeated in still clearer terms in chap. 13, and confirmed by sacrifice in chap. xv. Then we have circumcision enjoined as the covenant sign in chap. 17, where the name is changed to Abraham, “for a father of many nations have I made thee;” and, finally, after the son of the bondwoman is cast out, in chap. 22, we have Isaac, the son of the free-woman, the child and heir of promise, raised up from the dead in a figure, and the oath. See Heb. 6 “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 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: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (vers. 16-18).

All the nations, or Gentiles, are to be blessed in the seed, but they and the seed are quite distinct parties. The nations blessed therein are no more to be confounded with the Seed, than are the enemies whose gate the seed is to possess. There is blessing for both; but are the nations blessed in exactly the same way and in exactly the same degree as the seed? If it be so, where is the honored place of Abraham's seed; where is their peculiar privilege in virtue of the promises to the fathers? Or, after all, do they stand on one level of common indiscriminate blessing? If it be not so, and the seed is to have its own special promised place by divine favor, above all the nations who are blessed in it, then is it evident that the covenant with Abraham is one thing and “the

mystery” is another, wherein no such differences are found; but the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and joint-partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel. The believing Jew from the heights, and the believing Gentile from the depths, of their earthly estate, are ushered into an unheard-of sphere of heavenly oneness in Christ, which is made good by the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. Such is “the mystery,” as far as regards the church.

For the doctrine of Ephesians is not merely justification by faith, and the death of Christ, as the basis of this divine righteousness, the sole ground on which stand all the saved from the beginning to the end of time: in Romans, we have that fully discussed, and applied to past, present, and future dispensations. Much less do we find here the death of Christ connected in a special way with the Jewish nation, or even with the spared Gentiles who may be saved during the future reign of the Messiah: of these things the Psalms and Prophets abundantly treat. But we are taught in Eph. 2:11-18, that, beside and apart from these applications of the death of Christ, there is a new and most glorious use to which the wisdom and the grace of God have turned it. He has founded on the cross, and effected by the Holy Ghost thereon given, a novel and heavenly structure, without parallel in the millennial period, and without precedent in the ages and generations which closed with the crucifixion. “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that 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. 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, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 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: and he came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

Now, it is plain from scripture that the distinction of Jew and Gentile, with all its accompaniments, was set up of God, had His sanction so long as the earth in any way was owned (Matt. 10:5), and will be resumed when the church is caught up, and God begins to interfere immediately, and acts not, as now, in mere secret providence with the course of human things here below. The moment He enters upon the visible proof that there is a God Who judges the earth, the Jew appears first in responsibility—in guilt, no doubt—but first, assuredly, in blessing, by virtue of the promises to the fathers.

Accordingly the new covenant already ratified in the blood of Christ, but suspended in its application, save to a remnant of the Jews and an election from the Gentiles, who are together brought into and form the church, and enjoy its blessings—this new covenant, when it takes effect in all its value and in its literal results, will not neutralize but sanction the divinely ordained separation of the Jew from the Gentile, and the supremacy of the former above the latter. “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31). Is there a word said in this covenant of obliterating the difference of Jew and Gentile, of forming both into one new man, and of introducing them on the same level of intimacy to the Father? On the contrary, there is not a syllable about the Gentiles, but an emphatic assurance of blessing to the Jew, Jehovah undertaking to put His law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; to be their

God, and they to be His people; all of them to know Him from the least to the greatest, for He will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

There is no question that abundant blessing will flow to the Gentiles. “Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of host, in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:22, 23). “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the feast of the tabernacles” (Zech. 14:16; Mic. 3, 5, 7:16; Jer. 3:17. See also Psa. 77; 96-106, &c.). That is, the covenant order of blessing will be the Jews in the inner ring, and the Gentiles in the outer, when all lands make a joyful noise unto Jehovah.

Nothing can be more certain than the fact that Israel, sanctified by having Jehovah's sanctuary in their midst, will be kept aloof from and above the Gentiles, instead of both being made one body in Christ. That is to say, the abolition of Jewish exaltation above the Gentile is only for the church of the heavenly places. It was not so before Christ came the first time; it will not be so when He comes again. The space between these two boundaries is filled up by the formation of the church, where is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all: not a mere collection of all the individuals in every different dispensation, but a body now gathered into one by the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, and united with the Lord Jesus Christ in His heavenly glory. Neither of these things could be till Jesus was glorified (John 7:39; 1 Cor. 12:13). It was then that Christ took His place above as Head, and then that the church began to be called here below, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:20-22).

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 86

God's Promises to Abraham, and His Grace to the Church: Part 2

As the difference just insisted on is of all importance, let us look at Isa. 59:20, 21; 60:1, 2, 3. “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith Jehovah: My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah from henceforth and forever. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but Jehovah shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Here also it is clear that, in the coming dispensation to which the Holy Spirit in Rom. 11 applies the passage, preeminence over the Gentiles is guaranteed to Israel.

“The wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (ver. 5). “The Holy One of Israel... hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee.” “Therefore thy gates shall be opened continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (vers. 11, 12). Compare also the rest of this chapter, as well as chapters 61 and 62. One portion of the first is so decisive and striking that it may be well to cite it. “I will make an everlasting covenant with them; and their seed shall be known among the Gentiles” (is this the same common position?) “and their offspring among the peoples: all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are a seed which Jehovah hath blessed.”

Here, plainly and indisputably, we have the literal fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and his seed; but it is evident that the terms of the prophecy, equally with those of the original covenant, are irreconcilable with the notion of identical blessings to Jews and Gentiles, all difference between them being utterly nullified. On the contrary, great as may be the privileges to the nations of the earth, resulting from these promises, decided and blessed superiority will be the indefeasible prerogative of Israel. The Gentiles are to serve them, and the nations that will not shall perish. All this is in perfect accordance with the Abrahamic covenant whose accomplishment in any strict sense is yet future without one feature of resemblance to the church, which is entirely above such distinctions. For the Christian it is grace.

The prophecy of Zecharias (Luke 1:68-79) is evidently Jewish in its sources, its associations, and its hopes, as indeed had been the previous announcement of Gabriel to him (vers. 13-17). “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets,” &c. (is this the mystery which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God?) “that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us” (is this the character or manner of salvation to the church?); “to perform the mercy promised to our fathers” (are they really our fathers, or fathers of the Jewish people?), “and to remember his holy

covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us," &c. It is conceded that many of the blessings are common, such as "in holiness and righteousness before him," faith resting on Messiah and the new birth; for there are, of course, general principles which characterize all the people of God in all ages. But I affirm that, as a whole, this prophecy, as yet unfulfilled, and clearly based upon the oath sworn to Abraham, is not in any way a charter of church privilege. To say that it is, would be, in effect, to efface the peculiar doctrine of such Epistles as to Ephesians and Colossians; or, in other words, to deny unwittingly the being and proper character of the church of God.

Moreover, it was no secret that the nations were to be blessed. It was as ancient a promise, we have seen, as that which secured the peculiar seat of honor to Abraham's seed. It was repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26:4) and reiterated to Jacob (28:14). A Jew ought not to have thought of Jehovah's pledge of blessing to his race without remembering that he himself was to be the channel of blessing to the nations. Will it be affirmed that this most familiar assurance of blessing to the Gentiles in the promised seed, published frequently and undisguisedly (as the apostle Paul showed) in Moses, and the Psalms, and the prophets, is the same thing as "the mystery" which has been "hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints" (Col. 1:26)? Is that secret and silent which was published from age to age and rehearsed from generation to generation? Can a simple and familiar covenant, revealed so often by Jehovah, and so often appealed to by His people, from the book of Genesis till the last prophet wound up the Old Testament canon (Mal. 1:11)-can this be deemed a "mystery," altogether concealed from the sons of men? Surely not. Gentile blessing therefore, as involved in the Abrahamic covenant, which was the constant expectation of Israel, wholly differs from "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. This mystery was not revealed before. It is now disclosed. From the beginning of the world it was (not known to God's people, but) hid in God (Eph. 3:9).

Indeed, we have only to read Matt. 16:18 in order to see that, even in the Lord's life-time here below, the church did not exist save in the purpose of God. It was His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, but actually existed only after His death and resurrection. During His ministry He was not even beginning to build it: "Upon this rock I will build my church." Hence it is said in Col. 1:18: "He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead." Christ Himself, in resurrection, was the beginning. Souls had been born again; sinners had been brought by the faith of the Savior. But the church was a new body formed by the Holy Ghost, after its risen Head took His seat in heaven. Hence Heb. 12:23 distinguishes the church from the "spirits of just men made perfect" (i.e. the Old Testament saints), as plainly as from myriads of angels, a general assembly. Scripture applies the term "Church of God" only to the saints of the present period. The congregation of Jehovah, Israel, was wholly different.

Is it maintained then that election, redemption, faith, life, saintship, are peculiar to the church? By no means. The church of God shares these and other blessings with all the faithful of all times. But this does not make all the faithful to be the church; nor can it annul the peculiar standing which is traced as the church's portion, in Ephes. ii. iii. iv. It is admitted fully that to us, members of Christ's body, it can be said, "All are yours." Of the new covenant, though, strictly speaking, made with the house of Israel, we yet enjoy the blessing; and if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. But it by no means follows that millennial Israel, for instance,

though enjoying the new covenant and the Abrahamic promise still more literally than ourselves, will have any portion in that mystery, or secret of God, which is distinct from either.

Scripture speaks of the faith of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah; but that the Abrahamic covenant was in operation as to them is assumption and false. Faith ever rests upon the word, i.e. the revelation of God; and the Abrahamic covenant was not disclosed until the time of Abraham, though the Savior had been pointed to from the first (Gen. 3:15). Saints previously rested on a revealed Redeemer, not on an unrevealed covenant.

The real stumbling-block, as appears in scripture, has ever been, not so much the Jewish channel of outward testimony traced in Rom. 11 as the temporary leveling of Jewish prerogative, and the grace which gathers out of Jews and Gentiles, alike children of wrath as traced in Eph. 2. The ordinary notion, which prevails to the present, is a specious form of the same self-conceit which vexed the church from its early days.

The “new covenant” and “new testament” are merely various versions of the same Greek phrase, καιν■ διαθ■κη, of which the former is always, I believe, the right rendering, as regards the use of the full phrase in scripture. If so, the reasoning about the testator has no place save in the parenthesis of Heb. 9:16, 17 which seems owing to “inheritance” immediately preceding, besides being an admirable turn given to that other and familiar sense of the word διαθ■κη singly. I do not believe the new covenant to be identical with the Abrahamic covenants, which are more extended in their scope, though, so far as Israel is concerned, they may coincide; but it is needless to discuss the point at this time.

Nor is there such an idea in the Bible as the grace-giving testament. The grace of God brings salvation, even to such as were strangers from the covenants of promise. There is no doubt that the shedding of blood is essential to the remission of sins, and that the new covenant is much more too. Eph. 2, as we have seen, introduces other truth. Nor is it scriptural to say, that “the promise” and “the new covenant” are convertible terms, though they may be intimately blended.

But we can heartily agree that unconditionality stamps the Abrahamic covenant, as the apostle so strongly insists in Gal. 3 It is evident that, when the Judaizers insisted upon the law, the apostle could appeal most powerfully to the promises of God, given so many centuries before the law (Gal. 3); when they insisted upon circumcision, he could triumphantly point to the faith which their father Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised (Rom. 4). If therefore God now justified the uncircumcision through faith, it was no more than He had done in the case of faithful Abraham. Nor could any objections be more completely silenced. But to say that the Abrahamic covenant is the channel of God's grace to us argues an inadequate view of our wretchedness as outcast dogs of the Gentiles, as well as of the bright heavenly atmosphere into which we are brought, when baptized, Jews or Gentiles, by one Spirit into one body.

On the head of glory, Eph. 3:21 seems to show that the church, as the reflection of Christ's heavenly glory, will not lose its singular blessedness “throughout all ages, world without end.” And Rev. 21:1-8 appears to confirm the idea that, even in the everlasting state, the holy city, new Jerusalem, is distinct from though connected with the men who people the then purged universe. It is true that the Old Testament speaks of Jehovah marrying Israel, and Israel's land. Is it really meant that this equalizes them or their land with the Bride, the Lamb's wife? But here one may

pause. The grand principle has been already asserted.

Grace

Grace deals with all men upon one common ground, that of being sinners; it levels their moral condition, and comes only to those who have need of it (Luke 5:31, 32). This, man cannot bear; what he is always seeking to do is to make a difference between righteousness and unrighteousness in man, so that himself may have a certain character before others. Slighting God's righteousness, and magnifying our own, always go together.

On the other hand, there is sometimes the thought, that grace implies God's passing by sin. But, no; quite the contrary! Grace supposes sin to be so horridly bad a thing, that God cannot tolerate it. Were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways, and mend himself so as to stand before God, there would be no need of grace. The very fact of Jehovah's being gracious, shows sin to be so evil a thing, that, man being a sinner, his state is utterly ruined and hopeless, and nothing but free grace will do for him-can meet his need.

The triumph of grace is seen in this, that when man's enmity had cast out Jesus from the earth, God's love brought in salvation by that very act—came in to atone for the sins of those who had rejected Him. In the view of the fullest development of man's sin, faith sees the fullest manifestation of God's grace. Where does faith see the greatest depth of man's sin and hatred of God? In the cross; and at the same glance it sees the greatest extent of God's triumphant love and mercy to man. The spear of the soldier, which pierced the side of Jesus, only brought out that which spoke of forgiveness.

I have got away from grace, if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God's love. I shall then be saying, “I am unhappy, because I am not what I should like to be;” but that is not what is the question. The real question is, whether God is what we should like Him to be—whether Jesus is all that we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are, of what we find in ourselves, has any other effect than, while it humbles us, to increase our adoration of what God is, we are off the ground of pure grace. Faith never makes what is in my heart its object, but God's revelation of Himself in grace. If we stop half way and see nothing but the law, it will just discover to us our condemnation, and prove us to be “without strength.” If God allows us enough to show us our true state, there is just where grace meets us.

The grace of God is so unlimited, so full, so perfect, that, if we get for a moment out of the presence of God, we cannot have the true consciousness of it; we have no strength to apprehend it; and if we attempt to learn it out of His presence, we shall only turn it to licentiousness.

If we look at the simple fact of what grace is, it has no limit, no bounds. Be we what we may (and we cannot be worse than we are), in spite of all that, what God is towards us is love. Neither our joy nor our peace is dependent on what we are to God, but on what He is to us; and this is grace.

Grace supposes all the sin and evil that is in us, and is the blessed revelation that through Jesus all the sin and evil has been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins, nay, than all the sins in the world, are to us. And yet, with the fullest consciousness of what we are,

all that God is pleased to be toward us is love. At the same time we must remember that the object and necessary effect of grace is to bring our souls into communion with God; to sanctify us by bringing us really to know God and to love Him. Therefore, the knowledge of grace is the true source of sanctification.

A man may see sin to be a deadly thing, and he may see that nothing which defiles can enter into the presence of God: his conscience may be brought to a true conviction of sin; yet this is not “tasting that Jehovah is gracious.” It is a very good thing to be brought even to that, for I am then tasting that Jehovah is righteous; but then I must not stop there: sin without grace would put me in a hopeless state. I cannot say that God ought to be gracious; but I can say, if ignorant of His grace, that He ought to cast me, as a sinner, away from His presence, because He is righteous. Thus we see that we learn what God is to us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has revealed Himself to be; and this is “the God of all grace.” The moment I understand that I am a sinful man, and yet that it was because Jehovah knew the full extent of my sin, and what its hatefulness was, that He came to me, I understand what grace is. Faith wakes me see that God is greater than my sin: it is not that my sin is greater than God. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” As soon as I believe Jesus to be the Son of God, I see that God has come to me because I was a sinner, and could not go to Him. This is grace. J.N.D.

Chapter 88

A Letter on Recent Heterodoxy

My dear Brother,

As warning has been already given (full enough) as to this system of strange doctrines, I have not thought it wise or good to be occupied with an unsavory and dangerous theme. When we have arrived before God at the conviction, not only that such a truth for the saints as life eternal is darkened and rendered uncertain, but that Christ Himself is dishonored and misrepresented, one may turn away from the darkness to enjoy Him Who is from the beginning, and the love that was manifested in Him and is perfected in us and with us.

But as you and others desire to know its late phases, I will cite a few passages from “Readings and Addresses at Weston-Super-Mare, Jan. 3rd. to 10th. 1897,” which suffice to prove how daringly unreliable and perilous it is.

“The mystery is the body simply” (p. 38). Now the apostle took pains to lay down emphatically and on the contrary, that it is concerning Christ and concerning the church. How sad to leave out Him on Whom all depends, of Whom the assembly is but the complement! Compare Col. 1:27. To ignore the Head as the chief and efficient glory of the mystery is a fatal blank.

“I do not think there will be any fellowship in heaven” (p. 81). Its perfection, outside the scene of contrariety, is a singularly perverse ground for denying it; its absence there, what a blank!

“We shall not know Him as Lord in heaven, we shall know Him as Head” (p. 82). We now know Christ as Head on high, while we are on earth; but where is it revealed, that we are to know Him so when we are there? Where, that we shall cease to know Him as Lord? The book of Revelation tells us most of such things; but it assuredly endorses neither of these random utterances. Shall we ever cease to say or sing “Lord Jesus?”

“I have thought [speaking of Rom. 8:30] that for the Holy Ghost to be given to a man is in a sense to glorify him; all is settled morally” (p. 111). What a monstrous comment on the apostle's word, who in giving us the links of divine purpose speaks of glorification with striking anticipation!

But the worst and most shameless contradiction of fundamental truth is in p. 127: “Becoming a man, He becomes the Logos.” Need I say that John 1 teaches that He was the Logos, or Word, in the beginning or eternally? He became flesh in time. The other chief speaker evidently felt the error, and stated the truth subsequently, but did not dare to say more. Was this loyal to Christ?

Now these notes are “revised.” But where are they that care for Christ, wounded afresh in the house of His friends? Is there no fidelity left? no faith? no jealousy for the truth?

Of more than one I have heard, who owned such doctrines to be “diabolical.” This was the word. Why do you then go on in fellowship with such? For testimony was the answer. Testimony! certainly not to Christ, but rather to the enemy. Is it not infatuation?

Yours ever in Christ, W.K.

Chapter 89

The Holy Attire

Lev. 8

It may be well here to say a little on the dress of the priests, especially of the high priest, even beyond the general terms of our chapter.

The ephod was the garment properly sacerdotal but merely of linen for a priest. For Aaron it was made of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and twisted byss, as we are told in Ex. 28; and its girdle, or woven band was of the same, To the ephod was attached the breastplate of judgment, into which were put the Urim and the Thummim (or, Lights and Perfections). It had also two shoulder-pieces joined to the two ends of the ephod; two onyx stones being the clasp, graven each with six names of the children of Israel, and set in enclosures of gold. The breastplate was made like the ephod, but square and doubled, with four rows of precious stones set in it and enclosed in gold, each stone of the twelve having one name of Israel's tribes so that all were engraved on it distinctively. Besides two rings and two wreathen chains of gold which connected all, there was a lace of blue which bound the rings of the ephod on the band or girdle, so that the breastplate should not be loosed from the ephod. Then the robe or cloak, as distinct from the inner vest or shirt of checkered work, was blue and on its skirts pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, and bells of gold between each pomegranate, round about. On a plate of gold was graven, HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH, and put on a lace of blue on the miter or turban, upon Aaron's forehead bearing the iniquity of Israel's holy things, the turban like the vest being of byss.

Observe that the ephod consisted of the same materials as the veil (Ex. 25:31). There is however a notable difference on either side: the ephod had no cherubim made on it; the veil had no gold, which has the first place in the ephod. As gold represents divine righteousness, so does the veil (as we are authoritatively told) the flesh of Christ. The cherubim symbolized God's judicial authority which was given to Him, because He is the Son of Man. If the veil indicated Him as the executor of judgment, the ephod marked the absence of this as unsuited to His priestly character while He sits on the Father's throne. Here divine righteousness in grace is predominant, yet in man, and with the blue which is heavenly. There were also the kingly and imperial glories and title, with every form of practical righteousness. He was born “king"; and the still larger authority was the answer to His sufferings, though He did and will not exercise these powers, till He shall sit on His own throne. Compare Psalm 110.

The people of God were represented by the high priest not only in general, but expressly and in a minute and striking way. For the clasp of the ephod had six names of Israel's sons graven on each onyx for each shoulder. Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders, bearing them up before Jehovah. Yet more impressively the breastplate presented them. For there they all twelve shone, each with a distinctive splendor. “And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart when he goeth in unto the holy place for a memorial before Jehovah continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before

Jehovah; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before Jehovah continually." If it be granted that all for Israel failed through sin (in priests as well as people), what blessedness is typified for us who believe on Him to Whom all pointed unfailingly! How immense the favor that as He died in expiation of our guilt, He lives for us before God on high, bearing our judgment on His heart, not as if ashamed of us, but gloriously and continually!

Under it was the long robe of the ephod, "all of blue." It was the color here most characteristic of Christ. If faith could say of Him even here, "the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13), how incontestably so now that He has passed through the heavens, entered in once for all into the holies, having found an eternal redemption! Hence the prevalence of "blue" throughout those types, if other glories appear. But the purple and the scarlet did not fade, because the blue prevailed. He is the King and King of kings, though acting in other relationships as yet.

By the way, it is not perhaps wonderful that Josephus could not conceive other interpretation for the bells and pomegranates on the skirts than "thunder and lightning"! He was ignorant of the True Light Who makes it plain that the testimony and the fruit of the Spirit are in the train of His priestly grace. For it is to be observed that the bells gave their sound when He went into the sanctuary, as they will when He comes out; so the Holy Spirit was poured out, and will yet be when He comes again. And abundant was, is, and will be the acceptable fruit by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

But if these significant tokens followed duly as it were in the hem of His garment for those that were His, how precious the pledge in the innermost vest that He is Jesus Christ the Righteous, the Advocate that we have, as unchanging as His propitiation! and that on His head, typically, is the golden plate graven Holiness to Jehovah, with its lace of blue, bearing the iniquity of our holy things! Truly Christ is all for us evermore when saints and priests, as once for all for us when lost sinners. Yet we must not forget that all types are but shadows, and fail to convey the fullness of grace as of glory in Him. The Second man is of heaven in contrast with the first of dust. Thence He came, though truly on earth woman-born; thither when risen is He gone, and exercises His priestly office for us in heaven, minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man.

It may be noticed that in the garments of the high priest linen drawers are not included. Being expressly to cover "the flesh of nakedness," we can appreciate the omission by Him Who had Christ in view. Still, as Aaron was a sinful man no less than his sons, we can equally understand that, when the garments for Aaron's sons are afterward described, these necessary coverings are carefully prescribed. There and then it is added, that "they shall be upon Aaron and his sons when they enter into the tent of meeting, or when they come near to the altar to serve in the sanctuary; that they may not bear iniquity and die: an everlasting statute for him and his seed after him" (Ex. 28).

Chapter 90

The Hope of Christ Compatible With Prophecy—4

As for the relative bearings of the different portions of the New Testament, it may be said in general, that the Gospels have a character peculiar to themselves. Certainly it is not an exclusively Jewish condition, neither is it a proper church condition, but a gradual slide, in John more marked than in the others, from the one to the other. The Lord Jesus, rejected, was with His disciples here below. The Holy Ghost, Who of course was then as ever the faith-giving, quickening agent, was not yet given, i.e. in the new unprecedented way of personal presence as sent down from heaven, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Hence the disciples, although possessing faith and life eternal (John 6:35, 47, 68, 69), were not yet baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body. (Compare Acts 1:5 with 1 Cor. 12:13). In a word, the church was not yet built nor begun to be built: “Upon this rock,” says the Lord, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).

On the other hand the Acts historically, and the Epistles doctrinally, describe a different state of things as then existing: Jesus absent and glorified in heaven; the Holy Ghost present and dwelling on earth in the saints, who were thereby constituted one body, the church. Christ had taken His place as Head of the body. above, and the Holy Ghost sent down was gathering into oneness with Him there, into membership of His body, Who is Head over all things. Such is the mystery of Christ, which it was emphatically given to the apostle Paul fully to make known. And as the Gospels may be regarded as the preparatory transition out of Jewish relations to the blessed elevation on which the church rests, the Revelation answers as the corresponding transition from the church one with Christ in heavenly places, by various steps or stages, down to those Jewish relations which for a time dropped out of sight in consequence of the calling of that heavenly body.

The doctrine of the church is clearly concurrent with the one hope, which is found in the intermediate part of the New Testament. For along with the truth of the peculiar calling of the church, as the body commenced by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and thenceforward guided and perpetuated by Him-along with this truth, it will be found that the peculiar aspect of the coming of the Lord, for which I am here contending, stands or falls. None of the school of interpreters commonly called “the Protestant school” understood by the church anything more, at best, than the Augustinian notion of an invisible company from the beginning to the end of time. None of them, therefore, has an adequate idea of the new and heavenly work which God began at Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The consequence is that, if they read of saints in Daniel, in the Psalms, or in the Revelation, they are at once set down as of the church. If they read of “this gospel of the kingdom” in Matt. 24, or of “the everlasting gospel,” it is to their minds the same thing as what Paul calls “my gospel,” the gospel of the grace of God preached now. Hence follows, and quite fairly too, a denial of any specialty in the walk and conversation of the saints since Pentecost, and a general Judaizing in doctrine, standing, conduct, and hopes. It is also a simple and natural result of this, that all Protestant interpreters, if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present as the hope of the church that which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant; viz. the day of the Lord, the Son of man seen by all the tribes of the earth, and coming in the clouds of heaven with power

and great glory.

Nor is the truth of the church unknown to the Protestant interpreters only; it is equally an object of dislike to most of the Futurist school. And it is my conviction that the two baleful heresies, which have brought such shame upon the revival of prophetic study towards the beginning and the close of the years 1830 to 1850, are intimately connected with the rejection of this grand truth. For an error touching the church cannot but affect Him Whose personal presence is what is so essential to it; and that which dishonors the Spirit goes far, in the long run, to disfigure or deny the person and work of Him of Whom the Spirit is the vicar.

In the Epistles, it is beyond doubt that the church is continually addressed, as if there were no understood, necessary, revealed hindrances to the rapture at the coming of the Lord. How could this be if the church be the same body as those saints who are described in Daniel, the Psalms, &c., as being destined to certain fiery trials still future from a little horn which is to wax greater to the highest degree, and his satellites who are yet to appear? How comes it that the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the coming of the Lord, never hints at this tribulation, as one through which the church must pass; but always presents His presence as an immediate hope which might occur at one unknown moment to another? That this inspired man understood the just application of these prophecies, better than any since his day, is that which few Christians will question. They were scriptures long revealed and familiar to Jews, and the Lord Jesus in Matt. 24 had very significantly linked His fresh revelations upon that occasion with the predictions of Daniel. Yet the Holy Ghost, in His constant allusions throughout the writings apostolic to the future hopes of the church, never once refers to those terrible circumstances as a future scene wherein the church is to enact a part. On the contrary, the way in which the coming of the Lord is put before the saints, as a thing to be constantly looked for, seems incompatible with it. We have examined the only statement in the Epistles which might appear to interpose such a barrier; and we have seen that, so far from contradicting the thought of immediateness, the apostle seeks to relieve the Thessalonian saints from all uneasiness about the day of the Lord and its troubles: by the blessed hope of His coming and their gathering unto Him, two things in his mind indissolubly bound together. It is a gathering unto Him which must he before He appears to the world, for its judgment, because He and they are to appear together. It is certain, moreover, that there must arrive the apostacy and the revelation of the man of sin, not before the coming, but before the day, of the Lord. His coming will gather the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below.

(To be continued, D.V.).

Chapter 91

The Hope of Christ Compatible With Prophecy—5

THE prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and. compare Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel's people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or consumption, as in Isa. 28:22), “and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Dan. 9:27). That the desolator is not the Roman prince is manifest. He is hostile to both. The latter prince is described as one “that shall come,” after the Messiah had already appeared and been cut off (as is plain from verse 26). There is also the certainty that “the prince that shall come” is the chief of the Roman people. For his people “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” We all know who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple-the people of this future prince.

The latter part of the twenty-sixth verse does not continue the thread of the history, further than the general expression, “and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” In the last verse we are transported to the epoch of “the prince that shall come,” and his actings during the last week of the age. This period is shown to be broken into two parts, during the former of which, according to a covenant, Jewish worship is resumed; but “in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.”

Nor is it in chap. ix. only. If chap. vii. be consulted, it will be seen that there is a certain little Horn rising after the ten Horns of the fourth Roman Beast, before whom three of the first Horns fell-” that horn that had eyes and a mouth, that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows” (ver. 20). “And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High (or, of the high places) and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time” (ver. 25). Is it not evident that in chap. vii. is a Horn or king whose blasphemous pride brings judgment upon the Beast or Roman empire; and whose interference with times and laws, that is, with Jewish ceremonial order, continues for three years and a half? and that for the same space of time, or the last half week, “the prince that shall come,” the Roman prince of chap. 9, overthrows this ceremonial worship? For the Jew is still unbelieving and unpurged.

Now the Revelation not only takes up the last half of Daniel's week (Rev. 11, 12, 13) but shows what is the place of the church during this period. This truth it was not given to the Jewish prophet to reveal; because it was that which supposed and fitly followed the revelation of the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. Paul had given us the church waiting for the presence of the Lord. What is it that the Holy Ghost adds by John? What is the great outline seen in the Revelation?

After the vision of the Lord Jesus in chap. 1, we have “things that are,” in epistles to the Seven Churches, so conveyed as to apply not only at that time, but as long as the church subsists on earth. Then comes the properly prophetic part, the “things which should be after” the

church-condition had passed away. Throughout the prophetic portion of the book, the church is never described as being on earth. At the close of the third chapter, it altogether disappears from earthly view. Instead of the churches being any longer traced here below, a door is opened in heaven; and the prophet is called up there to see “the things which must come to pass after these,” i.e. after “the things which are,” or the church regarded in the completeness of its varying phases on earth. Besides other things (the throne, and One that sat upon it being the center of the vision), John sees, not seven candlesticks, but, suited to the new circumstances of heaven, four and twenty thrones, and upon them four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and on their heads golden crowns.

Thus we have, in vision, the place and functions of the saints after they shall have been taken up to meet the Lord, and before their manifestation with Him in glory. Here is the simple reason. The way in which He and they are here represented emblematically is totally different from what is revealed as connected with either, when the moment comes to leave heaven for the purpose of judgment upon the beast, &c.; or from what is revealed touching the reign for a thousand years subsequent to that judgment: that is, in Rev. 19:11, and in 20:4-6. For can the scene in Rev. 4; 5 be interpreted consistently with any view, save that of the church being actually caught up and completed in the presence of God? It is a quite distinct thing from our sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Such is the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Neither is it the same thing as the boldness which the partakers of the heavenly calling have even now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Such is the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the high-priesthood of Jesus is dwelt on at length, and the liberty which we have in consequence to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. For it is still faith, and not actual possession, however it may be, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

But quite distinctly the purpose of the Revelation is to disclose the dealings of God (whether the facts be expressed or understood)—but dealings which involve a certain condition of things that was future, if considered in relation to the circumstances looked at in the seven Epistles— “the things” in short “which must be after” those actually subsisting at this time. Nor can chapters 4, 5. be supposed to describe the blessedness of the spirits of the saints previous to the coming of Christ for the church. How could the departed who are with Christ be in fairness symbolized by twenty-four elders? that is, by an image evidently borrowed from the full courses of Jewish priesthood. The whole church, and not a part only, is comprehended in the symbol. But this can only be after the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain are caught up together with them in the clouds, and so to be ever with the Lord. Accordingly, here they are represented as in heaven, the Lord being also there; and although made kings and priests even when on earth, still the time is not yet come for the exercise of government.

In beautiful harmony, therefore, with this peculiar and transitional period during which they are removed from the world, they worship above. But the saints below are not forgotten. Those above have golden harps and golden vials full of odors, “which are the prayers of saints.” And they sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, not only because He was slain and had redeemed themselves, but had made them, i.e. these saints, to their God, kings and priests. And they should reign over the earth. The fulfillment is seen in Rev.

20:4-6: the reigning with Christ not merely of those symbolized by the elders, but also of the Apocalyptic suffers after that on earth.

Moreover, it is clear on the one hand, that the lightnings, thunderings, &c., suit neither the day of grace nor the millennial state. Earth is certainly not then brought under the power of the blood of Christ, when these symbols will find their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are saints on earth, while the twenty-four elders are before the throne above. That is, it is neither the millennial nor the present state; but an intermediate period of a peculiar nature, in which we have the throne, not of grace as now, nor of displayed glory as by-and-by, but clothed with what has been justly termed a Sinai character of awful majesty attached to it. It is judicial.

But those above exercise their priesthood in the presence of God as the full completed chief-priests. Hence the symbol of twenty-four elders round the throne, at the time when, as all confess, earth is still unreconciled, however there may be, in the next chapter, the anticipative song of every creature. If this be true, it follows that the Lord's coming to meet the saints takes place between Rev. 3 and iv. (if the thought be pursued, which I doubt not, that chaps. vi.-xix. will be fulfilled in a rapid crisis), room being left there for His coming described in 1 Thess. 4 and elsewhere.

Then the properly prophetic part begins, when of course the main action of the book goes on subsequently to the removal of the church. It is plain that another character of testimony from that of the church properly is announced. For God Himself is revealed in ways different from those which He is displaying now; that is to say, not as showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, but in the chastening judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, preparatory to the great day of the Lord which Rev. 19:11 ushers in.

On this coming state of things Daniel compared with the Revelation will be found to cast and to receive much light. For it seems plain that the saints of the Most High or heavenlies, of whom we read in Dan. 7, identify themselves with the saints who suffer under the beast, after the rapture of the church and before the Lord's appearing. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This, be it noted, is the Spirit of prophecy. Yet, though they are not of the twenty-four elders, they will have their blessed and holy part in “the first resurrection.”

Let it be remarked, that this term has nothing to do with the question whether all are raised at the same time. It simply describes the condition of those who rise and reign during the thousand years, as distinguished from those who do not rise till that period is ended. The truth of this seems manifest from the fact that Christ has part in the first resurrection; yet He nevertheless rose before the church more than 1800 years at least. Hence the thought is not forbidden of certain saints being raised who stand and suffer after the church is gone.

The symbol of the twenty-four elders continues unchanged throughout the course of the book, till chap. 19 They enter into God's ways and judgments, as interested in whatever affected His glory, as may be seen in Rev. 4; 5; 7; 11; 14; 19. But in chap. 19 there is a striking change. After the opening scene of the rejoicings over Babylon the elders no longer appear. The time for the marriage being come (and how evidently the church therefore is still viewed in the Revelation as unmarried!), the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is only then announced as made ready. (To be concluded, D.V.)

Chapter 92

The Hope of Christ Compatible With Prophecy—6

The heavenly joy and the Bridegroom and His bride being thus incidentally glanced at, He takes a new aspect, for the day is about to break upon the world; and so do we, for we will have gone long before to be ever with the Lord, and if He is about to appear, so are we along with Him in glory. Hence, in the eleventh verse, the prophet sees heaven opened, and a white horse, and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. In unison, therefore, as He thus comes to smite and rule, the armies which are in heaven follow the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful. These expressions are sufficiently clear to determine who are meant by “the armies,” if any one should have a doubt. It is the glorified who were in heaven following Christ, in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Contrasted with the marriage supper of the Lamb, all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited to the great supper of God. The prophet sees the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. The result all know, as it ought never to be doubted (vers. 17-21).

In Rev. 20 follows the angelic binding of the dragon for a thousand years, and the parenthetic revelation of the sitting on thrones, or, at least, of the living and reigning with Christ, during that period, of such as had part in the first resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, though their office may be discharged in a different way from what we saw as to some of them in Rev. 4 and 5. But they all reign with Christ for a thousand years.

It is a prominent feature of the book, that in it is traced the sovereignty of God, not only in His purposes regarding the church properly so called, but in His gracious ways with an election from among Jews and Gentiles subsequently. Thus, after the glorified are seen in completeness in heaven, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders (chap. 4, 5), we hear in chap. 6:9-11 of saints suffering, yet crying for vengeance. The announcement to them is that they should rest yet for a little, until their fellow-servants and brethren, doomed to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Vengeance should not arrive till then. These are evidently not the church, but saints on earth after the glorified are in heaven; their sufferings and cries to the Lord accord much with the experience detailed in the Psalms. Still, whether Jewish or Gentile saints, it is not named here.

In chap. 7 we have a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel, sealed with the seal of the living God; and after this an innumerable crowd out of all nations, &c., who are characterized as coming out of the great tribulation, and as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These groups are evidently distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other; and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the glorified. For we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders (i.e. the confessed symbol of the glorified) still represented as a separate party in the scene (ver. 11).

Under the trumpets again it is that we find the prayers of “all the saints” alluded to, who are of course supposed to be still on earth (compare chap. 8:3-4, with 5:8), and an implication of the sealed Jewish remnant being in the sphere, though saved from the effects of the fifth trumpet (chap. 9:4).

Further, in the eleventh chapter are seen the two witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth, and killed; in the twelfth, the woman persecuted by the dragon, who wars with the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. This evidently is accomplished by the Beast of chap. 13, who makes war with the saints and overcomes them.

The fourteenth chapter consists of a sevenfold sketch of the dealings of God, which brings the crisis to a conclusion: the hundred forty and four thousand associated with the Lamb on Mount Sion; the everlasting gospel summoning all to fear and worship God because of the proximity of. His judgment; the fall of Babylon; the declaration of torment for the Bestial worshippers; the blessedness from henceforth of those dying in the Lord; the harvest of the earth (out of which were redeemed the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as the first-fruits to God and the Lamb); and lastly, the vintage of the same. The reader has only to weigh verses 12, 13, in order to have the foregoing remarks confirmed. Even here we have the patience of saints described just before the harvest, the portion too, not of the glorified (for we shall not all sleep), but of a special class of sufferers here below, while the glorified are hidden above.

In chap. 15 (preparatory to chap. 16, i.e. the seven outpoured bowls of the wrath of God) is heard the song of the conquerors over the Beast, celebrating the works of the Lord God Almighty and the ways of the King of the nations. Compare also Rev. 16:5, 6, 15; 17:6; 18:4-6.

Now it will not be forgotten that to those who kept the word of Christ's patience (Rev. 3:10) the promise was to be kept (not in, or during, but) “from” the hour of trial, out of the fearful tribulation which is in store for the dwellers upon earth. But in the preceding scriptures it is clear that after Christ has fulfilled His promise in the translation of the glorified to heaven, there are saints on earth, both from among Jews and Gentiles, who suffer throughout the tribulation. And these Apocalyptic sufferers are described in Rev. 20:4 as having part, equally with those glorified, in the first resurrection. For that text discloses, first, the general place of the glorified in the millennial reign, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” Next come those killed in the earlier persecution of the book (chap. 6:9-11), “And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God.” Thirdly are the later witnesses for God, “and those who had not worshipped the beast,” &c. (chap. 15:2). Those saints, who were called and suffered after the rapture of the glorified are emphatically mentioned, because it might have appeared that they had lost all by their death. Not members of Christ's body before He comes for His own, they share not in the rapture; not protected from death during the prevalence of the Beast, they cannot be the living nucleus of Jews, or of Gentiles, saved to be the holy seed on earth during the reign of Christ. The two later classes suffer, are cut off, but are not forgotten. “They lived and reigned with Christ the thousand years,” as well as the first general class.

Thus the truth, brought to light in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, is assumed in the view which the apostle John was the honored servant to enunciate-viz., the blessed condition and holy employ of the glorified round the throne and the Lamb, after their removal from earth, but previous

to their appearing with Christ in glory.

The central part of the Revelation then appears to corroborate, on an irrefragable basis, the truth that the glorified will be taken away and fulfill the symbols we have been noticing, previous to the day of the Lord. During that same time other saints are still groaning and shedding their blood like water here below (Psa. 74; 79).

Such seems to be the main key which unlocks an important portion of the book, and confirms the view, so bright to the renewed mind, of going to meet the Lord, without one earthly obstacle between. Thus is kept unblunted the point and energy of a truth only revealed in the New Testament. For the Old Testament spoke of His coming with all His saints, not for them; of His appearing in glory to the confusion of His enemies; not of His descending to meet His friends, when we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and caught up together in the clouds. And hence, it would seem, the emphatic language of the apostle, conscious that God was by him revealing a new thing to faith. For in 1 Cor. 15 he says, “Behold I show you a mystery,” and in 1 Thess. 4, “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.”

How sweetly do the closing appeals tell upon the heart of him who has an ear to hear! “I am the Root and the Offspring of David; the bright, the morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come.” It would be to lose or at least to misuse the prophetic sayings of this book, were we to have any other hope than that Jesus is coming quickly (chap. 22:7). It is well to read in their light the signs of the times: knowing the awful end, we can thus detect the principles now at work.

But it is a mistake to construe of such signs obstacles to the coming of the Lord; to say, until I know the arrival of this or that precursor, I cannot in my heart expect Jesus. Blessed be God! such is not the language of the Spirit. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Are these the words of mere feeling, unguided by spiritual understanding of the mind of God? As a fact, we know that the Lord has delayed; but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But who will say that it is conceive-able to be looking for the Lord, wholly uncertain of the time of His advent, and at the same time to have the revealed certainty of a number of events which determine the year, or, it may be, the day?

That Jesus will arise, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4), is clear; and we know that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13,). But “this same Jesus” is far more than the supreme power of righteous government on earth. He is known to the church, at any rate, as the bright, the morning Star. Blessed light of grace, ere the day breaks, to them who watch for Him from heaven during the dark and lonely night! “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” The weakest Christian too can join: “and let him that heareth say, Come.”

“He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I am coming quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus.”

Chapter 93

“If” and Not “If”

When the Christian is viewed as in Christ, there is no “if:” we are in Him. When he is viewed as a pilgrim here, he is on the road to actual glory and has to reach the goal: here “if” comes in, and danger, and the need of being kept. But then we have the fullest assurance that we shall be kept and shall never perish but be confirmed to the end, and the good work completed. Thus dependence on God is maintained to the end, and confidence in His faithfulness. J.N.D.

Chapter 94

Innovation

Dear Brother,

Isolation is not the only snare for the Christian in the present anomalous condition of Christendom. Innovation is another resource of unbelief, suited to a different order of mind, but no less a dishonor to God and a danger for man.

Tradition, even in the baseless sense which Romanism conceives, is less offensive to a pious mind. For it assumes to have ever ruled, though unwritten, from the beginning of the church; it claims till our day the maintenance of God's authority intact. The authentic and authoritative doctrine of the Council of Trent is, that in their communion, and in theirs only, is preserved the precise and full truth and discipline from Christ's lips received through the Holy Spirit from the apostles. Concil. Trident, Sess. iv. They add, what is a foolish impossibility, that no one may dare to interpret scripture itself contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. For, though this may sound fair to such as know little beyond a compendium of controversial theology, those at all familiar with the Fathers must be aware of their differences as to almost every truth of scripture they discuss. Nor this only; for they ignore not only the most fundamental blessings of the gospel for the Christian, but the highest and most characteristic privileges of the church. The theory however is that theirs is the truth held uninterruptedly from the first.

Now it is true that in receiving Christ the Christian has the truth. He, not the church, is the way, the truth, and the life (John xiv.). The Father of His own will begot believers by the word of truth (James 1:18). The truth, the Son, makes the disciple free (John 5:32-36). But, if the babes are declared to have unction from the Holy One and to know all things (1 John 2:20), scripture, every scripture, not only the O. T. but still more the N. T., is the special safeguard as well as means, divinely inspired, and profitable, for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction. Thus only can the man of God be complete, fully fitted to every good work; as the church, having God's final as well as first word, is in both privilege and responsibility the truth's pillar and basement. In no other body here below, Jewish or Gentile, is this found. If Christ is-the truth, God's assembly or church is bound to hold it forth legibly and unshaken.

So we know that Christ walked, our only perfect example. Never did any so honor God's word, as the Eternal Word here when He became flesh. See Him, even as a child of twelve, sitting in the midst of the teachers, hearing them, and asking them questions; and all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. He was Lord of all, but came to obey, and learned obedience (being used to command) from the things which He suffered. When tempted by the devil, it was not otherwise even when hungry after forty days' abstinence in the wilderness, He would not convert a stone into a loaf without a word from God. Still less would He do homage save to Jehovah, Israel's God, for all the kingdoms of the habitable earth; Him only did Christ serve. Nor would He put God or His promises to the test, as if He were not sure of His fidelity, but here as always stood on “It is written “; and if Satan misused it, He corrected and defeated him by “It is written again.” He was always dependent and obedient. So He ever met the weakness, the

prejudices, or the self-will of friends, the opposition, hypocrisy, and hatred of enemies: every class, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians; priests, rulers, scribes, lawyers, He met with the word of God. If the officials owned, as all but the most wanton and wicked must, that no man spoke as this Man, He Himself set as the highest testimony God's written word, even Moses' writings, beyond His spoken words (John 5:45-47).

As in life, so in death He inflexibly obeyed and put honor on scripture. In His deepest suffering He expressed His sense of abandonment in the words written by His Spirit in David a thousand years before, as He commended His spirit to the Father in the language of another Psalm. Just before departing, and knowing that all things were now finished that the scripture might be fulfilled, He said, I thirst. Then a sponge full of vinegar and with hyssop round it was put to His mouth; whereon He said, It is finished, and bowing His head He delivered up His spirit: words never used of another, only proper to Him Who, though true man, was very God. Even so what care to prove the divine value of the written word! Not a bone of Him should be broken, proclaimed one scripture, as another predicted, They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.

Now we who believe are sanctified by the Spirit to the obedience, no less than to the blood-sprinkling, of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2). We are not under law like Jews; we are called to obey like Himself, in the conscious relationship of sons of God. His word is a law of liberty to us, as partakers of a divine nature; for Christ is our life. Hence God's word is our directory and chart; as Christ is the true object, and the Holy Spirit is the power. Thus has God provided for His children, for His servants, for His church, in all possible wants, difficulties, and dangers. He reveals every truth; He prescribes every service that is good. Not an evil doctrine, not a devious way, is overlooked.

There is a “commandment” for the beginner; there is the “word” for the more mature. Examples and warnings abound. The walk and the worship that please Him, being alone due to Him, are clearly set before us. For as our life in love upwards or downwards is also one of obedience in the Spirit, so it necessarily requires His word, that all may be the doing of His will.

So the Lord told Saul of Tarsus (who asks on his conversion what His will was), Rise up and go to Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which it is appointed thee to do. Whatever his place and power might be, Paul gives a blessed pattern of obedience to the Christian, and charged the saints to imitate him, as he also did Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Again, John urges the same principle in his First Epistle, chap. 2. Obedience is the first and most peremptory exercise of life, as we read in vers. 3-6. Love is essential, but justly follows in vers. 7-11; for the first-fruits are ever due to God. And if this be not so, we cannot love aright; nay it might even become a peril and delusion.

This we had learned to be the saving principle in the present ruin of Christendom. This was sought and taught in being gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus. Others, whether avowing it or not, had departed from God's word and believed not in the presence of His Spirit, for subjection to Him. There is always danger of swerving for personal or party objects; which, when yielded to, adds another sect. Let us consider the apostles when they met to decide the great question of imposing the law on the Gentiles who believed (Acts 15). Not Peter nor Paul, but James pointed to “the words of the prophets,” as agreeing with what God had now wrought in taking out of the nations a people for His name. Inspired men though they were, they thus rested on God's written word. As

we have the final mind of God in the N. T., what infatuation it would be to turn to any device of men from His will now given in full for our guidance! It is not only that scripture is sufficient, but that thereby the man of God may be complete: the standard and chief safeguard in these last and perilous days.

Where Christ is not thus the center, nor God's word the absolute authority by the Spirit, it is not surprising that saints should legislate, either to evade a danger or to enlarge their borders. But “scripture cannot be broken.” It really is to give up the divine for the human, to turn from faith to sight. Innovation is a departure fatal to any such stand as God insists on for the church or for the Lord's service.

For the first time has the retort come from within that those gathered to the Lord's name should be the last to complain of innovation, since they are the greatest of all innovators! A more perverse and unworthy utterance never was made. For our entire position is a return to the Lord's will individually and collectively. Every change that now prevails in great or little societies of Christendom we have renounced, in order to obey the word, relying on the Spirit's presence and action to glorify the Lord. That the adversaries of Christian obedience should try to defame recurrence to God's word is intelligible. They naturally assume that things as they are in their own company is the right thing; and they claim power to make as many new plans as they consider expedient. Next they venture to stigmatize those who go back to the beginning, in order to do God's will as He revealed it to His apostles, not because the charge is just, but because they regard it as most offensive to those who desire to be faithful, and as likely to please the multitude who judge by appearance and prefer present ease.

But is it not a humbling and afflicting fact, yet significant, that any one who ever took the place of being gathered to the Lord's name should have so completely forgotten the truth as to adopt the language of enemies? For the retort is not only to the last degree unintelligent and false; but it abandons God's word and substitutes the actual state of Christendom as the standard to judge by. For this poor gibe means, that it is innovation to leave Romanists and Anglicans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and that such ought not to complain of fresh innovation. Where is faith, where the obedience we owe our God, in such vain efforts to mislead? To follow the Lord and His apostles is the very reverse of innovation; and the adoption of such a reproach betrays an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

In a similar spirit is the application one has lately heard of Gamaliel's advice to the high priest and the council who sought to kill the apostles. “Refrain from these men and let them alone: because if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it be of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them, lest haply ye be found even fighting against God” (Acts 5:38, 39). It was the common sense, and perhaps the conscience, of an unbelieving Rabbi warning his fellows blinded by fury; but he and they in the dark as to God's mind. For we know too well how the grossest departures from the truth, like Romanism and many other evil systems, may last for ages and outwardly flourish, instead of being soon overthrown. Think of Christians fallen so low as to cite what scripture tells us of God's providential care in thus working among those without to restrain the residue of man's fury, even if it be not yet made to praise Him, as it shall be! Think of perverting it to hinder the inalienable and imperative obligation of God's children to refuse any service which lacks His authority in precept, example, or principle! What He wills is revealed; what

is not revealed, as being outside faith, has no claim on obedience. It is human and lawless; and lawlessness is sin.

Yours ever in Christ, W. K.

Chapter 95

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: Introduction

No considerate Christian will question the momentous weight due to this truth, both in itself and as it bears on every question arising in things divine. It is no disparagement to scripture that we need also a new nature, a purged conscience, and a heart purified by faith. Let us add the Holy Spirit given, as He is now, to know the only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He sent. For this is life eternal, inseparable from the object of our faith, of the Father's delight, and of the Holy Spirit's testimony. “He that believeth hath life eternal;” he has life in Christ, the Son, as truly as the apostle John, who wrote expressly to the family of God, for all, babes no less than fathers in Christ, that they might know that, believing on the name of His Son, they have life eternal (1 John 5:13).

When thus assured of a portion precious beyond reckoning, we are in a condition to appreciate the scriptures as becomes children of God. What a contrast between the rich grace that shines in Christ, the Personal Word, for every believer to enjoy, and the hesitating spirit among the baptized to appropriate these divine communications Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! didst Thou not bless every child of Thine with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ? Are they not to-day for the most part hesitating whether they are Thine or not? Are they not in doubt whether their sins be really all forgiven for His name's sake? And is not this painful uncertainty as plain in the third or fourth century after Christ, as in the eighteenth or nineteenth? And why is it, but that souls then as now were in general as feeble in believing God's written warrant as in receiving God's salvation by Christ and His work? How sad that a saint should even seem to he always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth!

Undoubtedly in God's mercy there are all over the world simple-hearted believers, in the aggregate a great multitude; who rest with cloudless confidence in the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ; who accept for themselves, and attest for all others that believe, the absolute reliableness of God's love and Christ's redemption; who know the Holy Spirit's presence with and in us forever. Hidden ones too, far beyond our thoughts there may have been, in all ages since our Lord died and rose, to profit by faith; whereas the recognized leaders prove by their remains how quickly and far the Christian profession departed from their proper privileges and divine joys. For it would be intolerable to doubt that those who express what prevailed were as real in Catholic times of old, as in Anglican or Puritan times nearer us. Far be the thought! The fail from grace was deep and wide-spread; the truth was clouded with dark traditions of men, ancient and modern. Scripture itself is plain how soon. such changes came in even among the best taught confessors of Christ. And the inspired men, Paul and Peter, John and Jude, prepare us for profound departure without one promise of restoration, still less of progress, for Christendom. These facts accentuate the all-importance of the written word, which then as now is the standard of truth and the sole means of recovery, applied by God's Spirit to remove obstructions, that Christ might give them light once more, yea that He should be formed in them.

Thus it is sadly, humblingly true that God has been dishonored throughout Christian times by unbelief of their best blessings in those who have borne the Lord's name; as we were warned, not

least of all by false teachers among them as by false prophets in Israel. In teachers and taught our own day beholds the bold and growing development of what is nothing less than sheer and systematic infidelity. This assumes the euphemistic name of “higher criticism” and puts forward the plea of fuller inquiries into the literary history of the scriptures. If we listen to themselves, it is in conflict neither with Christianity as a whole nor with any articles of the faith. But it is really a system as imaginative for the process they call the building up of (at least the earlier books of) the Bible, as is the Darwinian hypothesis for excluding God from creating species in the natural world, and for assigning this process to Time, the late Mr. D.'s great god, and to Natural Selection, his goddess. When souls are thus seduced to abandon the divine authority of scripture and to deny its inspiration in any real sense, it is no consolation to feel that deceivers are themselves deceived. Nor indeed is there a fact more notorious, than that the men beguiled to disbelieve God's word readily show themselves the most credulous of men.

Take an instance clear and sufficient. In hardly anything are the “higher critics” more unanimous or jubilant than as to Astruc's theory of Elohistic and Jehovistic documents, and the audacious consequences deduced from that assumption. But if it have an apparent sense as applied to the Pentateuch, how does it bear on Job? How on the Psalms? on Proverbs? on Ecclesiastes? or on the prophets, say Jonah for example? Did then Ezra and Nehemiah (or the inspired writers of these books) compile the annals of their own days from Elohistic and Jehovistic documents? If the theory hung together, to this absurdity it would fairly lead. The truth of God, conveyed by the admirable propriety with which inspiration employs these and other divine names, is wholly lost by such superficial guess-work. But this short introduction is not a suitable occasion to go into the minute and full proofs, on the one hand of the rationalist blunder, and on the other of the divine wisdom and beauty displayed in the inspired choice of the divine designations, in all scripture from Genesis to the Revelation, as well as in the books of Moses.

These considerations make it an urgent duty to survey the subject afresh, and with such a measure of precision and comprehensiveness as grace may supply for guarding souls in this increasingly evil day. The Christian wants divine certainty in his relations with God. Probability is all that man, as man, seeks or can have because he knows not God. But believers have ever craved and ever taken the wholly different ground of divine certainty by God's word. They had it and were blessed in it by faith long before there was a single scripture. Abel knew it, and Enoch, and Noah before the deluge, not to speak of the elders conspicuous in Heb. 11 for the various characteristics of their faith. So it is with all that are taught of God. All rest on His word, whatever the marked result in each by grace. It wrought long before there was a people of God like Israel. It remained vigorous when, on the temporary ruin of the Jews, God formed the church the body of Christ, calling out of Gentiles as well as a remnant of Israel. Thus every believer as of old, only now with immensely superior privileges, stands on ground of divine certainty, and not on probability however reinforced.

It is here that the Tractarian party proved the unsoundness of their position. So Dr. J. H. Newman lets us know in his” Apologia.” Mr. J. Keble, with all his melodious strains, was no better in principle. They were alike and all along on a plane which inclined to Romanism, the former being more consistent than the latter in going to Rome at last. Hence the attempt to supplement probability, “the guide of life” (61, 62), with faith and love within, to give it more force (69). Of natural life it may be with conscience as the monitor. The question is of our new life in Christ, of

which philosophy takes no account. But no assemblage of concurring and converging probabilities can raise probability to absolute certainty. God's testimony received by faith does and alone can give divine certainty.

Dr. J. H. N., though professedly at the opposite pole of thought, was really in the same quagmire as his skeptical brother, Prof. F. W. N. It is the case with the rationalists, be they superstitious or profane. Their ground is human, not divine. There are found the “higher critics” with all others who renounce God for man. Reasoning may predominate here, imagination and religious sentiment there; as others betake themselves to erudite speculation. But in no case is it the faith of God's elect, even if ensnared believers yield to it. What the word, and now the written word, was given to produce by the living operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart is divine certainty. But it is exactly what the “higher criticism” tends to destroy, even more directly than do the rank weeds of superstition which choke the good seed.

Such are the two schools which are to-day struggling for the mastery. They unite, as we have seen, in untiring effort to withdraw men if they can, from simple thorough subjection to God's word in faith. Of this they are alike jealous, and alike they cast scorn on it, though such faith alone becomes man, alone honors God. For it finds the God-given center in Christ, full cleansing by His work, its exercise in His service, and its joy in His love and the Father's, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nor is this all. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, and therein have our place and fellowship as worshippers, no less than as saints, one with another. Those on the ground of probability can never breathe this pure atmosphere freely; they have never emerged from the fog of nature. They betray their dark state by their inability, whether profane or religious rationalists, even to understand what is meant by such a scripture as “the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have no more conscience of sins.” Yet it is simply the common Christian position in this respect (but to both those classes unintelligible), because it is the fruit of Christ's perfecting work, made known to the Christian only, above man's intellect and beyond his conscience, though faith enjoys its divine certainty. Confidence (one may not say faith) in the church can no more impart it, than confidence in criticism higher or lower. It is the will of God now established, the work of Christ now finished and accepted, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, according to scripture, now received in full assurance of faith. Hence all joy and peace in believing is unknown to the gloomy man of superstition, and to the airy higher critic. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 96

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 1. Divine Authority

Chapter 1 Divine Authority

We open the Bible. Its first words are necessarily either a revelation or an imposture, either God's word or man's guess claiming His authority. A middle ground here is impossible.

The first and in extent the greatest of all miracles is revealed. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There is no specific date given. It is expressly indefinite. Many have confounded ver. 3 with ver. 1, some with feelings hostile, others friendly, to revelation. Both were inexcusably wrong, because both carelessly overlooked the scripture before their eyes. For this scripture, even were there no other confirmatory, affirms in ver. 1 the original creation of the universe, then in ver. 2 its chaotic condition. The earth was not created empty and waste when first called into being (Isa. 45:18). It may have become so often, if able geologists are heeded. It certainly was so immediately before the days of man's world began, which commenced, not with creating light, but with its activity after ruin and darkness. “And God said, Light be, and light was.”

Then ver. 2 does not describe God's creation like ver. 1, but a state of utter contrast with it, when total disorder ensued for the earth. Neither the one fact nor the other called for more than passing notice, as being physical, and as in no direct way the sphere of God's moral dealings with man. Yet was it of moment to have facts of deep interest briefly disclosed, which were entirely beyond the ken of man, lost in contending dreams of eternal matter in the West, and of emanations in the East, illusion and falsehood both of them into which evolution, the fashion of our day, no less surely entices unwary souls. Whatever of detail Gen. 1 furnishes is solely about the formation of the world as it was prepared for the human race; eventually for Christ the Man of God's counsels. It was no speculation of some “Hebrew Descartes” or Newton, but God's account of His own work by His servant and prophet Moses. It is worthy of God, deigning in love to communicate what man could not discover and ought to know.

Science is powerless to speak of the beginning of things. So the inductive philosophers own, ashamed as they may well be of all the cosmogonists, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Orientals, or any others. There stands God's revelation, simple, majestic, and complete for His purpose, without even a rival throughout all ages, against which the pride of man can allege nothing but his own errors of haste and misapprehension. How could such a chapter have been written but by divine revelation? Search, ye men of science, ransack all your stores; scrutinize the reports and transactions of the most renowned societies. Did not your wisest own himself but as a child picking up a pebble here and there on the ocean shore? Did not he own reverently this inspired record of creation?

But is there not what some foolishly call a “second account” in Gen. 2? The first chapter reveals simply that which Elohim “created to make,” closing with the sabbath He blessed and hallowed (chap. 2: 1-3). Then follows from ver. 4 Jehovah Elohim presenting man, formed specially and in moral relationship to Himself, and so not merely as in chapter 1 the head of creation. Hence it is

that here, only in chap. 2, we have the garden with every tree pleasant and good for food, and the tree of solemn import to humanity, life and responsibility; the last, a moral test applied to a condition of innocence; man exercising his lordship over all the lower creation, yet with no like helpmate; and then woman's peculiar formation out of man. These and more pertain to God as moral governor (Jehovah Elohim), and therefore demand as they have a new section of scripture.

How quickly the fall brought in death and ruin on man, an outcast from paradise! But grace revealed the Second man, the woman's Seed, to crush the old serpent, the tempter. Clearly then, far from being another and inconsistent narrative, Gen. 2:4 as a new subject begins the moral trial of Adam, and in it his wife too playing so grave a part, in that scene of paradise formed, no less than themselves, to give it best effect in His wisdom Who put man to the proof. Hence chapter 3 under the same divine title reveals the result, so glorifying to God, so humbling to the creature, yet a needed key to all that followed here below, with assured hope of the conqueror of Satan in a bruised Savior to be born of woman.

In all the Bible there is not, save in Christ's person and work, a fact so momentous as the fall, nor a revelation more essential than Gen. 2; 3 God alone could have given us the truth as there made known. It is monstrous to conceive the guilty pair adequate witnesses. Who then else but God?

Here it is the unadorned truth, still more profound morally than chapter i., in Christ revealing the grace of God to the Highest, God's glory in His person with man's ultimate deliverance, and thus of the utmost moment to the salvation, well-being, and happiness of the believer. All comes out in plain facts, such as a child could take in, yet involving principles truer and deeper than any ideas evolved by the most philosophic of mankind. Herein lies an essential difference between revealed truth, and all its rivals. Take Vedaism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Lamaism, or aught else in India and the adjacent lands; take Confucianism, Taoism, Foism, in China; take Sabaism, Jovism, Fetichism ancient and modern: can anyone of these systems allege a single fact as their basis? The religion of the Bible, O. or N. Testament, Judaism or Christianity, rests on facts, on realities, not on mere ideas of man's mind.

Whether a partial dealing of a moral nature by law within a particular people, or the full world-wide revelation of grace and truth in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's word was the divine communication of immensely momentous facts. The related divinely inspired writings are precisely those which rationalists, claiming to be Christians, devote their efforts to dislocate, discredit, and destroy, like Pagan philosophers of old. Like fallen Adam, I am born and have lived an outcast from God. Revelation, God's revelation, His word, is the only possible way of making God known to me. Now rationalism has no more than Paganism or its philosophy any just sense of the fall, or of sin, or of God's remedy for it in Christ. Here in the earliest revelation we have the fact unmistakeably brought out in its relation to present government on the earth, with light sufficient for faith to higher and everlasting things, as we see in Abel, Enoch, &c.

Nor is it otherwise with the law any more than the promises. As the latter was no aspiration proceeding from the heart of the fathers by the Spirit, but an objective revelation made to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob; so still more manifestly was the giving of the law by Moses for the sons of Israel. Not the least detail was left to the genius of that great man: everything was presented and regulated by the commandment of Jehovah.

So it is in Christianity, wherein is the revelation to us by the Holy Spirit of what is wholly beyond man's eye, ear, and heart; in the written word is the unswerving standard as well as the richest means of communicating all. All is established on sure and infinite facts; for the Incarnation, the Ministry, the Atoning death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, of the Lord Jesus are such realities. No doubt they may well exercise heart and mind, now that the believer's conscience is purged, and to the uttermost by the word and Spirit of God. Still they are facts, attested by divine testimony to God's glory through man and for man, to be made good also in man by faith and love, by experience and obedience, by life-service and worship. There can scarce be a stronger contrast than between law and gospel, the earthly calling and the heavenly. But this at least is common to them both, that their groundwork is one of facts, not mere thoughts of the mind; and these facts are communicated to us with the known certainty of God's mind and word, such as the Holy Spirit alone could give.

Hence we may observe there is no formal claim in the opening of the Bible. The great of this world may enter with a flourish of trumpets, naturally if not necessarily. Not so the divine record. Who could speak of creation but God? or tell it adequately in its relational light but Himself taking His relative name to His people? Who but He in both ways could fully let us know the cause, history, and consequences of the deluge? Who else, what led to the rise of nations, languages? or to the call of Abram and the fathers who followed of His chosen and separate people? Yet even here throughout we have “God said” and wrought; and so with Him as “Jehovah.” He is an enemy who denies its absolute truth and divine authority.

Then comes Exodus, where the redemption of His people appears first, with the bitter bondage and oppression that preceded and brought judgment on their enemies, and His dwelling in their midst that followed, with the law but not without the shadow of the good things to come. Then accordingly we have His name of relationship specially, explained. Here yet more abundantly “Jehovah said” and acted. But, either historically, or when nature is introduced, it is God as such, i.e. Elohim. No man or varying document has the least to do with this, but His own wisdom in the inspired word. The book must be a romance or imposture like the Koran, if it be not God through Moses. The peculiarities of it (such as reserving to chap. 30, where it even looks out of order, the altar of incense, the atonement-money, the holy anointing oil, and the holy incense for Jehovah) flow from the deep design of God, instead of the blunder of legends, or the incapacity of an editor, to which the imbecility of “higher criticism” rashly and ignorantly ascribes them. The repetitions, as of the sabbath, &c., which they regard as self-evidence of several scribes, are due to a like divine design; and they only learn and profit who bow to divine authority.

Leviticus is even more manifestly Jehovah speaking from first to last, with the least of history in it but this as manifestly by divine authority. It deals with access to Him, and hence begins with sacrifices and offerings, and priesthood. Thence it treats of unclean things and state; and the central truth of the Day of Atonement, and of blood reserved to God; then of evil relationships and holy ones; the feasts, &c.

Numbers is a book too varied for so brief a notice as the present; but treats it has the people's journeyings, and its characteristic moral facts are selected by the inspiring Spirit for God's permanent record, above all the wisdom of the writer or of any man at any time. The apostle in 1 Cor. 10 declares the typical character of the events recorded, for which God alone was competent,

to say nothing of copious and special injunctions to Moses, to Aaron, and to both, or of the wondrous predictions Jehovah spoke through Balaam compelled to bless Israel.

Deuteronomy has not only its task of rehearsal in a way beyond human thought, but is anticipative of their possession of the land, and solemnly insists on obedience of Jehovah's word, and on a covenant distinct from that of Horeb. But we need not say more than express the horror which a believer unsophisticated by the spirit of the age must and ought to feel at the blasphemous denial of the N. T. testimony to Moses as the writer, and of its divine authority.

It would be too much to glance at every book, as we have at those which compose the Pentateuch. But all else in the O. T. as in the New has the same authority of God. Hence the O. T. scriptures are called as a whole by the apostle Paul (Rom. 3:2) “the oracles of God;” as Moses is said by Stephen (Acts 7:38) to have received “living oracles” (not dead legends) to give unto God's people. And the Lord Jesus when risen said to the disciples, “These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and prophets and psalms concerning me” (Luke 24:44). This covers the entire Hebrew O. T. as the Jews present it to us. And herein the Latin church has proved a faithless guardian by adding apocryphal Greek writings to that Canon, which even Jerome in his Prologus Galeatus to the Vulgate admits to be not properly included. So similar unfaithfulness was essayed in early days by reading publicly uninspired writings, and joining them, as an Appendix, to the copies of the Greek N. T. But even Rome did not commit itself to so gross an imposture as this last.

The great apostle in his First Epistle to Timothy (v. 18) quotes Deut. 25:4 and Luke 10:7 as “the scripture.” He might have quoted Matt. 10:10 from one an apostle like himself; he was led of God to quote from one who was a prophet, not an apostle. For we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). This stamps Luke as no mere amanuensis expressing but as an inspired writer whom the apostle cites Paul's mind, according to the tradition of Eusebius, when writing in the Spirit. So 2 Peter 3:15, 16 shows us the apostle of the circumcision referring in this inspired document to Paul's Epistles as part of the scriptures. Thus we learn the unerring and far-seeing provision of allusion, which might to some seem casual, but the fruit of infinite wisdom, and weightier to faith than a world of human reasonings. Indeed the intrinsic character of the N. T. is so unequivocally self-evidencing, that only the pride of unbelief in Jew or Gentile can account for one who accepts the Old as divine hesitating about the New as no less. (To be continued, D.V.).

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 2. 1. Apostolic Doctrine

Chapter 2 Apostolic Doctrine

WE are not left to facts however momentous, nor to incidental statements though abundant, plain, and reliable. The N.T. pronounces the most distinct and conclusive doctrine on so all-important a subject. For it concerns not man only but God's honor, and the character of His word in both Testaments so called. “For thou hast magnified thy word [saying] above all thy name” (Psa. 138). Let us weigh a few of these testimonies.

The Lord Himself in John 14-16 prepared the way not for fresh promises, but for the fullest revelation of the truth by the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit. It was indeed to comprehend the power of enjoying every privilege and of supplying every need for the new creation, for the children of God, once scattered, now to be gathered together into one. “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for be shall not speak from himself, but whatsoever things he shall hear shall he speak; and he shall declare to you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine and shall declare it to you.” He had already announced that the Paraclete or Advocate, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father would send in His name, should teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that He said to them. At Pentecost He came and made all good.

1 Cor. 2 is remarkably full as well as precise. The O. T. left “secret things” belonging to God, which were then unrevealed: so intimated the law (Deut. 29:29); and the greatest of the prophets acknowledged that it was not theirs to lift the veil (Isa. 64:4). The apostle refers to this last, and contrasts the silence of old with what the Holy Spirit was now disclosing. “But to us God revealed [them] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God. For who of men knoweth the things of the man, except the spirit of the man that is in him? Thus also the things of God knoweth no one except the Spirit of God. But we received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God; which [things] also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in [those] Spirit-taught, communicating spirituals by spirituals. But a natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he cannot know [them] because they are spiritually examined. But the spiritual examineth all things, while he is examined by no one. For who knew Jehovah's mind that he shall teach Him? But we have Christ's mind” (vers. 10-16).

Here in fact is the whole case. God by His Spirit revealed what had been hidden, even His depths, which He only knows. We, says the apostle, received His Spirit that the things freely given to us by Him we may know as they are. The first is revelation of the truth, of His counsels. Next comes the making known to others what God thus revealed: “Which things also we speak not in words taught of man's wisdom but in Spirit-taught, expounding spiritual [things] by spiritual [words].” Thirdly, follows the necessary spiritual condition to apprehend them. For a natural man neither receives nor can know what is scanned spiritually. It is the Spirit of God Who works in the Christian, the last

stage, as He wrought in the first and the second. Thus we have God's gracious power by His Spirit, first in revealing divine things, next in communicating them verbally, and lastly in real reception or communion. Thereby have we Christ's mind, beyond even prophets of old.

The chief question lies in the word (ver. 13) translated “comparing.” As it undoubtedly has this meaning in 2 Cor. 10:12, it was a natural temptation to understand it similarly here. But notoriously words are modified by their context; and as we have no other occurrence in the N. T., we must search into the usage of the LXX or the like, For the sense of “comparing” is wholly unsuitable to the intermediate process, of which the apostle treats, though it might well form part of that which pertains to the reception or understanding of what was already written. Now in the Septuagint the most prevailing application of the word in its cognate forms is to the expounding or explanation of what God was pleased to reveal (Gen. 40:8, 12, 16, 18, 22; 41:12, 15), as in vision or dream (Dan. 2:2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 16, 24, 25, 26, 30, 36, 45; 4:3, 4, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21; 5:7, 8, 13, 16, 18, 20, 28; 7:16). As however in our text it is no question of a dream or vision to be interpreted, the sense naturally admits of a larger modification, and hence in this instance requires “communicating” or some such equivalent.

This accordingly and perfectly falls in with the bearing of the clause and the demands of the context. For the clause is occupied, not with the spiritual man's apprehension of what is propounded, but with the conveying it to him in words taught by the Spirit. They were as to this expressly not left to man's wisdom or ability. Not only divine ideas were seen in the Spirit, but moreover the wording was no less taught by the Spirit. Herein “comparing” has no propriety and is therefore inadmissible. And though “interpreting,” “expounding,” or “determining” might convey the sense in substance, none of them seems to give it at this stage so unambiguously as “communicating.” The connected words also acquire a definite force, free from the liability to different meanings which add nothing of moment. For “comparing” opens the door to vague and uncertain adjuncts; whereas with “communicating” the sense is fixed to “spiritual [things] by spiritual [words].” He had already spoken of the things of God, here designated “spiritual things,” and he had also treated of words Spirit-taught; now brought together briefly in communicating “spiritual [things] by spiritual [words].” “To spiritual men” would be premature in ver. 13; for he takes up this question in the verses that follow.

His latest Epistle (2 Tim. 3) gave the apostle the fitting occasion to lay down the distinct and full dogmatic decision of the Holy Spirit on the scriptures. He had himself been raised up, not only as “minister of the gospel” but as “minister of the church,” to fill up the word of God, as he tells us in Col. 1:23-25. To Timothy he writes in view of difficult times to prevail in the last days, men who presented its evil traits being already there to turn away from. For if they had a form of piety, they denied its power. They had their prototypes in those who withstood Moses, and their folly should be quite manifest to all, as theirs too became. But Timothy had followed up Paul's teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings, what things befell him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions he endured, and the Lord delivered him out of all. But wicked men and impostors shall advance to worse, leading and led astray. “But abide thou in the things thou didst learn and wast assured of, knowing of whom thou didst learn, and that from a babe thou knowest sacred writ that is able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

Here we learn the safeguard to be in no way the church's witness; for therein it is that we see the awful spectacle of a veneered Christian form, yet a moral heathenism, with hypocrisy added, the grossest ways only concealed or withdrawn (cf. Rom. 1). The man of God rests on no Unnamed one, great or small. He was well aware of whom he learned the truth, even the apostles; as he thoroughly knew what sort of life was his with whom he had the closest intimacy. For what is teaching without practice akin? Here it was maintained in face of persecutions and sufferings, with the marked deliverances of the Lord throughout; as indeed all should expect persecution who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus. Thus was manifested a marked difference in the later revelation as compared with the earlier. For its witnesses and instruments were contemporaries, bringing out the truth finally an together by the Spirit after Christ's advent and redemption; as the earlier writers had done their piece-meal work, spread over more than a thousand years, yet with a unity most marked.

But was it not the O. T. that Timothy knew from a babe? Unquestionably. Would anyone with wicked heart of unbelief thence seek to question or lower the N. T.? Let him learn that the apostle, while upholding God's ancient oracles as “sacred writ” (■ερ■ γρ■μματα), is careful to affirm in the most comprehensive terms the divine authority of all, or rather “every,” scripture, not old merely but new. For he, γραφ■, which he declares in its every part to be inspired of God, or God-breathed, as is no other writing. It runs through the four Gospels, the Acts, and the apostolic Epistles in this sense alone, singular and plural.

The more general sense was expressed by γρ■μμα, a writing, which might mean a “bill” (Luke 16:6, 7), or “letter” in the abstract (Rom. 2:27, 29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6), “alphabetic characters” (Luke 23:38; 1 Cor. 3:7; Gal. 6:4), “epistles” (Acts 28:28), “letters” or learning (John 7:15; Acts 26:24), or “writings” (John 5:47), which needed the epithet ■ερ■, sacred, &c. to stamp them as scriptures. But γραφ■ in Greek N. T. usage means nothing else, even without the article here or elsewhere, as our idiom also bears.

“Every scripture [is] God-breathed, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped completely for every good work” (vers. 16, 17). The Revisers, like some others, take “inspired of God,” not as the predicate but as qualifying the subject; and the clause would then run, “Every scripture inspired of God [is] also profitable.” But who will say that this is the natural meaning? who can deny that it involves a twofold awkwardness, but both by withholding the understood copula where one cannot but look for it, and by supposing it where it jars with the flow of the sentence? None of the constructions within or without the N. T. cited by Dean Alford approaches the one before us. One near in some respects is 1 Tim. 4:4, where it would be intolerable to make καλ■ν (good) part of the subject. Still nearer perhaps is Heb. 4:13, where nobody doubts that “naked and laid open” is the true predicate, if so, “God-breathed and profitable” ought to be thus taken here.

The truth appears to be that the conjunction κα■ though indubitably genuine was overlooked by early versions, as the Memphitic, Peschito-Syr., and many of the Latin copies, besides the Clem. Vulgate: so too some fathers Greek and Latin. This error necessitated, one may say, the view that “God-breathed” belonged to the subject. Other Latin copies, with the Gothic, Harklean-Syr., Arm. and Aeth., interpreted κα■ in the sense of “also” as introducing the predicate. Taken thus, κα■ is here feeble, and so superfluous that it was easily forgotten; whereas, wherever it is correctly so

taken, it has an emphatic or supplementary force, as in Luke 1:36, Rom. 8:29, 34, Gal. 4:7. It would certainly become those who contend for their construction to produce a sentence, where a like severance occurs or indeed can be between two adjectives ostensibly connected by a conjunction.

But, if possibly allowed as grammatical, can this rendering be counted tenable on internal grounds? For if θε■πνευστος be treated as part of the subject, it must be taken either as an assumption, or as a condition. If it be assumed that scripture is God-inspired, nothing is gained by those who favor so harsh a construction. The sense is substantially alike, whether you assume or assert the inspiration of every scripture. But if the aim be to understand a condition (i.e. “if divinely inspired,” rather than “being divinely inspired),” you are confronted with the acknowledged fact that γραφ■ in the N. T. is appropriated to scripture and spoken of no other writing. Hence the conditional construction, in order to apply, contradicts the known usage, and would require the wholly unauthorized sense of mere “writing” “every writing, if inspired of God, is also profitable, &c. If we understand γ., as we must, in the sense of “scripture,” and take the epithet with the subject, we gain nothing but a strangely incoherent phrase, yet in substance agreeing with its natural sense: “every scripture, being inspired of God, is also profitable,” &c., as in fact Origen long ago took it, but not Athanasius, nor Greg. Nyss, nor Chrysostom, who held as the A.V.

The R. V., whether intentionally or not, is ambiguous: “every scripture inspired of God [is] also profitable, &c. If it was not meant to raise a doubt, why was it so left? If it was, is it possible to conceive an object more opposed to the context? For the Spirit of God is furnishing the 'invaluable and needed safeguard against the difficult times of the last days; and after dwelling among the rest on the fact of Timothy's privilege in knowing from a babe the sacred writ of the O. T., he crowns all with the universal principle (which applies to the N. T. no less than to the O., and to what might yet be written as well as to what was), “every scripture [is] God-inspired, and profitable for teaching,” &c.

The apostle gives first, as was most reverent and worthy, its relation to God, the Author of this incomparable boon as of all others; next, its profitable uses for the blessing of the man of God. For as no creature but man in virtue of his spirit can know the things of a man, no more can one know the things of God save by the Spirit of God, Who both revealed and communicated them, and enables the believer to discern them, as we have already seen. Scripture teaches us in our ignorance, convicts us of obstinacy or errors, correct us when shirking or straying, and disciplines us in righteousness inward and outward, that in our stand for God we might be complete on every side, and with equal fullness furnished for every good work.

A learned dignitary (in loco) speaks of “God-inspired” not excluding verbal errors or possibly historical inaccuracies, and those of human transmission and transcription. But is not this doubly a mistake of grave import? It would first make the written word a divine guarantee of untruth, both originally as well as in its dissemination. Next, how he could mix up the two points is hard to say; for clerical blunders have nothing to do with the question of God's inspiration, solely with man's responsible use of its fruit. The former is a virtual denial of “God-inspired,” unless the God of truth can lie: if He sanction errata in trifling matters, why not in greater things? But “scripture cannot be broken,” said the Lord. Compromise is unworthy of faith. “It is written” was His answer to Satan's temptations, and is the guide and standard of all saints since grace gave scripture. It is not a

question of man's spirit, but of God's, Who is beyond doubt able to secure the truth absolutely, as the Lord and the apostles and the prophets every where assume and assert. To imply such weakness in man as is beyond the power of God is a feeble, not the full, inspiration, taught in the Bible. But when philosophy is sought as the ally of divine truth, the issue cannot but be vacillating, inconsistent, and misleading. “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.” It is a singularly loose comment on “every scripture is also inspired of God,” &c. One can scarce doubt that a rendering so halting and strange tempts to a hesitating interpretation, even though not a whisper be given that they hold any scripture to be uninspired. Yet it is a plain and peremptory utterance of the apostle, calling for a version and a comment of no uncertain sound.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 98

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 2. 2. Apostolic Authority

Chapter 2 Apostolic Authority

In ordinary thoughts and discussion on inspiration it is not always remembered that the apostle claims it authoritatively for “every scripture.” This goes far beyond what men uttered from God, moved or borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). For we are taught, not only what the Holy Spirit gave by His living instruments, but that what is written by Him abides now of at least equal divine authority. It is painful to see the readiness of any Christian to allow the compatibility of this divine power with historical or any other inaccuracies, natural enough to man's spirit. But the apostle Paul in the text before us leaves no room for evasion or uncertainty. “Every scripture” is either assumed, as some argue, or asserted as others believe, to be God-inspired. Does He fail to exclude verbal errors? Is He capable of historical or any other inaccuracies?

The imputation really leaves God out, as every measure of skepticism does. It dwells on human infirmity and ignorance, which no believer ought for a moment to forget. But God's inspiration of “every scripture” gives to faith the certainty that no such inaccuracies attach to the written word as it came from Him; and this is all that plenary inspiration means. It in no way excludes mistakes in transcription, translation, or interpretation. But it is an abuse of language, calculated to deceive the simple and gratify the enemy, if one allow divine plenary inspiration in word and then annul it in deed. For as God cannot lie, so He does not pledge His inspiration so as to sanction errors ever so small. He used men of God as the vehicle for carrying out His purpose in giving His word; He employed their mind and heart as well as their language and style; but He communicated His own wisdom in fulfillment of His design beyond the measure of the instrument, and in absolute exclusion of mistake.

For any then to contend that plenary inspiration admits of “leaving” inspired men to themselves in any respect is really to leave out God, and to blow hot and cold in the same breath. It is openly and absolutely to contradict the apostolic canon here laid down. Not only were the writers moved by the Holy Spirit, but “every scripture is God-inspired.” Scripture is no mere accident, nor simply a providential arrangement, where blemishes may naturally be. If God's purpose intended to give us His word, the Holy Spirit wrought to effectuate it in a wisdom, power, order, and end which bespoke Himself. One can understand unbelief blind even to the grace and the truth which came through Jesus Christ, and seeing only discrepancies and blunders in the Gospels, where spiritual intelligence finds the deepest demonstration of the divine mind which produced a perfect result to Christ's glory before the eyes of faith. How strange and distressing that any who hear Christ's word and believe Him Who sent the Lord fail to perceive that, of all theories, none is less satisfactory, tenable, or reverent! For is it not that the Holy Spirit Who inspired the evangelists recalled facts and words imperfectly to their remembrance, and stamped misleading memoirs with the authority of God's word? It is the more inexplicable that there should be no less than a divine Person for such compilations, supposed to be mutually inconsistent as well as defective in small points!

Here is not the place to show, not only how baseless is this unbelief, but the divinely admirable truth which the Holy Spirit set out in these inspired accounts of our Lord as everywhere else in the Bible. It would demand volumes and can be found by those who seriously inquire. But such speculations ought never to have been entertained for a moment. Their source is evil, though good men be ensnared by them. “Every scripture is God-inspired.” We are entitled as believers to set one's seal to it that He is true; so is His word. We are bound in simple faith to deny errors or discrepancies in scripture as He wrote it. We may not be able to answer every objection, or to clear up every difficulty which ingenious ill-will or even weakness may muster; for this depends on our intelligence, which may be small. But if we believe the apostle's deliverance on the Bible to be “the commandment of the Lord” (as he claims generally and for smaller things in 1 Cor. 14), we are warranted to rest in the peaceful certainty that “every scripture is inspired of God.”

So our Lord acted with friend or foe. So He taught His own, as He had confronted the great enemy. “It is written” was the conclusive answer to temptation and to question; and if scripture were perverted, “It is written again” is the short and best refutation. What an example for us, so ready to trust in our dialectic skill of defense or in dissecting an adversary's ignorance and error? The simplest believer can reckon on the word and Spirit of God. This honors Him and His word, and is for us the humblest, holiest, and safest ground.

In vain then do men argue that there are many things in the scriptures which the writers might have known, and probably did know, by ordinary means; that for some things they must have been supernaturally endowed; and that other things again required nothing less than direct revelation. The aim of this is unconsciously to lower scripture, and bring as much as possible within man's capacity. Now no believer need question God's use of means, if He pleases, or rising above them if for His glory. But “Every scripture is inspired of God” settles all questions. We have there wicked men's hypocritical words, and their rebellious ones; we have even Satan's temptations and his accusations in scripture; but “every scripture is inspired.” To present the least fact, to record the simplest word in scripture, was as truly of God's inspiration, as to reveal “the mystery” or to disclose the future glory of heaven and earth. Documents or none, the insertion in scripture was God-inspired: else the apostolic rule were infringed. But as our Lord said (John 10:35), “the scripture cannot be broken.”

As Jehovah magnified His saying above all His name, so did our Lord take His stand on the written word, the scriptures, as the most authoritative of all testimonies. All scripture, every part of it even, is God-inspired for permanence, and the true end of controversy for those that believe; while such as believe not must learn their sin and folly in the judgment. The question is in no way, whether the writer knew or did not know what they wrote (for both are found abundantly in scripture), but whether they were inspired of God to write it. And “every scripture” is so inspired. This alone makes it God's word, not its known truth or usefulness, but His inspiring it; and this we have in every scripture. Some writers may be sublime and others simple; some may be pathetic and others severe; but all are God-inspired; and the plain proof is that they are part of the scriptures. In the N. T. we have differences as wide as sever the Epistle of James from those of Paul, and the Gospel of Mark from that of John. But inspired they are equally, as their writings are part of the scriptures. Inspiration of God is a fact, and does not admit of varying degrees.

It is quite within the power of the Holy Spirit in giving God's word to adopt the style of each individual writer. But no effort on a writer's part could make his words to be God's. Even before the adversary the Lord told the twelve to have no anxiety how or what to speak, for in the hour of need it should be given. “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:20). How much more was that divine energy wanted and given, when not their vindication was in question, but the communication of God's mind and will for His own and forever? Indeed it is no more than the certain fact; for every scripture is God-inspired.

Speculation into the “how” of inspiration is a prying into what is not revealed, and therefore unwise and unbecoming. We are not told how God inspired the writers of the scriptures. It is probable that none could know save those who were so energized. Theories “mechanical” or “dynamical,” so called, are out of place and explain nothing. As 1 Cor. 2 maintains the principle, the necessity, and the fact of Spirit-taught words, so 2 Tim. 3:16 speaks, not of the revelations before the mind only, but of “scripture;” and decides for it as inspired of God. This is the all-important truth conveyed. It is God Himself in scripture removing all doubt about scripture, and even about every part of it. One can conceive no other communication more distinct or conclusive. The language is as plain as its aim is spiritually momentous, and its intimation is of the utmost practical interest and value. (To be continued, D.V.)

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 3. Its Uniformity

Chap. 3. Its Uniformity

We have dwelt the longer on the claim demanded by the great apostle for “every scripture,” because it really settles for the believer all the questions which the busy mind of man can raise. For we are not now debating with the Atheist or even the Deist, who openly disbelieves a revelation from God, but meeting the difficulties raised among professing Christians, though it may be too often originated by real empties. Doubts are more guilty now than in the days of our Lord Who reproached the Sadducees with not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For not only was He come as the True light to shed light on every man, and to give an understanding that we might know Him that is true, but the entire book of the final revelation from God has been added since by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. And it is in one of these latest communications of divine truth that we have God attesting His own inspiration of “every scripture.”

This was as it should be in view of man's need, and especially for the safeguard of believers, soon to be left without the living presence of apostles. But from the beginning of revelation God took care that they who read or heard His word should be assured that it was His truth in His power and by His authority, that His people might believe and obey Him. Thus in that last book of the Pentateuch, which it is a modern fashion to imagine of late date, in Deut. 4:2, we read, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God which I command you.” As with the Law, so it was with the Prophets: “Jehovah hath spoken,” though by Isaiah (i. 2); “The words of Jeremiah... to whom the word of Jehovah came” (Jer. 1:1, 2); and so with the others. It did not differ with the Psalms, as their chief writer says, “The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2).

The Lord Jesus when here set the scripture in the clearest light, in the simplest way, and on the firmest ground. He repels Satan's temptation with “It is written “; and when Satan uses the word, He answers by its right use, “It is written again.” It is remarkable and instructive, that all His replies are taken from Deuteronomy: the book that reveals the obedience of faith when the people should be ruined through failure under the law. He appeals to the earliest history (Gen. 2) as God's word. He also prepared His disciples for those new communications of grace and truth which the Holy Spirit would come to make on His own departure (John 14; 15; 16): these we have now in what is called the New Testament. So the apostles themselves declare (Rom. 16:25, 26; 1 Cor. 2; 14:36; 2 Cor. 13:2, 3; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 5:27; Heb. 1:1, 2; 2:1-4; 12:25; 2 Peter 3:2, 15, 16; 1 John 4:6). 2 Tim. 3:16 has been already before us. Apparently “occasional and fragmentary,” the writings of the N. T. have a real completeness unmistakably divine.

It is because this divine character of all scripture is not held in simple faith that men, and even pious men, have yielded to human thoughts which dishonor God's word and have opened the door to skeptical evil more and more ungodly. As the O.T. consists of the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, so does the N.T. of the Gospels and Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. Its basis is

grace and truth come through Jesus Christ, Who on His own departure sent the Holy Spirit as the other Paraclete to be with and in us forever. Again, the Epistles form quite as characteristic a part of the New Testament as the Gospels, following up those memoirs with the truth dogmatically, which saints could not bear before redemption; as in the Acts we have historically the Holy Ghost's action when personally descended and present.

Hence the contrast is greatest with the Psalms or poetic portion of the O. T.; and it is the Epistles, which to us stand over against them: of all compositions the most familiar and intimate. Therein it is no longer outpourings which anticipate Messiah's coming, sufferings, and reign in Zion, with groans and cries meanwhile; but heart communicating to heart in the Spirit the grace and the glory of the Son of God already come and gone, but about to come again to have us with Himself in the Father's house as well as to appear and reign, as we shall with Him, in that day. No wonder that a new walk (Eph. 2:10), and a higher nearer worship, go along with the new relationship most fully brought out in the Epistles. The closest analogue to the O. T. is in the Apocalypse which alone answers to the Prophets, but rises above while it confirms them, completing the whole to the glory of God and the Lamb.

The development of all, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, gives occasion to the most delightful variety in God's communications through His chosen instruments. But this only the more strikingly manifests the unity of the Divine Author. “Every scripture is God-inspired.” No notion can be more false or superficial than to infer from their variety of matter and manner a difference in the degree of inspiration, Neither the revealed facts nor the revealed doctrine allow an idea so baseless, unreasonable, and dangerous. Scripture pronounces that “every scripture is inspired of God.” One can understand cavils or disbelief about its parts, or even the whole where skepticism is extreme; but, for any one who admits scripture from God, a varying inspiration is negatived by divine authority.

This suffices to prove without further ado the egregious error of the late D. Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, in his Evidences of Christianity (i. 508). “By the inspiration of suggestion is meant such communications of the Holy Spirit, as suggested and detailed minutely every part of the truths delivered. The inspiration of direction is meant of such assistance as left the writers to describe revealed truth in their own way, directing only the mind in the exercise of its power. The inspiration of elevation added a greater strength and vigor to the efforts of the mind than the writer could otherwise have attained. The inspiration of superintendency was that watchful care which preserved generally from anything being put down derogatory to the revelation with which it was connected.” There are no such kinds of inspiration taught in the Bible, which speaks of God's inspiration pure and simple, and predicates it of “every scripture” alike. Dr. W.'s first kind is the only real inspiration, though even it is not fully stated. The other three are not the inspiration of any scripture, but such direction, elevation, and superintendency as His servants look for, and not in vain, day by day. But none of these is true inspiration, which conveys God's mind or will as perfectly as it excludes every error of man.

Doctors Dick (Lect. on Thess. i. 195), Pye Smith (Ser. Test. to the Messiah i.), Henderson (Lect. on Inspir. 36 sec.) and others have put forth a similar hypothesis of different degrees in inspiration, influenced partly by the free thinking of modern Germans, partly by a name so respectable as that of Dr. Doddridge (Works v.), of older date. There is modification; for Henderson makes five

degrees, while Doddridge states no more than three. But all agree in the hypothesis of differences which oppose the authoritative declaration of the apostle, without the semblance of warrant from any other scripture.

To what source then are we to attribute these unbelieving speculations? It would seem mainly to Moses Maimonides (A.D. 1131-1204), from whom B. Spinoza borrowed much, followed in that at least by Le Clerc, as Grotius derived it directly from Jewish channels. In his “Moreh Nebochim” Maimonides conceives eleven “degrees of Prophecy.” These the Portuguese Jew, Abarbanel (A.D. 14371508), melted into three degrees of inspiration for the O.T., answering to the three divisions of the sanctuary and its court: the Thorah, the Nebiim, and the Ketubhim, the Law, the Prophets, and the rest of the O.T. or Hagiographa. That Moses personally enjoyed the divine Presence, as no ordinary prophet did, is certain: Num. 12 and Deut. 34 are as to this explicit. John the Baptist (and we have our Lord's authority for it) was a prophet, and greater than a prophet. None of woman-born was greater than he; yet he neither wrote a line nor wrought a miracle. But whosoever wrote, inspiration is a fact, and admits of no varying measures. “Every scripture is God-inspired;” and God is equally true at all times and by all persons He employed to write or even speak His word. It was certainly a monstrous position of the Jewish scheme that the lowest in the scale of the inspired should be assigned to the Holy Spirit; for He, as we know, is the divine agent in man of all divine inspiration, and He does not differ from Himself.

Such then is the murky ditch whence the Jews have derived their chief theory on the books of the O.T. Such men abide still in the unbelief for which the branches were broken off from the olive tree of promise. No other origin perhaps can be assigned to the low and debasing influences, otherwise enlarged, which are in our day working to greater ungodliness among professing Christians. Can anything he more humbling to one who loves Christ and the church? How all-important to cleave to God and the word of His grace! This, and nothing else at bottom, is able to build us up (instead of leaving us a sport to every wind of doctrine), able also to give us an inheritance among all those that are sanctified. It is the truth, the Father's word, that sanctifies His children. Error, all error, defiles. What error more poisonous, next to heterodoxy on Christ's Person and work, than the dishonor of God's word, the great means of making divine truth known to us? How imminent and far reaching the peril of tampering with humanitarianism as to scripture!

Chapter 100

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 4. 1. The Human Element

Chap. 4. the Human Element

Nobody doubts that scripture without exception has a human element. In it God speaks and writes permanently to man, and therefore in human language. It were unintelligible otherwise. As the general rule Hebrew was employed in the so-called O.T., Greek in the New. We can readily perceive His wisdom in thus writing by man to man (Deut. 5:22; 9:10; 10:4), save in the most solemnly exceptional case: the law with all its variety of meaning in the language of His ancient people; the gospel with all the fullness of grace and truth in the chief tongue of the Gentiles.

But God was pleased to do much more—even to work to this end on man and in man, so that the reproach of “mechanical” is unfounded, no less than the setting up of “dynamical” is cold and insufficient. The inspired are through His goodness far beyond being His pen or even His penmen, as it has been said. Their minds and affections He uses as well as their language. There was indeed dictation in certain parts of scripture, as in His promises and His threats, His predictions, His ordinances, statutes, and judgments. Such is the latter half of Exodus, and almost the whole of Leviticus, a great part of Numbers, and not a little even of Deuteronomy, special as its character is. So there was to the Prophets, where they had to search, like their readers, what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point out, when it testified beforehand the sufferings that belonged to Christ and the glories after these; “to whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to you they ministered those things which were now reported to you through those that evangelized you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven” (1 Peter 1:11, 12).

In N. T. days, as we learn from 1 Cor. 14, men were not to speak in a tongue without the gift of interpretation. If there were no interpreter, such an one, gifted as he was, must be silent in the assembly, because all things there must be done to edifying, whereas even the man's own spirit was unfruitful. The great thing was to speak with the spirit and with the understanding also. Hence the apostle thanked God that he spoke with tongues more than any of them; but in the assembly he preferred to speak five words with his understanding that he might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. What a rebuke to the childishness which doats on the display of power! What strengthening of holy love that all might learn and be encouraged!

This of course was not inspiration, but it furnishes a principle for estimating intelligently the various forms which the Holy Spirit adopted in that work also. Nor can any right mind overlook on the one hand that where it was God's power conspicuously and unmistakably working in a tongue, it far from holds the highest place for the assembly; it was without the presence of an interpretation excluded, as having no more title in itself to be there than the performance of a miracle, a sign for unbelievers, not for the faithful. And so they and the like are classed together, the lowest in the scale of these divine gifts (1 Cor. 12). Prophesying on the other hand has the highest value; for he that exercises this gift speaks to men's edification and encouragement and consolation, he edifies the church; which the speaker in a tongue cannot do, unless there be also interpretation with it. Thus God gave the better place where His Spirit brought in the distinct element of profit for others.

Power, though plainly God's, is subordinate to spiritual blessing, order, and love.

So it is with the fruits of inspiration. All have alike divine authority. All are of the Spirit, and in their place and for their end give God's mind. Scripture says little of the mode in which He wrought in each case; but the little that is said shows that all were not favored with the same degree of intimacy in the manner, while the utmost precision was taken to affirm that “every scripture is inspired of God.” Some may exhibit simplicity, others majesty; some are models of terseness, others are rich and flowing; some are familiar with human life, its difficulties, dangers, disappointments, and snares; others are occupied with the trials of conscience and the affections God-ward. Then again some are historical (as Genesis), but with the momentous aim of giving us God's mind and principles of moral government as found nowhere else. This indeed is but a small part of its scope, which takes in the germs of almost all that God will do till time melts into eternity, as developed elsewhere in the Prophets. Others, like the Kings, are historical in presenting the conduct of His anointed rulers and of His people under law, where are episodes (rare indeed of men of faith) of kings, priests, prophets; where man's ways are stated just as they were, and God's ways thereon as no earthly historian ever gave or could. In all this the human element has a very large place; but inspiration yields God's word throughout, and thus the Bible is unique.

Take a quite different instance and a book outside Israel directly, yet devoted to solving the problem individually which applies to that people. The book of Job brings before us a godly man set on by the unseen adversary, and suddenly cast down from honor and affluence into such loss, bereavement, and personal suffering as never was allowed to fall on another, yet through causes that looked ordinary. Was God indifferent? On the contrary (and expressly to prove not only to Job but to all others who might be tried here below, that He can overrule even now the enemy for the good of His own), it was He that initiated the entire transaction by His gracious notice of the saint before Satan's envious and malicious ears. Job needed to judge himself before God as he had never yet learned, and to bow to God confidingly. The bearing of his friends does what Satan's cruel wiles wholly failed in; and Job breaks down in impatience, as his friends in misjudgment. Elihu intervenes, when they were reduced to the silence of vexation (but Job still unbroken), and proves that if the present world be as far as possible from being a reliable manifestation of divine government, God nevertheless carries on His government of souls in a most efficient and unfailing manner. And Jehovah Himself in His majesty ends the controversy by an answer to Job which humbles him in the dust, yet shows Himself very pitiful and of tender mercy; as He also puts to shame and censure the self-righteous friends (who deemed the sufferer a hypocrite), now dependent on Job's intercession who was blessed doubly more at the end than in his beginning. Here the human element abounds in the most instructive way. It was not that God approved all that Job said, still less what his friends uttered in their pride and self-complacency, to say nothing of Satan or of Job's wife. But inspiration gives the entire, perfectly to let us know where they all were, and to give us God's mind and aim from the first and to the last. Only He could have furnished the scene, where sacrificial offering had its due place, and righteous government ruled in the face of all appearances to the contrary.

The style of the history too is notable. How touchingly Jehovah is heard in Genesis adapting Himself to the childhood of mankind! “It is not good that man should be alone: I will make a help-mate for him, his counterpart.” “And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” Hear too His expostulation when they sinned, and His mercy toward

man glorying against judgment in His curse of the Serpent. Hear it with Cain when nursing the wrath which was soon to slay his holy and righteous brother, yea after that impious murder. What grief at His heart appears over the race in Gen. 6:5-7! What ready recognition of Noah's holocaust after the deluge, as He said in His heart, “I will not henceforth curse the ground any more on account of man.” How vigilant for the life of man, whoever might shed his blood! “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it,” not man merely from below! Compare also Gen. 11:6, 7; xviii. 20, 21. So too as to His people it is in Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-9 before their deliverance from Egypt.

It is not that divine majesty is lacking. The opening words of the Bible, simple, sublime, and absolutely true, proclaim the mind that inspired, no less than the words of the first day's work which drew out the admiration of the heathen Longinus. But “the philanthropy” of God, as the apostle calls it, could not be hidden from the first before the day of its full display; and this not only in His works and ways but in His word. Only the dullest of readers could fail to observe the varieties of style which pervade both Testaments. From Moses to Malachi each writer preserves his peculiarities intact; and it is precisely the same from the Gospel of Matthew to the Revelation of John. This is a fact patent, in presence of the still more wondrous fact of a mighty purpose flowing from One self-evidently divine wrought out in and by so many different agents with the most marked diversity of position and character, of time and place. It is just the human element maintained and governed by the divine; and so far is there aught inscrutable in this, when we see its admirable result in the scriptures, the believer feels that it is altogether worthy of God and gracious toward man. The difficulty indeed, now that we know it as a subsisting reality, would be to conceive any other mode emanating from Him that could so satisfy His mind and love. Thus is man morally elevated and best enlightened; thus alone is God's glory secured, while His grace has the fullest scope and exercise. We have nothing to reconcile: God has done it perfectly in scripture. It is for us to believe and be blessed, even to true and living communion with the Blesser; a blessing impossible for man save through the word and Spirit of God.

The wonder is deepened immensely when we recall the marked and radical difference of the two volumes, as we may call them, Hebrew and Greek: the one characterized by the law and the land; the other by the gospel and heaven. Yet it is the same living and true God, only now revealing Himself in the Son incarnate, and by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. And therefore it is that the N.T. acquires a human character yet more pronounced and more profound than the O.T. For not only did the Son become man, as He will never cease to be, but through His redemption the Holy Spirit deigns to dwell in the believer as He never did or could before, and acts as a Spirit of communion, not merely as One of prophecy. The assembly too or church is God's temple, His habitation in virtue of the Spirit Who dwells there. Yea, as baptized by Him it is Christ's body. Hence the human element shines as never of old, of the deepest interest and with the richest intimacy of grace, and only second in moment to the divine, because in their perfection we know and have both in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the True God and Eternal life; and this we have in Him. But we are also “members of His body “; for “He is the head of the church.”

Now the O.T. discloses a state of things under the kingdom of God wholly distinct from that of the gospel and the church, wherein Jew and Gentile cannot be, nor bond nor free, nor male and female, all being one in Christ Jesus. Whereas in the age to come Israel is to be restored and exalted, Zion to have the first dominion, and all the nations to be blessed, and the whole world set

under His reign in manifest power and glory, Who is alike Messiah, Son of man, and Jehovah. And the N.T. confirms the same blessed prospect for the earth and all its families in that day; while it alone reveals the heavenly portion of the glorified, and the church's marriage with the heavenly Bridegroom, sharing the inheritance with Him Who is the Heir of all things.

This therefore imparts unequaled ground and occasion for the human element in God's counsels and ways, as it is no less reflected in the inspired communications of the N.T. The Epistles are accordingly the fitting form of God's mind thereon; as the Christian himself is Christ's epistle as well as the apostle's, known and read of all men, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not in stone tables but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Yet the O.T. proclaimed the coming of the New, and that ruin of the chosen people through the rejection of the Messiah which made their own fall necessary, and thus opened the way for Christ's exaltation on high, the call of the Gentiles by the gospel, and the formation of the church in union with the Head by the Spirit come from heaven. Hence too the new volume of inspiration authenticates the new work going on till the Lord comes, but seals the truth of the O.T. which it replaces for the Christian and the church. Yet it assures that the Law and the Prophets are verily to be fulfilled in the day that is rapidly nearing, when Christ shall be hidden no more but appear to gather together in one all things in Him, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.

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Chapter 4—the Human Element

It is evident that a human element is in one form or another characteristic of inspiration, that it is even more “prophetic” in the New Testament than in the Old, and that it is only second in interest and importance to the divine which is there. But it is a phrase employed to insinuate liability to human error in some respect if not in all; just as men avail themselves of the Incarnation to overthrow or undermine the personal glory of Christ. Such unbelief is in both altogether unfounded and unworthy. Scripture is most explicit in guarding souls from thus dishonoring God's Son or His word; and all the more because appearances afford a handle to such as seek this occasion. For scripture, like the Lord Jesus, is a grand moral test; and those who desire not God's will can readily find reasons against both out of that will which is declared to be “enmity against God.” To impute human defect to scripture is to deny its inspiration of God.

1. As an important instance to test the unbelieving cavil, take the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel. This, pseudo-criticism will have to be a compilation of ignorance and mistake. It is often assumed that Matthew simply adopted the existing Jewish register. Gaps in such pedigrees were quite understood and made no difficulty where the line was sure, and give no real ground for the charge of discrepancy with other lists. Compare Ezra 7:1-5 with 1 Chron. 6:1-15 for the stem of Aaron. This was open to the inspiring Spirit here as elsewhere, if such were God's will. But the genealogy here has marks of design which we find only in scripture. It opens with marking out the Lord as “son of David, son of Abraham,” the beginnings of the kingdom as settled of God forever, and of the promises. Then it presents from Abraham to David fourteen generations, from David to the Babylonish migration as many, and the same from that migration to the birth of Christ.

It is universally known that three generations are omitted from the intermediate series. Nobody can with candor conceive that Matthew, whose Gospel displays pre-eminent and profound acquaintance with the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, did not perfectly well know that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah were here left out between Joram and Uzziah. An unenlightened Israelite could not be ignorant of a fact so patent. It was therefore due to purpose, in no reasonable way to oversight or confusion. It was intended to arrange the line with but twice seven in each of its three sections the beginning of the stock of promise down to the king of God's choice; the course of the kingdom till its utter evil and humiliation in Babylon; and the faithfulness of God notwithstanding in preserving the royal line to the virgin's Son according to prophecy. As therefore some links must be dropt to effect this aim, who could be so fittingly omitted as these three descendants of the foreign and murderous Athaliah? The Jews themselves may well have done this in some register of theirs, assuredly not ignorant of what they did, but with moral design. Whether this was so or not, we cannot say, as the registers were lost at the destruction of Jerusalem. But the omission is plain at this point and to the extent of leaving the intended links of fourteen generations. Whatever may have been the motive of the writer, the fact is before all; and the character of the Gospel altogether refutes the imputation that it was lack of care, intelligence,

or honesty. If he was inspired to give the genealogy, it is impossible that God could either lie or err.

But the proof of divine design appears in other features also. Think of any one on human grounds selecting such women as are here named in the earlier chain! Think of a Jew on his own motion inserting these only in his pedigree of the Messiah! Not a word about Sarah or Rebecca, of Leah or Rachel; but “Judah begot Pharez and Zarah of Thamar!” Certainly it was no accident to drag out a history so scandalous into the light of the N.T. risking the dishonor of the Messiah. And is it “after the manner of men” to blazon the fact that “Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab?” or even that “Boaz begot Obed of Ruth?” And when we come down to “David the king,” what can one say of recalling the chief shame that stained his life? “David begot Solomon of her [that had been wife] of Uriah?” An incestuous woman! a harlot! a Moabitess! an adulteress! Never was there such a choice, and in the face of so many admirable and saintly wives passed by!

No; it is incredible that any priest or scribe or lawyer ever drew up as a legal document such a genealogical roll. Further, it is not conceivable that Matthew himself would ever have thought or dared to do it without the power of the inspiring Spirit working in him to this end. It is at first sight as opposed as can be to every natural instinct. Nothing can account for it but the direct and deep purpose of God, Who was pleased to disclose to us the depths of sin abounding in Messiah's ancestry, calmly but expressly singled out, that we may see in His redemption, where sin abounded, grace surpassing yet more through Christ to God's glory. And if the Holy Spirit be the true author, and the result God's word, who and what are they who venture on their petty and unhallowed criticisms?

Again, the same spirit of unbelief objects to the genealogy that it is Joseph's line; whereas what they want is Mary's! There extreme ignorance is betrayed; for the genealogy needed to satisfy an inquiring Jew was and must be descent from Solomon. This was solely through Joseph. If our Lord had not inherited legally his title, He could not have been David's Son in the direct royal line. And this was given to Matthew, who proves Him to be beyond doubt the Heir through Solomon whose succession Jehovah confirmed with an oath: the true and expected David's Son Who was David's Lord, yet born of the virgin and so marked off from all others, Emmanuel, yet Jehovah, Who should save His people from their sins.

On the other hand, Luke's genealogy (which is quite mistakenly counted Joseph's, but can be shown demonstrably to be Mary's) was essential for the due proof that our Lord was her Son, not legally merely but really, Son of God and Son of man in one Person, and thus “Light for revelation of Gentiles, as well as glory of God's people Israel “: so all this Gospel illustrates. He was truly man: how else had He reached all mankind, or even Israel, as the Savior? He was as truly God: else He had never revealed Him adequately in His life, nor availed efficaciously in His atoning blood and death, as all the Gospels testify and above all John's. Christ was thus according to the law Joseph's heir, both naturally and supernaturally Mary's Son; above all He was the Only-begotten Son of God through eternity. This last is given by John, who furnishes no earthly genealogy any more than Mark, though for a wholly different reason: John, because He is presented as being God, and therefore far above it; Mark, as becoming Servant of God for every need of man, wherein nobody looks for a genealogy.

2. The next case we may here review is the inextricable difficulty some critics have found in comparing the Synoptic Gospels, and in particular on the supposition that the writers which

succeeded each other had before them the Gospel or Gospels that preceded. The conclusion is that they had a common oral tradition or teaching, while each was left to tell his own story with all the modification incident to human weakness where there was also veracity. Let me cite the late Dean Alford on the example in question, which seemed to him not only typical but peculiarly plain and sure from his frequent allusion to it. “The real discrepancies between our Evangelistic histories are very few, and those nearly all of one kind. They are simply the results of the entire independence of the accounts. They consist mainly in different chronological arrangements, expressed or implied. Such for instance is the transposition, before noticed, of the history of the passage into the country of the Gadarenes, which in Matt. 8:28 ff. precedes a whole course of events which in Mark 5:1 ff. and Luke 8:26 ff. it follows. Such again is the difference in position between the pair of incidents related Matt. 8:19-22, and the same pair of incidents found in Luke 9:57-60” (Gr. Testament, Prolegg. I. 12, fifth edition). He gives these up as “real discrepancies,” complaining on the one side of enemies who would thereby overthrow the truth, and on the other of the orthodox who would harmonize at the expense of common fairness and candor.

Now why is it that one who sincerely loved the Lord and His word felt driven to so helpless a dilemma? Because he failed to hold unflinchingly that “every scripture is inspired of God,” and allowed under that standard that the writers were “left, in common with others, to the guidance of their natural faculties!” But this is not divine inspiration. It does not rise above the gracious guidance of the Spirit every Christian looks or ought to look for day by day. If the Dean would confine it to “much variety,” i.e. discrepancy in points of minor consequence, he could not resist the demands of others who apply it to any or every statement, be it of the highest moment. He thus surrenders the unwavering standard which faith finds in God's inspiring “every scripture.”

Is there then any insuperable obstacle in the way of believing that the differing arrangements, being equally inspired, are to be received implicitly as God's word and absolutely true? Why impute the difference to man's weakness? Why not to God's wisdom? One can heartily sympathize with a believer who says, Here is a difficulty beyond my solution; and so I wait and search with prayer to Him Who gave it by His Spirit for my comfort and instruction. Therefore, as I am sure it is all and equally true, I hope yet if it please Him to see the apparent discrepancy cleared, perhaps in my own reading, or yet more probably through another believer. For we are members one of another; and thus the Spirit loves to help. Far be it from me to lay on God's word the blame which belongs to my own spiritual dullness. In the present case, without in the least claiming power of the Spirit to meet every hard question or to answer all possible objections, let me say that the special design of each Gospel (ascertainable by grace from its own contents) is the main key.

Matthew was led of God frequently to depart from the mere order of the facts with the deeper end of the Spirit in setting out the dispensational change from Jehovah-Messiah's presence, and His rejection by the Jews. Luke was led to act similarly in presenting the moral principles which shone in Christ's words and ways as the Holy Thing born of woman, the Son of God, Man on earth among men. Chronology was on these occasions subordinate and vanished before the weightier aim of the Holy Spirit. In ordinary cases it was preserved; and so we may observe it to be all but invariably in the Gospels of Mark and John, the divine design in them not interfering with it.

Matt. 8 opens first with the Jewish leper cured; then follows the Gentile centurion's servant healed. Yet the fact of the leper occurred before the Lord went up the mountain in chaps. v., vi., vii., as is certain from comparing Mark! The centurion's servant was not healed till He came down. Again, Peter's mother-in-law was restored to strength from fever, and of course the crowd of sick and possessed after sunset of the same sabbath, before even the leper, as the same chapter of Mark proves beyond cavil. For in his Gospel we have the day specified and the order of events kept; whereas it is not so in the part of Matthew we are examining, where we have only “and,” “and,” “and,” leaving the time open, save in the connecting vers. 16, 17 with vers. 14, 15. Further, it is quite clear from Mark 4:35—5 that the passage across the lake and the storm that obeyed the Lord's rebuke were on the evening of the day when the Lord gave utterance to the great parables of Matt. 13, and that the two demoniacs were delivered on the other side after that, Mark and Luke being inspired to dwell on the more desperate case of Legion. There is not even the semblance of discrepancy; because Matthew states the facts without any note of time, and states them in the order suited to give a display of the Lord's power in detailed testimony on earth to show the dispensational change that was imminent. Mark gives them as they happened in his ministry; which enables us to see how hasty are all who set one account against another. The design explains each and all.

It may be added that Luke 9 appears to indicate that “the pair of incidents” which illustrate Christ's position in Mark 8 occurred historically after the transfiguration given in Matthew's chap. xvii. Hence we have there no note of time in the First Gospel. This cuts off all ground for the charge of “real discrepancy.” It is unworthy of a believer that anything of the kind should issue in a wanton insult to scripture, due to one's own haste and ignorance.

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3. There is a passage which is constantly adduced by those who contend that scripture itself denies its own divine character and claims no more than diligence in using human means to arrive at authentic history. It is the well-known preface to Luke's Gospel. Does it warrant such an inference? Does it in the least contradict 2 Tim. 3:16? Is not a Gospel as fully inspired as an Epistle? Are they not alike God's word? And is not the word of God such in reality as in name?

“Forasmuch as many took in hand to set forth a narrative concerning the matters that are fully established (or, believed) among us, according as they who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word delivered to us, it seemed good to me also having accurately followed up all things from the outset to write with order to thee, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest fully know the certainty about things (or, words) in which thou wast instructed” (Luke 1:1-4).

Can there be a more striking witness of divine design and special character? This Gospel more than any other develops the ways and words of the “man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6): not the Messiah rejected by the Jews, not the Servant of man's need and specially of the gospel, nor yet as the Divine Word become flesh, the Only-begotten Son. Here pre-eminently He is the Son of man among men, and so traced up to Adam, though carefully shown to be the Son of God as no one else. Here have we the beautiful sketch, not only of the Babe just born, but of His youth; here the sabbath in the synagogue at Nazareth where He read the beginning of Isa. 61, closing the book (or, roll) exactly where it was fulfilled that day. On their expression of unbelief, He reminded them of Israel's long famine when God's mercy flowed to the Gentile widow of Zarephath, and of the Syrian cleansed when there were many lepers in Israel.

Here we read more than elsewhere of His praying; here only we find the widow of Nain whose only son He gave, raised from the bier of death, to his mother. Here is given the affecting story of the penitent woman in Simon the Pharisee's house, forgiven, saved, and in peace. Here we read of the many women blessed in various ways whom He allowed to minister to Him of their substance. Here we are told of James and John rebuked for their lack of grace toward certain Samaritans. Here is given the mission of the seventy, and the Lord's call to a joy in heavenly privilege rather than in power over the enemy. Here the Lord teaches Who is my neighbor? by the good Samaritan. Here Mary's good part is declared to anxious and bustling Martha. Here the rich fool is laid bare to rebuke such too as would make Christ a divider of inheritance. Here waiting is shown to-be beyond working for the Lord, though His own are called to both.

Here men who prate of judgments are warned to repent lest they all perish alike. Here the great supper comes before us, and man's contempt for God's inviting goodness. Here are presented the combined parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son, here too the Father's love and joy in saving. Here meet us the prudent that sacrifice the present in view of the future; here the light of the

unseen shows us Lazarus exchanging extremist misery on earth for Abraham's bosom, and the rich man his sumptuous ease for torment unspeakable. Here the repentant tax-gatherer is justified rather than the self-trusting Pharisee. Here the Son of man brings salvation to the rich Zacchæus. And here at the end the rejoicing disciples praise God for “peace in heaven and glory in the highest,” as the heavenly host at the beginning ascribed “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men.” So here only we have the touching assurance to denying Simon Peter of his restoration through the Lord's intercession, and of his subsequent confirming his brethren. Here only do we read of an angel strengthening Christ and of His bloody sweat; here of Jerusalem's daughters warned; here of the converted robber to be that day with Him in Paradise. Here lastly have we the walk of the risen Jesus to Emmaus; here the preaching, unto all the nations, of repentance and remission of sins in His name, beginning with Jerusalem; here His ascending from Bethany to heaven, while He blessed His own on earth.

Thus we have distinct facts and words indicating a marked design, and doubtless a design far deeper than Luke's mind, though God wrought in his affections and his understanding powerfully, as He did in each of the inspired men. But it was given to him in particular to trace Christ morally and in His grace to man universally. So his preface savors of that design; and he speaks of the motives that animated his writing to another fellow-disciple, instead of plunging into his task without a word about himself or Theophilus. The human element is therefore at its height here as throughout. This is exactly the special character with which God was pleased to invest the beloved physician whom He employed, (himself distinguished with others from those of circumcision in Col. 4) to write to a young Christian who was a Gentile. Hence this Gospel, though commencing with “the Jew first,” like the great apostle, breaks quickly forth out of Jewish trammels, and reveals in the Savior what God is to man in grace.

Just so is it with the preface and introduction and dedication to Theophilus with his Gentile title. Luke contrasts rather than compares his account of our Lord with the composition of others. If the “many” who undertook the work had done it with the certainty requisite, there had been no need for him. The others had drawn up their reports, in accordance with the tradition of those that from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. Nor does he censure them or their accounts. But it seemed good to him also, having accurately followed up all from the first, to write in an orderly way that Theophilus might know the certainty respecting what he was instructed in.

How he had had this full and accurate acquaintance with all this history of infinite interest and importance, he does not tell us, as none of the inspired do more than he. But he does open out his mind and heart in a way peculiar to himself, yet in perfect accord with the Gospel throughout, so as to hear the stamp of the Holy Spirit working in him unerringly to that end. “Every scripture is inspired of God “; and Luke's Gospel no less than any other portion. But if the gracious and godly motives of the writer appear in the preface in a way quite unusual; so the absurdity and superficial narrowness of the critics are evident in perverting that fact, beautifully characteristic, to lower the divine authority of this book of scripture he was employed to write. It is on the contrary an additional and powerful evidence, in passing, of God's inspiring him to do the work in a way beyond the power of man, who fails even to see it when done.

It is unfounded too, as may be remarked here, that Luke says he derived his knowledge from what was delivered by other people, as they did who undertook the accounts alluded to, which were

evidently not the Gospels we have. He like the other evangelists, wrote his Gospel with full knowledge of its exactitude. But it was not the usual way of inspired men to speak of that divine power which gave them, each and all, to communicate the truth in words which the Holy Spirit teaches. The truth shines in its own light, and needs no taper of man that it may be seen. It is light from God, though the blind may not see: only His gracious power can open their eyes.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 4. 4. The Human Element

Chapter 4. the Human Element

1 Cor. 7. has been appealed to confidently as going even farther, and disclaiming inspiration! This would be strange indeed if true, seeing the Ep. is not only one of the most important of the communications in the N.T. but is opened expressly with the writer's claim of apostolic authority. It is therefore one of those Epistles which the apostle Peter classes among the “scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15, 16). Still as it is alleged to prove that the apostles “sometimes candidly admit that they are not speaking by inspiration,” we are bound to refute the perversion. Any such inference drawn from ver. 6 is wholly baseless: “But I speak this by allowance, not by commandment.” The apostle means that he speaks here not as commanding but as conceding. No compulsion was laid on the saints as to the advice given in ver. 5; but he recommends this to them. He was inspired thus to speak. The mistake lies in the sense of the Lord's permission of him to write; whereas he means that it was not compulsory on them but for their discretion before the Lord. Compare 2 Cor. 8:8, But ver. 10 is also adduced, and quite as much misapprehended: “But to the married I enjoin, not I but the Lord, that wife be not severed from husband.” This the rationalist would make a distinction between inspired and non-inspired. Whereas the apostle is drawing attention to the fact that the Lord had Himself settled this question personally; and therefore it was not now left to His servant: see Matt. 19:6, and Mark 10:12. This is made remarkably clear in ver. 12, “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.” For the call now in question had not been ruled by the Lord, as shown in the Gospels. Therefore the apostle in the Holy Spirit determines it here by authority given to himself. But it must have been and was from the Lord, though not the Lord deciding in person. For the question is of the mixed marriages that arose as the gospel spread. Now according to the O.T. the Jew was bound to abandon the Gentile. On the contrary the apostle shows that grace now intervenes. Hence if a brother has an unbelieving wife, and she consents to dwell with him, he is not to leave her; and a woman that has an unbelieving husband who consents to dwell with her is not to leave the husband. Here then if anywhere divine authority was required in an absolute way. Is it possible then, that this could be no more than the “human element”?

The very fact that the Lord when on earth had not spoken as to this case made all the more conspicuous the authority of the apostle, who under the gospel supersedes what the law demanded of a Jewish man or woman in analogous circumstances of old. God owns no longer the feebleness or the partial dealing of the law. Grace now reigns; the truth is spoken according to God fully revealed; and the apostle, not the Lord in person, was here the spokesman, as the Epistle is the inspired communication, that we might have it livingly here, as we had the other for permanent guidance in the Gospels. Clearly then it is hardly possible there could be a more cogent disproof of the rationalistic aim than the true force of vers. 10 and 12 before us. Not only is there not the most distant thought of lowering the character and weight of what the apostle writes, in comparison with the Lord, but the passage brings out in a singularly striking manner the authority conferred on the apostle in consonance with gospel liberty to remove the shackles imposed by the law on the ancient people of God when marriage had been contracted with

Gentiles. Not the Lord when on earth, but Paul now by His authority from heaven abrogates the Jewish restrictions, which, without this apostolic word would have surely clogged the question and hindered the will of the Lord in the church. “And thus I ordain in all the assemblies” (ver. 17). What can be stronger?

But there is another case, not as to the mutual conduct of believers in the married state, nor yet about the mixed condition of those so related (a believer and unbeliever), but the virgin or unmarried in the latter half of the chapter. Here the apostle declares that he has no commandment of the Lord, but he gives his judgment, as having received mercy of Him to be faithful (ver. 25), which he winds up with the words at the close (ver. 40), “And I think that I too have God's Spirit.”

Here is equally certain the absurdity of supposing that the apostle conveys one word derogatory to his own apostolic authority. But this last case is an interesting illustration of what many have failed to see in the ways of God as to His word. Everything written therein is inspired, the latter part of the chapter just as truly as the former. But as the apostle had shown in the former that the Lord had decided the general rule of marriage, and himself the special case of mixed marriage, so here he was inspired to give for the unmarried not any commandment from the Lord, but his own judgment who was entitled assuredly to form and express one, if ever man could. Yet the intention of God in thus inspiring the apostle was to distinguish this particular case from the Lord's commandment, which in all other unrestricted matters he declares what he wrote to be (1 Cor. 14:37).

Thus we have in scripture as the rule the “Lord's commandment.” But we have here what inspiration carefully distinguishes as a distinct spiritual judgment, given as such from the faithful apostle to the faithful for profit and guidance. By divine design it was not inflexibly bound on the conscience, but set before the saints with the exceeding value of one who labored more in the gospel than any who ever lived, of one who revealed the church's nature, character, and hopes as no other, even apostle, did. What this exceptional passage is, rationalist unbelief would like to make all scripture; not the Lord's commandment, but the holy view taken of an important question for Christian practice by a most eminent servant of the Lord, and conveyed to us. Only they fail to see that inspiration admits of a godly judgment commended to our consideration, no less than of the words of worldly and wicked men, or even of Satan where no reasonable man could imagine them to be the Lord's commandment. But they are all alike inspired of God, because they are scripture, and every scripture is so inspired. Now the nature of the case decides that the record of evil counsel, or the counsel of evil beings, cannot be the Lord's commandment. So the apostle distinctly excepts from the category what he gives of his own spiritual judgment. In this instance, it must be perverse not to receive it as such. Still worse would it be to deny to be the Lord's commandment what he wrote without any such restriction. It is the exception that proves the rule. He discriminates his judgment in this particular case to be what it really is, and what God meant it to be. All else is the Lord's commandment. But even a judgment thus characterized as his is scripture; and every scripture is inspired of God.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 4. 5. The Human Element

Chap. 5. the Human Element

1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:13 are a fair sample of texts which unbelief regards as unworthy of divine inspiration. It may be of interest and profit to consider in our measure as believers, why God was pleased to give each of them a place in His word. To the neo-critics such vulgar details, wholly lacking in the theological element, seem beneath the operation of the Holy Spirit for permanent use.

It will be observed that they both are found in the Pastoral Epistles, and in the two addressed by the apostle to the fellow-servant who had his most intimate affection. The Epistle to Titus contains no such tender or familiar communications. This was just as it should be. To Philemon there is again a shade of difference, which is of exquisite moral beauty in its place. All are of the utmost value for that instruction or training in righteousness which God purposed to give by these scriptures. In various forms they each illustrate the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in man, and even in his body now made a member of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15) and a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in him which he has from God. For he is not his own, but bought with a price, and so is to glorify God in his body. This by the way, seeming strange and low in natural or philosophic eyes, led to early tampering with the text by the addition, “and in your spirit, which are God's.” But there is no doubt of the genuine text amply attested by the best MSS. and most of the ancient versions, &c. As little should we doubt the general doctrine of the believer's body, as now claimed for God (Rom. 6:12, 13, 19; 12:1; 2 Cor. 4:7, 10, 11; Phil. 1:20). It was no peculiarity of the heathen or Gnostics to pretend holiness in spirit, while giving license to the body. Scripture leaves no loophole for such antinomianism. The body is for the Lord, and therein dwells the Holy Spirit. God is wise. Man cannot improve scripture, but injures it by his supplements or corrections.

Now it is the gift, the Pentecostal gift, of the Spirit which gives its distinctive character to N.T. inspiration. This is displayed in the Epistles following up the infinite fact of the Son of God revealing the Father, and accomplishing redemption, sending out the gospel, and building the church as the Gospels tell. It would indeed have been extraordinary if the human element had not been given a new and far richer place than ever, just when God was making Himself fully known and had effected that work in which He is perfectly glorified. Christ is the key to both and the perfect manifestation of both; which indeed could not be, had He not been as verily God as man, and so manifested.

Take the Epistle to the Romans. There the apostle elaborately develops God's righteousness in the face of man's proved unrighteousness; and the holy practice to which the Christian is called. Yet from this immense scope of divine truth and grace the last chapter turns to the most touching salutations of love with an individuality of cordial interest in each beyond parallel; and the more striking because the Epistle is written to all the saints in the metropolis of the world, which he had not as yet visited. Yet there his heart went out into characteristic details of their service, many of them lowly men and women, honored and loved for Christ's name by him who was alike His

greatest servant and greatest sufferer. Was not this truly divine? Yet where was the human element more conspicuous? It is equally God's word, in which one has well said, Nothing is too great for man, nothing too small for God. As He can afford, so He effectually works in Christ and by His Spirit.

It is not otherwise in the confidential letters the apostle sent to his true and beloved child in faith. The weightiest injunction is in the First Epistle laid on Timothy; not only as to godly order but also fundamental truth, but along with directions for befitting decision in his public position, tender solicitude for his bodily health and frequent illnesses. So in the still more solemn dangers which the Second contemplates, with the apostle's speedy departure. Timothy's affectionate care in what the apostle wanted at that time is fully counted on, as love ever does. Such episodes would be doubtless entirely out of place in a Bishop's Charge or a Pope's Encyclical; but they admirably bring out the wholly different atmosphere of scripture, and in particular of the N.T. There the Holy Spirit working in man delights in blending zeal for the eternal principles of God's nature and glory in the gospel, and in the church as the witness of His truth, with consideration for an earnest man of God, lest he should yield overmuch to abstemious scruple and forego that liberty in the use of the creature which his bodily well-being required. There, even when the imminent and hopeless ruin of the Christian profession was intimated along with the holy and unfailing safeguards for the most difficult times, the same Spirit does not fail to show that His entering into the least details of life are perfectly compatible with the solemn last words of the great apostle. Do we not find the same principle in the dying charge of the Savior Himself (John 19:27)?

Here are the passages. “No longer be a water-drinker, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent infirmities” (1 Tim. 5:23). “The cloak, which I left behind in Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13).

In the first case divine wisdom overrules the morbid tendency of a truly devoted servant. The body is for the Lord, as the Lord is for the body. Hence as impurity is evil, so is asceticism alien, though flesh may glory in the latter, as it might indulge in the former. Christ alone maintains both holiness and liberty; and the apostle was here inspired so to exhort Timothy. A Rabbi, a theologian, might regard such a reference beneath the dignity of a divine mandate for all time. But thus they only betray the empty arrogance of the earthen vessels. Here we have the treasure in it. Here we own the condescension of God's love, as we do the majesty of His truth and the purity of His ways, in the same context, pressed by the awe-enforcing words, “I charge in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels that thou keep these things without prejudice, doing nothing according to prepossession” (ver. 21).

In the second case, what a lesson for us to read, at such a crisis of the apostle's life, and in delivering his final message in the Spirit to the same cherished fellow-laborer in tones of the deepest gravity, and on truth meant to be the stay of the godly when seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived! He was again a prisoner, already being poured out, and the time of his release come, looking for the crown of righteousness, which the Lord would render to him, and not to him only but also to all who love His appearing. He bids Timothy use diligence to come to him quickly, but withal to bring with him the cloak left with Carpus in Troas and again to come before winter (ver. 21). Is not this a pathetic glimpse why he wished “the cloak?” God was not unmindful of his need nor of ours. Whether he had no means to procure a new one, or he

judged it of God rather to request the old one, have we nothing to learn? Nor are “the books” without guidance to us. I do not believe he meant either “the sacred letters” of the O.T. (chap. 3:15), nor “scripture” generally (ver. 16), but his “books” of an ordinary kind. The apostle was no fanatic, but as far as possible from it, as this testifies, particularly at such a moment. “The parchments” he wished especially. They were wanted for more permanent use, and seem to have been not yet written on. Did he desire them for copying his Epistles, now that he had his departure in immediate view? Oh! the grace of the Lord in giving what is here conveyed, not as a private note but in an Epistle of his, which is among those which the apostle Peter pronounces to be “scriptures.” It is the human element of God's word.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 4. 6. The Human Element

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We may now compare the Second Epistle of Peter with that of Jude. For erudite ignorance loves to set one against the other, lowering one if not both, and denying God's inspiration of the two in any adequate sense. In comparatively early days unbelief worked in the active minds of Origen, Eusebius of Cæsarea, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and many more. Nor was this surprising; as they were no less daring in their speculations on Christ's person, and as to revelation generally. It is easy to fee] difficulties and suggest doubts. It needs distrust in self and faith in God to await His solving the one and dispelling the other, as far as it may seem good. In every case the positive weight of revealed truth is so great in all the disputed Epistles in the N. T., as against not only the early spurious writings but the best remains of the post-apostolic writers, that to discredit the former is as inexcusable as to accept the latter. Circumstances might be adverse, and influence carry away souls, for a season in this place or that. But as those writings which compose the N. T. were in the earliest days received as divinely inspired without any known question, so even in face of a deeply fallen and degenerating state the objections and reasonings of incredulity passed away into their own nothingness. Individuals now and then revived these, until the rage of free-thinking in modern days emboldened men far and wide to flatter themselves that faith in revelation is well-nigh perished from the earth. How little they are aware that such are the precursors of that dark and destructive hour which awaits Christendom when the apostasy shall come and the man of sin be revealed! Yet this the apostle Paul was given to reveal in one of his earliest Epistles. He furnished the light of God: they spread the darkness of the pit, before that day.

The fact is that both these Epistles carry the indelible marks of divine inspiration. We cannot doubt that their writers were familiar one with another, and both with the O. T. as well as the Christian revelation. The facts and the truths of which these Epistles are full were habitually before their souls till the Holy Spirit saw fit to prompt their communication in this permanent form. No considerate believer can wonder that there is not a little common ground of solemn warning and urgent importance. But it is of the deepest interest to trace that difference of spiritual design which God alone ever did or could effectuate. This rationalism quite fails to discern. Yet the proofs of it are intrinsic and even plain, irresistible too in the measure of our faith. So it ought to be in a moral book like the Bible, where mathematical demonstration would be not only absurd and impossible but destructive of its character and aim. No doubt the two Epistles confirm each other, both being perfectly true and occasionally touching the same facts and truth. But they were given of God for the more momentous task of bringing out His mind in distinct ways of the utmost gravity, which one only, perfect for its own purpose, could not have done.

Both Epistles treat of the growing ruin of Christendom, Peter's as a question of unrighteousness to God, Jude's of departure from His grace.

We may readily see that Peter's two Epistles are characterized by the place given to God's moral government the first chiefly with the believer, redeemed and begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and passing through the wilderness world as a stranger and sojourner, suffering for righteousness' sake and Christ's name; the second, rather on the difficulties created by the rebellious wickedness not only of the world, but of those who bore the Lord's name falsely and in unrighteousness, with God's judgment impending, sure, and everlasting.

Jude treats of the narrower scene but profounder evil of ungodly men who crept in privily, turning the grace of our God, and denying the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is more special apostasy, not general unrighteousness as with Peter, but evidently and particularly found in the Christian profession.

Hence in his Second Epistle Peter does not say more of the false teachers than their denying the Master that bought them. They reject the universal title which the Sovereign Master has by purchase. Accordingly, as the saints received like precious faith with the apostles through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and were exhorted to add the becoming moral qualities, the false teachers are warned of God's righteous and unslumbering judgment. And the examples chosen are viewed in this light. God spared not angels when they “sinned,” nor the old world when the deluge came on the “ungodly,” though He preserved Noah an eighth person, a preacher of “righteousness.” And so afterward He reduced Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, rescuing Lot “a righteous” man; as subsequently Balaam is dwelt largely on who loved “unrighteousness' wages.” In chap. iii., where Peter predicts the mockers at the end of the days, he vividly sets out the day of the Lord and the total dissolution of all nature on which such men build, and God's bringing in new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth “righteousness.”

Jude on the other hand draws attention to the fact that the Lord, having saved a people out of Egypt's land, in the second place destroyed those that believed not. Of this Peter did not speak but Jude, who treats of departure from grace, not of simple opposition to righteousness. Thence when he speaks of angels, it is of those that kept not their own first state. They were apostates. And when we hear next of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is as, in like manner with them, going away after other flesh. Michael the archangel is specified by Jude as in contrast with railing. So a far fuller picture of Christian apostasy is given in ver. 14, Cain and Korah as well as Balaam. In Korah's gainsaying, where apostasy is clear, they are to perish. Again, we have Enoch's prophecy here only on the terrible end; for that holy man in the vision saw the Lord coming judicially. And Jude shows us Him that is able to set the saints exulting and blameless before His glory: the special hope, and not the general blessedness of which Peter spoke so appropriately.

It would be no difficult thing to draw up a detailed comparison of the minute verbal proofs of the different design which pervades the two Epistles. But this would afford evidence interesting chiefly to the student, and would be quite in place in an exegetic comment of that kind. The aim here is simply to furnish proof, overlooked by those who boast much of erudition, but quite accessible to every believer, that there is not the smallest ground for the cavil of Peter borrowing from Jude, or Jude from Peter. On the contrary there is incontestible certainty from their own words, that the Holy Spirit gave each of them his own distinctive line, both Epistles contributing their very solemn and united testimony, and each in its differences of purpose and aspect of the highest value, to

give us the complete truth of God. The more salient features are ample for what is now in hand; the details, if honestly and intelligently followed up, will furnish accumulative confirmation.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 4. 7. The Human Element

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7. WE may conclude this chapter with a brief examination of the Second and Third Epistles of John. Many years ago I remember Cardinal Wiseman (then Rector of the English College in Rome) in his zeal for Romanism, challenging the Christian as to these two Epistles. How demonstrate from internal facts their inspiration? Why could they not have been written by a very holy and pious man, without any aid whatsoever from inspiration?

Thus it is that the Romanist takes ground similar in principle to the infidel. In his anxiety to exalt the claims of his own sect, which he assumes to be God's church, he denies the intrinsic self-evidencing power of the scripture. The infidel indeed rejects it absolutely, and denies more than man in the case; the Romanist regards the church as the voucher for the written word, so that scripture is thus subordinated to ecclesiastical authority.

For the essence of faith is that one believes God's testimony, because it is He that speaks or writes. If one requires somebody else as his warrant in order to believe His word, this is in effect to believe that other warrant, rather than to believe God. Yea, it is to frustrate the very aim and the desired end of faith; for this is to put the soul by believing His word into immediate relationship with God. It is true that He reveals Himself in Christ; but does this hinder? On the contrary He above all promotes and effects perfectly that immediateness of association with God, being God and man in one person. He Whom God sent speaketh the words of God. Through Him, says 1 Peter 1:21, we believe in God that raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, so that our faith and hope are Godward. If Christ were not God, there would be interposed a barrier to keep the soul away from God; but as the image of the invisible God, and the Only-begotten Son, He shows us not only God in His nature but the Father in the richest gift of His love and in the deepest nearness of His relationship, that we through Him dead and risen may know His Father our Father, and His God our God.

“Never man spake like this man,” said those whom His enemies sent to apprehend Him (John vii. 46). Yet what can be more striking than His own testimony to the scriptures for which men claim the validating or sealing authority of the church? “How can ye believe, receiving as ye do glory one of another, and seek not the glory that is from the only God? Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for about me he wrote. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words” (John 5:44-47)? Thus, where the Lord is enumerating the witnesses to the Jews why they should believe on Him, He gives pointedly the highest place, over spoken words, to the written word as having a permanence from God peculiar to itself. Not to believe scripture is virtually that God did not and could not make it bind the conscience to receive it as His without the church's authority to stamp it. The church is bound to be a witness and keeper of God's word, and all the more because blessed beyond measure through it; but to set up to be its necessary and authoritative warrant is shameless arrogance and unbelieving profanity.

How then do these two short Epistles carry in their own contents the evidence of God, as they do of “the beloved disciple?” They are a pair, like those to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Yet have they the genuine mark of originality, in form and wisdom from above, in object and execution. They both insist solemnly on the truth, on love, on obedience; and this because Christ is all, alike to writer, readers, and the saints. The glory of the Father and the Son, the confession of Jesus Christ coming in flesh, is even more peremptorily urged in the Second Epistle than in the Third. Yet the Second is addressed to an elect lady and to her children, the Third to Gaius the beloved. For in the former case the foundation was at stake; in the latter no such peril existed but a turbulent self-seeking man, who opposed the free service of Christ in the truth, whereas Gaius is exhorted to go on as he had begun in its gracious support.

It is well known what doubt exists among the learned and from early days till the present to whom the Second was written. And no wonder. God no more meant us to know the name of the lady here than of the sinful woman in Luke 7 on which so much foolish conjecture has been spent. It is as plain Greek as could be written for “an elect lady,” whom with her children the apostle loved in truth. But she was not meant to be named; while the solemn duty laid on any was meant to be perpetuated whenever the like danger arose. Thus, while the injured glory of Christ claimed this service from the apostle, under the touching and lowly title of “the elder,” while a lady and her children were the object of the Holy Spirit's inspired injunction (to cut off all plea that they were surely to be spared this painful token of loyalty to Christ), the written word expressly omitted to register the name in such a distressing case and paramount obligation. It is not “the” but “an elect lady.”

His experience, however, must be small, if not familiar with the artifices of heterodoxy in taking advantage of a woman and of young persons. Let us not forget that even those branded as antichrists once seemed as fair and zealous as others. One of the most hideous in our own age began his career as a clergyman with earnest evangelicalism and conversion work in numerous souls. If he called on a Christian household which used to honor him and his work, after that the deadly error betrayed itself, how natural for him to enter on the old terms, and for them to welcome one of whom personally they knew only good. “I am but a woman, not a brother, still less an elder: who am I to sit in judgment on a dear servant of God? And my children so young in the faith, are they to refuse his kindly visit? Surely we do no wrong in showing love, as the poor brother has had to bear such fearful censure from the brethren.” No! the elder was inspired of God to cut off any such excuses of weakness, reminding the lady and her children of the infinite worth of Christ, and causing them to wax valiant in fight, as truth and love pointed, and in no way yielding to the enemy. “If any one cometh unto you and bringeth not this doctrine [the truth of Christ's person], receive him not into the house, and greet him not; for he that greeteth him partaketh in his wicked works.”

Wholly different in circumstances, the Third Epistle rests on the same basis of Christ. It is as in the Second, life eternal shown in the walk of truth, love, and obedience. Gains was prospering in his soul; so that “the elder” wishes him to prosper, not surely “above” but “about all things,” and be in health too, for in such a case it would not be misused. In the work and among the workmen of the Lord disappointments occur. Gaius persevered in loving aid, notwithstanding difficulties and trials. “The elder” rejoiced exceedingly in the testimony borne, not only to his walking truthfully in the truth he knew, but to his faithful identification in love with the laboring brethren, even when

strangers, setting them forward on their way worthily of God; and all the more because for the Name they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentile sort. Nay, the apostle went so far as to say emphatically, “We therefore ought to receive [or, welcome] such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.” What grace on the apostle's part!

Now the nice propriety here is as manifest as in the preceding Epistle. On the one hand, a woman, indeed we might say “a lady” in particular, needs to watch against what her affections might prompt, and what (she thought) might be expected of her. Looking to Christ would guard and guide her, where she had adequate testimony that there wrought the deceiver and the antichrist. In and for His name to shut the door would make the house a fort impregnable for her and her children. Did they not owe supreme allegiance to Him? On the other hand a man is not so lively in his affections and therefore less exposed to yielding thereby; he is apt to confide in his judgment, and liable to shut up his bowels of compassion if he fears being imposed on. But Gaius, being a good man, persevered in love as he walked in truth, and thus to go on is far more than to begin warmly. Nor must he be cowed by the imperious party-spirited surliness of one in the assembly, like Diotrephes, who loved the first place, prated with wicked words against such as the apostle, and set himself violently against the brethren that went about, carrying Christ's name everywhere. This was heart-breaking enough; but let him think of one that did good like Demetrius, testified to by all and by the truth itself; even as John did, whom Gaius knew to give a true witness.

In these two Epistles then we have an admirable provision of inspired wisdom for individual guidance in “the last time “; as in the First Epistle God gave us the fullest unfolding of Christ in His person especially, but also in His work, when antichrists abound. Where such an evil dares to enter, even a lady and her children are called to act in the most decided manner, lest they might be entrapped into misprision of treason. They are therefore warned not to receive even into a house him that brought not the doctrine of Christ, no matter how fair appearances might be. Christ admits of no compromise; a lady and her children must not shirk their responsibility. But the beloved Gaius is by name exhorted to receive those who did good in Christ's name. Here no delicacy need preserve silence as to his person. As he was doing faithfully and in love, let him not grow weary, but be all the more zealous in gracious consideration of Christ's messengers. He was to imitate not what is evil, glaring as it might be in Diotrephes, but what was good; and this, as he knew it to be of God, he might find in Demetrius. It is well then not to be in despair but to be in our watch-tower, when we prove how many deceivers are (not entered, but) “gone out into the world.” But let us rejoice that in the darkest time we are cheered by the love and fidelity of a Gaius and a Demetrius; and as they have apostolic sanction, so also then especially are “the friends” to greet and be greeted. In short we have instruction for a time of exceeding and increasing danger, whom to receive, and whom to refuse. It is invaluable and imperative to him.

To the Cardinal all this might seem wild and uncanonical. He ask if this (and much more of which we need not speak) might not be within the scope of a pious and holy man. Divine authority is nil to him without the church's. Alas! ritualism blinds almost equally with rationalism, as both stand opposed to the truth that is according to godliness. But these Epistles strikingly attest, not the absence of the human element, but the power of divine inspiration adapting the truth, with apostolic sanction and a prophetic insight wholly beyond the creature, to the exigencies of each case, both of great moment, one of them fundamental.

Chapter 107

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5.0 Divine Design—Introduction

Divine Design-Introduction

Among the marks of God's word, none is more impressive or important than the design which the Holy Spirit was pleased to stamp indelibly on the various books individually and on the entire collection as a whole; and this not only on the O.T. and the N. T. separately, but on both as forming what we, Christians at least, call the Bible. There are faults of transcription in the Hebrew as in the Greek. There are shortcomings and errors of translation in ancient as in modern versions. There are yet more abundantly mistakes in the commentaries from the earliest extant down to our own day. But all these flaws together, though some may conceal the witness of a detail, cannot deface to the instructed eye of the believer (save in a very small degree) the exquisite beauty of the Scriptures, “Forever singing as they shine, The hand that made us is divine.” And this is as much above the orbs of the sky, of which one of our own poets used the words, as what is material sinks below the expression of God's word, mind, gracious affections, and glorious purposes, for His children and His people, and all the nations too, which find their center, their aim, and their accomplishment in Christ the Lord of all and the Son of His love.

That unbelief fails to hear God in His word goes without saying. So Scripture itself testifies; and such is its experience since it was written and diffused in every age, land, and tongue. Nor could it be otherwise with man fallen into alienation from God as a race. “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God,” says the apostle to the Romans (Ro. 8:7). The world by wisdom knew not God,” writes he to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:21). Who can wonder when he reads the overwhelming words to the Ephesians (Eph. 2:1-3)? “And you, being dead in your offenses and sins, in which ye (Gentiles) walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we (Jews) all too had once our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.” “And you, being once alienated and enemies in mind by your wicked works,” writes he to the Colossians (Col. 1:21). There is therefore innate repugnance to God and His word in every child of Adam. Hence the absolute necessity of being born anew, as our Lord assured Nicodemus (John 3:3-5): “Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And if they believed not, when He told them the earthly things, how would they believe if He were to tell them the heavenly things? For God's kingdom embraces both, Christ being the Heir of all things, already set on high, as He will soon be manifested Head over them all.

But all this, and, yet more, the ground of it in His personal glory and in the efficacious work of reconciliation through His death, are unknown to and scorned by the haughty unbelief of man. This sees in the scripture (say of the Pentateuch, the very foundation of the O. T. and no less maintained as divine in the N. T.) only a patch-work of antique human legends which do not even agree, if not an imposture, or at least a romance written as a whole in Samuel's or even Josiah's day if not later still. But so abominable a fraud is the baseless invention of old English Deists,

burnished up to date by the mischievous ingenuity and the ponderous learning of their modern successors, chiefly in Germany and Holland, to say nothing of their English speaking disciples.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they and have done abominable iniquity; there is none that doeth good. God looked down from the heavens upon the sons of man to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back; they are together become corrupt; there is none that doeth good, not even one” (Psa. 53:1-3). So it is that those self-styled “higher” but really skeptical critics treat His word. They exclude God from the authorship of the Scriptures. Not one of them honestly accepts the Lord's ruling by the apostle Paul (2 Tim. 3:16): “every scripture is God-inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness.” It is a sentence expressly affirming divine inspiration, not for the writers only but of every whit, even to be written, as Scripture; as he had already spoken of the O. T. in ver. 15, distinguished by a different term so as to lend the greater emphasis, and to take in every part of what grace was supplying as God's latest communication. Of course the word that Timothy knew applies to what was written of old; for the Scriptures, like other boons from God, are committed to the care of His own, ever liable to fail in keeping intact, and duly understanding, and conveying to others the holy deposit. To remove such human intrusions is the legitimate function of the critic; so that the reader may have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In no other book but the Bible is this found; no, nor in all others put together.

Now the neo-critics start with the preliminary lie that the Scriptures are in no real sense the word of God. They hence deprive themselves and their followers of all confidence in what is written, where no question arises of its primitive text. As they do not truly believe in God's inspiring any Scripture, so still less if possible do they look for His revelation of Himself in it, either in its wondrous unity, or in each part consistently and perfectly contributing to that grand end; and this throughout the varied dealings of God with man before sin came in, and afterward, when there was neither the law of God, nor the government of man ordained by Him; when the promises to the fathers were given, and when the law was given by Moses to their sons; when the Levitical system was introduced, and the shadows of the coming good things accompanied it; when the judges followed till Samuel, and kings were set up; when the prophets became more distinct and pronounced, developing from God what Moses predicted more generally from the first judgment of Israel, then of Judah's idolatrous departure and every other from Jehovah, “till there was no remedy;” and times of the Gentiles began by His people becoming Lo-ammi (not-my-people), and the world-power given meanwhile to the Four Empires. Under the Fourth or Roman was sent the Messiah, presented too with every evidence of grace, truth, and power of God in humiliation, but for this very reason rejected by all, even and worst of all by the Jewish remnant which had returned under the Second empire from captivity in Babylon. Thus was fulfilled the word of the prophets, both in God found by Gentiles that sought Him not, and in the Jews losing their place for the time as a rebellious people to whom He had spread out His hands all the day. Compare Isa. 65:1, 2, with Rom. 10:20, 21.

Thus the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the Only-begotten Son of God, brought out not only the lost and evil state of man, but that of the Jews more guilty still. For in the cross, which was the deepest proof of their combined iniquity, was accomplished fully by Christ the will of God, in virtue of which we have been and are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb.

10:10). The gospel of God's grace to all mankind, and the church (the body of Christ in the baptism of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven), are the blessed consequences which required that new revelation of God commonly called the New Testament. This fully confirms the O.T. in every respect as divine, fulfilling it notably in prophecies of Messiah's person, God and man; His unique walk, mission, and service; His death too, not only through man's hatred but in God's atoning grace; His resurrection and ascension; and His return to raise the dead, to restore the kingdom to Israel, to bless the earth and all the nations, having put down the higher or spiritual powers of evil.

But the N. T., besides sealing the truth of the O. T., reveals for the Christian and the church the mysteries of the kingdom, showing a quite different state of things from the old, and yet more the mysteries with regard to the church, wholly incompatible with Israel's position either in the past or in the future. This therefore only comes into actuality and view when that people as a whole had for a while forfeited its privileges by adding the cross of Christ to its idolatry. Indeed man's responsibility as under law, and still more widely God's government, run through the O. T., though there is also prophetic testimony to His purpose in Christ.

But the New Testament gives us the Son of God come, a man yet the True God and Eternal Life. This brings in the greatest change. It is no longer as in the O. T. God hidden and dwelling in the thick darkness, but God manifested in Him, Who is Son as none else is or can be, the Word become flesh. His death, as sacrifice for sin, goes farther still: not simply God in man tabernacling among men, full of grace and truth, but the veil rent, sin judged in the cross, and the man, at least believing man, brought to God, all the offenses forgiven, himself once and completely purged so as to have no more conscience of sins, and God's Spirit thereon abiding in him forever. Such is the Christian; nor is it all the privilege which might be said. This gives a nearer, a more intimate, character to the N. T. generally; but divine authority belongs equally to both O. and N. Its authority is because God speaks in both through His instruments. If we do not hear Him, we have no living faith. A tract or a sermon, a parent or a preacher, may be the means of presenting the truth to my soul; but if I have not believed God, my faith is human and worthless. We are thus born of God, receiving Christ, the object and spirit of the word, as the apostle says in 2 Cor. 3:17: “Now the Lord is the spirit” (referring to ver. 6, not the letter but the spirit of the O. T.).

When men rest on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, they receive the Holy Spirit Who guides into all the truth. Doubtless we only know in part; yet even spiritual babes (1 John 2) are assured that they know all things. Ere long it is learned that each book (remembering that such as the two of Samuel, and their continuation, the Kings, &c. go together), has its own design permeating it, whether in O. T. or in N. Of this its own contents must be the evidence, as will by grace be presented severally ere long. To draw it out fully would demand many large volumes doubtless, even if one had spiritual ability for so serious and difficult a task. Here but a small space can devoted to the purpose. This means that no more can be attempted at present than a cursory view of the various writings which compose the Bible. Such a sketch however involves the advantage that the proofs which scripture furnishes in each case will stand forth free from those clouds of commentary which so often overload and disguise the text.

There is thus no more striking characteristic of Scripture than the design God has imprinted on its various books. Old or New Testament makes no difference. The poetic portion attests it no less than the prose, the prophetic as clearly as the historical. It is quite likely that the various writers

may have been unconscious of any intention on their part to effect such a result. All the more instructive and sure is it that one animating and directing Author presided over each several part, imparting a special character to it, and at the same time causing all to contribute to the common purpose of revealing His counsels of glory and His ways of grace, while fully making known the weakness or the wickedness of the creature in resisting His will and doing its own. For that such is the fact, not obviously on the surface but indelibly and deeply underlying the entire body of the Scriptures, is the inevitable conviction produced on the Christian by the careful examination of the Bible as a whole and by the intelligent comparison of its component parts.

Evidence to appear consecutively and in due time will be set before the reader, unstrained, clear, and abundant, that the Scriptures are ruled from first to last by a moral purpose which discloses the wisdom and goodness of God rising above the failure of the creature, and especially man's sin giving occasion to the resources and the triumph of His grace in Christ for heaven and earth, time and eternity, for man, Israel, the saints of old, the church, and the nations. Who but God could have intimated so vast and far reaching an intention from the first writing that ushers in all the books that follow through many generations, not only those composed in Hebrew (with Aramaic in a small degree), but such as after a marked interval appeared in Greek, revealing in that one generation of the N. T. the Son of God come, the gospel and the church, the latest book being the suited answer to the earliest and manifestly closing the complete compass of inspiration?

That in the Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses we have the firm and ample foundation of the O.T. can be disputed by no reader subject to the truth. They are called the Torah or Law, as this is the institution of God given so fully in Exodus and Leviticus, with supplements drawn out by the journeys of Numbers, and the moral rehearsal of Deuteronomy in view of the entrance into the land of Canaan across the Jordan.

The Prophets, early and later, as the Jews distinguished the books that succeed as well as the openly predictive books to which we give that name, attest the growing departure from the law, and hold out the bright vision of Messiah's Kingdom, not only for the restored people of Israel but for all the nations of the earth. Then the hosts of the high ones shall be punished on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth. Then Jehovah shall be exalted, and the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Then the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The Psalms constitute the third division, the leading portion (as in the other sections) giving its title to various books of an emotional and ethic character. Here too we find a class of writings, which bear witness quite as strongly as the others to the grand design of God in His word: the ruin of the first man; the blessedness of the Second, even for all those of the ruined race that put their trust in Him (Psa. 2:12). In the Prophets we have formal witness indeed to a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, which shall supersede that of the law; when the promises to the fathers shall be made good in the true Seed.

It would be idle to impute to the N. T. in the least degree any imitation of the O. T. The fresh revelation has the distinctive power of a divine testimony to the Son of God, the Man Christ Jesus, manifested here below and ascended to heaven after accomplishing His great sacrificial work for man to God's glory. Yet one cannot fail, when attention is drawn to the new collection as compared with the old, to find the unmistakable proofs of a common plan, not named by a single writer, but

evident when we have all before us. For there is a similar basis of fact historically presented: not the first but the Last Adam with the new creation dependent on Him, and associated with its Head; and instead of the Law (given alike on a day of Pentecost), the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven to abide forever. Here only is the “perfection,” which was not possible by the law, though this made its need felt and was its shadow or even its foreshadow.

Then, after the Gospels and the Acts, we have the Epistles, which answer and more than answer to the Ketubhim or “writings” of the O.T., and unfold the grace and truth in Christ and His work and offices, with the blessed hope, all bearing on the heart and walk and worship of the saints.

Finally there is the one wondrous book of the Apocalypse preceded by not a little in the Gospels and Epistles as in the analogy of the O.T. Therein all the predictive revelations of Scripture are coordinated and completed, not only till the establishment of the displayed kingdom of the Lord Jesus filling the heavens and the earth to God's glory, but right on to the endless issues of all in eternity, when evil is finally and forever judged, and the new heavens and earth are come, wherein righteousness, instead of ruling by power, can and does dwell unbroken and absolutely perfect, God being all in all.

Thus is there, where much else differs, a very distinct correspondency in the two volumes, the Old and the New, without the least effort after it by any writer in either volume. What could more indicate without a cloud one Divine mind of infinite purity and goodness, Light and Love, communicating in the Scriptures, as He will accomplish in fact, those purposes worthy of Himself and of His Son, full of blessing for all who believe, but of everlasting judgment to those that love Him not and despise His word?

Chapter 108

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 1. Divine Design—Genesis

Divine Design.—1. Genesis

Let us now test the reality of distinct purpose on God's part attributed to His word, beginning with the earliest book of Scripture.

Genesis opens with the creation, distinguishing the beginning when man was not nor our environment of nature, and intimating a state of convulsion for the earth at least, which followed the original act and preceded its formation for the human race (Gen. 1:1, 2). The week is then detailed which ushers in Adam, God's (Elohim's) work and rest (Gen. 1:3-2:3).

The true commencement of chap. 2 is in ver. 4, where the name of Jehovah Elohim, or the LORD God, necessarily appears as in chap. 3 also. For the design was to identify Elohim, the Creator, with Jehovah, the moral Governor, Who established man, not as a living soul only, but by His in-breathing into him only in immediate relationship with Himself, and set in a paradise planted for him, yet with moral responsibility put to the proof and provision for life if obedient, but if disobedient with death the penalty. Nor this only, but man's relation to his wife, builded out of himself to be his intimate counterpart and so named by himself, is here; as he also gave names to the subject creation of earth, bird, and beast.

Chap. 3 shows how man fell through the woman by the wiles of a mysterious foe who availed himself of the serpent as medium, and so acquired to the end the title of “the old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan” (Rev. 20:2). The design here required the same divine designation as in the chapter before, the form of which is all the more apparent from the omission of Jehovah by the serpent and by the woman parleying with the tempter (1-5). But the solemn sentence of death was not passed on the head of the race, now knowing good and evil, without a previous curse on the serpent, wherein was intimated the blessed assurance of the woman's Seed, bruised in heel, to bruise the enemy's head. Coats of skins were given to the guilty pair, who knew themselves not the less naked for their fig-leaf aprons. The divine covering for sinners had its source in death.

Thereon follows the essential difference between Adam's sons in chap. 4. Abel by faith brought a sacrifice. Cain, hard and unbelieving, brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, and, incensed at Jehovah's acceptance of Abel and his offering, slew his righteous brother. What a picture of man's worship; as the close of the chapter is of his world with art and science and pleasures of life to hide that he is an outcast, a vain substitute for paradise! Here accordingly Jehovah's name appears with strict propriety; the exceptional case in vers. 25 only confirms it, as Eve's natural expression, disappointed in her spiritual thought of ver. 1. Yet is Seth the appointed seed that succeeds the slain Abel, and men call on Jehovah's name: so it will be, as it was.

In chap. 5 is a review of the race down to Noah and his offering. Adam and his sons, long as they might live, died at length. For if Elohim created and made, death was through sin; but Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him. It was not simple government, but Elohim known and acting according to His nature. On the other hand Jehovah as properly is used in ver. 29

where His moral dealing is in view. Of all those, two men are divine witnesses, respectively of heavenly grace, and of earthly judgment yet with mercy glorying against it.

Then chap. 6:1-8 proceeds with righteous judgment under Jehovah's name, which is no way inconsistent with “the sons of God” in 2 and 4, as in Job a regular designation; whereas Elohim alone is found in 9-22. The expression is as accurate as the design is evident. Relationship was violated; and nature was corrupted; but if judgment must ensue, the Creator duly perpetuates the creature.

So in chap. 7 Jehovah has respect for Noah and his house too, enjoining clean beasts and birds by sevens, not two as in His name of Elohim; and Noah obeyed in both (5, 9). Oh, the blindness of pseudo-critics, who fancy inconsistency, when the divine wisdom was as plain in His acts, as His design is in His word! What ignorance and folly to account for all this by the imaginary patchwork of tradition! See also the absurdity of an Elohist and a Jehovist in the same ver. 16, where the two motives of divine action meet in Noah subject and kept safe. Truly “all have not faith:” woe to those who believe not! particularly if they profess the Lord's name,

Chap. 8 conversely has Elohim only in 1-9, but in 20-22 Jehovah no less instructively. This instruction pseudo-criticism denies and destroys as far as it can, by the childish fancy of different legendists. Truly they labor for the fire and weary themselves for vanity.

So chap. 9 designedly gives Elohim throughout, save that the special blessing in Shem's case brings in Jehovah his God in 26, whereas of Japheth is said Elohim only in 27. Conceive the imbecility as well as the unspirituality of supposing here two authors, where so much of the force depends on the One Who first uttered all by one mouth, then wrote all by a single pen in due time! As the end of chap. 8 shows the world that was resting for its order on sacrifice, so 9 begins with the principle of government committed to man's hand, and the sign was added of no deluge more.

In chap. 10 we have the rise of nations divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, from Noah's three sons; and even in those days Nimrod's assumption of despotic power, where alone Jehovah occurs, as right relationship was violated. But in the earlier verses (1-9) of chap. 11 we have Jehovah judging the moral cause for the scattering of men, bent on making themselves a name in one vast republic. From ver. 10 the generations of Shem are traced to bring in “the fathers,” and “afterward the sons,” of Israel.

Chap. 12 presents Jehovah's call of Abram. He had left Ur of the Chaldees for Haran at the end of chap. 11. Only when he “went as Jehovah had spoken to him” does he arrive in Canaan. He first has the promises, father of the faithful, as Adam of all mankind. Abram is a pilgrim, with “this land” promised to his seed, and has not a tent only but altars he built to Jehovah. This was the walk and worship of faith. Under the pressure of famine he goes down into Egypt, and denies his true relationship to Sarai; so that she was taken into Pharaoh's house, and he became very rich with the king's gifts. It was total failure; but Jehovah plagued Pharaoh, delivered Sarai, and dismissed Abram, who had no altar in Egypt and returns to the place where his trial had been at the beginning, unto the place of his altar there.

Chap. 13. Thereon strife among their herdmen leads to the separation of Lot from Abram, who has Jehovah's promise more fully renewed, and Abram builds another altar.

But chap. 14 shows Lot swept away in the world's wars, as he had already betrayed his worldly-mindedness. But Abram defeats the conquerors who led Lot captive, Then Melchizedek king of Salem blessed Abram on the part of God Most High, possessor of heaven and, earth, and blessed God Most High Who delivered Abram's enemies into his hand. It is a picture which closes the first part of Abram's history, the type of the day of blessing, of “bread and wine,” not of sacrifices nor of intercession above and unseen, which sustains now, based on sacrifice. Here the distinctive name is Jehovah, but qualified by God Most High (Elyon), the victory of faith when enemies are put down and rival gods vanish; heaven and earth unite in the blessing of God and His own under the priest Melchizedek reigning. How plain yet profound is this typical climax? Who could have designed it all but God?

From chap. 15 we have a fresh and subsequent order of things personal, rather than public, closing with chap. 21, where the question of the heir is solved fully and in various points of view. First we have Jehovah's word coming in a vision, and the seed after the flesh in prophetic detail, and a sacrificial covenant by which the limits of the land are guaranteed. In chap. 16. we see failure in the faith so bright in the chapter before, and the carnal impatience which sought it illegitimately, to her sorrow especially who suggested it. Not Hagar but Sarai must be the heir's mother. Cf. Gal. 4. In chap. 17 Jehovah (for such is the name here also) appears to Abram revealing His title, specific for the patriarchs, of El Shaddai, God Almighty, and enlarging his name to Abraham, as his wife's was to be Sarah. Yet it is said to be Elohim so talking and saying: so baseless is the fancy of different documents or authors; and so perfect is the design in putting these elements together. Nations and kings were to come of Abraham and Sarah by an everlasting covenant established with Isaac, but with circumcision (expressing death to the flesh) which extended even to the connected stranger. Chap. 18 gives Jehovah's next appearing in intimate condescension; and the time of the heir's birth is announced, but after this of the judgment just about to fall on the guilty cities which draws out Abraham's intercession. This stopped short of what his heart yearned after; but Jehovah delivered Lot and his daughters, while punishing his wife's disobedience in chap. 19 with its sad sequel. In chap. 20 Abraham again denies his relationship to the mother of the coming heir; but Elohim warns Abimelech who also restores Sarah intact. God's grace alone shines throughout; but Jehovah had judged the deed (ver. 18) in His righteous government. The series concludes with chap. 21, when the heir was born, and soon after the bondmaid's son was cast out, though preserved in respect for faithful Abraham. But more now; for Abimelech, instead of reproving, stands reproved; and Beersheba attests the inheritance of the world, Abraham planting a tamarisk or grove and calling on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God (El Olam). The inheritance, wide as it is, may not compare with His grace Who gives all; but it is glorious. Who but One could have indited these communications? Did He leave them like Sibylline leaves to be blown about, and gathered by Elohists, Jehovists, or such like imaginary ghosts? His word is truth.

Chap. 22 lays the foundation in the Son's death and resurrection figuratively for new and heavenly things; chap. 23 is the passing away of the mother, Israel; chap. 24 the call of the bride for the risen bridegroom; and chap. 25:1-10 indicates other descendants of Abraham endowed with favor, but not to the disparagement of the heir of all; after which the father dies in a good old age. Here the futility of different hands, Elohist or Jehovist, is as manifest as before. Elohim tempted or tried Abraham's faith; yet the angel of Jehovah interposed after the proof that he feared Elohim; and so

to the end of chap. 22. Neither occurs in 23; but Jehovah the God of the heavens and the God of the earth &c. is in 24. In chap. 25:11 Elohim blessed Isaac, yet after the generations of Ishmael (12-18) Jehovah appears in those of Isaac: what more simple, intelligible, or accurate from one and the same hand? So it is Jehovah yet the God of Abraham in chap. 26 even in Gentile lips; and again in chap. 27. There we read “Jehovah hath blessed; and Elohim give thee” (vers. 27, 28): plain and sure evidence against the variorum hypothesis; and so is chap. 28:3, 4, 13, 16, 17, 20-22.

Now we enter on Jacob's varied experience, hearing no more of Isaac but his death in chap. 35:28, 29, after a life spent exclusively in Canaan as contrasted with Abraham and Jacob. Divine design is evident in the scripture as well as in the fact. Isaac typified the Son who after death and resurrection is the church's Head and Bridegroom in the heavenlies. Compare chap. 24:3-9, 37-41. Just as strikingly he who was even called Israel knows the greatest vicissitudes, as we see in the remaining chapters of the book. Was this casual? Did it not flow from God's design? It is Jehovah in chap. 29 and Elohim in chap. 30:2-23, yet in the next verse (24) Rachel says not Elohim, but Jehovah; and thus it is in 27 and 30. The notion of different writers is mere fancy, explains nothing, and hinders all due inquiry into the divine motive for the change of name. See also chap. 26:3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 24, 29, 42, 49, 50, 53; chap. 32:9, 28, 30; and chap. 33:5, 10, 11, 20.

One cannot wonder that neither name is in chap. 34 or in 36, 37; but it is Elohim, God in His nature, God sovereign in His action, which appears in 35:1, 3, 7, 9, 10; only the revealed El Shaddai, dropped with Isaac save in reference to Jacob (28:3), here reappears (11). Then Elohim is in 13, 15. But Jehovah is the name in chap. 38:7, 10, where His rights were violated flagrantly in Judah's family; as His marked blessing was on Joseph in 39:2, 3, 5, 21, 23. What could be more correct? On the other hand Elohim alone suits 40:8, 16, 25, 32, 38, 39, 51, 52. It is the historic as well as abstract expression; and hence in 42:18, 28; 43:23, 29; 44:16; 45:5, 7, 8, 9; 46:1, 3; 48:9, 11, 15, 20, 21; 49:25; 50:17, 19, 20, 24, 25; whilst in 43:14, and 48:3 it is El Shaddai, and in 49 Jehovah as specially due. God, or Elohim, is in contrast with man; Jehovah is His name of relationship; El Shaddai is the proper patriarchal title, as El Elyon is that of the kingdom in figure.

But how manifestly we have divine purpose in progressive warning through Esau as before through Ishmael! For Esau was worse, a profane man despising his birthright, which Jacob, however faulty, was far from; but God is faithful in wanderings caused by his unbelief and given with much detail. It is the picture of Israel's sad history, the pledge of their future and blessed restoration to the promised land, as indeed God announced in chap. 46:4, and predicts in Jacob's last words (chap. 49). To this also point the burials there of his body and Joseph's.

Nor can one fairly overlook the tale of Joseph, the general hatred on the part of his brethren, the special guilt and special recovery of Judah, the sale of Joseph to the Gentiles and their subsequent evil, Joseph's interpretation of God's mind in his humiliation, his elevation to administer the kingdom over the Gentiles with a wife then given him, and finally his reception of his brethren now penitent before his glory. A plainer type cannot be of God's dealings, much accomplished yet some not even yet, all settled and sure if we believe the scriptures in general which teach these truths explicitly elsewhere as to Christ.

Is not then divine design throughout the book of Genesis established of God beyond just question? How vast the scope from the absolutely first act of creative energy! How wise the details only when man was to be created! How important to distinguish the fact of the Adamic earth from the relative position of all concerned, and to show how soon and complete was the ruin through sin! Yet do we see immense long-suffering, till the violation of all order, added to man's growing corruption and overspread violence, draws down divine judgment, yet Noah and his house prepared by grace to begin the world set under sacrifice on the one hand and the principle of human government brought in on the other. Instead of filling the earth at God's command, the willful effort to combine and make themselves a name was met by the confusion of tongues, which scattered mankind. Thus began the nations divided in their lands, everyone after his tongue, and his family. Then, when men began to serve other gods, as Josh. 24 tells us, Abraham was called out of country, kindred, and father's house, separated to the true God as His witness. To him was promised the land of Canaan, and yet more all the families of the earth to be blessed in him. Isaac typifies the risen Son in the heavenly place, with a bride called out from the world to join Him there. Jacob represents the earthly people, to be blessed at length in the land after bitter experiences in and out of it, the effect of their own faults. In the midst of this history Joseph foreshadows Christ separated from his envious and hating brethren, but manifesting God's wisdom in his low estate, and exalted to the administration of a world-wide kingdom. He is thus made known to the Jews, now humbled and owing their preservation to him as all others do; yet was his heart set on the people and land notwithstanding; where the great prophecy of chap. 49 shows they are to be at the end of days. Is all this a concourse of atoms? or the work of divine purpose?

Chapter 109

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 2. Divine Design—Exodus

Very different from the first is the second book of the Pentateuch. Here, instead of the vast variety which meets us in Genesis, we have in the main one great truth developed, with the antecedents which made its necessity felt, and with the most characteristic consequence which ensued in God's wisdom and goodness. For here in a way peculiar to itself we have redemption accomplished for Israel, the foreshadow of an eternal one in Christ, in its foundation, its display, and its effects. The basis one must be blind not to see typified in the Paschal sacrifice; and the displayed power in the passage of the Red Sea: the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The effect is seen in God's tabernacling in their midst. What lends the greater force is that, multifarious as are the counsels and the ways of God which Genesis presents to us in germ, redemption is wholly absent from its contents. The very word occurs only once toward the close in its general or figurative application to Jacob's life; and thus is quite distinct from that precise sense which the type in Exodus vividly supplies. Can any proof of specific design on God's part be asked more powerful than this, supposing the facts to be made out clearly and without violence? Let us then examine the evidence.

Chap. 1 opens with the sons of Israel after Joseph's death waxing many and mighty but, under a king that knew not Joseph, bitterly oppressed. The then king of Egypt sought even to destroy the males. This was counteracted at first; but in chap. 2 the murderous aim was pressed so far that Moses could not be longer hid. Him when exposed, Pharaoh's daughter found and brought up as her son: who, when not only grown up but going out to see his afflicted brethren, slew an Egyptian evildoer, but finding no right feeling in the objects of his care, had to flee the king's resentment. The time was not yet come; and Moses in Midian protects the daughters of its priest king, one of whom he marries; and his son “Gershom” witnesses that he was no settler there, but a sojourner, who remembered his brethren, as God did His covenant with their fathers as He heard their groans.

In chap. 3 when “Jehovah” saw that he turned to see the bush that burnt, unconsumed with fire, “Elohim” called to him (vers. 4). How irrational as well as unspiritual to imagine more than one writer! Jehovah is relative name, God or Elohim in nature. Compare verses 7 and 14, where He adds “I AM THAT I AM” as the name to assure His despairing people, and sends Moses and their elders with the petition to let them go. Then in chap. 4 Jehovah gives two signs and even a third for his mission, and makes Aaron to be his spokesman when hesitating as once too precipitate. So Moses bids his father-in-law farewell, and with wife and sons returns to Egypt, but not without a solemn reminder of a neglected duty for both husband and wife. Aaron meets him at Jehovah's command on the mountain of God, and the people bow and worship when they heard. Next in chap. 5 they lay Jehovah's message before Pharaoh, who scornfully flouts it, and cruelly aggravates the burden of the Israelites under penalty; so that they suffer more than ever, and Moses pours out His plaint.

But Jehovah (chap. 6) assures him that He would act so that Pharaoh should drive them out of his land. And here He formally inaugurates “Jehovah” for Israel, in contradistinction from the patriarchal revelation of “El-shaddai” (God Almighty), as the pledge of also bringing them into the promised land. But the people hearkened not for anguish, as Moses told Jehovah, when He bade him speak to Pharaoh. Both Moses and Aaron He charged with the same errand. Thereon follows a remarkable genealogy, as in Genesis; but as each there has its own character, so has this, which, starting with Reuben and Simeon, stops at Levi and his sons, giving prominence to “Aaron and Moses” (20-26) in natural order first, but lastly (ver. 27) in spiritual power “Moses and Aaron.” Is this then man's folly, or God's wisdom and design? For men have not been wanting to blow on it in their ignorant presumption. Let them learn His mind and give thanks.

After the preliminary sign in chap. 7 the plagues follow God's demand refused: — 1, The river which they gloried in and adored was turned to blood for seven days at the time when even a red appearance never occurs; 2, Frogs swarmed so as to torment them in their houses, beds, ovens, everywhere; 3, The dust became lice or some equally noisome insect on man and beast; 4, So did flies swarm yet more grievously, but none in Goshen; 5, A deadly murrain overspread Egypt, but not Israel's quarter; 6, A boil broke out on all in Egypt, man and beast; 7, Hail followed, and fire mingled, and thunder, without example in that land; 8, Locusts beyond parallel; 9, Darkness for three days that might be felt; 10, The firstborn slain of man and cattle from the king to the slave, but Israel untouched (8-11).

Then came redemption by the blood of the lamb, chap. 12. Without this, as Israel's ground before Jehovah, He could not go with a people sinful and degraded. But where He saw the blood, He would pass over (ver. 13). On His own estimate of that blood, which pointed to the one efficacious sacrifice, He acted; as they at His word had sprinkled it on the door-posts of each house. Pilgrims now, they fed on the lamb's flesh with bitter herbs (repentance) and without leaven (the emblem of corruption rejected). There is no type of redemption so clear and comprehensive. Who but God could have given it? or would have put it here, the most suited time and place in all the Bible? Israel, not the priest yet, was separated to Jehovah by it; and this marked by their firstborn of man and beast, as well as by the feast of unleavened bread (chap. 13) continually, in remembrance of the slain firstborn of Egypt and judgment executed against all their gods. Chap. 14 completes the picture: redemption by power, which brought Israel dry-shod through the waters of death when they engulphed the flower and forces of Egypt. The song in chap. 15 celebrates their salvation and their enemies overwhelmed, but Jehovah's holiness glorious. But they pass through a desert world, where the bitter waters need the tree cast in to sweeten them; but where they come to springs and palms in all fullness for refreshment by the way. The sabbath, figure of rest, is marked by the manna that typified Christ; as the living water, i.e. the Spirit, was given from the smitten rock (chaps. 16, 17), followed by conflict with the enemy, where victory depends on the continued intercession of the Mediator. This series of grace closes (chap. 18) with the type of the orderly government of the kingdom; where the Gentile worships and eats bread with Israel, confessing Jehovah greater than all gods.

From this reign of grace to glory we turn in chap. 19 to law accepted as the condition of blessing and finding themselves under curse, instead of owning their sinfulness and pleading the promises. All is changed to menace of death, to thunder, lightning, and thick cloud; to trumpet's sound exceeding loud, and a voice of words more awful still, so that Moses quaked. Then the Ten Words

were spoken; and national judgments were given afterward (chaps. 20-23). Blood sealed this covenant on the ground of the people doing all the words Jehovah had spoken: death was the solemn sanction of all; and Israel's elders eat and drink in God's presence. But Moses ascends higher to receive the tables, and abides on high forty days and nights.

In chap. 25 Moses is directed that the Israelites should bring Him a heave-offering, as their heart prompted, of all the requisites in precious metals and stones, in dyes, skins, wood, oil, fine cotton or byss, incense and aromatics, for the priesthood and the sanctuary, with all the parts and vessels of which He would show the patterns. They represented heavenly things, as we learn in Hebrews. Of these the ark is first with the mercy-seat and the cherubim in the holiest; then in the holy place the table, and the lamp-stand. Thus did Jehovah provide for manifesting Himself in His dwelling in the midst of His people. For to this grand effect of redemption are we now come. The ark was His seat in relationship with Israel, but in truth as the Judge of all; there divine righteousness was attested. For on the day of atonement the blood was sprinkled upon it once, before it seven times. Christ Who alone glorified the Father in living obedience glorified God about sin on the cross. But there was also in the supporters the witness of judicial authority that would make Him respected. The table with its loaves set forth divine nourishment in man, as the lamp-stand divine light in the Spirit; of both which Christ is the fullness and witness.

Chap. 26 presents the tabernacle itself with its curtains, boards, bars, and veil which severed the holy place from the most holy. Christ too was the true tabernacle or temple, though it had a wider application too. Next in chap. 27 we have the copper-laid altar of Burnt offering, and the court of the tabernacle with the requirement of oil for the light. This altar represents God's righteousness in Christ, as far at least as man's sin thoroughly judged, but in grace to the sinner, where he is and can come before Him freely.

To rationalistic eyes it seems unaccountable disorder that the order for the consecration of the priesthood should be given in chaps. 28, 29. It is really divine wisdom; for thus is separated that part of these patterns of the heavenly which relates to God's manifestation of Himself to man, from what brings out the presenting of man to God in the sanctuary, though some may partake in a measure of both. But there is a true distinction; and the priesthood is the transition, as they were the medium which represented Israel therein. Aaron and his sons represented those of the heavenly calling in the grace of Christ minutely displayed and throughout those two chaps., as is plain enough to every instructed believer. Then in chap. 30, the due place for it, comes first the altar of incense, as the type of Christ in intercession for the saints, a continual sweet savor, on the horns of which too the atoning blood was put. Next came the atonement-money, the same half-shekel for every one rich or poor; then the laver of copper for purifying Aaron and his sons; the holy anointing oil also for them; and the perfume of aromatics holy to Jehovah. All these are types of what Christ is for us; not the manifestation of God to us, but the means needful for our being presented to Him. But who could have initiated this but Jehovah? Then in chap. 31 comes the qualifying of the workmen by Jehovah for the construction of all; the sabbath too here again appears as the sign that God's rest is His people's hope; and Jehovah gave Moses the tables of testimony.

Below, how sad the contrast! The people of Israel corrupted themselves away from Jehovah; and Aaron helped them in it. Hence Jehovah bids Moses go down to his people, corrupt as they were,

and offers to make of him a great nation. But Moses pleads, and not in vain. Yet when he saw the golden calf and heard their songs, he shattered the tables in his indignation and summoned those that stood for Jehovah. When the sons of Levi responded, he called on them to consecrate themselves in His name, and they slew about 3,000 men. The same Moses turns to Jehovah in intercession the next day, and offers to be blotted out for them. But God, accepting his mediation, modifies the terms by His long-suffering goodness while still leaving them under His law, and bids Moses lead them on with His angel going before. It is thus no longer law, pure and simple as at the first, but now a mixture of grace with law, to which 2 Cor. 3 refers as a ministry of death and condemnation, even though Moses' faith shone as only on the second time (33. 34). It is at this time too that Moses left the camp and pitched the tent outside, calling it the tent of meeting, whither went every one that sought Jehovah, anticipating the tabernacle that was to be established. There God revealed His merciful name on that separation from corruption.

In chap. 35. Moses again speaks of the sabbath, and enjoins the heave-offering on all the willing; to which they answered promptly. He told them once more that Jehovah called Bezaleel and Aholiab in chief to the work. In chaps. 36. 37. it proceeds with abundant zeal, set out in detail, not only there but in chaps. 38. 39. “as Jehovah commanded Moses.” Is this true? If anyone bearing the Lord's name dare to say it is false, it is well that Christians should know with what they have to do. Chap. 40 tells of the tabernacle set up and of the priesthood consecrated according to the command of Jehovah, all anointed. The cloud then covered the tent and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. How true is the book to the divine design of showing redemption, and the worthy end of God dwelling in the midst of His own then realized in type, as the effect of redemption!

Chapter 110

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 3. Divine Design—Leviticus

As scarce a book in the O. T. consists so much of the express words of Jehovah, so none gives fuller evidence of divine design from first to last. One great theme governs as in Exodus; but it is approach to God in the sanctuary, not redemption as there. The title we employ like most is vaguely if at all appropriate; for from its nature the priesthood are essential and prominent, not the Levites who figure here but little. The Jews do not attempt distinctive titles, but name the books from the opening word in each.

It is Jehovah speaking, not the Ten words from the darkness on the top of Sinai, but out of the tent of meeting in the midst of His people, to lay down the conditions of their relationship with Him Hence His relative name to Israel is used throughout, and only in the later chapters from 18 have we occasionally “your” or “thy” God added to it, or connected with it. Hence not a shadow yields room for the dream of an Elohist, senior, junior, or in any wise. It is Elohim in relation with His people, and therefore “Jehovah” calls, speaks, and commands throughout. Even the historical episode of viii-x. is all and only Jehovistic, and so is the briefer one in 24:10 to the end of the chapter. But it is the more untrue and illogical to make this fact depend on a special writer; for the writer, though giving uniform predominance to “Jehovah,” identifies Him as surely with “thy” or “your” Elohim.

Access to Jehovah then is the design of this book, as redemption is of Exodus; access to Him in the sanctuary, as individuals or as His people, according to the law. Not only are the means defined, which required sacrifice and offering, with the priests duly inaugurated, but the duties and state of the people, as well as their privileges, with those of the priestly family. Then follows the ruin which disobedience and apostasy must entail; yet would He in judgment remember mercy, and the covenant with their fathers, anterior to the law and dependent on promise. Also the vow of devoting persons, beasts, or land should result, on Israel's failure, in Jehovah's rights, when Christ as both Priest and King will order all to His glory. Not Moses, nor any other man, left to himself, was capable of a design so profound, and of evidently prophetic character; but if Moses was inspired to give what Jehovah spoke throughout, all is plain and holy and true. Rationalism may impute departure from original integrity and other faults suggested by the pettiness of man's mind; those who do so must take the consequence before Him Who is its Author. Let us look into the details as they stand.

The book opens with the basis of all access to Jehovah, sacrifice and offering. As not the first man but the Second is His object, He begins with the Burnt-offering (1), the Meal-offering (2), and the Peace-offering (3), and only then enters on the Sin-offering and Trespass-(or, Guilt-) offering (4-6:7), with the laws of each (6:8-7). Such is the divine institution: when application comes, as with the priests (8:14, &c.), the Sin-offering precedes, or with a leper, the Trespass-offering (14:12, &c.). Who but God could so order? The first three oblations are alike Fire-offerings of sweet savor to Jehovah. They represent the positive excellency of Christ as offered upon the altar, in death as in life man holy, and for communion; together they form the first communication from Jehovah.

Offerings for sin follow in chap. iv., with a transition of mingled character in 5:1-13, after which to 6:7 we have the Trespass-offering fully; and the regulations, which deal mainly with the question of eating or not, are given to the end of chap. 7. From the Trespass-offering in chap. 5:14 are no less than seven distinct but connected communications from Jehovah.

In chaps. 8; 9 is given the institution of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. Here we find another, and if possible brighter, witness to the unique excellency of Christ. For the high priest alone, as typifying Christ and duly attired, was anointed without blood (8:10-12), and at the same time the tabernacle with all therein. He to Whom Aaron pointed was entitled to the energy of the Spirit in person and inheritance; and He is Heir of all things. No mortal would ever have so thought or spoken of himself; only Jehovah Who inspired Moses. His sons also, duly attired, required the Sin-offering; and as Aaron personally was a sinner like them, all laid their hands on the victim's head (14), and Moses put of its blood on the altar, and thereon burnt the fat and the rest of the body without the camp. Then the ram for a Burnt-offering was duly offered; but that for consecration had its blood put by Moses, first on Aaron's right ear, thumb, and toe, then on his sons similarly. After the rest of that rite was completed, Moses took of the anointing oil and of the blood, and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and their garments with his. On the eighth day the glory of Jehovah appeared, the plain prefiguration of what will be for Israel when He shall sit and rule upon His throne, not for heaven only but manifested for the earth. Chap. 10 is the affecting history of the failure of the priesthood at once, even Eleazar and Ithamar only spared by intercession. Then come the chapters that refer to discernment of food clean and unclean (11) and priestly dealing with defilements natural (12) also typifying sin and its cleansing (13; 14), and others occasional (15).

Then comes the momentous Atonement-day (16), the fast of the sacred year, on which all hung for priests and people, the high priest acting for both in access to God. How any believer can fail to own that Jehovah alone could have designed it, not only for the time then present, but as prophetic of the first coming of Christ and His work, and even of the still unaccomplished second coming when it is applied to Israel's pardon and spiritual restoration, is strange indeed. The N. T. interpretation is unmistakable in Heb. 9 more particularly. The Christian blessing is identified with Aaron and his house, in virtue of the one offering for them in the sanctuary. When the high priest comes out will be the application of the scapegoat, but on the ground of Jehovah's lot, to the repentant people. To regard Azazel, the living goat sent away associated with the slain one, as a demon or evil genius, is a monstrous perversion whether of ritualists or rationalists, blind to the full efficacy of Christ's atoning work and to the hopes of the Jews. The two goats figure one Christ offered to Jehovah for propitiation and substitution. But who beforehand could have anticipated the truth?

This is followed by communications to guard priests and people from the dishonor of Jehovah, in the matter of blood, and especially against eating it (17); in natural relationships against impurity (18); in the maintenance of holy ways and comely practice, far from profanity (19); and especially in abhorrence of heathen and unnatural abominations (20): all, as became a people in holy nearness to Jehovah, and separated from the peoples to be His. Chap. 21 insists on a still higher sanctity on the part of Aaron's sons, and especially of the high priest, in view of their access to the sanctuary; and chap. 22 adds other disqualifications even if but transient. Then the people are joined with the priests in the caution against a blemished offering, and due heed claimed for

Jehovah's injunction as to times, &c.

Chap. 23 presents the Feasts in which, especially in the greater ones, Jehovah gathered all the males around Himself as their center. Here the prophetic character is yet more marked than in the great Day of Atonement; as in it there is plain historical sequence, so that it is easy enough to distinguish the fulfilled from what remains to be so, when the Lord returns in power and glory. Now who is, who could be, competent for these things? Only Jehovah, Who spoke to Moses concerning these “set times” of drawing near to Himself.

The Sabbath has this specialty of being revealed before the Feasts proper, as it will be accomplished at their close, when the true sabbatism will no longer “remain” but be realized for the people of God (3).

The Passover is the foundation of all blessing as it prefigures Christ sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7), the head or beginning of months (5).

In immediate sequence is Unleavened bread for seven days, the feast we now celebrate, not with old leaven nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth (6-8).

Then comes the Wave-sheaf on the next day after the sabbath, the clear type of Christ risen from the dead; for Whom therefore was no Sin or Trespass-offering, but Burnt and Meal-offerings with the Drink-offering thereof (9-14).

And the Feast of Weeks follows, seven weeks complete from the day of the Wave-sheaf, or fifty days till the morning after the seventh sabbath. It is Pentecost with its two Wave-loaves of fine flour, but with leaven: not Christ now, but they that are His, and therefore the leaven. Here then not only have we a Burnt-offering, with oblation and Drink-offering, but a Sin-offering. For it is short sight to deny the old man in believers; it is their joy that by Christ's death the evil is annulled to faith. This new oblation to Jehovah has His injunction appended, not to reap or glean so as to clear the field's corners, but to leave for the poor and the stranger. It is a provision for those who are to follow the souls who now believe, during the age's completion (15-22).

Next is announced a new speaking of Jehovah to Moses. It is a fresh testimony, a memorial of blowing of Trumpets. This new Feast, like those that succeed, are all in the seventh month; and this on its first day. It is Jehovah summoning His ancient people from their sleep-from their “graves” as Ezekiel calls it figuratively. Compare Isa. 26:19, Dan. 12:2. The Christian call is past; the Jewish appeal will then begin and go on. Grace is preparing a people for Jehovah on earth, as now under the gospel for heaven.

On the tenth day is the day of the Atonement, when Israel no longer unbelieving but repentant shall afflict their souls, and mix up no works of theirs with His work, long despised, now understood and honored. It is the application of the cross of Christ to their souls, deeply feeling their sins and His grace.

The fifteenth day opens the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles seven days to Jehovah: a complete cycle for them when “glory shall dwell in their land,” as we have in keeping the feast of Unleavened bread. Only an eighth day follows, which points to the glory in resurrection connected then, the heavenly things of the kingdom with the earthly. Compare John 3:12, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20.

Now who was capable of such a living, comprehensive, all-important scheme of divine dealings from the beginning? Look at it from the purpose of rest couched in the pledge of the sabbath, till that day which shall display the Heir of all things centering in Himself all creation, heavenly and earthly, not only reconciled to God by His blood, then applied in power, and ourselves reigning with Him, being already reconciled by faith, as Israel will be “in that day” with all nations joined and no more at enmity. Christ is the One on Whom all turns: if received, life, peace, holiness, blessing, with access to God and to His glory; if rejected, wrath and indignation, tribulation and distress, when the vanity of present things and the vain show of man can no longer hide the truth. What could imaginary Elohists or Jehovists avail to put together such a wondrous plan? All is simple, and only so, if Jehovah spoke to Moses, and Moses wrote of Christ. And who or what are they who blasphemously deny it? For He has testified to it.

Chap. 24 furnishes the solemn contrast of Israel according to purpose and as they are through their unbelief. In the one aspect shines the light of the Spirit through the High Priest during the dark night of their slumber; and the twelve loaves, with the pure frankincense, are on the table as a memorial for Aaron and his sons to eat (1-9). In the other we see the actual state under the “son of an Israelitish woman whose father was an Egyptian,” blaspheming the Name and cursing. “His blood be on us and on our children” was their cry; as Blood-field (Aceldama) is their land to this day. So do they bear their sin (10-23).

In chap. 25 we have the sabbath of the land every seventh year, and the hallowed year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year proclaimed on Atonement day. What affecting regulations in view of the trumpet which will usher the people of Jehovah, long outcasts for their sins, into the land which He will make theirs! for it is His, as He will prove against the mightiest foes. Let Gentiles beware who intrude. As this is prophetic, so is chap. 26 Israel made and worshipped idols; Israel rebelled, despising their nearness to Jehovah; Israel braved His chastenings; Israel brought waste on their cities, and desolation on their land. But away in exile shall they confess their iniquity and accept its punishment from Jehovah Who will remember His covenant with their fathers and remember their land. Mercy shall glory over judgment; and Jehovah's end is that He is full of tender compassion and pitiful.

The last chapter (27) brings in the priest again, but Moses' estimation. There may be vows of persons or beasts (not of the first-born, already Jehovah's), of house or land; but if all fail or be lost through man, God's rights abide. All was gone before God, when Christ was worth no more in Jewish eyes than the price of a slave. Yet will He retrieve all for them, having glorified Jehovah in all. Is this a human book?

Chapter 111

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 4. Divine Design—Numbers

The Fourth Book of the Pentateuch is inadequately described by the title given in the versions generally. Nor is the usual Jewish expedient of the first words better rendered, “And spoke;” others say what is given later in the verse, “In the wilderness,” which fairly presents its scope. For, as we have seen in its predecessors, this book has no less impressed on its contents a worthy divine design, which we as Christians are enabled by the Holy Spirit to apprehend and enjoy, in a way impossible to the Israelites or even to Moses its writer. “Now all these things happened to them as types; and they were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). This to the believer is decisive authority, far from excluding the book of Exodus, but fully extending to Numbers. The history, as far as it goes, is thoroughly reliable; but the typical instruction, as we are taught, was the aim and motive of the Holy Spirit. And this it is which accounts for repetitions and a seeming disorder in parts, which is the best order for the truth intended by the divine Author. If the Neo-critics had only reverent faith to learn, they would be kept from a wholly ungrounded pretension to judge what is above their powers, and might apprehend the goodness and wisdom of God's revealed mind to their blessing for evermore.

The book contemplates, as does none other, the desert journeyings of Jehovah's people, the walk in the wilderness. Hence here only are the people numbered (1), and arranged (2), at the beginning; and for an equally important reason they are numbered again toward the end. As service attaches to this condition, here we have (not in Leviticus) necessary prominence given to the Levites who are separately numbered, and their tabernacle duties (3; 4); whereas in the preceding book, which treats of access to Jehovah, the priesthood has that prominent place. Hence too the preservation of the camp as a whole, and of each individual, from defilement is here fully provided (5); as is the converse case of special devotedness in its various forms (6; 7). The High Priest lighting the lamps next appears in chap. 8 morally connected; and the consecration of the Levites. Gracious consideration follows for any unintentionally unclean, that they too might not be debarred from observing the fundamental feast for all the people, the Passover (9). Hence here is the great and common call to guide the journey and the encampment according to the commandment of Jehovah. Nor was there “the cloud” only, but the silver trumpets for special occasions (10). Yet when their first march was ordered, grace interposed beyond prescription, and if Moses leaned on Hobab, the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting-place for them. What a God of all consolation for the earthly pilgrimage! And Moses could now in the Spirit suitably speak when the ark set forward, and when it halted.

Such is a brief review of the first division of this book. Could any mere man that ever lived have conceived and adjusted such an introduction? Were this the fitting occasion to enter into the details, for instance for carrying the tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary in chap. iv., the typical force would add incalculably to the impiety as well as absurdity of fancying such ill-omened sprites as Elohists, Jehovists, and Redactors, where everything points to the One Divine Spirit Who employed Moses to write, not for Israel only, but for all that fear God at all times. The literary

mania of Jew or Gentile (one is ashamed to say of professing Christians) is a suicidal and destructive snare of Satan when it sits in rationalistic judgment on God's word. It is blind to that manifestation of God in Christ here portrayed in the holy vessels, &c., and their respective coverings, only here found, only here suited, whether for the day that now is, or for that which is to come for His people on the earth. Further, “holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for evermore.". The desert journey is just the responsible scene for maintaining it; and therefore is chap. v. in its precisely right place, whatever be the objection of shallow and reckless speculation. So is the counterpart in chap. 6 of Nazarite separation to Jehovah: special defilements, and special devotedness, closing with the blessing of Jehovah on Israel pronounced by the entire priesthood.

Then, as we have said, follows the free-will offering from the twelve chiefs of the tribes, given to the Levites according to their service (chap. 7), the dedication-gift of the altar. And the Voice from above the mercy-seat speaks, in chap. 8, first of the candlestick, a striking figure designedly here, whatever rationalist presumption may say; then the Levites purified and set apart for Jehovah's work. That the sons of Israel laid their hands on them is a wholesome hint for ritualists to ponder. Jehovah gave them to Aaron and his sons for ministry. The Passover fitly comes at this point as uniting all Israel in the feast of redemption, with a gracious provision here only for such as were hindered by uncleanness from a dead body (chap. 9). The direction by the cloud is next given. The sounding of the silver trumpets opens chap. 10; then the first move with its deeply interesting accompaniments already noticed. Various subdivisions may be observed within this first division; but we must first forbear.

The second general portion opens with the moral history of the people in their journeyings. They murmur, and Jehovah judges, but hears the prayer of Moses. They lust after flesh, weary of the manna; all fail, even Moses and Joshua in a measure; and Jehovah smote the people severely (chap. 11). Envy shows itself in Miriam and Aaron; but Aaron confesses, and Miriam stricken with leprosy is healed at Moses' cry (chap. 12). As unbelief let in these evils on the way, so in chaps. 13; 14 we see as to the hope. The pleasant land is despised through fear of the sons of Anak. In the same unbelief, instead of allowing self-judgment, after a carnal mourning, they went up without a word from Jehovah and were cut to pieces, as far as Hormah by the Amalekite and the Canaanite hill-men. How marvelous and opportune the grace, which there and then drops these evil ways of Israel and their inevitable chastenings, to instruct them (chap. 15.) what to, do when come into the land of their habitations which Jehovah gives them! To offer Fire-offerings to Him with the drink-offering of joy! To offer Him the first of their dough as a heave-offering throughout their generations! Let us admire also the provision for sin unwittingly (only the gospel could meet worse evil): the presumptuous sin dealt with by a death which all joined to inflict; and the fringe of blue to promote remembrance and obedience. What man of his own notion would have ventured such an episode? No wonder that unbelievers cavil, because they know not God. Chap. 16. is the culmination of the sad story here in the gainsaying of Korah, with other chiefs. The worst part of the rebellion lay in the ministry arrogating the priesthood; which, as Jude declares, has its answer in the apostasy of Christendom. Jehovah decided by consuming fire; and, when the assembly murmured, by the plague that destroyed more than 14,000.

We may consider chap. 17 as introducing a fresh division, where the power of priestly intercession is shown in the fruitful rod of Aaron, living after death, alone able to lead the failing people through

the wilderness. In chap. 18 the relative place of priests and Levites is explained. Aaron and his sons bear the iniquity of the sanctuary. How far is this from human, earthly, ambition! Theirs were the hallowed things to eat. The tithe was for the Levites, not for the priests save a tithe of the tithe given by the Levites to Aaron.

As these chapters are by divine design in their exactly right places, so in chap. 19 the Red Heifer is here alone given, for it alone suits this book as the special provision for the defilements of the wilderness in general and in this place of grace particularly. The standard for every Israelite is the holiness of the sanctuary. The blood was put in its completeness of efficacy, as the basis needing no renewal; the ashes mixed with living water were applied to the unclean. It is the remembrance of Christ's suffering by the word in the Spirit. In chap. 20 Miriam dies; and the people, wanting water, contend with Moses. Jehovah being appealed to directs Moses to take the rod, and speak to the rock which should give its water. Here Moses and Aaron quite fail to represent Jehovah's grace. For instead of speaking with Aaron's rod of priestly grace, Moses smote the rock with his own rod of power. The waters flowed; but Moses and Aaron were doomed to die outside the land, as they did. Edom, we are told, opposed the direct way; and Israel turned from them as akin however hostile. Aaron dies on mount Hor, and Eleazar succeeds.

Chap. xxi. appears to begin a new series. King Arad's coming out against the Israelites is said by Dr. Perowne (Smith's Dict. ii. 581) to be “clearly out of place.” But the comparison of chap. 33:40 confirms the assurance that it certainly is in its true place. Only the supplied “when” of the A.V. is a mistake; this is not written. But now the Canaanite made head, till Israel vowed to Jehovah to deal with the accursed race as He adjudged. Yet after fresh impatience and murmuring against the bread from above, they are smitten by the enemy's deadly sting, and find the only remedy in what figures Christ made sin for us. Then comes joyful refreshment in the well dug by the staves of their chiefs; and Sihon and Og assail them to their destruction, leaving their possessions to Israel. On the plains of Moab, with only Jordan severing them from Canaan, Satan makes a new and final effort to thwart Jehovah by cursing His people. But the false prophet was compelled to bless in repeated strains of unequaled beauty, before which the odes of Pindar and Horace are as inferior as their heroes and the occasions of their laudation. They are not only prophetic but Messianic throughout, indirectly and directly. Elohim, Jehovah, El Elyon, and El Shaddai are used with perfect propriety, but so as to expel from the field of spiritual intelligence the flimsy rag of Astrue wherewith rationalism seeks to cover its nakedness. Poor as His people are in themselves, here God gives His mind and purpose about them: separateness, justification, beauty, and glory (chaps. 22-24.). Never did such thoughts grow out of the heart of man; and God will verify them all in His time. The day is at hand.

In chap. 25 we see Balaam's will in corrupting the people, but Phinehas avenging it and staying the plague. Then in chap. 26. is renewed the enumeration of the people; and chap. 27 has daughters secured in the coming inheritance; while Jehovah bids Moses, in view of his decease, lay his hand on Joshua to lead the people in. Chaps. 28; 29 follow the analogy of kindred insertions, and treat of what Jehovah calls His bread, His offerings at the set times, not as Lev. 23 did in picturing the course of dispensations, but viewed intrinsically and as displaying the worship rendered by His people on earth. Then in chap. 30 we have the secret of man's or Israel's failure, and the way grace takes to surmount it and deliver the weak. Next is the holy war to execute Jehovah's vengeance on Midian, with (not Joshua the soldier, but) Phinehas the priest for leader

and the alarm-trumpets in his hand. The victory is complete, and the seducers destroyed. But chap. 32 indicates the fact, so sadly common, that whole tribes prefer their inheritance outside the Jordan: still they fight as Jehovah's people against the enemy. Then comes the interesting list of the journeys as far as God was pleased to relate them in chap. 33; and in chap. 34 the borders of the land on the other side of the Jordan to fall by lot to the nine and a half tribes of Israel. This leads to the cities of the Levites (chap. 35), who had no inheritance in the land, and to the provision for him who might have slain unwittingly: a striking figure of what grace will yet reckon to the repentant remnant of Israel. The last chapter guards the security for heiresses from disordering the inheritance by passing out of the proper tribe.

If it be objected that not a little of this book refers to the land of promise, not yet possessed by the people, as adverse to the character of pilgrimage, the answer is that the looking on ward in assured hope is precisely what is needed to cheer those who pass through the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness. The thing objected to is therefore in perfect keeping with its divine design. So we saw in the riband of blue only given in Num. 15, like the water for separation in chap. 19, however differing in character; for the one recalls the light of heaven to those walking on earth, who also specially need the means of purifying from the defilements of the way. How superficial are the critical censures of unbelief! how deep and precious are the helps of the divine word to faith!

Chapter 112

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 5. Divine Design—Deuteronomy

The last book of the Pentateuch is as definitely marked as each of its predecessors. It alone was written in view of Israel's crossing the Jordan and entering on the land of their inheritance. It is therefore wholly different from Genesis which has a primary character, and is all but universal in its range, the word of Him Who knows the end from the beginning. Neither does it converge on redemption from Egypt, like Exodus; nor on access to Jehovah, like Leviticus; nor yet on pilgrimage through the wilderness, like Numbers. The title in the A. V. follows the Latin Vulgate, as it the Septuagint, but is at least nearer the mark than in the other cases; for the book largely consists of a special recapitulation of the law. Only we must allow for the divine affluence of scripture; which, when interpreting a vision, or a parable, or even a particular symbol, not merely repeats but adds very strikingly.

If we believe the book (and he is God's enemy who does not), Moses spoke and wrote on the eve of his approaching death. This could not but impart a peculiarly earnest and solemn tone. Ethic, affectionate, and expostulatory elements predominate beyond what we find in any other of the five books. As Moses says, in closing the brief preface of ch. 1:3-5, he began to declare or expound this law. Obedience is urged continually, and the spirit of it in the heart. It is the people as a whole therefore, who are in general addressed directly throughout, on their responsible tenure of the land. Typical teaching is comparatively rare, moral abounds, not without prophecy at the close especially. “The priests, the Levites” only appear for specific reasons, and Levites also as such. But the people are regarded as under the moral government of Jehovah their God in the land; and this accounts for its characteristics. Those born in the wilderness had been uncircumcised, and so disqualified for the privileges of Israel. This was no longer to be tolerated. Israel must henceforth take their normal place of obedience in Jehovah's land. So the book urges anticipatively.

From chap. 1:6 to the end of chap. 4 is an introduction, in which Moses first sketches in the rest of chap. 1 the journeying from Horeb to Kadesh, with the previous choice of rulers to judge, and the subsequent one of the spies, their rebellious unbelief, and its punishment. Then in chaps. 2; 3; we have their final advance, after long abidings and marches in the wilderness. They were not to meddle with Edom, Moab, or Ammon. When Sihon and Og opposed, they slew them and their people, taking all they had as spoil on that side of Jordan, and giving their lands and cities to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, who were as eager to possess at once even outside Canaan, as Moses pleads in vain to go over and see the good land. Chap. 4 turns shameful Baal-peor into an appeal to obey Jehovah's word, neither adding nor diminishing; as they alone have Him so nigh with His statutes and judgments, heard His voice, yet saw no similitude. Therefore were they called to abhor every image and created object, lest Jehovah should expel and scatter them among the idolatrous nations. But even there are they encouraged to turn and obey Him. The chapter closes with three cities chosen for the manslayer in the country beyond Jordan taken from the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. Such a refuge was due to Jehovah, Who would not tolerate the shedding of man's blood on the one hand, nor on the other allow mischance to be dealt with as murder. Where His people dwelt, even though outside their proper barrier, His

rights must be respected. We may observe how distinct is the setting of these refuge cities in Numbers, where they are given within the portion of the Levites, and in view of the decease of the anointed priest: a typical connection of which Deuteronomy here shows no trace, but has its own appropriate reason. What a testimony to the divine inspiration of both! What we have had hitherto suits no book, but the one that has it.

From chap. 5 to the end of 11 are given the general moral principles on which Israel were put before Jehovah. Chaps. 12-26 are rather the special terms in statutes and judgments made with the people.

In chap. 5 Moses repeats the law according to the Horeb covenant, made not with their fathers but with them; as was said just before in the face of Beth-peor to impress their danger, but in the land they had won to cheer them. Similarly to the fourth commandment is annexed, not the recall to creation as in Ex. 20, but the remembrance of His deliverance from Egypt Who now commanded its observance. Chap. 6 is a homiletic application of the first commandment, as 7 is of the second. Chap. 8 impresses the whole from their wilderness experience of God and of their own heart with Canaan in view. Chap. 9 reminds them of their weakness, though assured of victory by Jehovah's grace, and of their grievous sins and rebellion, of Moses' own indignant smashing the tables though inscribed by God's own hand, and of his deprecating divine wrath; so that he came down after other 40 days and nights with freshly written tables for the ark, as he states in a parenthesis of chap. 10 from vers. 1-9, the more singular for containing another parenthesis in 6-9. For if Aaron died at a later day, Levi “at that time” gained a good degree by devotedness, and Jehovah gave the tribe an honored place of service. Obedience therefore is insisted on most touchingly; and love too in chap, 11 in presence of His wondrous ways of mercy as well as judgment, and this to their enjoying the good land. He repeats therefore in conclusion the all-importance of keeping Jehovah's words, they and their children, as in chap. 6, that they might be blessed and their foes put down, instead of reaping a curse on their disobedience.

Now there is no place in the Pentateuch, nor in all the Bible where such appeals are so suitable as in the last words of the prophet and legislator. The very repetitions are not vain but deeply pathetic, and only despicable in the eyes of men as stiff-necked as those who kicked against them of old. It was the adaptation of the law to the new need of the generation about to enter and possess Canaan; but no language is clearer than its claim to be of Moses. If this be untrue, the book is an imposture; if true, what are they who undermine and defame it?

This design accordingly governs the enactments. They regard Israel as if in Canaan. This determines which reappear, and which do not. It has nothing to do with later times or various authors; nor any real discrepancy with the previous books. For Jehovah's land is required for His people obedient and true to His relationship, eschewing false gods and images, with one center to His name for their sacrifices, and their offerings, and either; yet with leave to kill and eat flesh, not the blood, within all their gates (12). For the same reason, prophet or dreamer that enticed to other gods must be put to death; so must be the nearest relative that enticed, however secretly; and if a whole city were thus drawn away, it must be devoted to destruction, as a traitor to Jehovah (13). As sons of Jehovah they must adopt no foreign custom, nor eat unclean food, but were truly to tithe corn, wine, oil, and first-fruits, bringing them or their value to Jehovah's central place. Even another tithe at the end of three years is claimed for their homes, and for the Levite and the

sojourner, the orphan and the widow, besides that carried to the holy center (14). For the people would thus be shown in immediate relationship with Jehovah, while His sanctuary had its place also. What a witness of the book's divine design is this added tithe, here only in the Pentateuch, where alone it could be! It is the people's joy in fellowship with Him Who not only redeemed and kept them, but gave them the land, the Levites, &c. (who had none) being graciously prominent. Chap. 15 follows this up by release of a debtor by a neighbor at the end of seven years, and by a call to constant liberality, as a people blessed of Jehovah. For which reason also the hallowing of male firstlings from herd and flock is here pressed for Jehovah's center; but if a defect existed, to be eaten within their gates as hart or gazelle.

Chap. 16 is so weighty a proof of the same design, that it claims a little farther notice. It enjoins the three feasts of the year which gathered all the males to Jehovah's chosen place in the land, and not empty but according to His blessing given them. It is not the full typical circle of God's ways as in Lev. 23, nor the witness of God's worship yet to be rendered on the earth as in Num. 28; 29. In our chapter we have, first redemption, then the liberty of grace, and lastly, after the harvest and the vintage, the “whole joyfulness” of glory. Yet even so only the seven days are here, because it looks not beyond the blessing of Israel in the land, the scope of Deuteronomy. The close from ver. 18 takes up the means of sustaining the people in righteous order and in abhorrence of idolatry, before Jehovah. Chap 17 first commands integrity of conscience in sacrifice, then joint clearance of disloyalty to Him; and if any had recourse to the priests, and the judge in those days, with meekness to bow to that decision. This leads to the question of a king, who from them was to be chosen of Jehovah, to avoid fleshly and worldly ways, and to write a copy of the law for his personal guidance. Then we have the priests, indeed the whole tribe of Levi (18) with their dues. Next are denounced for Israel, the heathen abominations for which the Canaanites were dispossessed; and the promise of the great Prophet from their midst is given. Acts 3 is conclusive authority that Christ is meant; and so is Acts 7: both Peter and Stephen attesting that Moses so said to Israel.

The same principle applies to chap. 19. They when possessing the land were to separate three cities of refuge more for the unwitting slayer: the murderer must surely die. Landmarks were not to be removed, and testimony guarded. In chap. 20 we see how the fear of Jehovah controlled war, both within and without. It was not a rival to be got rid of, but the abominable races who in fact held the land, destroyed by them, for Israel to whom the land was divinely given. But chap. 26 presents moral truths of interest in the man found slain, the captive woman, the child of the hated wife, and the rebellious son: if these refer to Israel in the land which Jehovah will have hallowed, and to inconsistency judged, the close (we know) points to Him Who became a curse in infinite grace to deliver them and bless the land: the contrast of all who defile it.

On the other hand chap. 22 fosters gracious and even delicate feeling, forbids mixture of principle, punishes impurity, and protects the weak innocents against brutality. Again, in chap. 23 relation to the congregation of Jehovah is guarded, making a difference, and the seemliness even of the camp maintained; the runaway slave shielded from oppression; prostitution and its gain scouted, and interest to from a brother; vows established; kindness enjoined as to vineyard or field, but selfishness forbidden. In chap. 24 divorce was allowed under law; but the Lord brought in better things under grace. Many and various ordinances follow keeping flesh in check to the end of chap. 25.

This is closed by the unique worship in chap. 26 where the Israelite in possession of his inheritance puts the first of his fruits in a basket, goes to the chosen place, and says to the priest that shall be in that day (for Deuteronomy is the anticipation of faith), “I profess this day to Jehovah thy God, that I am come unto the land that Jehovah swore to our fathers to give them.” Then the priest takes the basket and sets it down before Jehovah's altar. And the offerer says, “A perishing Syrian was my father, and he went down to Egypt,” &e. “And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, Jehovah, hast given me.” This set before Him, the Israelite worshipped: else he was free and called to rejoice in all the good which Jehovah had given him and his house, “thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is in thy midst.”

Can anything be conceived more Deuteronomic? or more distinct from the preceding books? To call these specialties inconsistent with foregoing observances is absurd and wrong. Are man's eyes evil because Jehovah's eye is good? Hope and its accomplishment call out gratitude and generosity, as in the tithes of the third year, a characteristic institution beyond the ordinary Levitical tithes and its tithe to the priests. It was the festive and overflowing joy of the people before Jehovah when put in possession of His land. Amos 4:4 alludes to it ironically, because the people were steeped in transgression which tainted all; Tobit (i. 7, 8), though of no divine authority, relates the fact; as does Josephus (Ant. iv. 8, § 22). It is worship, not intermediary in the sanctuary, but direct, personal or household. But the priest in the sanctuary remains none the less; to set the one against the other is only rationalistic shallowness and ill-will. The joy of communion with Jehovah's manifested goodness is provided for in the new order of things assured.

The chapters which follow are in the exactly right place. Chaps. 27 and 28 are supplemental, and each where it should be. They express the sanction of the law. First, on passing Jordan into the land, great stones were to be set up and plastered, with “all the words of this law” written on them; an altar of kindred nature also for Burnt-offerings and Peace-offerings. But a most solemn sign followed: six tribes told off to bless on Gerizim; six to curse on Ebal. Yet, whatever might be the fact, the chapter gives the Levites loudly proclaiming to all Israel nothing but the curses. Such is the basis of the apostolic word to the Galatians 3:10, “As many (persons) as are of works of law are under curse;” not merely those who transgressed, but all on that principle, like the Galatians bewitched. Spiritually, it was no use to tell us of the blessings on Gerizim. Chap. 28 speaks, not of the personal curse, but of governmental blessings or curses and therefore temporary; whilst chap. 29 applies all to the conscience: only the last verse refers to the secret or hidden things belonging to Jehovah. This is of the deepest interest. The things revealed were as to the law; but there were secrets in divine purpose, only alluded to prophetically till the rejection of Christ, when they too were revealed. Chap. 30 illustrates this, if we compare with it the apostle's words in Rom. 10:4-9.

Moses then in chap. 31 announces Joshua, not himself, as their leader over Jordan under Jehovah; and exhorts them to be courageous and strong in His going with them. “This law,” it is definitely said, Moses wrote, and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, and to all the elders of Israel, with the command (at the release of every seven years, when all Israel met before Jehovah at His chosen place) to read it in their ears, men, women, children, and even the stranger within their gates. Then Joshua receives his charge at the tent of meeting and as Jehovah directed, Moses wrote that day a prophetic song, His witness against the sons of Israel. Indeed “this book of the law” too was to be put by the side of the ark for the same purpose. For Moses well knew their rebelliousness, and the evil to befall them at the end of days; but he rejoiced that Jehovah's

purpose is unfailing and irrevocable.

Chap. 32 begins with the song, before which Horace's lyrics are flat and Pindar's froth. Its holy grandeur has no equal. Its prophetic insight justifies the present grace to Gentiles (21) during the hiding of Jehovah's face from His ancient people, and His future vindication of Israel when humbled and believing (35-42); and then will be the fulfillment, not inchoate but complete, when the nations shout for joy [with] His people, or speak aloud their praises, as some Jewish versions say, and in substance the Vulg. but not the Sept. Yet all point to the glorious future. It is utterly groundless that the stand-point is other than Moses then took whether on Jehovah's side or on the people's, though anticipating, as it is the aim of all Deuteronomy, their entrance on their predestined inheritance. Alas! they disobeyed and became idolaters; but Jehovah abides, and will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will make expiation for His land, for His people. After a few words more from Moses to the people, Jehovah bids him go up Nebo, and when he had seen the land, to die.

But this was not before blessing the sons of Israel in chap. 33. His blessing is in view of Jehovah's government of His people in relationship with Himself in the land, the key-note of the book. In this way it differs from Jacob's in Genesis, which is historic and prophetically complete. Yet there is no inconsistency, but each true to its own divine design. What triumphant fervor in both the exordium and the conclusion! and what critical shortsightedness in thinking that it was not suitable to the prophet Moses in Deuteronomy to say, “He thrust out,” “and said, Destroy,” and “Israel dwelleth” or any other form in 27, 28!

There is no need whatever to take chap. 34 as written by Moses before his death. Others followed inspired like him. But, as to the contents, Jehovah buried the dead law-giver; and Jude tells us what none had revealed till then. Satan would have turned a willing people to idolize him dead, whom living they strove against. No man knows his sepulcher unto this day. The testimony to the blessed man of God better suits the successor to whom it was given of God.

Chapter 113

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 6. Divine Design—Joshua

Divine Design—§ 6. Joshua

The book of Joshua is closely akin to the last book of the Pentateuch, which it immediately follows; but it has its own proper design given of God. It is no longer the mediator, no longer the apostle and high priest, but typically the power of Christ in Spirit leading His own in conflict with spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies. The book does not prefigure the personal presence of our Lord appearing from heaven, when He takes the inheritance of the universe in power and establishes the undisputed reign of His glory at the end of the age. Joshua represents the intermediate action of Him Who, dead, risen, and ascended, works by His Spirit in His saints to realize their heavenly title and inheritance in the face of their not yet extirpated enemies. What can be clearer than that Eph. 6:12 warrants, as well as suggests, this as the just application?

It is not heaven now entered individually after death, nor the enjoyment of God's rest when we are all conformed to the image of His Son and are with Him in the Father's house; but our death and resurrection with Christ, and sitting in the heaven-lies in Him, with our consequent responsibility to wrestle against the world-rulers of this darkness on high who strive to hinder our laying hold of our heavenly blessedness in Christ. If the popular Puritan allegory expresses evangelical shortcoming (to say the least), the Romanist and even the Catholic view is still darker. Both ideas betray the loss in this respect of the due and characteristic privilege of the Christian and of the church, developed specially in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

How inimitably chap. 1 prepares the way necessary to God's design! On Moses' death, Joshua is called to “arise and go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give them.” For the people redeemed from Egypt the wilderness was not Jehovah's purpose, only His way. Compare Ex. 3:8, 17; 6:4-8; 13:3-5; 15:13-17. The Jordan sets forth our death and resurrection with Christ, as the Red Sea does Christ's death and resurrection for us. Energy and courage were imperative and unswerving adherence to the word. So it is for the Christian; he is set free, yet bound, to obey God.

In chap 2 how bright the accompanying grace to a hitherto worthless and despised Gentile! Salvation to her, and even to her house, was attested by the scarlet line. She believed Jehovah, and this likewise in the midst of His people, before a blow was struck in Canaan. Then in chap. 3 came the wonder wrought in Jordan when it overflowed all its banks: the ark of the covenant was borne in by the priests, and the waters fled before it, till all Israel passed over on dry ground. It points to the new position with and in Christ for the heavenly places, as the Red Sea prefigured our justification by His death and resurrection, needful even for our pilgrimage through the wilderness. The latter was out of Egypt, as the former into Canaan under Joshua. We died with Christ and were raised together with Him; and therefore should we mortify our members that are on the earth (Col. 2; 3). So we see the full witness of life out of and over death in the memorial of the twelve stones of chap. 4 and the circumcision of Israel in chap. 5 at Gilgal, when, and not before, the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Thus “the old things passed away; behold, new

things are come; but the whole of the God that reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17, 18). The passover was kept as the Lamb's death. Next, the resurrection food, the old corn of the land, took the place of manna. In fact and in spiritual force this could only be now. Compare 2 Cor. 5:16. As in the wilderness, we eat the manna, and we celebrate His death. But as heavenly (for "all things are ours"), we feed on Him risen and on high.

Thus, after the vision not of the unconsumed bush for the desert, but of the Captain with drawn sword for Canaan and holiness in His presence, we have in chap, 6 the first and greatest lesson of Jehovah in Jericho's fall: absolute subjection on man's part; the means seemingly unmeaning or absurd; but Jehovah the real accomplisher, as Joshua learned of Him and told the people before the siege began. But man as he is was faithless; soon the wickedness of Achan brought defeat on Israel who failed to inquire of Jehovah before assailing Ai. That sin must first be sifted out and judged. Even then self-confidence is rebuked in chap. viii.: for all must go even against so small a place, and a special ambush be laid, and a signal appointed by Him be obeyed, when victory comes.

But the land was owned as Jehovah's according to Deut. 21:22, 23, and by the altar of Ebal which proclaimed Israel's responsibility to obey. Gibeon in chap 9 disclosed that the chiefs failed in vigilant faith, for Israel was then deceived into an oath to spare a race whom Jehovah had devoted to destruction. But chap. 10 shows a mighty discomfiture of the hosts that gathered against Gibeon, when sun and moon, or rather Jehovah, hearkened to Joshua's voice, who passed on, smiting the whole country, the mountain and the Negeb, and the lowland, and the slopes, and all their kings. He let none remain; but he utterly destroyed all that breathed, as Jehovah the God of Israel commanded. There was no more doubt of their wicked abominations than of his divine warrant to execute judgment. Thence is the return to Gilgal, whence he went up: there, was the memorial of death and resurrection; there, the mortification of the flesh. When weak, then are we strong. A new combination by the king of Hazor (chap. 11) only brought the word of Jehovah for a complete victory to Joshua till the land had rest from war. Chap. 11 rehearses the conquest and the land acquired.

Yet the second half of the book tells us how imperfectly man's part was done. The failure was assuredly not in Jehovah, but in His people: so it ever is. Caleb received his portion, but not even Judah made good his lot by dispossessing the enemies of Jehovah. Ephraim and half Manasseh did no better. On these details, so full of interest to those who will reenter and never more leave the land, one need not dwell now. Who but God could have given us such a book, on the surface so simple, but with depths beyond man's plummet? So Caleb was not forgotten, neither were Zelophehad's daughters; nor did Joshua show favor to the sons of Joseph, but faithfulness. At length also he rebuked the slack tribes, in order to taking possession by lot, as we learn in chaps. 18; 19.

The cities of refuge were appointed (chap. 20) on this as on that side of Jordan; and the Levites received their forty-eight cities with their suburbs (chap. 21) and the two tribes and half were sent away (chap. 22). But they built an altar before crossing Jordan, which roused the alarm of Israel, who sent Phinehas and other representatives to remonstrate. On disclaiming any thought save of a witness between them and their God, that they too had portion in Jehovah, peace prevailed.

In chaps. 23; 24 are two charges of Joshua, the first more general, the second more detailed and emphatic, in which the departing leader set blessing and warning before them, but not a word about his own achievements in either. In the latter he reminds them how Abraham was chosen out of an idolatrous house; how Egypt was plagued, and Israel brought out; how the Amorites opposed and were effaced; how Balaam was forced to bless; how the nations in Canaan were delivered into their hand. Then he puts their danger from all false gods, avowing fidelity to Jehovah from him and his. On the people declaring their loyalty, Joshua owns his just fears, whilst they repeat their allegiance; and a covenant was thereon made in Shechem. The book closes with the death and burial of Joshua in the hill-country of Ephraim: so Joseph's bones had been laid there too, and Eleazar's also, each in its own quarter.

Not only was the book of Joshua of the highest interest and importance to Israel as the evidence of Jehovah's accomplishing in power what His mouth had promised; but it sets out to the Christian the present privilege of realizing our spiritual blessing in the heavenlies as in no other part of the O. T. If the types in the first half reveal the mighty work of God in Christ risen and ascended, the second speaks most practically to our souls also. It was written by one who “passed over” Jordan that day (Josh. 5:1); but it was and must be by God's unerring hand and mind and love, let unbelief rail as it may.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 7. Divine Design—Judges

Divine Design § 7. Judges

Is this book less marked by the finger of God? Here it is not slackness but growing failure, and grievous forsaking of Jehovah; and Bochim succeeds to Gilgal, so that He sold them into heathen hands. Yet it attests His ear open to their cry, and deliverers raised up in answer. It is the book beyond all others of revivals on God's part, when to His mercy His people appealed out of their misery from their shameful sins. Historically and morally the book could only be where it is; the divine design is exactly suited to the facts.

To Jud. 3:7 is an introduction, as chap. 17 to the end is a dark yet needed appendix. Joshua's death did not hinder Jehovah's blessing when He was looked to by Judah, and for Simeon too. Othniel's early story is repeated. Yet did they all like Benjamin fail in energy: so too did Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. Nor was it felt, till Jehovah's angel (chap. 2) came up from Gilgal to Bochim with the dread word that He would not drive out the accursed race whom they had spared. Thus they sunk lower and lower, as each deliverer died. Tears cannot do the work of faith. The evil was within and against Jehovah. Humiliation came from heathen without, instead of self-judgment by the word.

Their first oppressor was Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, till the Spirit of Jehovah wrought in Othniel, and the land had rest for forty years. Then came the dominion of the Moabite Eglon, till Ehud was raised up, and the land rested eighty years. Shamgar followed for deliverance from the Philistines (chap. 4). Again Jabin of Hazor mightily oppressed Israel twenty years, when Deborah was used by God to subdue the Canaanite through Barak; and they sing Jehovah's praise in the noble ode of chap. 5.

On fresh evil Jehovah delivers Israel into the hand of Midian; but when they cried to Him, Gideon was raised up to be a savior. But what lessons of faith to make the weak strong in chaps. 6; 7; 8! Yet never were the people lower morally. And so it came out openly when Gideon died; and retribution fell on Abimelech and the men of Shechem (chap. 9).

Afterward as we read in chap. 10 came Tola, and Jair with his thirty sons; but when Israel sank into the worship not only of other strange gods but of those of the Philistine and the Ammonite, Jehovah sold them into the hands of those neighboring peoples; and their cry arose, and His soul was grieved for their misery. Jephthah (ch. 11) the despised became their leader, on whom was the Spirit of Jehovah; and Ammon was subdued. But the haughty men of Ephraim, graciously answered by Gideon, met a severer judge in the Gileadite; after whom came Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (ch. 12).

A worse relapse brought a stern and nearer chastening from the Philistines. Here therefore the deliverer was a Nazarite separation to Jehovah was the condition of suited mercy. Yet Samson was weak enough morally, and his work more individual, and rather prowess physically, than in any previous case. His strength lay in maintaining the secret of Jehovah; and when he gave it up

basely, he became as another man for a while, but his vision gone, till God visited the vain glory of the Philistines with a disaster at his hands greater in his death than the victories of his life (chaps. 13-16).

The tale of Micah in chaps. 17; 18 is not in chronological order, but here given after the history, to lay bare the lawlessness in religious matters which prevailed in the days of the judges; as that in chaps. 19-20 lets us see the frightful demoralization in those days, and the calamities it brought on Israel, when Benjamin was all but extinguished as a tribe. How marvelous the grace which turned their shame to profit, both in self-judgment from God, and in recovery of fraternal affection! Who but Himself could or would thus have lifted the veil off His people for good?

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 8. Divine Design—Ruth

Divine Design § 8. Ruth

It is not our task to search into the motives which led the later Jews to take the book of Ruth from its place, as indicated in our Bibles as well as in the Septuagint (the Greek Version rendered long before our Lord came), and class it with the Lamentations, Song of Solomon, Esther, and Ecclesiastes, as the five Megilloth, part of the Kbetubim or Hagio-grapha. Following Judges and preceding the books of Samuel, it is just where it should be. It falls within the days of the judges, and most fittingly points on to the Beloved whom Jehovah chose to be His anointed, coming to the throne when Saul fell.

But what a contrast with those old anomalous days, especially with the horrors of the appendix! The Holy Spirit here brings before us from within that period a tale of surpassing beauty, in particular of her whose name is the title.

The death of Elimelech ("whose God is King") left Naomi a widow, the type of Israel. Her two sons also died, and she returns from among strangers to the land of promise, hearing that Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread. Only did Ruth cleave to her. So it will be after the people's sins and desolations; a remnant will return, after Lo-ammi had been long written. This is vividly typified by the Moabitess daughter-in-law; but meanwhile Naomi owns herself as yet Mara, not “my pleasantness” but “bitterness.” But come back to Bethlehem, they meet with Boaz (“in him is strength”); and Naomi, encouraged by his kindness and character, instructs Ruth to claim her Levirate title. Another, who represented the nearer claim of the law in flesh, refuses to take the inheritance with Ruth; while Boaz represents the risen Heir, and as the kinsman-redeemer accepts the widow to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And out of their union sprang Obed, father of Jesse, father of David. So it will be in the last days, when the godly remnant will be owned in grace by the Redeemer, before the kingdom is established in power and glory. Types of the Kingdom will soon appear in the books that follow this: personally in David the warrior king and in the son of David, the man of peace, both needed to give an adequate view of the Messiah in relation to Israel.

That these anticipations of Holy Writ are true can readily be proved to men of faith. All men however have not faith; but if the words are of God from first to last, if they will be surely fulfilled in the grand events of the latter day, what can one think of the spirit, aim, and state of those who, bearing the Lord's name, strain every nerve to darken and destroy these living oracles, reducing them to legends haphazard and of varying merit, but really denying that God wrote them by His inspired servants, that they might be worthy of all acceptance?

Chapter 116

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 9. Divine Design—1 Samuel

Divine Design § 9. 1 Samuel

The wisdom of God is no less apparent in these four books, which are parts of the same design. They open with the failure of the priesthood, as distinctly as the people had failed both in the wilderness and in the land. “By strength shall no man prevail.” Since sin entered, and death through it, grace alone avails, as in Hannah (1, 2), and expressed in her prayer-song, and by the man of God prophetically to Eli in the marked change of even the faithful priest walking before Jehovah's Anointed forever. Thus was the King foreshadowed in sovereign grace, before the evil heart of unbelief wearied of Jehovah, and would have “a king like all the nations.” Hitherto the high priest was “the anointed.” Soon was there to be the anointed King before whom the priest would walk, which finds its complete realization only in the Lord Jesus.

The word of Jehovah meanwhile calls Samuel, to whom He revealed Himself for all Israel (3); and the ark abused by selfishness passes to the Philistines (4). But if this was Ichabod for people and priests, the enemy and their idol were forced to bow before the vindicating judgments of Jehovah, only too glad to send the ark away with their guilt-offering (5, 6). If the men of Bethshemesh indulged in profane curiosity, a yet more severe blow befell those who ought to have known better. To Kirjath-jearim is the ark brought, and abides there twenty years. It never returns to the old order, and only enters its due place when David's son set up in peace the picture of glory, which still awaits the people under Messiah and the new covenant. When Israel lamented, Samuel calls them to repentance and gathers them to Mizpah where his prayer rises because of a counter gathering of the Philistines, who were driven out into their border (7). But if Samuel judged in faith, he could not make his sons judges beyond the name, when Israel, revolting from them, revolted also from Jehovah (8); and He putting aside Samuel's indignation, gave them a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath, as says Hosea. This episode occupies to the end of the book; but within it is the tale of him who was made the type of the true Beloved, His king, to sit on His holy hill of Zion. Saul was the chosen, higher than any of the people, according to the heart of Israel (9), saluted as king, by all save some base fellows (chap. 10), and achieving a crushing victory over the Ammonites (11). Samuel, acknowledged to have been faithful, warns them of their responsibility, but assures them of his continued intercession (12); whereas Saul after two years is heard summoning “the Hebrews,” as a heathen might say who believed not that they were Jehovah's people (13), and offered the burnt-offering in his disobedience. Jonathan wrought with God, his father Saul only spoiling the victory and only kept by the people from making Jonathan the victim of his superstition (14). Samuel let him know, on his fresh disobedience as to Amalek, that Jehovah rejected him from the throne of Israel (15).

Jehovah in chap. 16 takes the initiative, and has Jesse's youngest son anointed by the prophet. Meanwhile he is sought to soothe with the harp the king troubled by an evil spirit. Then follows his victory over Goliath in chap. 17, with Jonathan's love, and Saul's jealous hatred, Merab given to another, Michal to him as a snare, but only proving Jehovah to be with David who escaped the

king's murderous hand (18, 19). In 20 Jonathan, slow to believe his father's renews his covenant with David, who becomes now an exile, and receives the show-bread from the priest with Goliath's sword. This brings death on the sons of Aaron at Doeg's hand (21, 22) and gives occasion to many a psalm of plaint and praise, as David hides in Keilah, Ziph, and Engedi (23, 24). Nabal's folly is as plain as Abigail's faith in chap. 25. But if David's generosity puts Saul to shame at Hachilah (26), his faith breaks down in 27, and an interval in no way to his praise follows in Ziklag. Saul seeks the witch of Endor, when Samuel's soul appeared, not her familiar spirit, and tells him the approaching doom (28). David is refused as an ally by the Philistine lords, and returns to find Ziklag burnt, and the families of him and his men captive (29, 30), but defeats the Amalekite spoilers, as the Philistines smite Israel, Saul, and his sons on Gilboa (31).

Chapter 117

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 10. Divine Design—2 Samuel

Divine Design § 10 2 Samuel

The second book (1) opens with David's resentment at the stranger who falsely taxed himself with the slaying of Saul to please him, and with a genuine lament over the fallen house. In chap. 2 at the word of Jehovah he goes to Hebron, and reigns over Judah seven years and a half. For two years reigns Saul's son Ishbosheth over Benjamin and Israel generally, through Abner's influence, with whom Joab contends. David only had title from God who let the hindrances pass, without the least sympathy on his own part with the guilty instruments (3, 4). In chap. 5 all the tribes come to him in Hebron, and anoint David king, who reigns in Jerusalem over all Israel thirty-three years more. The stronghold of Zion falls; and Tire sends gifts. In vain the Philistines gather against David, who inquires of Jehovah, instead of going at once in the confidence of prowess and old victories. Again they come; but David only acts as Jehovah commands. Still the ark remained in Abinadab's house; and David desired its presence (6). But he did not inquire, nor did he search the scriptures, how it should be done. So it ended in death, as it began in error. And the ark was carried into the house of Obed-edom for three months of blessing to all the house. Tidings of this awakened the king to the homage of faith; and the ark was duly carried into the city of David with joy. It was not yet the temple, but the provisional tabernacle beyond which David could not go. The rest of glory was reserved for Solomon, type of Christ in peace, as David was of His wars. All this appears clearly in the prophets who came afterward; here its analogue comes historically; but who could have done either but the Holy Spirit? David is not viewed as a priest on his throne, but acts by grace as a servant, and so thoroughly as to rouse the fleshly anger of Michal, who pays the penalty of her contempt.

How proper did it seem as we read in chap. 7 to build Jehovah a palace as the king had done for himself! But Nathan the prophet is corrected by Jehovah the same night: David's son, who shall be Jehovah's son, is to build that house; and his house shall be established forever. So it shall be in the most glorious way. If this be the truth, who but God could have so revealed? and how perfectly in keeping with the divine design in this book! David could no more build the temple than Moses could enter the land. Hence we may note his subduing the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, &c., in chap. 8 He typifies the warrior still. The man of peace shall build. Christ will answer to both in the fullest perfection. David's grace to Jonathan's son shines in chap. 9. But chap. 10 shows how the type fails; chap. 11, how far he fell shamefully; and chap. 12, how the sword should never depart from his house in Jehovah's moral government. What a rebuke was Amnon's lust in chap. 13. What another was Absalom's blood-guiltiness! Nor was this all. For if through Joab Absalom returns (14), his rebellion breaks out, as chap. 15 shows, and David's flight in chap. 16. Ahithophel comes to nothing in chap. 17; and Absalom perishes by Joab's hand in 18. Touching is the king's sorrow; but he returns in chap. 19. Sheba's rebellion ends with the traitor's death, but not without Joab's guile and cruelty in chap. 20; as chap. 21 gives the striking proof that Jehovah punishes in king Saul's house perfidy toward even the accursed Hivites of Gibeon.

Then how remarkably comes in here David's song of deliverance from all his enemies and Saul too (22)! followed by his “last words” in chap. 23 when he long reigned, but also had the grief that “his house is not so with God;” and though he could say the covenant was all his salvation and desire, yet “He maketh it not to grow.” Judgment must intervene; which Christ alone could execute perfectly. Who but God could have so written? even as He will accomplish all in its day. Then follows the roll of David's worthies on the one hand, and the plague that devoured the thousands (chap. 24), about whose numbering he sinned in the pride of his heart, in painful contrast with Him Whom he foreshadowed so much. But even there mercy glories against judgment at Jerusalem, and the threshing-floor of Araunah becomes the site of the altar to Jehovah, the meeting-place of reconciliation for His people forever.

Directly and indirectly we thus see that the books of Samuel are God giving man's choice of a king superseded by the figure of the true Beloved, reducing His enemies to subjection; as the Lord will when He comes in power and glory at the end of the age, before He reigns in peace.

Chapter 118

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 11. Divine Design—1 Kings

Divine Design § 11 1 Kings

The first book of Kings pursues the history of the kingdom, not only to the division under Rehoboam, but to the death of Jehoshaphat and the reign of Ahaziah. A design similar to 1 and 2 Samuel pervades it and its successor. So in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate they are together entitled the Four books of Kings. But they essentially differ from all other annals, in that prophets in this case were the historians: a character which rationalism does its utmost to doubt, darken, and destroy, but in vain. Only Christ stands, and will, in every relation in which the first man failed; and as king it will be displayed power and glory on earth as in the heavens. Who but an unbeliever cannot discern a greater than David in Him Who, delivered from the strivings of the people, is made Head of the nations?

Here we have the type set in responsibility, blessed and a blessing in the measure of fidelity, and bringing in ruin through unfaithfulness till there was no remedy. But Jehovah cannot fail nor His Anointed, as the consummation of the age will prove to a wondering world. These books testify what the kingdom was in its decline and fall with the assured promise of the “morning without clouds,” when judgment clears the way for His reign Whose right it is. Such is the divine design of all four: in the first two, David's history in this point of view; and now Solomon's, who is seen established on the throne, the more for Adonijah's rebellion, in which fell crafty Joab, and later, Shimei, with Abiathar the priest (chaps. 1, 2) in God's righteous government. Though affinity with the Gentile has its expression in chap. 3 and Solomon was blessed with wisdom and much more, a feebler faith appears in his cleaving to the brazen altar and the great high place in Gibeon, as compared with David's appreciation of the ark. But the splendor of the kingdom was great, the peace maintained, Israel prosperous and glad, the Gentiles filled with his fame, and subservient to his glory (4, 5). Then follows (6, 7) his building in seven years the temple of Jehovah, himself but a shadow of Him Who is to sit and rule, a priest on His throne, according to Zech. 6; his house in thirteen years, and that of the forest of Lebanon, with the porch of judgment, and a house for Pharaoh's daughter. In chap. 8 at the feast of Tabernacles he dedicates Jehovah's house in prayers, to which Jehovah answers (chap. 9) in language only to be fulfilled in Christ's reign when His world-kingdom is come (Rev. 11:15). And the queen of Sheba (10) prefigures the Gentile powers coming to the brightness of His rising Who is far greater than Solomon. But darkness falls on the king in chap. 11 and prophecy tells of approaching judgment. So it is with the first man.

Under his son Rehoboam it comes in part and soon; for Jeroboam rebels with the tribes of Israel, leaving Judah. Rehoboam must bow to the word of God (chap. 12). Prophets rise into marked prominency, and especially in Israel now apostate and idolatrous; as Jeroboam was made to feel (13, 14), though he adheres to his sin. Abijam follows Rehoboam in evil; Asa shows piety, but trusts in a Syrian alliance to his sorrow (15). The godly Jehoshaphat succeeded, though he too failed in allying with Ahab and Ahaziah. At this time was the ministry of Elijah the prophet and of Micaiah (17 - 22). But we need not dwell on the details, of wondrous interest and instruction

though they be.

Chapter 119

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 12. Divine Design—2 Kings

Divine Design § 12 2 Kings

Ahaziah fights against Jehovah and perishes (chap. 1). Jehoram is no better. Where the king, as in Israel then, was not a link of relationship with God, but rather a witness against Him as being idolatrous, the prophet was so in extraordinary grace. But now Elijah was to be caught up, yet not before Elisha is called, as it were from that ascension, and hence has a character of grace as marked as his in righteousness who retired to Horeb, confessing that all was over as to Israel. Jericho is relieved from the curse, though the mockers are punished (chap. 2). Moab fights in vain (3). Miracles of mercy abound, even to deliverance from death and to the outside Gentile (4, 5); so that the baffled foe comes no more. The famine yields to unexpected plenty (chaps. 6, 7). Israel will yet be restored (8), whatever humiliation may be even for Judah, whatever changes in Israel (9, 10). Judah seemed menaced with the destruction of the royal house: but a branch is hid, the pledge of sure blessing (11) at the end, and of judgment preceding. The Syrians meanwhile oppress both Judah (12) and Israel (13), though dying Elisha helps the king who failed in faith to consume the foe. The pride of Judah's king received its humiliation (14); and Jehovah relieved the bitter afflictions of Israel.

Then the Assyrian is bought off by Menahem, during the long reign of Azariah (or Uzziah) over Judah (15). But Pul is followed by TiglathPileser who sweeps into captivity the north of the land. In Jotham's time the kings of Syria and Israel begin to act against Judah; but in the days of Ahaz, wicked as he was (16), Jehovah pronounces the failure of their confederacy. Yet later, in the reign of Hezekiah is Samaria taken, and Israel as a whole carried away (chap. 17), according to Jehovah's judgment of their apostasy; whereas the Assyrian Sennacherib has his blasphemy punished by an unexampled blow from Jehovah in one night, as he was slain afterward by his own sons in the house of Nisroch his god (chaps. 18, 19). The trustful son of David typified the final fall of that power, when Messiah shall reign, great even unto the ends of the earth (Mic. 5:1-6). But his rising as it were from death is followed by vainglory before the ambassadors from Babylon; when the prophet announces Judah's captivity to this power, not to the Assyrian (chap. 20).

The revival in that day no doubt gave rise to fond hopes; but it is succeeded by the enormous wickedness of Manasseh (21), and his imitating son, Amon. The pious fear of Josiah (22, 23) was but a brief stay of the impending ruin, which was hastened by the iniquity of those summed up in Matt. 1:11 as “Jechoniah and his brethren.” Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar might contend for a little while; but the divine design had long been uttered. Out of Egypt Israel was called; into Babylon Judah must go (24, 25), and now utterly corrupt and apostate, became the slave of the patroness of corruption; till all her graven images were broken to the ground, and the avenger said of Jerusalem, She shall be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. This however was but providential.

Grace only can really meet the need to the divine glory, crushing all the power of Satan; though for the earth God will be glorified in Israel. This Christ takes up in Isa. 49 where He substitutes

Himself for the utterly ruined people; while His rejection and atoning death become the pivot for deliverance and righteousness, power and glory. What design so worthy of God, so blessed for man and Israel? And this it is which runs through the four books just surveyed. All the wit of man would have failed to conceive or express the ways of divine government here traced. God alone was capable of forming such a moral already accomplished in the realities of that land under the sway of kings (for the most part failing and judged), but with ample foreshadow of overturning, until He come Who alone is worthy, to Whom the kingdom will be given.

Chapter 120

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 13. Divine Design—1 Chronicles

Divine Design. 13. 1 Chronicles

That there is a purpose in the book of Chronicles, now divided into two, distinct from that which runs through the preceding books of Kings, is unquestionable. No “And” connects their beginning, as before. But the Septuagintal title of Παραλειπ■μενα, “Things deficient or omitted,” fails to describe it adequately. A great deal is repeated though not without characteristic differences, while very much is fresh with notable omissions of a markedly homogeneous kind. The introductory genealogy from man's existence on the earth ought to have shut out the notion of a mere supplement, and prepared for a special design of God; Who here points out, in the midst of general ruin, His sovereign mercy and blessing bound up with the house of David and the tribe of Judah, whatever His chastenings because of their sins. They were a spiritual retrospect, like Deuteronomy, which also is not in continuity with its predecessors, though to the believer undoubtedly of Moses, as the Chronicles in all probability of Ezra, both admitting of a little inspired addition to complete them. But there is no such ground to insist on Ezra here, as on Moses there, who claims the book with unusual precision; so that one must accept this, or treat it as a fraudulent romance and risk the consequence both now and before the judgment-seat of Christ.

The so-called first book parts into two sections, chaps. 1-9:34, and 10-29.

In the nine chapters constituting the preliminary section we have the principle long after formulated by the apostle Paul, not first the spiritual but the natural, then the spiritual. Even the general genealogy of chap. 1 is governed by this divine purpose. That of the sons of Israel from chap. 2 follows the same rule. In chap. 3 are named David's sons, born in Hebron and in Jerusalem, Judah thus occupying the space from 2:3 to 4:23, the sons of Simeon following who were allotted there and were specially associated as in Judg. 1. How Reuben, the firstborn, lost the primacy which sovereign grace gave to Judah, though the birthright passed to Joseph, we read in chap. 5; and Reuben's war with the Hagarites, which leads to a brief notice of the Gadites and Manassites, his neighbors. Then comes the incomparably fuller view of the Levites and Aaron's sons in the long chap. 6; as those of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, the other half of Manasseh, Ephraim, Asher, curtly follow in chap. 7. But Benjamin reappears particularly in chap. 8 to bring in Saul, his forefathers and descendants. Dan and Zebulun are not even noticed. Chap. 9 sketches the circumstances on the return from Babylon, when some of Israel, but especially the sacred and the royal tribes came back, in and near Jerusalem.

We may regard the history opening with Saul and his house in chap. 9:35, but hastening to his sad end on mount Gilboa, with the Holy Spirit's moral comment on it in chap. 10. Thereon, for here too the spiritual was after the natural, follows the true king of Jehovah's choice, not in Hebron only but Jerusalem; Zion taken; and his worthies in chaps. 11, 12. Then we have the ark with the failures that first hindered in 13, while David was blessed when he was dependent on God (chap. 14); but at length he honored God in due order and reverence of the ark to the joy of all but Michal (15) Yet was its place only provisional, whatever the blessing and praise on that day (16). David's son was

to build Jehovah's house (17), and his thanks rise higher still in the assured and everlasting blessing of his own house. David's conquests and prosperous reign through Jehovah's favor appear in chap. 18, and the Ammonite king insults him to the ruin of himself and his allies (chaps. 19, 20). David's terrible fall in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba is left out, as well as his tribulations before he reached the throne; not so in the pride that counted Israel, which drew from Jehovah pestilence, arrested at Oman's threshing-floor, Mount Moriah, thereon bought by David as the site for Jehovah's house (chaps. 21, 22). The sanctuary then becomes actively his concern, and his charge to Solomon to build it, and to the princes of Israel to help. Then in chap. 23 David divides the Levites for their services, and in 24 the sons of Aaron into their twenty-four courses, as in 25 the singers and musicians into a like number. The doorkeepers and other officials are seen arranged in chap. 26. Then in 27 we have the civil officers for every month, and heads of tribes, and the royal controllers in their several places. In 28, 29 the king repeats his charge before all the chiefs as to Solomon and the house to Jehovah's name, with its inspired pattern and his ample store of material, stirring up pious generosity in the men of means, and blessing Jehovah before all with sacrifice abundant. Solomon is again made king, with Zadok priest. And David's close is touchingly recounted, with Solomon reigning in his stead: the twofold type of Christ, as we have seen in Moses and Joshua. The episode of Adonijah, &c. is only in the Book of Kings.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 14. Divine Design—2 Chronicles

Divine Design 14. 2 Chronicles

The continuation begins with Solomon in the same aspect as David. It is the figure of the kingdom. How blessed when the Great King reigns, with Whom is no failure, but blessing to the full! Solomon's faults, like David's, it was not the point to name, save where otherwise it was required. “Jehovah his God was with him and magnified him exceedingly.” But the brazen altar was before him as before the people, rather than the ark, David's delight. He asked wisdom of God, and received also riches and honor beyond all (chap. 1). But the house of Jehovah engaged him rightly, and the king of Tire helped him, and all the strangers in the land served (chap. 2). This is described in 3, 4 and the assembly on its completion, with their hallelujahs when the glory of Jehovah filled God's house (chap. 5), for indeed He only is God: so little have diverse documents to do with the terms. And Solomon's prayer goes up with blessing in chap. 6, and the fire came down from the heavens as answer in chap. 7. It was the feast of Tabernacles, as well as of the altar's dedication, kept with joy and gladness; and Jehovah appeared to Solomon, but not without solemn warning. The Gentile gives gifts (chap. 8), and Pharaoh's daughter has her separate house; and his fame spreads far and wide, so that Sheba's queen comes with her precious things and proving his wisdom (chap. 9), as indeed all the kings of the earth owned it.

Next Rehoboam fools away all but Judah and Benjamin, and Israel rebelled against David's house (chap. 10); but here the contrast with the preceding books is striking, for we have no account save of what adhered loyally and in faith. Even Rehoboam bowed to the man of God sent to prohibit his avenging Israel's defection (chap. 11); yet afterward (12) forsaking the law he was chastened by the hand of Shishak. Abijah who succeeded and had more faith inflicted a severe blow on Jeroboam and Israel. So with Asa in chap. 14, before whom Ethiopia's myriads fell, and who was blessed in hearing Oded the prophet, chap. 15. But relying on Syria against Israel (chap. 16), he was smitten of God by a lingering death. The bright reign of faithful Jehoshaphat follows in 17-20, yet with the blot of joining himself with the idolatrous kings of Israel for state purposes to his shame more than once.

Of Jehoram and Ahaziah there is only evil to say in 21, 22; and the wicked Athaliah seemed to have extinguished the lamp of David's house; but not so. Jehoiada, the priest, conceals the heir in the house of God six years. In chap. 23 we read how the young king got his own again, and the murderous usurper came to her death. But Joash too forgot his debt to Jehoiada when his son Zechariah was slain by the people at the king's command; and he too publicly and personally came to grief. Amaziah had a mixed career according to his behavior and ended ill, chap. 25; and Uzziah reigned well and long, but he also transgressing in pride became a leper judicially till his death, chap. 26.

Jotham did better, as we read in 27, but Ahaz (“that is that King Ahaz”) walked in the ways of Israel's kings, and spite of calls of grace, sank lower and lower. His son Hezekiah was simple and strong in faith, as we see in chaps. 29-32 and honored in the overthrow of the Assyrian. Yet he got

lifted up at last; though here again the Spirit omits the details of his sickness, and his vain display before the ambassadors from Babylon, both only touched on in the Chronicles. The horrors of Manasseh's reign are shortly given, and also his repentance and restoration after captivity; Amon's evil follows in the same chap. 33, but punished by his own servants who were themselves punished.

In the midst of Judah more and more corrupt, how marked is the tender conscience of Josiah with boldness for Jehovah's honor and hatred of idolatry and heed to the word of God! so that the passover was kept as not before since Samuel's days. But fighting without divine direction he fell before the then king of Egypt; and the evil under Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and the profane Zedekiah brought on the destruction of the kingdom, of Jerusalem and the temple, with the captivity of the remnant in Babylon. “There was no remedy.” After seventy years Cyrus the Persian according to the word of Jehovah proclaimed the return and the rebuilding of His house at Jerusalem.

Chapter 122

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 15. Divine Design—Ezra

Divine Design 15. Ezra

This book has its own design from God, manifestly distinct from that of Kings as well as Chronicles, even if the style of the latter did not point to the same writer, “a ready scribe in the law of Moses which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given.” In fact however the book before us was joined, not with the Chronicles, but with Nehemiah, though this was by the governor's hand, long designated together “the Book of Ezra,” and it would seem, only late in the fourth century after Christ separated as we now have them. Ezra was not the witness of the facts in chaps. 1-6, as he was of those in the remaining four; but there is no sufficient ground to doubt that he was inspired to give us all.

The overthrow of Babylon was an event of signal moment, not only in itself and its immediate consequences, but yet more as prefiguring the judgment of the Gentile dominion from the God of heaven on the actual apostasy and ruin for the time of Jehovah's people. This is made plain in Isa. 13, 14 where, as none ought to doubt that it predicts the catastrophe that befell the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride by the Medes, &c., so none should overlook that “the Burden” does not stop short of the final downfall of the power which “the golden city” began, when Jehovah will have compassion on, not on a mere remnant of Judah chiefly, but “on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land,” and “they shall take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.”

This book of Ezra was of the utmost importance to show the divine account of the intervening provisional state in which they waited for the Messiah, and the fulfillment yet further when they are completely restored, in the land, under the new covenant, and have the true David and David's Son reigning over them in power and glory. They are meanwhile Lo-ammi (not-My-people); they are (not “were”) bondmen of the Gentile power. Compare Ezra 9:9, and Neh. 9:36 which makes the correction certain. Yet Cyrus had proclaimed more than liberty to return and even a charge to build Jehovah His house in Jerusalem according to prophecy. Withal he returned the captured vessels, gold and silver, by Shesh-bazzar, prince of Judah (1); and the children of the captivity went up (2), every one to his city, upwards of 42,000 genealogically reckoned, besides their servants male and female. Most appropriately they set up, not first a wall, but the altar, and offered Burnt-offerings, and kept the feast of Tabernacles (for it was the seventh month), and other dues to Jehovah according to His word, before the foundation of the house was laid. When it was laid before their eyes, greatly wept the old, loudly shouted the young (3). But the adversaries were on the alert, first pretending a friendly alliance, next accusing the returned remnant to Cambyses (=Ahasuerus), and as he evidently would not oppose his father's decree, then to Smerdis (=Artaxerxes), who lent them his ear; and the work ceased (4) But the prophets, looking to God, re-awakened their zeal by their prophesying (5); and the work went on, notwithstanding the opposition of influential antagonists, before the fresh letter to Darius Hystaspis brought out his decided confirmation of Cyrus' original proclamation. The house was finished in his sixth year, and

its dedication kept with joy; and remnant though they were, shorn of their chief ornaments, they embraced all Israel in faith and subjection to the word; as in due time they kept the passover duly purified and joyfully, though owning the Gentile king in the bondage to which God had reduced them because of their departure from Himself (6).

After these things, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Ezra the priest went up from Babylon, and with him other Israelites of all grades by the king's favor, and with free-will offerings, and authority for all Ezra wanted for the house of his God, and instruction and judging of the Jews: a witness alike of divine mercy through the Gentile, and of the abnormal position of Israel (7). The genealogy follows in chap. 8 of Ezra's companions, their fears, yet faith, and safe arrival. But this faithful servant of God, when he learned the affinity of those already in the land with the Gentiles, sat down grieved and overwhelmed until the evening oblation; then he poured out with tears his humiliation to Jehovah (chap. 9). There Shechaniah confessed for the rest; and they agreed to put away the evil at a solemn assembly of all by proclamation. And so it was done, though not without resistance; for the sin was widespread, even among the priests.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 16. Divine Design—Nehemiah

Divine Design 16. Nehemiah

Not less distinct is God's design in the book of Nehemiah. But it is their civil policy, not their religious position. Both must be according to God, but in the lowly estate that became captives returned from Babylon. Pretension in either would have dishonored God; but obedience is ever imperative: no ruin absolves from its obligation. In this book we have his own touching account of the grief that filled him even at the Persian court in Artaxerxes L.'s twentieth year, when he heard of the great affliction and reproach under which the remnant lay, the wall even still broken down, and the gates burnt with fire. So he gave himself to mourning and prayer to the God of heaven. Still He was God and would hear supplication (1). The great king perceived his sadness, though a forbidden thing there; and his cup-bearer, not without fresh prayer, made his request to build the city of his fathers' sepulchers, which was granted, to the vexation of new adversaries. But Nehemiah saw all with his own eyes, though by night; and only then laid his purpose to build the wall before the chief men, who were cheered and strengthened accordingly, whatever the scorn and despite of their neighbors (2).

Great things were far from Nehemiah, but jealousy for God and persevering love for Israel in their utter weakness and shame. Chap. 3 is the deeply interesting account of their labors in detail from the high priest down to the least. If nobles failed here, even a ruler's daughter repaired elsewhere. Great was the anger and indignation of Sanballat; bitter the contempt of Tobiah; but Nehemiah prayed and set a watch, and they built with swords girt on, and the trumpeter by the governor (4). What mortification and anger, when he heard of Jews exacting usury of their brethren, and even enslaving them as the issue! So he put them to shame and redressed the wrong; as his own unselfishness rebuked them (5.). Then we see him in chap. 6 escaping the snare, as before the violence, of the foe; and the wall is finished, in spite of treachery of priests, prophets, and nobles. The genealogy of the returned captives under Zerubbabel here appears in chap. 7 in connection with his repeopling Jerusalem and building houses in it.

Next in chap. 8 we are told, as the seventh month was come, all the people gathered, and Ezra read the book of the law; and when the people wept, they were exhorted to good cheer; for a day holy to Jehovah does not call for gloom. But obedience is of all moment always; and so they judged all previous departure, as they had not done since Joshua's day. Chap. 9 shows them fasting shortly after, as becomes them, with a true repentance: so in Ezra's case before. Chap. 10 gives the list of those who sealed the covenant of separation from strangers and of confession of sins from the Tirshatha downwards; as in chap. 11 we have those who devoted themselves to reside in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Again, chap. 12 furnishes the names of the priests and the Levites that had first returned, and those descended till subsequent days.

The dedication of the wall brings us down to the time when Nehemiah came again from the Persian court in the two and thirtieth year of the king (13:6). Then a fresh effort was made to separate Israel from the strange multitude, the house of God was purged from impurity, the

sabbath vindicated, and mixed marriages put an end to. For even the high priest's son was guilty and repulsed by Nehemiah.

Chapter 124

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 17. Divine Design—Esther

Divine Design 17. Esther

More striking still is the special divine design here, of which the omission of God's name is an essential part. It was intended to mark that, when the people, already Lo-ammi, were in such circumstances among the Gentiles that His name could not be named, His secret providence on their behalf comes out unfailingly. This is so sure and manifest, that no detailed proof is required. Yet deep religious feeling is latent throughout, as in the Jewish horror of the Agagite, the fasting of Esther, and the feast of Purim. It was indeed what people call an “invisible church” to the utmost.

The Septuagintal addition, we may add, brings in God's name to the destruction of that silence which so embarrasses Canon Rawlinson and most persons. When the people were in such a state that God could not own them, He unseen, unnamed, cares for them. How could He acknowledge a daughter of Israel married to the great king? The book looks at the dispersion, as Ezra and Nehemiah did at the returned remnant. It is thus unique as well as invaluable.

As a type, it shows us the Gentile bride set aside who failed to display her beauty, and the Jewish one established in her stead. The enemy may rage in a last effort of destructive malice; but all ends in his own ruin and that of his instruments, but to the joy of Israel and of the nations under righteous rule throughout the vast dominion. How will not Christ administer the kingdom to the glory of God the Father!

Chapter 125

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 18. Divine Design—Job

Divine Design.—18. Job

Having thus surveyed the historical parts of the O. T. with a view to the question of divine design, it remains for us to apply the same research into the poetical books, at the bead of which in the English and many other Bibles stands that of Job. No sufficient ground appears for doubting that it rightly opens this fresh division of O. T. scripture. Even those free handlers of the Bible who admit the impossibility of fixing the date of this book precisely, but would like to bring it down to Jeremiah's age, allow the weight of Ezek. 14:14-20, for the true personality of the patriarch, his known righteousness, and the proved value of his intercession. The internal evidence of the book points to patriarchal times and manners; the religious observances, and even the idolatry which was spreading, though (like adultery) an iniquity for the judge, all confirm the bearing of his age. On the other hand the prologue and the epilogue naturally imply that the writer of the book was not earlier than Moses, though recounting the great debate which supposes God not so known. Indeed not a few of weight have been impressed by the similarity of its narrative to the book of Genesis.

This, however interesting in a literary way and otherwise, is quite subordinate to its inspiration. Nor do the neo-critics, though self-sufficient and scornful because of their inability to appreciate Elihu's speeches, fail to see the transcendent superiority of what Jehovah says here, as compared even with the grandest strain of Isaiah on a kindred theme. What then is the design of the book which proves God to be its author? What place does it hold in the Bible peculiar to itself, worthy of Him, and needed by man?

Here in the midst of the sacred writings of Israel stands a book, which no Jew of his own notion would ever have written or could even have conceived. For it authoritatively reveals the deepest interest of the true God in a man outside the fathers or the sons of the chosen race, a son of the east in the land of Uz, “perfect and upright, one that feared God and abstained from evil.” Who can wonder at the outbreak of the early rationalism clearly as in Maimonides? Jewish pride would like to see in Job no more than a fictitious personage. Yet if even an inspired romance were really possible, the difficulty would remain. For the case presented is as overwhelming to Jewish narrowness, as it must cheer any soul on earth that knew it. The curtain is drawn (chap. 1) for the occasion from the unseen world, that the believing reader may know that God initiates the unparalleled trial about to open for the good of Job, and challenges the ever active Adversary. “Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth” &c. Satan imputes a selfish motive for Job's piety; and all belonging to him is left for the evil one to blast. This he at once willingly executes by natural means: a lesson of great value, nowhere else in the O. T. taught so clearly. Satan fails. In the midst of family joy and his own piety messenger follows messenger of Sabean and Chaldean raids, of lightning and tempest, which swept from Job all his oxen, sheep, camels, and children; but Job blessed His name as to all, and sinned not.

The Adversary reappears with the sons of God on high (chap. 2) and challenged yet more, and he obtains leave to touch Job's bone and flesh, apart from his life: not that this would have really made a disadvantage to Job, but it would have hindered the end of the Lord. Even when a mass and a spectacle of suffering, with his wife tempting him, Job cleaves to God, and Satan vanishes. But God carries on the trial; for the hindrance was not yet reached, and Job's self-complacency might and must have been enhanced by his patience in sad adversity, had all stopped there. So his three friends come, each from his own place; and their sympathetic grief brings out Job's passionate cursing of his day (chap. iii.), and desire for death to close his trouble. He is being laid bare and humbled in his own eyes before God, as he never had been before.

His friends, though pious men, knew still less of God and of themselves than the afflicted and now complaining saint. They each and all come out in their own thoughts, farther from the truth God was teaching than Job; for they assume the adequacy of present results as the criterion of God's estimate of man. Now there is a providential government, which overrules evil, and which does good according to God's nature; but His word reveals only at the close righteousness governing, and later still righteousness dwelling when all things are made new. Meanwhile God makes all things work together for good to those that love Him, humbling them, pious though they be, with what they are, and giving delight in God and submission to Him. We thus learn ourselves as well as God.

In this sketch it is not called for that we analyze the discussion that ensues. Suffice it to say that there are three series of speeches: from Eliphaz more grave and courteous; from Bildad more formal and severe; and from Zophar more suspicious; to each of whom Job replies respectively. The third time, Zophar, the least weighty and the most violent, is silenced. But Job took up his parable again, as if for him also, unless indeed we may not better regard chaps. 27, 28 as more general, and chaps. 29-31 as a closing summary which contrasts his bright past with his dark present, whereon he then confidently appeals to God. It is anything but a religious drama, or epos, or philosophy, as it has been called. It is a divinely given disclosure in a living saint's case for the instruction of man at any time, independently of special position as of Israel in particular, though for his correction too as peculiarly needing it. There we have a saint in the relationship with God which faith forms, exposed to the conflict of good and evil. Thus, as we discern Satan's enmity here below behind second causes and his accusation on high, we may also know God's gracious interest all through as before heaven. Not only is thus proved the failure of any righteousness on our part as a standing before God, but the necessity for such a daysman (or mediator) as the Lord Jesus, perfect God and perfect man.

But the intervention of Elihu is of the greatest moment, however people may disparage it who do not enter into the truth or feel their personal need of it. For he speaks as the requisite interpreter, “one of a thousand,” and while exposing the rashness of Job and the inability of his friends to solve the difficulty, he furnishes the key:-God uses trial and suffering for the blessing of souls. This he shows in chap. 33 as to man generally, to deliver him from going down to the pit; while in chap. 36 it is to open to instruction the ears of the righteous, who might be sadly wrong and fall into danger and evil. This was much. But more was vouchsafed; for Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind (chaps. 38, 39), not by argument nor even by instruction, but displaying the witness of His majesty and power, so that Job was constrained to say, “Behold, I am of small account: what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth: once have I spoken, and I will not answer; yea

twice, but I will proceed no farther" (40:3-5). Jehovah answers again out of the whirlwind, by presenting two creatures, behemoth and leviathan, to enforce Job's sense of powerlessness, and the folly of his presumptuous words, so that he again answers (42:2-6), "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be hindered. Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore I uttered what I understood not, things too wonderful for me that I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak. I will demand of Thee, and inform Thou me. I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor [myself] and repent in dust and ashes."

It is an unintelligent objection that when Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are censured, and owe their pardon to Job whom they had wholly misjudged, Elihu does not appear. He had done his good work: Jehovah alone must be exalted. And the captivity of Job was turned when he prayed for his friends; and Job got twice as much as before. Typically it applies to Israel when the time comes for His mercy to the erring people, then blessed more than at the first. But meanwhile for souls from the day it was written, what an unfolding of the divine ways with those that fear God! They, because they are His, must learn the folly of their own heart, and confide submissively in what He is, not only in Himself and His work, but this in His ways toward them.

That still higher and deeper things appeared in Christ on earth, and by the Holy Spirit when He went up on high, is true; but such divine and heavenly communications in no way set aside the immense worth of the book before us, the design of which is unique in the Bible. And who but God Himself could have given it?

Chapter 126

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 19. Divine Design—Psalms

Divine Design. 19. the Psalms

The special character of the Psalms is undeniable. In no part of scripture is the design of God more evident. This is the more notable, because of the variety of writers concerned, and the profound arrangement of their contributions, not superficially according to source or time, but by a distinct and divine purpose which governs the due place of no less than 150 several pieces, some alone, others in groups, all falling under five large sections, each with its own scope and its marked conclusion.

Of these the first comprises Psa. 1 to 41; the second has 42 to 72; the third contains 73 to 89; in the fourth are 90 to 106; and the last gives us 107 to 150, where the end comes without any form of expressing it as before. The first section, as one may gather from its contents, presents prophetically the general principle of the godly discriminated from the wicked among the Jews. Yet they are still together for the city and the sanctuary; and the covenant name of Jehovah predominates accordingly. In the second, on the contrary, the godly are a remnant who are severed from the multitude with whom they used to pass along to the house of God, as its opening intimates. They are sorrow-stricken, and ask Elohim to do them justice against an ungodly nation. Here accordingly, as deprived of public and common covenant privileges, they fall back on what God is in Himself, and the abstract name predominates. A striking proof of this appears from comparing Psa. 53 with 14 The third section, which has the divine names more mingled from Elohim to Jehovah, opens and goes through with the introduction of Israel as object of divine goodness, but such only “as are of a pure heart,” with all the nations jealous and hostile coming under judgment. The fourth division, after an appropriate exordium, strikes the note of a psalm-song for the Sabbath, and is filled with Jehovah reigning when He again brings the First-begotten into the inhabited earth; and here with the covenant name we find also the Most High and the Almighty. The last part celebrates Jehovah in the redemption of His people from the oppressor's hand, and their ingathering out of all countries, east, west, north, and south. It furnishes a believing and moral review of all that had passed, the virtues of the law written thenceforward on Israel's heart, and an affecting series of songs of degrees, followed after due interval by an ever swelling chorus of Hallelujahs, universal and lasting while earth endures.

As the history of man and of Israel is but the history of sin and ruin, but on God's part from man's fall were given communications of grace in prophecy and promise, so we have in the O.T. this beautiful and central book whose undercurrent is “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them.” Here we have the Holy Spirit providing inspired effusions from the heart and for the heart in sorrow and in joy, that the expression might have a divine savor through mercy and in truth, for His people passing through vicissitudes beyond all others, more favored yet more guilty, in respect not only of the law, but of the Messiah, but at length brought out of all guilt as well as distress unequaled, repentant and meek, into the over-abounding joy of grace and the everlasting glory of the kingdom, when everything that has breath shall praise.

The Psalms therefore obviously and assuredly have the prophetic bearing which is stamped more or less plainly on all scripture. But they have the peculiarity of expressing the heart's feelings to God, produced by the Holy Spirit in poetic form, when holy men passed through grievous trials, as for instance David particularly, the writer of far the most of the Psalms. But we have the Lord's authority and that of the inspiring Spirit that an infinitely greater was the object of God, in some of them personally, in all of them His Spirit. This accordingly gave rise to the richest exercise of heart and conscience in the saints thus tried; which the Holy Spirit produced and clothed in appropriate language for others in similar or even deeper trials, especially those in which the Jew will be involved at the consummation of the age. Deepest of all are those which none but the Lord Jesus could adequately feel and express, such as Psa. 8, 16, 22, 40, &c. Many are the Psalms on the other hand which anticipate the glory which is to appear, and the triumph not in heaven only but here below for Him Who was rejected and put to shame and by none so bitterly as by His brethren after the flesh.

In the Psalms therefore, beyond every other part of the written word, we have the divinely inspired expression of the hopes and fears, of the dangers and falls, of the confessions and recoveries, of the self-judgment and the thanksgivings, of the praises and the blessings, of God's people. We have the outpouring even of the Lord Himself, alone in atoning for sin, associated with others in governmental affliction, and leading the praise where and when this could be. Who but God could have supplied all this with a vast deal more, and beforehand? Who could have combined the experience of man's trembling and agitated heart, with the consolations of divine grace suited to his state, in a form worthy of God and a bearing for all time, even for that when the groans of creation shall be changed into the joy of the earth in unison with the heavens, and the field shall exult, and all the trees of the forest sing for joy, when the floods shall clap hands and the mountains chant together. For Jehovah will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

The order of the Psalms was a final act of divine inspiration as certainly as the substance of every several psalm. There is an exact propriety in the succession, which in no case could be disturbed without loss, and thus forcibly attests the finger of God. The titles, where given, are significant of a deeper mind than man's, though naturally unintelligible to such as look only for what lies on the surface. The absence of a title has its meaning, though it may not always be the same. Thus Psa. 1 and 2 have no title, not only to link them together, but this at the start as the preface to the first section and indeed also to the entire collection: one laying down the character of the godly man before Jehovah, whose hope is in Messiah; the others, the titles of Christ, as Jehovah's Son and King anointed for His holy hill of Zion, as surely as He will crush the nations and their kings in His day.

From 3 to 7 it is not the godly alone, nor Christ alone, but the Spirit of Christ in the godly. It is not Christ personally, but in His Spirit setting forth great moral principles. Thus in 3 it is faith in Jehovah, howsoever many be hostile; in 4 Jehovah sets apart the godly to Himself and hears him; in 5 it is confidence of blessing through Jehovah's righteousness for the righteous; in 6 he bows in distress before Jehovah in the sense of His just displeasure and pleads for mercy; in 7 he looks for His judgment falling on the wicked. Psa. 8 closes the group by passing from God's purpose about Christ to His suffering in fact as Son of man, and even now highly exalted in a wider glory, as in result Jehovah's name excellent in all the earth.

Again, Psa. 9 and 10 plunge us into the latter-day crisis as the time to which in general the psalms apply, not the period of the gospel and the church. Hence the issue is judgment executed on the quick (hostile heathen and wicked Jews), not the rapture of the saints glorified to heaven. They are a pair, and regard the enemies without and within. And they are followed up by a connected series up to 18 which express in 11-13 the experience and feelings of the godly in those days. Psa. 14 contrasts the character of the wicked and the righteous in view of that day; and 15 replies to the challenge, Who shall dwell with Him then?

Then in Psa. 16 and 17 Christ is seen as taking in grace His place therein, and in righteousness; whereas Psa. 18 identifies strikingly Messiah with His people from the deliverance out of Egypt at the outset till the Abiding One, when He becomes head, not of the church as now, but of the nations at the end of the age. Next come the divine testimonies of creation and the law in 19, then in 20 of Messiah answered in the day of trouble, and glorified in 21; whilst Psa. 22 is Messiah made sin and so forsaken to God's glory, resulting in grace flowing out more and more widely, if not then so deeply, till all the ends of the earth turn to Jehovah, and His righteousness is declared to a people that shall be born, on the ground of Messiah's doing. For after all, as we read in 23, 24, He as Jehovah guards His sheep when evil reigns, and will Himself be owned as Jehovah King of glory in the kingdom and house of Jehovah.

Then commencing with 25, 26 we see confession of sins and integrity of ways united in those that are His, emboldened by His sacrifice to own the truth and pursue holiness: a fresh start for the psalms to come. Whom should such a one fear? says Psa. 27, and (whatever the distress) Jehovah is his shield, Who will judge the wicked according to their deeds, as in 28. Hence the challenge in 29 to the sons of the mighty to own Jehovah, as every one in the temple says, Glory! Psa. 30 celebrates deliverance: if weeping comes for the night, there is joy at morn. Yet for this Messiah died, 31. Thus only could transgression be forgiven, sin be covered, and true blessedness come, 32; and thus alone could the righteous exult in Jehovah as in 33, its companion psalm, while Psa. 34 rises to a strain yet higher and sustained “at all times.”

The next four psalms, again, contemplate the way and power of evil judicially, also the path of the righteous, as well as a just sense of their sins confessed; whilst Psa. 39 owns that it is to their chastening, though man walks in a vain show. The section worthily concludes with Christ, after death and resurrection, praising in a new song, faithful in obedience, as also in bearing sins, in word and deed and suffering to the uttermost (40); and blessed is he that understands the Poor One, if His own familiar friend lifted up heel against Him (41).

The second section regards the godly remnant as forced to flee and be outside Jerusalem (42). Compare Matt. 24:15, &c. For those within are in league with idolatrous Gentiles, being alike ungodly and apostate (43). “Arise,” pleads 44. Christ too is no longer viewed in general as graciously in their midst on earth, but gloriously on high; as we see in 45. Elohim appropriately is their refuge in 46, but Jehovah Most High is anticipatively celebrated in faith, and this for all the people, a great King for all the earth (47). Whatever present things may say, the utter rout of earth's kings is seen by faith, and Zion is the hill of His holiness (48). Psa. 49 is a homily thereon: that day proclaims the folly of unbelief. Man in honor and understanding not is like the beasts that perish. Their wealth, lands, sayings, glory, come to naught. Only the redeemed abide. The chosen people in Psa. 1 were no better than the world, yea more guilty; but the godly made a covenant

with God over sacrifice. In 51 like David they own corruption and blood-guiltiness; they recognize man's might under judgment, 52, and the folly of “the many” 53. But all the resource of faith is in God, 54, though the wilderness was better than the city traitorous to Christ, 55. Psa. 56, 57 are an evident pair, expressing confidence, and growingly, in that day of danger and distress. So are 58, 59 when God's judgment is owned as the only means to convince man of fruit for the righteous, and that God rules in Jacob.

In 60 the Jew accepts God's chastening, but looks for victory. In 61 he cries “from the end of the earth” (and it is mainly for his soul and the king's life); in 62 with enlarging expectation. In 63 the praise and blessing and soul-satisfaction rise, though he be still an outcast from the sanctuary. Psa. 64 spreads before God the deadly craft and evil of that day, but is sure of God's intervention; and also in 65 the outburst then of praise, silent long in Zion. Yea, all the earth shall shout aloud to God; and the godly one who had fled will then go into His house and pay the vows made in trouble, 66. Then 67 closes this group by the blessing of the Jew as the means for all nations knowing God's salvation, never before nor otherwise.

The triumph of God, as Psa. 68 exultingly sings, is in and by Christ ascended on high. So shall His enemies be scattered when He arises; so shall the isolated be made to dwell in a home, and the kings of armies flee, and Jehovah dwell in Zion forever, and the kingdoms of the earth sing to God: blessed be God! But what was not Christ's humiliation in order that this should be righteously? This, 69 declares of Him, Who here speaks of being smitten and wounded of Jehovah. Indeed Christ bore reproach for His sake, for which judgment must follow on His enemies. Psa. 70 pleads for His deliverance, but withal to the shame of His wicked adversaries, and to their joy that sought Jehovah, Himself afflicted in order to it. Psa. 71 turns this principle to Jewish deliverance, “old” as they might be, but yet to renew their youth in praise; and so this portion closes with Psa. 72 “for Solomon.” It is not the aged David, the man of war, but the Prince of Peace, Who introduces the rest of God, when the prayers of Jesse's son are ended. Who can doubt the divine design thus far?

The third division bears out its larger character as bringing in Israel and their Gentile foes so plainly that fewer words are here needed. Psalm 73 speaks expressly of the people thus; as 74 of their and His enemies. In 75 Messiah intervenes, judging with equity; when earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved, He bears up its pillars. Can any one doubt Who He is? or when? Psa. 76 speaks of the catastrophe for the kings of the earth when He dwells in Zion; not when His presence shines from heaven to the destruction of the Beast and the False prophet. But there is inward deliverance also as in Psa. 77 And the history of the people is turned more than ever to “instruction” in that day as in 78. But even when Israel is back in the land, Gentile hatred once more breaks out as we see in Psa. 79, and the people are not yet established in the new covenant. In 80 they pray that the Shepherd of Israel may shine forth, and His hand be on the Man of His right hand, the Son of man.

Psa. 81 bids the trumpet be blown at the new moon. It is the awakening and gathering of Israel, as 82 warns the judges of His arising to judge the earth. Nor will the confederacy of Gentiles, small or great (83), avail against God's hidden ones; their greed after His holy places will only bring out that He alone Whose name is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth. Psa. 84 then points out the blessing, first, of dwelling where Jehovah dwells, in His house; next, of going up thither. Psa. 85

celebrates His favor, though the result was far from complete; for glory is to dwell in the land. Cf. Isa. 4 for Jerusalem. A suited prayer of David follows in Psa. 86; and Psa. 87 contrasts Zion with the passing splendor of earth's old great ones. But none the less do the godly feel and express in 88 the terrors of a broken law, and crying to the God of their salvation accordingly. They had utterly failed in their relationship; but the Spirit of Christ in no way held aloof from this righteous affliction, Himself holy and spotless. Psa. 89 is the song of Jehovah's loving-kindness or mercies, the center of which is the Merciful or Holy One in ver. 19. They had lost all but His mercies in Christ, which abide and will yet be theirs “forever.”

The fit opening of the fourth section is Moses' prayer, Psa. 90 The sovereign Lord alone can say to crumbling man, Return, children of men. But this turns on the Messiah, Psalm 91, Whose work brings in the true sabbath song, 92. Jehovah then reigns, higher than the highest of creatures; and holiness becomes His house ever more, 93. Yet vengeance belongs to Him, dishonored from the first, and most of all at the last, 94. But when the workers of iniquity are cut off, then goes forth Israel's joyous call to sing to Jehovah, 95, as in 96 all the earth is invited to sing a new song. Is not 97 the answer to that, as 99 to 98 where Israel is in question? In Psa. 100 they are all summoned to shout aloud and serve Jehovah with joy. There is no narrowness of heart more. If “we” are His people, enter “ye” into His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Psa. 101 is Messiah setting out the terms of His reign, mercy and judgment. Psa. 102 gives the ground of all blessing in His humiliation, Who was not the cast down Messiah only but Jehovah, as truly as He who lifted Him up; for He is the Creator of all. Then, Psa. 103, what praise in Israel flows out? What praise in creation, Psa. 104! What thanks given in Psa. 105 where Jehovah's ways of grace are retraced from the fathers down till the sons entered on the lands of the nations! What thanks, in Psa. 106 not less deeply but here adding, “for His loving kindness (or mercy) is forever.” Grace opens their lips to confess how they had sinned with their fathers, and done wickedly throughout the self-same history, and later still when carried captive. Now they say, “Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations to give thanks to thy holy name, to triumph in thy praise.”

The fifth division begins with Psa. 107, in substance like the concluding one of the fourth, but adding the weighty facts in vers. 2, 3, and recounting their varied providential past, wise now to understand Jehovah's mercy. Cf. Rom. 11:30-32. Psa. 108 is the joy of the Spirit of Christ when Israel is put in possession of their long forfeited inheritance. Here it is His mercy, truth, and glory. Now in 109 we have Christ rejected but exalted to help the needy, with judgment on the son of perdition first and last. Psa. 110 is David's Son and Lord exalted. Though Priest forever after Melchisedek's order, He is about to smite through kings in the day of His anger, especially the “head over a mighty land “: the just reply to 109.

In 111 to 118 we have a group celebrating Jehovah successively in His works and wonders: 111; 112, in His commandments and righteousness; in His character and dealings; 113, praise, all being Hallelujahs; then in 114 is the effect on the earth of the presence of Jacob's God, as 115 is the humbling effect on Israel to His glory, blessed and blessing; and in 116 their love in Christ's Spirit as delivered from death like Jairus' daughter. Again, 117 calls all the nations to praise Jehovah, as 118 closes the set with “His mercy forever” sung by Israel, Aaron's house, and those that fear Him. Through sore trial Israel had passed, but destroyed their foes; but it was in His name Who set the rejected Stone at the head of the corner, and in His name Messiah coming they bless.

Next in Psa. 119 we have Israel's state shown, the law written on their hearts, and its virtues analyzed fully and distinctively. Then follows the series of fifteen “Songs of degrees,” or steps in Israel's restoration, not yet fulfilled. In 120 the deceitful foe is discerned; in 121 Jehovah is looked to for help; and in 122 Christ's Spirit kindles their joy in worship. Then in 123 their eyes are devotedly lifted up to Jehovah; and in 124 the snare is broken, and they bless Him. In Psa. 125 they confide in Jehovah, peace on Israel; in 126 joy is reaped after sowing in tears, by Christ above all. Psa. 127 is for Solomon, contrasting the house and the city of the rest of God with the Babel-building that preceded, and looking for a blessed posterity. The blessing of Jehovah-fearers duly ensues in 128 and their many afflictions can now, in 129, be calmly remembered with the assurance of shame to all that hate Zion. Then, 130 tells how forgiveness with Jehovah taught them to fear Him, and wait for Him, and hope; as in 131 the moral effect goes forth in subjection of heart, deepening that hope. Psa. 132 asks Jehovah to remember for David all his affliction, the figure of infinitely greater; and to arise into His rest, with answers from ver. 14 exceeding every request. Next, 133 points us to the beauteous dwelling in unity that results in the power of the Spirit, honoring a greater than Aaron in the blessing-life for evermore; while 134 ends this series with blessing rising up: night brings no pause, and Jehovah blesses out of Zion, king and priest being here together in it.

Psa. 135 is more general praise, though it and the succeeding 136 may be regarded as replying to the psalms of degrees. They are rehearsals. The first begins and ends with Hallelujah; the second resounds with Israel's known chorus.

Special circumstances, of the people's sorrow, and of Jehovah's fidelity to His word, begin in Psa. 137 and 138, while 139 gives the individual heart-searching in goodness of the Eternal, which encourages to pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart,” &c. As the last foe has not fallen before the kingdom is established in peace, we have in 140 a prayer for his fall; as in 141 for preservation and profit by the discipline meanwhile. It is even more urgent in 142 and in sense of loneliness. Psa. 143 takes the deep ground that in His sight no man living shall be justified. It is a question of divine righteousness. So in Psa. 144 “Jehovah, what is man?” Why should He delay judgment and blessing for him? for Jehovah only has and gives might.

Psa. 145 is the Spirit of Christ in the Jewish saints praising for the kingdom; and Hallelujah psalms swell in volume to the end. Psa. 146 is the contrast in the man of Jehovah delivering His people; Psa. 147 His mercy to Jerusalem and Israel's outcasts with His blessing of creation. In 148 it is His praise “from the heavens,” and “from the earth,” with all therein; as Psa. 149 is His praise in the congregation of the godly (for such are Israel henceforth). Psa. 150 is praise to El, the mighty One, everywhere and in all respects, with every instrument and by everything that has breath. How evident the special design of God, not only in each psalm but in their arrangement! Man without Him was incapable of either.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 20. Divine Design—Proverbs

Divine Design.- 20. Proverbs

The collection of “the words of the wise” which next claims our heed is as different in character from the book of Psalms as one can conceive, though both may be in form poetical, the latter in the highest degree. But they are the inverse of one another: the Psalms mostly presenting to us Jehovah, or God in His nature rather than in covenant, the expression by the Holy Spirit of His people's and His own feelings in their varying experience, in hopes and fears, joy and distress, as well as in the acknowledgment of His ways.; the Proverbs, His wisdom in view of the difficulties and trials, snares and joys, and all other circumstances in the earthly path. The fear of Jehovah is the key-note. The special design of the book is unmistakable. No other part of the Bible fulfills or even shares its place. It communicates Jehovah's wisdom in its authoritative instruction of His people. Hence “God” as such occurs very sparingly in the prologue, 2:5, 17, 3:4; not at all in the strict “Proverbs of Solomon” (10-24); once in the supplement which Hezekiah's men transcribed (25:2); and twice in the appendix of Agues words (30:5, 9). This however gives no countenance to the dream of Astrue, but one more plain proof that it is false, senseless, and misleading.

After the preface of 1:1-7, we have a very full and affectionate introduction in the first nine chapters. In contrast with the authority given to parents is the enticement in the world through independence and lust, which calls to violence in ch. 1 and corruption in ch. 2. But if that authority works early and within, wisdom on Jehovah's part cries without, warning of the judgment at the end on the wicked man and the strange woman, and assuring of the moral value and blessing at all times for those that hear and prize her voice. In ch. 3 not our own intelligence but Jehovah's fear and instruction can avail. Hence in ch. 4 wisdom's words are to be sought to get true intelligence, avoiding all other ways. In ch. 5 is shown that only remorse and ruin come from swerving to corruption, while Jehovah would have His own enjoy the relations He sanctions. Ch. 6 warns against suretyship and sloth, evil activity and adultery; as ch. 7 pursues the latter in detail to death and Sheol. In ch. 8 the wisdom of God, energetic and importunate in love, rises up to Him Who is Son; as Christ is said to be His wisdom in the N.T. (object of Jehovah's delight), and His delights not merely in Israel but “with the sons of men.” In ch. 9 wisdom has built her house with her seven pillars, answering to the house of God, as it were, and not His call only, but contrasted with “the foolish woman” who leads her victims to destruction. Wisdom has an organization of good, as the strange and “clamorous” woman has of evil.

The intermediate chapters to 24, with the supplement in 25-29, present us the detailed wisdom of Jehovah for His people on the earth. The special walk of the Christian is not contemplated; still less is the church of God before us; any more than Christ suffering as God's witness, or for our sins, or His exaltation on high as Head, and in the heavenly sanctuary as Priest. But we have those divine apophthegms on the earthly path, which have drawn out the admiration of the wisest among men. After all they are but a selection from the “three thousand proverbs” which Solomon spoke (1 Kings 4:32). For God gave the king wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and

largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about. What we have is a selection made by the Holy Spirit: a principle just as true of the “signs” wrought by our Lord (John 20:30, 31; 21:24, 25). Every scripture is of God's special design.

Of the concluding chaps. 30; 31 we would say here little more than that they are in keeping with the book and worthy of forming its close. They claim the character of “prophecy “; and every word bears the stamp of God. The picture of the matron in the last 22 verses (acrostics) of the book is beautiful, and shows what woman might be under the law, even before Christ came and gave her a yet higher dignity.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 21. Divine Design—Ecclesiastes

Divine Design. 21. Ecclesiastes

On the face of the book stands revealed this striking difference from the Proverbs that here Elohim, or God, is found from first to last, never once Jehovah. Hence it is not the people in special relationship, but man as he is. Indeed some found on this fact the absurd inference that, if Solomon for the most part wrote the former, he could not have written the latter. The books claim to have emanated from the son of David. This however is nothing to a rationalist, save perhaps one incentive more to deny it. Leaving such a question, the case confirms the truth which we have often asserted, that the use of these divine designations depends on the different object in view, not on separate writers. In Ecclesiastes it is no question of covenant relationship and its prescribed order, but of God, of the Creator, and of man vainly seeking happiness in a ruined creation. Here therefore Jehovah would be wholly out of place. It is moral suitability under the Holy Spirit which regulates the choice, quite independently of the writer, whether the same or a different person. It is therefore Elohim, and man having to do with Him and His judgment.

Thus here again God's special design is manifest; and so is the shortsightedness of learning, or rather of unbelief, in overlooking the intimations of the written word for an hypothesis of pure imagination. The truth on the contrary, if it be only in the designation, edifies and helps us so far to enter into the scope of the book. Here it is a book which has its own peculiar place; none other even resembles it. It is the experience of a man unequaled in his capacity, in his circumstances, and in his means (for what can the man do that comes after the king?) for quest of happiness, and finding only vanity and pursuit of the wind in all “done under the sun.” How could it be otherwise, if man is an outcast from paradise, and looks not in faith to Him Who is above the sun? Experience, even the exceptional power, position, and activity of Solomon, experience of all that promises most on earth, ends in “vanity of vanities,” as surely as experience of self does to the man born of God who is occupied with himself (Rom. 7:7-24). All in man or the world is fallen and most wretched. Nor did wisdom itself avail to help, but rather intensified, the dissatisfaction and the sorrow. Death comes, and what does man as such know of that which is after it? To outward eye he dies as the brute. What then is for him but to fear God and keep His commandments? For this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. This has been counted pessimistic and skeptical; and so it would be if it were all. But the book itself urges the thankful use of the good God gives in a ruin so pervading. And if He gives them to weary themselves, it is to cast themselves on His fear and obedience, wherein is no vanity. But it was in no way the aim of the book to unfold sovereign grace, and its saving provisions. “The words of the wise” are not positive here as in the Proverbs, but negative, acting as goads to turn from seeking good in the creature, seeing that the end of all is death. Of this, as it closes on man, is given a most poetical allegory at the close, as the book opens with the constant change stamped on all the creature around, and within. What a contrast with the rest of God into which the work of Christ (here entirely out of sight) alone can introduce such as we are, which from the beginning pointed to the Messiah and redemption based on

sacrifice! Even when God's house is named, it is for man to hear, and pay vows conscientiously, and fear God; but the forgiveness with Jehovah that produces fear is no more entered on here than propitiation is in Rom. 2:1-16, where the apostle lays down God's immutable principles in dealing with men, be they who they may. Man needs God as a center for his heart which the creature cannot satisfy.

Chapter 129

The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 5. 22. Divine Design—Song of Songs

Divine Design. 22. Solomon's Song

Quite as unique is God's special design in Song of Solomon wherein neither Elohim nor Jehovah is once found, only Jah descriptively and not as an object (7:6). It is the Beloved and His love, the Bridegroom and the Bride as revealed to Israel; not the great secret as to Christ and as to the church, but a communication fully disclosed to the ancient people of God. (Compare also Psa. 45 and Isa. 62). The one who drew the bride's heart is the King-Messiah Himself; as this Song of songs is Solomon's. This need not hinder its application to the believer, or mutatis mutandis to the church; for there is a principle of relationship common to them all. It was an early error especially from and even before the Constantinian epoch, to conceive Israel cast off forever, and the church the heir of earthly honor and power. Men forgot the warning in Rom. 11 that this is but Gentile conceit, which loses the church's present suffering and future glory with Christ, and also denies the mercy which, when the Gentile calling corrupts itself and is cut off, will restore Israel and be to the world as life from the dead when the Lord comes to reign. Thus the key to Song of Solomon got hidden; and the book was either lowered irreverently, and sometimes grossly enough as is natural to a rationalist, or elevated in error to a heavenly object, which finds its proper unfolding in Rev. 19-22, not here strictly or fully.

The church is the body of Christ glorified at God's right hand on high by virtue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit sent down as the fruit of Christ's known redemption. This explains the peace and calm enjoyment of our peculiar relationship even now, before the day comes for the marriage of the Lamb above, as we read in Rev. 19 which adds and keeps for us, in all its fullness, the power of hope in Christ's coming,

It is a different state we find here where the relationship has to be formed or re-established under the new covenant. Hence the varied antecedent experiences for the heart of which this book so largely consists, and which grace will turn to the blessing of the daughter of Zion. Nothing of the kind is found in the N.T. any more than a collection of Psalms; but they are both provided in the O.T. about the ancient people, though all is surely for our use and blessing, although not about us. We are supposed to be in such peace, liberty, and joy by the presence of the Holy Spirit, as to make and sing our own psalms and hymns (1 Cor. 14, Eph. 5, Col. 3). The misuse of these scriptures, as if the church were Zion, Judah, Israel, &c., has done much to judaize the Christian. The blessing of their direct use will begin for the godly remnant before the day breaks; after which all Israel will sing them together-with what joy in that day! But who save God could have provided this wonderful anticipation?

Chapter 130

Isaac: 1. Introduction

Having already sought to weigh the history of Abraham, I desire to consider what scripture gives us to learn of Isaac. It is true that much less is said of him than of Abraham on the one hand or of Jacob on the other, even less than of Joseph among the many sons of Jacob. Yet there is not a little, in the spiritual account of him who came between the two chief fathers, distinguished by his own equable, retired, and peaceful way, and indicative of great principles in God's word and ways, not in the O. T. only but also in the New.

Isaac was the pattern of sonship, the child of promise and as Abraham was its depositary, elect, called out, blessed, and to be a blessing universally for the earth at the end, though himself looking higher by faith. Sovereign grace wrought as to both father and son. “For the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through law, but through righteousness of faith.” Thus only could it be, as it was, according to grace; that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of Abraham's faith, who is father of us all, before the God Whom he believed, Who quickens the dead and calls the things which are not as though they were.

But the progress of revelation as to this is as interesting as instructive. It was when Lot's choice of the well-watered plain of Jordan severed him from the one to whom all the land was promised that Jehovah renewed the assurance of it all not only to Abraham but to his seed (Gen. 12:7; 13:15). Still had the patriarch to wait; and when, after his disinterestedness on the occasion of his victory, he lays his childlessness before Jehovah, the word came that not Eliezer, his steward, should be his heir, but he that should come forth out of his own bowels, seed numerous as the stars (15). Then after the episode of Hagar in chap. 16 comes the revelation of God Almighty, El-Shaddai, in chap. 17, and under the outward rite of circumcision, death to the flesh imposed on him and his seed, with a new name to his wife as well as himself; for she too has the promise of the son, whose name was given. Thus however great and fruitful He would make Ishmael, His covenant was to be established in Isaac, whose birth had a time set for it.

The exceptional interest Jehovah took in the birth of Isaac has a still more striking witness in Gen. 18 There in the guise of man He Himself appeared with two angels (compare chap. 19:1) to Abraham, and deigned to partake of the meal he prepared and set before them under the tree in Mamre. Thus and then He specified the precise certainty of the time when Sarah should have a son. For the difficulty lay, humanly speaking, yet more in the wife than in the husband, and her unbelief was reproved. But Abraham as the “friend” of God heard, not of his son's birth only but of the world's judgment, which drew out his soul in intercession for his righteous kinsman and his house in ungodly and lawless Sodom. If his advocacy stopped short, “God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the overthrow.”

After another failure in chap. 20 (more guilty than the first occasion in chap. 12, Jehovah visited Sarah as He had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham

called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. Him on the eighth day Abraham circumcised; and Sarah's laughter was now of overflowing joy and gratitude. But the great feast on the child's weaning drew out Ishmael's mockery, and the expulsion of the bond-maid and her son on Sarah's remonstrance, an allegory to which Gal. 4 gives us the key.

The great change is then adumbrated. For instead of Abimelech reproving Abraham justly, Abraham now reproved the Gentile king; who with the chief captain of his host owns God with him in all that he does. Yet Abraham swears to show him kindness; and they make a covenant. And as the well of the oath was not without significance, so neither was the grove planted there, or the calling on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God. The day was anticipated when “in the wilderness shall waters break out,” and “the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it.” The blessedness of the coming age for the earth is thus typified.

After these things, and quite distinct from them, God tried Abraham. What is not here for God as well as man! It is the picture, which blind unbelief alone fails to see, of the Only-begotten Son given, of the Lamb which God would provide Himself for a Burnt offering. Here Isaac gave himself up to die, as Abraham was ready at God's word to sacrifice his beloved son: the sign of a far better thing.

But Jehovah arrests his hand when his heart was proved, and confirms to the son raised from the dead in a figure, that in Christ, the antitype, should all the nations of the earth be blessed, as the apostle reasons in Gal. 3

Then after the passing away of Sarah (the covenanted mother of the child of promise), we have the call of the bride for the bridegroom and heir of all. Next are given certain details of Isaac's history, as we shall examine in due time after this preliminary notice. Yet we may notice here the “moderation” of Isaac made known to all men in the question of the wells his servants found (chap. 26); and the crisis of his ways when his foot had well nigh slipped in the matter of his two sons (chap. 27). Grace here overruled; and he was saved yet so as by fire. How striking it is that such a scene should be singled out to his praise in Heb. 11:20! “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau even concerning things to come.” Isaac lived many years after this; but Scripture records only his death and burial.

Chapter 131

Isaac: 2. His Antecedents

Gen. 12-20

Isaac stands in marked contrast with Abraham, though he and Jacob were “the fellow-heirs of the same promise.” But Abraham comes before us the unexpected object of sovereign grace. The tales, so plentiful among Jews and Mohametans, of preternatural ability and attainments of wisdom and goodness antecedent to his call, are altogether fabulous and excluded by scripture. All the more therefore did he suit divine election. No prophetic word hailed his birth like Noah's, whose father said, This same shall comfort us for our work and for the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. Yet no man was given to hold a place as “father of those that believe,” like Abraham, a headship of higher character than Adam's. But Isaac has the peculiarity of his own, however personally and in place overshadowed by his honored father, in that he was gradually introduced before his birth more frequently and signally than any, save that Son of Abraham, and Son of David Who was also Son of God as no one else ever could be, Isaac's great Antitype.

It may be of interest to draw out the evidence of this. In Gen. 12:7 “Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, To thy seed I will give this land; and there built he an altar to Jehovah who appeared to him.” Long before in Ur of the Chaldees had Jehovah said to Abraham, “Get thee (or, Go) out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3). Therein Abram at first failed, not quitting his father but following him to Haran, from which he did not emerge till his father's death (Acts 7:4).

Then and not before “Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had acquired and the souls that they had got in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.” Obedience now had its perfect work, and its result accordingly. The renewed appearing of Jehovah was not only a call to separation, but to the walk of faith, a pilgrim and a worshipper in the land which was to be his only in hope. “By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise as in [a land] not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the fellow-heirs of the same promise; for he awaited the city that hath the foundations, whose designer and master-builder is God” (Heb. 11:9, 10). What was the possession of an earthly seat compared with this in heaven which dawned on his faith? Now he learns that Jehovah would give it to his “seed.” He worships and was content to be a stranger; and as he moved his tent elsewhere in the land, he built an altar to Jehovah and called on His name (8).

Still “seed” was vague, as it is explained in Rom. 9:7 and so appears also in John 8:33-39. But the time was not yet come. Abram failed in his new place, swerving from the revelation which had so happily wrought in his walk and worship. He goes down into Egypt for help under the strain of a famine in the land; and there is not a word of altar or tent. There he denies his wife, who was taken

into the home of this world's prince, and got rich by it to his shame. Jehovah failed not, but plagued Pharaoh and extricated Sarai. This was not “all families of the earth blessed” in him: how could it be other than a curse when the depository of the blessing had left his true place with Jehovah and compromised his wife? Delivered by overruling mercy, he returns to the south, or Negeb, and thence as far as Bethel, “to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai; to the place of the altar that he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah” (Gen. 13:3, 4). The humiliation before was blessed to one, whose first wrong step led to worse; but his heart turned to Him Who had rescued them, and he again regains his privilege without a fresh appearing to him. But in the strife between their respective herdmen that followed, Abram is as disinterested as his nephew betrays his worldly wisdom. And “Jehovah said to Abram, after that Lot had separated himself from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that thou seest will I give to thee and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth,” &c. (14-18). Lot has no title here. A fuller view of the land was given to him who looked above: it was secured forever to him and his. Again Abraham moves to Hebron and built there an altar to Jehovah. His worship rises afresh.

Next, after the wondrous episode of Abram's victory over the earthly potentates, who had punished their vassal kings and carried off Lot, and after the still more wondrous scene of the mysterious King-priest of the Most High God, we have (in a new series of Abram's history) the word of Jehovah coming in a vision, to assure him that not Eliezer, but “he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir,” and like the unnumbered stars, “so shall thy seed be.” And he believed Jehovah, Who reckoned it to him as righteousness; of which the N. T. makes fruitful use. So it must be for the earthly seed, as well as the heavenly: flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. It is the earthly which is in view here; as this was what Abram sought, and God bound Himself by covenant based on death of victims, with prophecy and the limits of the land defined according to the Gentile races in present possession.

But if the son and heir was now defined to be Abram's, not so yet the mother. For in chap. 16 Sarah manifests the haste which is not of faith but the device of nature, to gain the blessing in its way to the sorrow of all and especially her own. This the apostle applies allegorically to Israel under law. In chap 17 Jehovah reveals Himself (not His gifts only) by the new name of El Shaddai (God Almighty), not His word in a vision, but God talking with him who has His covenant and the enlarged promise to be father of a multitude of nations, and kings to come out of him. Circumcision, death not of victims but of flesh, is imposed; and as Abram's name was now widened, so Sarai's was raised: Abram's son God would give of her. “And thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant to his seed after him” (19). Ishmael was not to be forgotten of God; but His covenant should be with Isaac, whom Sarah was to bear at this set time in the next year. Thus was the case made increasingly full and clear.

These preparative notices are crowned in chap. 18 where Jehovah appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre, and with two angels, who in human guise deigned to honor him as his guests. He thus emphasizes the importance to be attached to Isaac's birth, which even then Sarah laughs at as too wonderful. But the son and heir will surely come at the appointed time, and Jehovah personally announces it for the last time before it is accomplished. And we may note the proof He gives that He made Abraham His friend by telling him, not only the detail of what so

intimately concerned himself and Sarah, but the judgment He was sending the angels to execute on the guilty cities of the plain. This draws out Abraham, not now to ask for himself, but to intercede, and Jehovah answered beyond his faith.

Yet Abraham failed once more after so signal a favor. How often it is so! Flesh is puffed up, not judged: we are off our guard, instead of watching to prayer. No flesh shall glory, but as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The unbelief of the believer led to deceit; and the sin of Abraham was worse now with Abimelech than long before with Pharaoh. He denied his wife's relationship, after Jehovah let him know the soon coming birth of the promised son by her. Yet though inexcusable and reproved by the Philistine king, God does not forget but maintains Abraham's relationship and makes Abimelech seek his prayers.

Chapter 132

Isaac: 3. The Son and Heir Born

Gen. 21:1-7

The set time was now come. The child of promise was at hand. Many and various had been the premonitions on the one side, and checks on the other; but at length in the face of weakness and drawbacks, of unfaithfulness with gracious overruling, the divine word is proved to be, as it is, unfailing and worthy of all trust.

“And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as he had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God hath made me laugh: everyone that heareth will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said to Abraham, Sarah will give children suck? for I have borne a son in his old age” (vers. 1-7).

Here the usage of the divine designations comes before us remarkably. To impute the difference to distinct authors is the despairing or malevolent resource of uubelieving ignorance. First of all “Jehovah” occurs with emphatic repetition (ver. 1). Governmental relationship was in question; and as Jehovah had promised, so also did He show Himself faithful to perform. But it was of no less moment in the next place to indicate that He who thus spoke was God in the supremacy of His nature (ver. 2). Hence “Elohim” is employed, and throughout the chapter, till ver. 33 where relative dealings properly demand the name of “Jehovah Elohim,” as will be shown in due course.

But beyond controversy it was the birth of one who here typifies the Son of Psa. 2:7, 12. This explains why there should have been so many prophetic intimations to prepare the way. This accounts for the serious consequences which followed for such as despised Him when come. So the prophet was given to say, more than seven centuries before the event (Isa. 9:6 and following): “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And they shall call his name Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of eternity, Prince of peace.” The prediction, glowing and glorious as it is, has nothing to do with His being First-born from the dead, Head of the body, the church, Who is the beginning. It belongs to His other Headship, as born into the world, the Firstborn of all creation. For in all things He must have the supreme place.

Hence we can see that Calvin only expresses the prevalent confusion of these two relationships, when He says that in this chapter God has set before us a lively picture of His church.

Not so. It is not “the mystery” which is here foreshewn, but the new covenant; it is the mother, and not the bride. Consequently the Christian has already new covenant blessing in the death of the Savior; but the scripture which most fully explains it to us (2 Cor. 3) points to its being in spirit rather than in letter; it will be formally with both houses of Israel in the day which fast approaches, and forever. But Israel, however richly blessed in that day, will not have the union with Christ as

His body, which is ours even now with Him Who is head over all things. And this involves the most important differences, as widely apart as heaven is from earth, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly. The distinction however cannot well be over-estimated.

Next in ver. 3 Abraham called his new-born son Isaac. So he was now, whatever had gone before, whatever might come after. Any laughter of doubt had given place to the joy of grace. And Abraham certainly looked on with joy to wide, deep, and enduring results; he rejoiced that he should see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. How blessed will it be for Israel and the earth and all the nations and every creature of God! How different from the day of Massah and Meribah in the wilderness; when man hardened his heart and Jehovah was grieved long years with a generation that erred in their heart and knew not His ways! In that day what singing aloud to Jehovah, what shouting for joy to the rock of salvation, and coming before His face with thanksgiving and psalms! Yea, the heavens shall rejoice and the earth be glad; the sea shall roar and the fullness thereof; the field shall exult and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before Jehovah, for He cometh-for He cometh to judge the earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, and the people in His faithfulness (Psa. 96). Isaiah bears the same witness at intervals from his first chapter to his last, notably in 11; 12; 24-27; 30; 32; 35; 40-45; 49-55; 60-62; 65. So we may say in general have all the prophets spoken. So much the more lamentable is the unbelief which merges all in the church's blessings, only to lose its heavenly bridal place to no end obscured by that groundless confusion.

But the joy of Abraham in no way weakened his duty of subjecting his son to the sign of death for the flesh. He circumcised Isaac duly when he was eight days old, “as God had commanded him” (ver. 4). The eighth day points to resurrection in contrast with nature. Circumcision was instituted, not when Ishmael was born, but in view of Isaac, the seal of the covenant. The principle was God's righteousness. Man was judged as evil and flesh mortified.

It is notified in ver. 5 that Abraham was a hundred years of age when Isaac was born. Faith had indeed to wait, but was in no way disappointed: God is faithful. “And Sarah said (ver. 6), God hath made me laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me.” She had laughed at first when Jehovah announced the set time for her to be a mother, and she added the shame of untruth when taxed with it (chap. 18). But all is here changed by grace. God, she owns, made her laugh now. It was no longer within herself, but of Him; and others who heard would share her joy. “And she said (ver. 7), Who would have said to Abraham, Sarah will give children suck? For I have borne a son in his old age.” Sarah is thenceforth, old as she was, become a child of wisdom; and wisdom is justified of all her children.

Chapter 133

Isaac: 4. Isaac Abiding, Hagar and Ishmael Dismissed

GOD knows how to rectify the false position that springs from unbelief. We may therefore look to Him and His word, and have only to obey. But if this ever costs the flesh not a little, blessing surely follows self-denying submission to His will.

“And the child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw Hagar the Egyptian s son, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. And she said to Abraham, Cast out this maidservant and her son; for this maid-servant's son shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said to Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy maid-servant: [in] all that Sarah saith to thee, hearken to her voice; for in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee. But also the maid-servant's son will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a leathern bottle of water and gave [it] to Hagar, putting [it] on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. And the water from the bottle was exhausted; and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went and sat down over against [him] about a bowshot; for she said, I will not look on the death of the child. And she sat over against [him], and lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the lad's voice; and God's angel called to Hagar out of the heavens, and said to her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the lad's voice there where he is. Arise, take the lad, and hold him in thy hand, for a great nation will I make him. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became as he grew up an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt” (vers. 8-21).

As the child born and the son given typified the Son of the Highest, it was meet that the occasion should be marked by consequences of the gravest. What can distinguish inspiration more than the lesson the apostle in Gal. 4:22-26 draws from that which seems on the surface a mere domestic occurrence? “For it is written that Abraham had two sons; one of the maid-servant, and one of the free-woman. But he that was of the maid-servant was born according to flesh, and he that was of the free-woman through the promise. Which things have an allegorical sense; for these [women] are two covenants: one from Mount Sinai, gendering unto bondage, which is Hagar. For Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the present Jerusalem; for she is in bondage with her children; but the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother.”

This was God's purpose, though none apprehend it save those who have Christ's mind. Hence the unbelieving Jews fill the place, not of Isaac, but of Ishmael. They are as far as possible from suspecting that they are only born according to flesh, and persecute him that is born according to Spirit. Yet they cannot deny that their mother is the Sinai covenant, and that they are cast out by God. They have the law's curse as transgressors; they have not a shred of the promise to cover their nakedness. Their own prophets declare that they are not God's people, and if without a false

god without the True, as they have plainly neither land nor prince; and this because they rejected, first Jehovah, next His Christ.

But the apostle goes a great deal farther; and though he does not confound the believing Gentiles with Israel, like the theologians of Christendom, he shows that all who take their stand on law come under the curse (Gal. 3:10). Thus the principle applies in all its force, indeed emphatically, to Gentiles, who have not the excuse of inveterate Jewish prejudice. It is to fall from grace, through which alone can souls be saved. Law cannot save but condemn sinners; and if grace be mixed with law, the mixture is unavailing: grace only can save the guilty and lost. The Galatians who were bewitched to tack law on to grace, he solemnly warns of utter ruin, so sure that as many as are of works of law (i.e., on this principle) are under curse. After having begun in Spirit, how senseless for them to seek perfection in flesh! The law itself, in the tale of Abraham's two sons, convicts of folly those who thus abuse the law. Its lawful application (1 Tim. 1:9) is not to a righteous person, but to lawless and insubordinate, to impious and sinful, to unholy and profane, to whatever in short is opposed to the healthful doctrine Paul taught.

Hence the peremptory tone of the apostle to the endangered Galatians. He will have this “leaven” extirpated, whatever it cost. It was a deeper peril than the “leaven” which he enjoins the Corinthians to purge out. Not even a moral man could defend the gross inconsistency with Christ and His sacrifice of having the wicked man in their midst. But the fair show in flesh set up in the Galatian churches was subtler, and a denial of the grace which the gospel proclaims, when law had been proved to be simply a ministry of death and condemnation. What then “saith the scripture? Cast out the maid-servant and her son; for the son of the maid-servant shall in no wise be heir with the son of the free-woman.” The Judaizing Gentile is even more blamable than the Jew. Alas! the ritualism of the day is incomparably worse still and growingly apostate; for not content with the legal forms of Israel, it incorporates the idolatries of the heathen also, as in the adoration of the sacramental elements, &c.

Yet is it affecting to know God's goodness to Abraham's seed according to flesh. When the mother yielded to despair, and laid her son down to die at a distance from her, “God heard the lad's voice;” and His angel bids Hagar hold him in her hand. Had not Jehovah called his name Ishmael, because He had heard her affliction? And as she was then by a fountain called Beer-la-hai-roi Well of the living who was seen (or, seeth me) from the name of Him that spoke to her (ch. 16), so now God opened her eyes to see a well of water whence she gave the lad drink. If she forgot the divine assurance of a numberless multitude in general to spring from her, and that Ishmael should dwell in the presence of all his brethren, God remembered him and declares that He will make him a great nation. So it has been. There they are with the same characteristics to this day.

Chapter 134

Isaac: 5. Jehovah, God Everlasting

Though the name of Isaac does not occur in this section, it is in no way a digression, but in strict pursuance of the divine ways on the occasion of his birth, the dismissal of Hagar and her son, and the recognition of Sarah's son as the sole heir of Abraham.

“And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech, and Phichol the captain of his host, spoke to Abraham, saying, God [is] with thee in all that thou doest. And now swear to me here by God that thou wilt not [lit. if thou shalt] deal falsely with me nor with my offspring nor with my son's son. According to the kindness that I have done to thee, thou shalt do to me and to the land in which thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear. And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this, and also thou didst not tell me, and also I heard not but to-day. And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave [them] to Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe-lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What [mean] here these seven ewe-lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, For seven ewe-lambs shalt thou take, that they may be a witness to me that I dug this well. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba, because they had sworn, both of them. And they made a covenant at Beer-sheba; and Abimelech rose up and Phichol chief of his host, and returned into the Philistines' land. And [Abraham] planted a tamarisk (or, a grove) in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah God everlasting. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days” (vers. 22-34).

It was not only that due order of the household was now secured by the expulsion of the Egyptian and her mocking son, and that the child of promise abode without a rival; but an outward event follows of such significance that the Holy Spirit gives it here an imperishable place. The marked blessing that resulted drew the Gentile's heart, and the Philistine with due formality (for the commander-in-chief accompanied him) seeks the pledged friendship of Abraham. So it will be in days to come when the promises are accomplished in the Messiah; and thus far Isaac typifies Him. It was far otherwise when the Lord came the first time, and even the Jew rejected Him in dark unbelief and in bitter hatred that the grace which they refused should be preached to the nations. Unhappy and unholy, they please not God and are contrary to all men; and the wrath is come on them to the uttermost. But the day hastens when they judging themselves shall welcome by faith Him in Whom the promises are Yea and Amen unto the glory of God. Then shall Gentile kings be Zion's nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers (Isa. 49); then shall ten men take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you (Zech. 8).

Nor does Abraham at all repel the Gentiles. The Seed of promise—received and honored leads to a new state of things for the earth. To the king Abraham assents, and forms a covenant on oath and other solemnities. In the Seed are the Gentiles to be blessed. Woe to those that curse in that day! A witness of the change to ensue on the largest scale is here given by Abraham's reproving

Abimelech. Now only does he speak of the wrong done by Abimelech's servants who had violently possessed themselves of a well dug by Abraham. And Abimelech bows meekly. Righteousness will reign in that day, and princes shall rule in judgment; yea, judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. For the Spirit will then be poured on Israel from on high; and He holds the inflexible scepter over all the earth, the Righteous Servant and Atoning Sufferer, Who in that day shall be seen exalted, and lifted up, and very high. And Israel's seed shall he known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed (Isa. 61). The limper shall no longer halt, but the first dominion be even to the daughter of Jerusalem.

The Well-of-the-Oath is the name Abraham gives as the permanent sign of the covenant made then and there. Typically it is a total change from strangership to possession, as it will be really in the days of the coming Kingdom. Nor do we hear of a tent now, though Abraham's calling on the name of Jehovah implies a fresh altar here. Only it is not now as the One Who appeared to Him in the far off land, and led him at length, separated to Him, into Canaan; nor is it the altar he built at Bethel any more than at Shechem, nor yet at Hebron. Here only is the striking change, which inspiration alone can account for, to “God everlasting.” For so it will be when the displayed Kingdom comes in power and glory. Fallen and fading things will then give place to permanence and peace and blessing. For “Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.” (Psa. 102)

In unison with all this is the planting of a grove on Abraham's part. Here only do we read of such an act, the beautiful prefiguration of “that day” when the parched land shall blossom abundantly, and all the trees of the wood shall sing for joy.

Chapter 135

Isaac: 6. Isaac Dead and Risen in Figure

Gen. 22:1-14

HERE begins an entirely new section of the book, which we may regard as stretching over the death of Abraham in chap. 25, though more than once verses seem appended to complete the history rather than higher views. No more profound principle can there be than that which is introduced as the basis in our chapter; for it is death and resurrection in the person of a beloved son, an only-begotten. Such a type is unmistakable save to the blind. The very details are full of living force: what then is the anti-type? All is impressive, lovely, and instructive in the highest degree. As the figure of Abraham looms most in the scene, and as this has been years ago before us in treating of him, it remains to speak here of Isaac.

“And it came to pass after these things that God tried Abraham and said to him, Abraham; and he said, Behold me. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only [one] whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the Moriah land, and offer him there for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave wood for burnt-offering, and rose up and went to the place of which God told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship (or, bow down), and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood for burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Behold me, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood, but where [is] the lamb for burnt-offering? And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for burnt-offering, my son. And they went both of them together; and they came to the place which God told him of; and there did Abraham build the altar and pile the wood; and he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And Jehovah's angel called to him from the heavens, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Behold me. And he said, Stretch not forth thy hand against the lad, nor do thou anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God and hast not withheld thy son, thine only [one] from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, a ram behind caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for burnt-offering, instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said this day, On Jehovah's mount it will be provided” (vers. 1-14).

We must bear in mind that “the lad” had at least reached his majority, as we say; Josephus (Ant. i. 13, §2) makes him 25 years old. His entire submissiveness to his father indeed, but also to the will of God, is exactly in keeping with his piety. If it was beautiful in the type, how much more in that which it shadowed! For it was unsought and infinite love in both Father and Son.

Here it was not merely a test of the strongest claim ever made on the heart of man, indefinitely increased by the promise so long waited for and so singularly accomplished, and by the full

persuasion of world-wide blessing which centered in that very son, and yet seemed to be made impossible by the intensely painful act to which he was called. What was suffered to the full and unsparingly, that God might be glorified, that sin might be condemned in a sacrifice of blessing to sinners without bound or end, that good might surpass where evil abounded, that love might overcome where enmity had wrought its worst, that Satan might be vanquished where he had been a prince and a god, that man might be brought, no longer a child of wrath but of God, out of all iniquity, intense misery, and everlasting judgment to peace and righteousness before God now and to heavenly glory with Christ in the presence of the Father forever?

The father and son brought before us so strikingly here furnished an unrivaled occasion to show in a figure or “parable,” as it is called in Heb. 11:17-19, the real death and as real resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The interpretation given, as it has been believed by all saints of N.T. times, rests on no probability however strong, on no tradition of men, however ancient. He that disputes will have to give account of his inexcusable incredulity to the Lord Himself when we are manifested before His judgment-seat. Very beautiful is the minute accuracy of this N.T. comment. “By faith Abraham when tried hath offered up Isaac; and he that took up to himself the promises was offering up the only-begotten, in respect of whom it was spoken, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that even from the dead God is able to raise; whence also he received him in a parable.” We may not in English easily express the perfect in the first instance of the offering; but the force is evident and points to the subsisting or fixed result of that act. Morally it was done; and the effect abides. The second use of the word in the imperfect corrects all possible misuse of that; for it states that literally Abraham was in the act of offering his only son when arrested as Genesis tells us by Jehovah's angel. The spiritual test was complete, though the act was not completed. So had divine wisdom ordered and accomplished.

Nor is this new thing, though only in parable, an isolated and transient fact, but it is connected in the declarations and the events that follow with consequences of the utmost importance, as will be shown in due time. This is the most powerful and conclusive proof that the scripture is in the fullest sense inspired of God. It is not only that a moral pinnacle is here reached as never before; but that the death and resurrection of Christ prefigured by it reflects on what follows a light which shows that what is related stands in perfect keeping with that infinite event, and is a shadow of what we find in the N.T. could only follow it, as it did according to God's counsels and in the development of His ways.

The answer of the father to the son (7, 8) was from above and in a wisdom wholly above man's; God's providing Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering is the basis of the new and only justifying righteousness, God's righteousness. In the infinite reality it was the Son become man and on behalf of men yet to God's glory, after proving Himself the righteous Servant, made sin for us, that we who believe might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus was love maintained as fully as holiness, and that new righteousness, God's righteousness which can justify absolutely him that believes on the Lord Jesus, instead of condemning the sinner as he deserves. It was the Father's will, the Son's work, and the Holy Spirit's witness, as indeed we read in Heb. 10.

Viewed merely on the historical side, what admirable devotedness to God's authority testing the heart to the uttermost! What unhesitating trust in God and His word, that the giving up of what is dearest in possession and hope would result in unimpaired re-establishment of all! And so it truly

was in the issue, and beyond all expectation of man as he is.

Chapter 136

Isaac: 7. The Numerous Seed and the One Seed

Gen. 22:15-24

Consequent on the wondrous type of the far more wondrous sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we have Jehovah's angel announcing to Abraham His solemn oath on that which deeply concerned both Jews and Gentiles, and we may add God Himself most nearly, and His title to bless not only in His righteous government but in sovereign grace according to His nature.

“And Jehovah's angel called to Abraham a second time from the heavens, and said, By myself I swear, saith Jehovah, that because thou hast done this and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as stars of the heavens, and as sand that is on the sea's shore; and thy seed shall possess his enemies' gate; and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast harkened to my voice. And Abraham returned to his young men; and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

And it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also hath borne children to thy brother Nachor: Uz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel father of Aram, and Chesed, and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel (and Bethuel begot Rebekah). These eight Milcah bore to Nachor, Abraham's brother. And his concubine named Reumah, she also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah” (vers. 15-24).

Because of Jehovah's appreciation of Abraham's unreserved surrender to Him of what was most precious to his heart, first comes the assurance of rich blessing and great multiplication of his seed according to flesh. It should be for multitude as stars of the heavens and as sand of the seashore. Nor this only, but with power over their adversaries, as befits the earthly people of His choice. Beyond just question Israel is thus in view (ver. 17).

But there follows in ver. 18 a promise intentionally severed, and couched in such terms as point to the True Seed in Whom should all the nations of the earth be blessed. And here not a hint was uttered of a numerous posterity; as indeed the evident aim was to indicate the One on Whom alone depended blessing of a far higher order, and this for “all the nations of the earth.” Here we are recalled to the original promise made to the patriarch and recorded in the last half of Gen. 12:3: “and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” There, as here, it follows the national blessing of the earthly people. It was therefore left open and goes out in unlimited grace as in the gospel. He only could thus speak Who knew the end from the beginning.

Of this the apostle in the power, of the Holy Spirit avails himself in writing to the Galatians (chap. 3), beguiled as they then were into that judaizing of heavenly truth which has been and is the sore bane of Christendom. Works of law are a ruinous principle for sinful man; the promise is by faith, whereby alone believers are blessed with the faithful Abraham. For as many as are of law-works are under curse; not merely such as violate the law, but all that take the ground of law before God. As surely as they do, they being sinful fall under curse. Therefore Deut. 27 is cited, wherein the

Holy Ghost passes by all account of the blessings of the six tribes on mount Gerizim, and only gives in detail the curses of the other six on mount Ebal. These alone were effective. The blessings cannot be for guilty man on that ground. It is by faith, says the prophet, the just shall live; and redemption from curse is needed for those under law, that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, as the gospel declares. Nor is this all. For the Seed is arrived, and the covenant is confirmed, as it was typically in Isaac, dead and risen parabolically. Hence the apostle proceeds, “But to Abraham were addressed the promises, and to his seed"-to the father in Gen. 12, and to his son in chap. 22. “He saith not, ‘And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, ‘And to thy seed' [where allusion to stars and sand, as well as greatly multiplying,' are quite dropt], which is Christ.”

The reasoning of the apostle, here as elsewhere, only appears weak to presumptuous men, who are unbelieving and so must fail to understand God's mind in it. Where souls accept the divine authority, not only of the Epistle to the Galatians but of Genesis which the Epistle assumes, all is seen to be bright, profoundly true, and of living interest. It is no question of mere grammar, but of context; which, in the promise that distinctly contemplates Israel, makes much of numbers; whereas in that which introduces the Gentiles for blessing, it says not a word about anything of the kind, but only of one, “thy seed.” It was a covenant confirmed beforehand by God; and the law, which came after four hundred and thirty years, does not annul it, so as to make the promise of no effect. Nor does the law clash with the promise: each has its own object; the one, a ministry of death and condemnation; the other, of blessing by faith. Mixing the two does the mischief; and this is exactly to what man is prone, and what scripture ever explicitly sets aside.

In the light of N. T. facts, how the types of Genesis come out! The woman's Seed is surely man, yet more than man, bruised to bruise utterly and forever the old serpent the devil, fallen angel as he is, Abraham's Seed, foreshewn in Isaac dead and risen in figure, portrays the Deliverer in the wholly new condition of man beyond death, able to bless Gentiles in sovereign grace no less than Jews, and unite them to Himself in heavenly glory. And this is just what the gospel now reveals to faith.

The closing verses of the chapter bring before us a brief sketch of Nachor's line (Abraham's brother), whose son Bethuel was father of Rebekah through Milcah the wife, not through Reumah the concubine. How closely this connects itself with Isaac's future we shall have before us in due time, carrying out the purpose of God.

Chapter 137

Isaac: 8. Sarah Dead and Buried

Genesis 23

Here is given the decease of Sarah with her burial, to which inspiration devotes a considerable place. Is there no instruction beyond the affecting moral that is before all eyes? Where in all the O. T. is there such a picture of a husband's sorrow in providing a burial place for the departed wife? Where of a father's care and faith in the call of a bride for his son, as in the chapter that follows? We have looked into the deep typical lessons of the chapter that precedes, and we hope to weigh that which is hardly less to be questioned in that which is now to occupy us. Is it to be assumed that our chapter is altogether devoid of similar truth below the surface? Let us at least seek to learn of God through His word.

“And the life of Sarah was a hundred and twenty-seven years-the years of Sarah's life. And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba, that [is] Hebron in the land of Canaan. And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, I [am] a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a sepulcher with you, that I may bury my dead from before me. And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, Hear us, my lord: thou [art] a prince of God among us; in the choice of our sepulchers bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulcher for burying thy dead. And Abraham rose up and bowed himself to the people of the land, to the sons of Heth, and spoke to them, saying, If it be your will that I should bury my dead from before me, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which is his, which [is] at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me among you for a possession of a sepulcher. And Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the ears of the sons of Heth, of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, No, my lord; hear me. The field give I thee; and the cave that [is] in it, to thee I give it; before the eyes of the sons of my people I give it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed himself before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the ears of the people of the land, saying, But if only thou wouldst listen to me, I give the price of the field: take [it] of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, My lord, hearken to me. A field of four hundred shekels of silver, what [is] that between me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the price that he had named in the ears of the sons of Heth-four hundred shekels of silver current with the merchant. So the field of Ephron which [was] at Machpelah, which [was] before Mamre, the field and the cave that [was] in it, and all the trees that [were] in the field, that [were] in all its borders round about, were assured to Abraham for a possession before the eyes of the sons of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah, opposite to Mamre, that [is] Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field and the cave that was in it were assured to Abraham for a possession of a sepulcher by the sons of Heth” (vers. 1-20).

The sketch is so simple and so graphic as to need few words. Abraham's grief lives before us, as does his noble bearing in such circumstances with the sons of Heth for a cave wherein to bury his dead. It was a delicate affair. For the Hittites were touched, courteous, and friendly; while Abraham, resolute to plead for such, as in Gen. 14:24, was no less resolute to appropriate nothing now as then for himself. Even in the presence of death would he preserve the place of pilgrim and stranger in their midst. He would pay in full for a possession, not of a mansion nor of an estate, but of a sepulcher. Ephron, oriental-like, set his price abundantly high for those days; and Abraham weighed it in presence of all, the then mode of lawful and sure conveyance with a curious anticipation of modern particularity. Otherwise the patriarch had no inheritance in the promised land, no, not so much as to set his foot on, whatever argument the late Bishop of Lincoln set up to the contrary. Even for a grave he would not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion has light with darkness? Abraham would be separate and touch no unclean thing. Is this scorn or pride? Not so, but subjection to God, and maintenance of His honor by His children, however weak and unworthy, as some are, but all ought to be, quite willing to allow.

Typically viewed, Sarah was the free mother of the child of promise, in contrast with the bond-maid and her son cast out already, according to the doctrine of Gal. 4. Now that the Son is seen dead and risen, even that covenant, which Sarah represents, passes away, in order to bring in a yet higher counsel of the Father Who would call a bride for His Son in the heavenlies. As surely as Sarah dies, she will rise again; and only then will that covenant of promise and liberty be valid for Israel, who meanwhile are blinded by unbelief and find their pattern in Hagar and her son. Thus did the Jews lose for this long season their privileges; for they were sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God wade with Abraham, But rejecting the one true Seed, their own Messiah, through Whom alone any and all could be blessed, they have stamped upon them more deeply than ever Lo-Ammi. Yes, Sarah is dead; and as the next development of rising purposes, we shall see Rebecca called from a far land and conducted across the desert to be the spouse of Isaac in Canaan.

Chapter 138

Isaac: 9. The Bride Called for Isaac

(Gen. 24:1-9)

Chapter 22 gave us the new and unique position of the son and heir, dead and risen, the figure of the infinite reality where the antitype was also the lamb that God would provide Himself for a burnt-offering; chap. 23 the passing away, at this point of God's ways, of Sarah, the mother of the child of promise. For those who ought to have received the dead and risen Messiah stumbled at the stumbling-stone, and by their blind insubjection put off for the present the application of a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. As regards the ancient people, it was dead through their unbelief, though grace would not permit it to fail for a godly remnant and for those of the nations who believe the gospel. That blood, which the Jews imprecated as a curse on themselves and on their children (Matt. 26:28), is to Christians the cup of blessing which they bless, Christ's blood of the new covenant that was shed for many unto remission of sins. Its literal terms and full extent for the earth await the chosen nation to whom it is pledged by Him Who will infallibly accomplish it another day. Not more surely shall Sarah rise again than the covenant of grace shall be made good to Israel, notwithstanding all that they have done, when they shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name. Then will he execute judgment and righteousness in the land, and Jehovah shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Jehovah and His name one.

But it is a wholly different prospect here, the no less distinct figure of the new and heavenly relationship which grace forms, while the Jew abides in unbelief and therefore postpones the magnificent scenes of predicted glory for Israel and all the Gentiles in that day. It is the call of a bride for Isaac out of that world from which Abraham had been called. The trusty servant, described in terms quite exceptional, “the eldest of his house, who ruled over all that he had,” is charged with the delicate mission of finding her out according to God, and of guiding her across the desert to the bridegroom.

“And Abraham was old, advanced in age; and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, the eldest in his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that thou take not a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but thou shalt go to my land and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac. And the servant said to him, Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land: must I, then, bring thy son again anywise to the land from which thou earnest out? And Abraham said to him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. Jehovah, the God of the heavens, who took me out of my father's house and out of the land of my nativity, and who spake to me and who swore to me, saying, To thy seed will I give this land; even he will send his angel before thee; and thou shalt take a wife thence for my son. And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then shalt thou be clear from this mine oath: only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this

matter” (vers. 1-9).

No one denies that in the letter the aged father was devising in a grave and pious spirit to help his son Isaac in the most important step of a life, not merely momentous to the Jewish seed which had earthly blessing divinely promised, and in the highest degree, but yet more bound up with still better blessing in his own seed to all the families of the earth. Nor was Abraham content with the long proved fidelity of him who had from earlier days earned and deserved his confidence. Here and now only he exacts of Eliezer an oath of peculiar solemnity, that the bride taken should be, not from the accursed race of Canaan, but out of that land from which he himself had been called, and of his kindred. But he who weighs the typical meaning which the N. T. authoritatively gives to the previous history, as we have seen, will not be disposed to deny it here; where the exceeding fullness and character of the narrative suggest a deeper import, which is itself the certain truth of God, and fits it here, as nowhere else, precisely answering to the new history, but of more exalted application and of the nearest interest to the Christian reader.

“I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that thou take not for my son a wife of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell; but to my country and to my kindred thou shalt go and take a wife for my son Isaac.” It is well to remark that here the divine title is most note worthy, besides proving the groundlessness of Astrue's conjecture which has exercised so powerful a spell over rationalist minds. The nearest to it in the book of Genesis, (both without parallel in the Pentateuch) is found in chap. 16. There “God Most High” is in conjunction with “possessor of the heavens and earth;” and the evidence points to the days of the kingdom as yet future, when it will not be merely the “order” in contrast with Aaron's, but the true Melchizedek will exercise His priesthood in blessing the victors at the end of the age, and the heavens and earth shall be united instead of severed as they are still.

In chap. 24 before us “the God of the heavens and the God of the earth” presents the universal rights of the only true God, revealed fully and only when the Son of God is come, and He dead and risen brings out all the truth distinctly in connection with the call of the church, the bride of Christ. Hence, in Eph. 3, the apostle speaks of the mystery or secret hid in God Who created all things (ver. 9) and the Father from whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named (ver. 14), one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in us (or, you) all (4:6). Thus it is not only life and incorruption which are now brought to light in Christ Jesus, but the highest and widest rights of God in His universal supremacy, universal providence, and yet the truest intimacy of relationship with His children, and them all. Now if God intended to communicate this as far as a type (only intelligible with the antitype), where could it be fittingly introduced but here? Truly God's ways are as marvelous as blessed; and His word as here is the revelation of them, as also of His counsels and nature. Of this rationalism is profoundly ignorant, and necessarily so because it is rationalism, and not faith.

The answer of the servant and the reply confirm the force of another and connected truth. “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land: must I then bring thy son again to the land whence thou camest out? And Abraham said to him, Beware thou, that thou bring not again my son thither.” Here we see the utmost stress (and it is reiterated once more) laid on Isaac's abiding in Canaan. There only must he be found; and he only of all the patriarchs. For as his father came out of Mesopotamia, so did he for a time go down into Egypt; and again his son

Jacob returned to Mesopotamia, and also went down into Egypt, and died there. But Isaac alone must and did never leave the land of Canaan. In this he most strikingly represents Christ after He died, rose, and ascended; in which condition He becomes Head of the church, and the Bridegroom. He is emphatically the heavenly (■ ■πουρ■νιος). God makes Christians “heavenly,” not yet as a displayed fact (for we still bear the image of the man of dust), but as a spiritual title and reality, on which we are called to walk while in the world, but not of it as He was not. Compare Eph. 1:3-30; 2:6; 3:10; 4:8-16; 5:25-32; 6:12; also 1 Cor. 15:48, 49.

Hence Abraham continues, “Jehovah, the God of the heavens, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, To thy seed will I give this land; he will send his angel before thee; and thou shalt take thence a wife to my son. And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then shalt thou be clear from this mine oath: only my son bring not again thither.” And so the servant swore. The Head given to the church remains heavenly in the most exclusive terms and according to the most distinct and persistent purpose. And such is the clear and sure doctrine, which the apostle was the inspired vessel to communicate. It was a secret revealed (Eph. 6) to the holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; but Paul became minister of the church (Col. 1:25) according to the stewardship given him to complete the word of God in this respect; as in fact no other writes of the church as he does. Christ is glorified in heaven to be the church's Head; and He is there only while the body is formed in the power of the Holy Spirit sent for this end. “As He is, so are we in this world.” The Christian, the church, is called to manifest the mind of heaven on earth. But the ground of this is that we are already joined to the Lord, one spirit with Him Who is on high. Thus it is that we characteristically know Him; no more according to flesh, but dead, risen, and ascended (2 Cor. 5).

Here the shortcoming of Christendom through unbelief is all but universal, though in varying shape. Some are so dark as not to comprehend what answers to Hagar and her child expelled from the house of Abraham. The bondmaid covenant of Sinai is still their rule of life, though they deny not the birth of the true son and heir. Others advance no farther than the covenant of promise in Sarah and Isaac, though they see that the son of the bondmaid cannot be heir with the son of the free-woman. They believe in the atonement; but they have no right apprehension of the new place of the Son as dead, risen, and associated only with heaven. Yet this alone, as we have seen in the figure, gives the proper blessedness of the Christian in union with Christ, by virtue of the Holy Spirit given to us on the ground of His sacrificial death, where He is, being Himself on high till He comes to take us to the Father's house. Hence as the heavenly relationship of the church is unknown as Christ's body and bride, as the truth of having died with Christ and being risen with Him and seated in Him in the heavenlies, is utterly vague and uninfluential, the door lies open to the rudiments of the world, as well as philosophy and the vain deceit of rationalism; hence the baptized set their mind like Jews or Gentiles on the things upon the earth instead of those above, where Christ sits at God's right hand. They are so ignorant of the power of Christ's resurrection and ascension, that they cannot read its wondrous foreshadowing in the first book of the O. T. Thank God, they do not deny His death adumbrated in the sentence on Isaac, though only effected and forever efficacious in the cross of Christ. But they wholly fail to appropriate the new standing prefigured in Isaac risen and never quitting Canaan, while the bride is being called from the world to join him there.

Let us recall the beautiful conformity of the Acts of the Apostles, and of God's ways in this connection. After Christ went to heaven, Peter preached to the Jews in Solomon's porch, as recorded in chap. 3, and pointed out how the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob glorified His servant Jesus Whom they denied and slew. Yet did he assure them that, on their repentance and conversion, not only should their sins be blotted out but God would send Jesus Who was fore-appointed for them, in order to bring in times of restoring all things as His prophets had ever declared. But the Jews sealed their unbelief; and thus the new covenant lapsed as far as the people were concerned; and an apostle was called by the Lord in heaven to preach to the Gentiles and reveal the full heavenly place of the church, one with Christ above. This it is which is called “the mystery,” or secret hidden of old when God gave promises and prophecies. In the Epistles of Paul we have the mystery revealed as to Christ and as to the church.

Chapter 139

Isaac: 10. The Bride Called for Isaac

Gen. 24:10-21

In the early verses we have the most specific directions laid down by the father for his son's bride. Now we learn how faithful was “his servant, the elder of his house who ruled over all that he had,” in giving effect to his will. It is he who becomes the most prominent throughout the chapter till the bride joins the bridegroom. This is unmistakable typically. As surely as we behold the Father seeking a bride, the church of God for Christ His Son, all the while and only in the heavenlies, so do we recognize the sending and action of the Holy Spirit in this signally honored and trusty servant. In fact his unstinted and unwavering subjection, so far from being a difficulty or objection, is what the type required. For just as the Son became bondman to do the Father's will and secure His glory, so does the Holy Spirit subserve the Son as well as the Father. Thus we read in John 14-16 and other scriptures. Take this one: “He shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever things he shall hear he will speak; and he will report to you things that are to come. He will glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and will report to you. All things that the Father hath are mine,” &c. For the Christian, for the church, we need and have the Holy Spirit as well as the word. The Spirit given is our distinctive privilege and power.

“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master and departed (now all the treasure of his master was under his hand); and he rose and went to Aram-naharaim [High land of the two rivers], to the city of Nachor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water, at evening time, at the time that women go out to draw [water]. And he said, Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, meet me, I pray thee, this day, and do kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand by the fountain of water; and daughters of men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass [that] the maiden, to whom I shall say, Let down, I pray thee, thy pitcher, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also, [be] she whom thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and hereby shall I know that thou hast done kindly to my master. And it came to pass before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah wife of Nachor brother of Abraham, and her pitcher [she had] upon her shoulder. And the maiden was very fair to look on, a virgin, and no man had known her; and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me sip, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord; and she hasted, and let down her pitcher on her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, Also for thy camels I will draw, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondered at her, holding his peace to know whether Jehovah prospered his way or not” (vers. 10-21).

How simply beautiful is the picture here presented of the walk by faith, not by sight or appearance, to which the church is called, and those who individually compose it! In no other part of Genesis, nay of the O.T., can one recall a scene so capable of foreshadowing it as what we have now

before us. Dependent and confiding prayer characterizes it. So we find repeatedly in the Acts of the Apostles; even when not exactly “praying in the Holy Spirit,” we are encouraged in everything to make our requests known to God. Compare Ananias in Acts 9:10-17, and Paul in Acts 22:17-21; and that “free address,” which is the exact import of the word translated “prayer” in 1 Tim. 4:5. Christ come, and His work, bring us into the reality of what becomes us before God. Even if we were not so weak and ignorant as we have learned ourselves to be, how blessed to have God near and faithful in fully proved love, so that we may bring before Him “everything” great or small! How dishonoring Him to trust in our wisdom or common sense! See too how the servant keeps before him and puts forward the promises to Abraham, the special relationship grace had already formed as a place for present need, and especially in what had been pressed as of the profoundest moment. Guidance of the Spirit is precious but guaranteed. As many as are led by God's Spirit, these are sons of God. It was not a mere sign he asked as Gideon in Judg. 6; 7, but the very bridal person herself of whom he was in quest, not for himself, but for his master's son. The honor and love of faith filled his heart.

Nor had he long to wait. “Before he had done speaking,” the maiden comes. Freely he had asked, boldly and minutely had he ventured to prescribe. But this reckoning on Himself is most pleasing to God, if unbelief dares to deny it as presumptuous. It was really prayer of rare simplicity, of striking suitability, of entire confidence; and the immediateness of the answer anticipated the day when righteousness shall reign, and Jehovah will hear while His people are yet speaking. So it is now through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, when we have the new covenant in spirit if not in letter, and the Messiah not present, it is true in earthly power and glory, but known on high in a yet surpassing glory.

Accepting the answer, “the servant ran to meet” Rebekah. There was no hesitation but alacrity; for he knew Whom he had believed, and laid before her what he had already asked of Abraham's God, Jehovah. And Rebekah with no less alacrity responded graciously to his request uttered to her, and to that which he had said only to God in caring for “all his camels.” No wonder that he wondered at her, silently waiting for full assurance (as he was but the type of a greater Servant), whether Jehovah prospered his way or not. Even our Lord expressed fully His appreciation of the Syro-Phœnician woman's faith, and wondered at the Gentile centurion's, though it was His own grace which produced faith in both. The servant could and would not disguise from his heart that God had acted according to his heart's desire for his master and his master's son; and he looks for yet more to His own glory.

Chapter 140

Isaac: 11. The Bride Called for Isaac

Gen. 24:22-29

There was astonishment in the servant's mind at the immediate and punctual answer to his prayer. To call it unbelief, as Calvin does, is unwarranted. It is the picture of the Holy Spirit's working in man, which never wrought so fully as since redemption, and never will work so again while he is on the earth. But if the servant rightly felt the gravity of the oath taken of him by his master, and the delicacy of the task for his master's son, he was deeply and believingly impressed with the speedy fulfillment of all he had laid before Jehovah, his master's God. The first sight of her could not but impress him. Still more was he struck, when, running to meet her, and asking as he had been led, she simply and completely responded to his petition just spread before God. Even our Lord, perfect man as He alone was, “wondered” at the Gentile centurion's faith. If this expressed His delight, where not a particle of unbelief could be, we need not disparage the servant's “wondering” at her, when he received so marked and ready a token of favor on his mission, “remaining silent to know whether Jehovah made his journey prosperous or not.” His action that follows is the best proof of his faith. “He that believeth shall not make haste;” and this absence of the haste, into which flesh rushes, is what really comes out in one content to take a single step at a time, as becomes man however blessed.

“And it came to pass, when the camels had done drinking, that the man took a gold ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets of ten [shekels] of gold, and said, Whose daughter [art] thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there in thy father's house room for us to lodge in? And she said to him, I [am] daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nachor. And she said to him, [There is] both straw and much provender with us, and room to lodge in. And the man bowed down and paid worship to Jehovah, and said, Blessed [be] Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who hath not withdrawn his mercy and his truth from my master; I [being] in the way, Jehovah hath led me to the house of my master's brethren” (vers. 22-29).

What a testimony to “the riches of grace” we have here from the outset! Where in all the Bible do we find anything to compare with those precious gifts on such an occasion or at so early a stage of it? The Christian reader can read the counterpart in Eph. 1. There as here we have purpose in the early verses, followed up by the boon of redemption in verse 7—the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace, before the proper privileges of union with Christ are spoken of, or those peculiar gifts which He gave as ascended on high, the type of which we shall not fail to see later on. So, anticipating the gospel of God's grace, our Lord shows how the Father receives the returning prodigal: the best robe, a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet, and a feast of joy greater far to Him than to the son thus wondrously received or to any that shared the feast. The gospel accompanies but precedes the church; and the call of grace is marked variously in both. Can any with open or intelligent mind fail to trace in our chapter the divine design, which is the constant and unmistakable witness of inspired scripture, and which makes it differ from every other book?

But in the history before us, how confirmatory was the maiden's reply to the inquiry of the servant! Truly dependent on God, he tries even the brightest concurrence of circumstances by the word which guided his way and defined his aim. This does not suit the self-confidence of man; but is it not the one path, the inalienable duty, of the saint? For we walk by faith, not by sight. The Holy Spirit, as He thus led the Lord Jesus always and perfectly while here below, deigns now to conduct us after the same blessed pattern. What Rebekah said fell altogether and distinctly within the requirements of Abraham in the bride he sought for his son Isaac. No doubt her character even in this brief interview shone out in love and lowliness, in unaffected respect and readiest service, a meet daughter-in-law for Abraham, a pure and gentle wife for Isaac. Yet this was not everything that the servant sought, true to the interests of the son and to the words laid down by the father. “Whose daughter art thou?” Was she of Abraham's kindred? Her answer was just what he sought, and she assures him and his retinue of a suitable reception.

This draws out another characteristic in the account. For the man bowed down and paid worship to Jehovah. Worship, worship in spirit and truth, distinguishes the Christian and the church. So the Lord told the Samaritan woman. The hour for it is come and now is. The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth, in contrast with Jerusalem no less than the mountain of Gerizim. A people in the flesh, a worldly sanctuary, earthly priests, material sacrifices and offerings, are unacceptable. The Father seeks and has children. They are sons, not distant bondmen nor yet infants; but redeemed and with the Spirit of adoption they cry, Abba, Father. Nor is it less true of the church than of the individual; as we read in 1 Cor. 14 where the Lord enjoins that all be with the spirit and with the understanding also, prayer, and singing, and blessing, and giving of thanks. For not literal circumcision is now of account; but we, Christians, are the circumcision, who worship by God's Spirit, and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence or trust in flesh. Forms avail not, nothing but Christ, our life.

And the man said, for it is intelligent worship, “Blessed be Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who hath not withdrawn from my master his mercy and his truth; I in the way, he hath led me to the house of my master's brethren.” It is confiding and adoring acknowledgment of His faithful goodness. So in our case the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding to know Him that is True; and we are in Him that is True, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life; without which, and the Holy Spirit given now that He is gone, we could in no way rise to such worship. But what a wondrous prefiguration of it is the scene before us! It is just where it should be; nor is there a scene like it elsewhere.

Chapter 141

Isaac: 12. The Bride Called for Isaac

Gen. 24; 28-33

Hitherto we have seen the lovely prefiguration of the Father's purpose in calling out of the world a bride for His Son. In this point how sedulously and solemnly the Son is kept from all direct relation with the world. He is seen in a heavenly position exclusively. Nor is less clear the place which is given to the chief servant of the house in executing this charge of entire devotedness, distinct dependence in the prayer of faith, and in ready attitude of worship. These are exactly the qualities looked for in, and suited to the operation of, the Spirit in Christ's body and bride. As Rebecca at once and signally met this purpose from the first, we are now to learn how all that follows was furthered by grace to the same end.

“And the maiden ran and told her mother's house according to these words. And Rebecca had a brother, and his name [was] Laban; and Laban ran out to the man to the well. And it came to pass when he saw the ring and bracelets on his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebecca his sister, saying, Thus spoke the man to me, that he came to the man, and behold, he was standing by the camels at the well. And he said, Come in, blessed of Jehovah: why standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for camels. And the man came into the house, and ungirded the camels; and he gave the camels straw and provender, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. And there was set before him to eat; but he said, I will not eat until I have told my business. And he said, Speak on” (vers. 28-33).

The simple-hearted alacrity of Rebecca is here as apparent as her thoughtful courtesy and kindness before. Such should be the church, and the Christian now. Blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, are we not individually and collectively bound to reflect the grace of Him to Whom we belong in His sovereign goodness? Freely we received; freely should we give. Far from us should be the proud forbidding independence of a Jew, the ever craving unsatisfied covetousness of a Gentile. Yet was the maiden quick to discern the signs of the crisis for her, and ran to tell “her mother's house.” This was in keeping with propriety, even if her father were not throughout singularly in the background: so much so, that some have ventured to think that the name after Laban's (ver. 50) may have been a younger brother rather than the father. Certain it is that Laban is the active leading man of the house from first to last. Here he ran out to the man by the well or fountain.

Nor is it a casual circumstance that we read of Laban's ready proffer of hospitality when he saw the ring and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard her report of what Abraham's envoy said to her. Forthwith he came to the man still standing by the camels at the fountain, and gave him a welcome in terms no less cordial than pious, as such characters are apt to say when sure of honor and advantage accruing. The history shows subsequently that Laban was an overreaching man and an idolater. We are compelled therefore to infer from the language here employed that the sight of the jewels given to his sister, and the man's words about his master, powerfully acted on one whose motives were far from unselfish. His salutation was

winning however: “Come in, blessed of Jehovah: why standest thou without? for I have prepared the house and room for the camels.”

The remarkable procedure of Abraham's servant is what we have to notice for our edification. He came into the house, ungirded the camels, and had straw and provender given, with water to wash the feet of himself and those with him. But when meat was set before him, he refused to eat till he told his story. This is not at all in accordance with the usual way, especially in the east, and after so long a journey. His errand is all-absorbing. He would not allow his own ease, or the customs of men, to come first or make the way for what he had at heart. He was there for his master's sake. Word and oath bound him, as well as honor and love for his master's son. He would not even seem to let their interests be secondary. “I will not eat until I have told my business.”

So it is most exclusively and in a way altogether worthy of the Father and the Son, that the Holy Spirit devotes Himself to His quest and care of the Bride. We know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to purpose, as the apostle says in Rom. 8. But what should be our confidence when we also know the divine Person of the Paraclete sent by the Father in the Son's name to teach us all things, and remind us of all that Christ said, the words that are spirit and are life, and many other things which could not be borne before redemption? What new and heavenly relationships, as of Christ's body and bride! What light of His heavenly glory! What announcement of the things to come! If the Savior's meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work, the blessed Spirit of God is no less sedulous in speaking, not, from Himself, but all that whatsoever He should hear; for He it is Who here and now glorifies the Son.

Chapter 142

On Isolation or Independency

My Dear Sir,

As far as I understand your position, it is one of “holding yourself aloof,” or nothingarianism as to church relations. Without doubt a dry morsel and quietness therewith is better than a house full of the sacrifices of strife; as it is better to dwell in the corner of a house-top than with a contentious woman in a house of society.

But I read unmistakably in the last Epistle of the great apostle who alone communicated the truth of the church, that grace gives a wholly different resource in view of the disorder and dangers of the last days. Circumstances may indeed here or there leave one isolated; but isolation is neither the revealed provision nor the legitimate aim.

The firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knew those that are His, And, Let every one that nameth the Lord's name depart from unrighteousness. This is individual and of deep moment as things are. But all does not end there. “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. If then one purge himself out from these (i.e. the vessels unto dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared unto every good work.” And this you own and have acted on. We are not tied to ecclesiastical corruptions where they are sanctioned constitutionally and admit of no removal. One must purge oneself out, if one cannot purge the evils out. But is this all? While the apostle bids his beloved child flee the lusts of youth, wide as they are and some of them subtle, he adds, “and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:19-22). Thus one may and ought to look for companions and fellow-witnesses called to like fidelity. Never should one contemplate isolation. The Holy Spirit bids one by grace to desire and expect communion of saints, however great and general may be the ruin of Christendom.

Rev. 2; 3 may be pleaded for individualism. Now the call here to “him that hath an ear” is imperative in not allowing assemblies absolutely to govern faith or practice. I am bound, whatever the pretension to authority in defense of wrong or error, to hear not them but what the Spirit saith to them. Their voice is prima facie entitled (like that of my parents) to high respect and obedience, but certainly not if the wrong or the error is known and even acknowledged: else that holy, responsibly holy, enclosure becomes a screen for evil, and may end in a hold of any unclean and hated bird. As a prophetic book the Apocalypse does warn and call for obedience to the word; but that word was to leave no faithful soul settled down in isolation. On the contrary it encourages him, who separates from the evils men impose under the abused name of the Lord, to cherish a fellowship as much according to God Is the separation. For Christ died to gather in one the children of God that were scattered abroad; and the Holy Ghost came to baptize them Jew or Gentile into one body. Never should God's will as to this inalienable privilege and duty become secondary. It is of all obligation; and the Holy Spirit abides to give both permanence and power, as we too are called to be subject to the Lord. Hence the blessedness of His own promise to be in the

midst (not certainly of all Christians in their wanderings but) of all that are gathered unto His name, were they but two or three. Let these be diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; and may they do it with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

W. K.

Chapter 143

James 3:1

WE are here directed to a weighty matter in the believer's practical life, already but briefly noticed in chap. 1:19, 26, now treated in full. It is opened with remarkable exhortation about “teachers,” as it unequivocally ought to be. The connection with speaking confirms the required meaning, independent of philology, though this of course admits of nothing else. It would seem however that, in stages of our tongue now obsolete, “master” had not only the general sense of “superior” which is here quite out of place, but the special force of “teacher.” So it was used in the English versions of the Gospels as the counterpart of the Hebrew “Rabbi.” And so it is rendered here by Wiclif and a Wiclifite (Oxford, iv. 599), Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva, Rheims, as well as the A.V. It was as natural for Jews to claim external honor in that position, as it became Christian teachers to follow their Master in the lowly love which led Him to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. or did our Lord leave this to spiritual inference from such words as these; He enjoined it explicitly on the most honored of His disciples. “Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant (or, minister), and whosoever would be first among you shall be your bondman” (Matt. 20:25-27).

“Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment” (chap. 3:1).

No Epistle in the N. T. is less ecclesiastical than this; not one has less before it the gifts of the Lord for the perfecting of the saints. The task which the inspiring Spirit enabled the writer to perform was to warn against empty profession and to insist on holy practice in speech, walk, and affections, conformable with the new life begotten by the word of truth. This makes it all the more striking, that he, like the great apostle of the circumcision, should in this hortatory preface use language which implies that liberty of ministry among the confessors of Christ, which fell to the greater apostle of the uncircumcision to develop with certainty, precision, and fullness. The Acts of the Apostles historically presents the unspeakably momentous fact which accounts for and explains that liberty. Again the Epistles make plain that it was also a question of responsibility to the Lord Who gave to His own bondmen His goods, to each according to his several ability; as He will, when He comes, reckon with them on the use they made of His trust; and woe shall be to the wicked and slothful servant who traded not with the talent given, because he was afraid and distrusted the grace of the Master.

Here the openness of the church in apostolic times to receive instruction from all competent to impart it is beyond controversy. As gifted men were by that privilege bound to give it out, so were the saints bound to profit thereby. Thus we are taught in the capital seat of this fundamental truth for the assembly, 1 Cor. 12-14. There Paul lays down, in that great Epistle of ecclesiastical order, the correction of their abuses about women's place, the Lord's Supper, and the assembly also. “If any one seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” Human societies naturally fall into the inventions of men; not so those that believe God has revealed His mind for the church as authoritatively as for every other thing on which He has

spoken.

If the Holy Spirit abide no longer with and in us, we are left orphans indeed. But it is not so. The Father, Who in answer to the Son's request sent another Paraclete or Advocate, gave Him to abide with us forever. So abides the one body like the one Spirit. In chap. xii. we have this power shown in His varied activity in the members, as His presence is their uniting energy. Not of course that all is given which once abounded as signs of Christ's victory. Tongues and interpretations, powers and gifts of healings, did follow those that believed, as the Lord promised. But He never intimated that these were to continue “till the end of the age,” or in any equivalent phrase elsewhere. But the gifts needful to complete, what the apostles and prophets began, as the foundation, are guaranteed in Eph. 4:12. In 1 Cor. 13 divine love is notably introduced, as requisite for the right exercise of this new relationship, and having its blessed scope there pre-eminently. And chap. 14 closes the teaching by the authority of the Lord in His word, directing and controlling the action of gifts in the assembly; so that an unbeliever might report that God was indeed among those gathered, and the believers be responsible that all should be done to edification, comely and in order. Nor is there any other order for the church as such sanctioned of God. Can the church change it or correct Him?

But 1 Peter 4:10, 11 also furnishes a word of great price. “Each according as he received a gift, ministering the same one to another as good stewards of God's manifold grace: if any one speaketh, as God's oracles; if any one ministereth, as of strength which God supplieth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might unto the ages of ages. Amen.” Here is the same liberty and the same responsibility as elsewhere. Each gifted one is bound to act as a good steward of God's various free-gift. But the speaker is to speak as God's mouthpiece, as God gives then and there; and service of another kind is to be full of strength which He supplies, that (not man but) God be glorified through Christ Jesus. Only the power of the Spirit could make either good. No creature ability could avail. It is alone through Christ to His glory.

Our text adds another and characteristic lesson. Though the door be open, the solemn caution is heard: “Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment.” Conscience is appealed to here, as faith by Peter. Let there be no haste, no levity, no self-confidence, no vanity in seizing the opportunity; but there lay danger, the capability of ready abuse. The guard however is no official restraint, as in Christendom generally, to shut out liberty, but the counsel in this case unmeaning, against many teachers, knowing as we do that we shall incur greater judgment. Our Lord, denouncing every idle word and the account thereof to be rendered in the day of judgment, said “By thy words thou shalt he justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;” so His servant here reminds us, that by thus speaking responsibility is increased. God is not mocked and remembers words lightly said, which might he urged on others, with little or no thought of our need. “Thou then that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” In every way judgment becomes heavier if teaching flow not from love and in the fear of God. But the inspired writer never thinks of closing the open door as a divine remedy.

James 3:2

From the over-eagerness to teach, gift or no gift, we come in the next verse to a far wider range of caution, which is illustrated in the usual practical way, but with singular aptitude and force.

“For in many things [or, often] we all offend. If any one offendeth not in word, he (is) a perfect man able to bridle the whole body also” (ver. 2).

Thus the Spirit of God turns from the vain readiness to teach in public to the irrepressibility of speech in general. “For in many things we all offend.” The word translated “offend” passes from physical stumbling to moral failure, as in chap. 2:10, the transition already being marked in Rom. 11:11. Compare also 2 Peter 1:10 with the double occurrence in our verse.

Without doubt each saint is responsible in all humility as regards himself, to speak for the Lord where His glory and will, grace and truth, are plainly revealed. Alas, how much is said that has no higher source than self, however veiled it may be! But self when opposed is apt to break out into strife and party-work, with all their deadly accompaniments and results. Nor are any souls more deceived than those who accredit themselves with the best motives, and fear not to assail those who reprove them with odious imputations. It is clear that James knew this deplorable evil but too well, as indeed the other inspired writers; nor did anyone perhaps suffer from bitter experience of the evil so much as the apostle Paul. It could not be otherwise, when we read of the state of the Galatians on the one hand and of the Corinthians on the other, and of his own responsibility to pronounce on such early departure from both divine truth and the ways of the Lord. For they are ordinarily associated with a self-exalting and rebellious spirit.

But these servants of the Lord did not refrain from the most trenchant denunciation of both errors and moral condition, any more than He Himself when here in perfect love, and because it was perfect. Who but He called Peter “Satan?” For he was an offense to Christ, because in the most amiable way he was minding the things of men, not those of God. How often too He had to mark and rebuke the rivalry of men, whom grace alone caused to differ from others, craving after their own honor, where He pointed the way to shame and suffering now (Himself alone entering its unfathomable depths), but to heavenly glory with Him shortly! Even after He rose, what could He say to the sorrow-stricken doubters, but “O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets spoke?”

Not less cuttingly does Paul remonstrate with the Corinthians as carnal and walking as men, to whom he gave milk, not meat as being not yet able to bear it. These were the men ready to sit in judgment on the apostle's authority and practice! Were not the signs, of an apostle wrought out among them in all patience? The humbling thing to his heart was that he should have one word to say about it to saints so deeply indebted to him. But he does not fail to speak with severity, whatever the anguish it might be to himself. How little they knew what it cost him, when they winced under the reproof! How far from feeling the love according to God that lay beneath the truth, which did not flatter them but laid bare their lofty thoughts and low ways!

Just so the apostle reproaches other children of his in the faith, “O senseless Galatians, who bewitched you?... I am afraid of you, lest indeed I labored in vain as to you.... of whom I again travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you.... The persuasion is not of him that calleth you.”

Let us not forget what spirit it was that resisted of old such faithful men as Moses and Aaron, or taxed them with taking too much on them, “seeing all the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and Jehovah among them.” It was their own self-sufficiency that left out His will and word in their eagerness to lift themselves up. And such gainsaying is not obsolete. It is the spirit of the age increasingly, and displays itself religiously yet more than in the profane world.

Yet even the most spiritual have to watch habitually and to judge self in this respect at least as much as in any other. “For in many things we all offend. If any one offendeth not in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.” It is trying to hear men talk of matters which they are incompetent to judge. And it is easy enough to overshoot the mark of a true and deserved horror of what no godly mind should tolerate; and all the more because true discernment is rare. Christ is the pattern. A perfect man is he who offends not in word, able to bridle the whole body also. May our word as the rule be always with grace, seasoned with salt. May we also, if by God called to the duty, be brave to overthrow reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and to lead every thought into the obedience of Christ.

James 3:3-4

The figure of “bridling” in verse 2 suggests the illustration in verse 3, which again is strengthened once more in the verse that follows. In the received text we appear to have an error exceedingly frequent among the copyists, who are apt to confound ε■ and ■ where it does not affect the sense, and where here it does. Probably ■δο■ in the beginning of verse 4 led to the idea of commencing verse 3 with ■δε; but it ought rather to have induced hesitation, for why then vary the adverb? It would seem that ε■ δ■ was thus mistaken, and the more because the apodosis might easily be overlooked by being made part of the conditional protasis.

“Now if we put the horses' bridles (or, bits) in their mouths, that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are turned about by a very small rudder, where the impulse of the helmsman may purpose” (vers. 3, 4).

The instances chosen energetically tell for the purpose in hand, being homely and familiar. It would be a palpable mistake to doubt the power of a given object, because its size is diminutive. Such are the bits we insert into the horses' mouths. Impetuous the animal may be; but thereby as the rule it is reduced to obedience. Nor is it only the mouth or head that is governed, but “we turn about the whole body also.” Thus is complete contrast secured.

It is true that we ought not to be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings must be bit and bridle for restraint, or they will not come near unto thee (Psa. 32). But this is restraint, and our shame where it is needed, as in the case supposed; for it is our joy, when walking in the spirit of obedience, to know God's guidance in the way we should go, counseled with His eye upon us. But if it be needed, He knows and fails not to restrain and to chastise.

In another form is pointed out a like principle on the sea, as we have had on the land, and in an inanimate object of immensely greater proportions. Let the ship be of ever so vast bulk and driven sometimes by a wind however rough, yet is it turned about by a very small rudder, whither the steerman's impulse may direct. The steering, if it could be questioned, is made evident in the sequel.

We may notice by the way how little avails either a powerful mind or ponderous learning for the just interpretation of scripture, when such a commentator as Grotius could understand “the body” in these verses as said of the church. No inspired writer but the apostle Paul ever employs that figure. James means simply the outer man. He is still dealing with the extreme liability to fail with the tongue. If one does not fail in word, this is a perfect man; for he had owned that we all do fail. This he follows up by two illustrations, which show the influence of a small thing in controlling a great even in the most difficult circumstances, to impress the importance and the duty of governing our speech. Blessed indeed is it, when the tongue, under the guidance of God, testifies to the whole body under His control! He who more than any other urges works, in evidence of reality in those who profess faith in the Lord Jesus, warns us of license in our words, so influential for evil if

not for good; and all the more seriously as indicative of the inner man and involving the outer.

Chapter 146

James 3:5, 6

Many there are in all ages disposed to take account of nothing but deeds. Freedom in speech seems a necessary prerogative of a man, and its excess of all things most venial. Far different was our Lord's estimate of words (Matt. 12), which yet more than deeds express the feelings and bent of the inner man. And similar is the language of His servant here, couched in terse, severe, highly figurative, but all the more unsparing, terms. “So also the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. See how large a wood how little a fire kindleth! And the tongue is fire, the world of iniquity; the tongue cometh to be in our members that which defileth the whole body, and setteth in a blaze the course [lit. wheel] of nature, and is set in a blaze by gehenna” (vers. 5, 6).

That the tongue should be physically diminutive only gives the more vividness to its capacity for mischief beyond reckoning or measure. Who can conceive the destructive effects of an evil word? Yet the tongue, little as it is, boasts habitually and also great things; and is so much the more readily enticed to persevere and grow bolder, if sin is limited to deeds of the body. It may be observed that the word ■λη (here as generally translated “wood” or “forest”) is often in philosophical writings used to express “matter,” and by historians or others, like “materia” in Latin authors, the stuff or material of anything, timber, &c. The A. V. had ground for its rendering, even if the preponderance lean to that view which is presented here.

How energetic is the opening of ver. 6! “The tongue is fire.” It is not only that a mighty conflagration ensues from an apparently trivial spark; but the tongue itself is “fire” morally. However free from open acts of unrighteousness he may be who gives it loose rein without God before his eyes, it is without going farther “the world of iniquity.” He Whose ears are open to the cry of the righteous does not fail to mark unbridled license of speech, which shrinks not from any imputation, however unjust, that ill-will can dictate.

The best witnesses, both MSS. and Vv., omit the “thus” which smooths the way for the second time “the tongue” is introduced. It is most forcible as it stands simply. “The tongue cometh to be in our members that which defileth the whole body,” and this is a sense which, prevailing in the best authors so that no detailed justification is necessary, seems to suit the clause, better than the bare “is” of the A. V. or “is constituted” as it frequently means. Here it is liable to give the erroneous notion of being divinely arranged to so evil an end; which is a thought impossible to a good conscience and wholly opposed to the truth. It is through the fall, and the self will or lawlessness which characterizes sin, that the tongue comes thus to be such a burning power of evil in the members. It is the defiler of the whole body, for there is no limit to its unrighteousness; “the world of iniquity,” deeming itself to have immunity as long as it only injures in word.

But the latter clauses both enlarge the sphere of the evil, and deepen our sense of its source to the highest degree. For we are next told that “it setteth in a blaze the course of nature, and is set on a blaze by hell.” The wheel or course of nature extends far beyond the whole body; and such is the inflammatory range for the malignant tongue. What then must be the spring? It is, as we lastly hear, “set on a blaze by hell.” The evil one is a murderer as well as a liar; and unceasing

antagonism to Christ in both respects is its flagrant proof.

Chapter 147

James 3:7, 8

ANOTHER consideration is now urged, and not a little humiliating to set souls on their guard in the allowance of the tongue, and to hinder surprise at the extravagance of its outbreaks.

“For every nature of both wild beasts and birds, of both things that creep and things in the sea, is tamed and hath been tamed by the nature of man; but the tongue is none of men able to tame: an unsettled evil, full of deadly poison” (vers. 7, 8).

Here the inspired writer alleges an indisputable fact. What savage brute has not yielded to the dominion of man? What has not been subdued and become his pet or playmate? What bird of the air fierce or timorous has not bowed to his superiority and obeyed his will? Serpents even, however wily, powerful, or venomous, have been often taught harmless familiarity; while creatures of the sea have made friends and rendered homage or service to him.

But where is the man that has truly tamed either his own tongue or another's? Here one can appeal to universal observation, though not less forcibly and painfully to personal experience. It may and ought to be a heart-breaking confession; but is it not most true? Who does not know how rapid and ready is the tongue to break bounds; how slow to seek or keep the peace? How vehement its invective, how irritating its insinuations, how bitter and unmeasured its revilings? Is any one too obscure or feeble to escape its assault? Is any so venerable or exalted as to overawe its audacity? What piety or godliness can suffice to shame its insolence, or to silence its malice?

It is indeed, as it is here called “an unsettled” or unstable “evil, full of deadly poison.” Nor is the poison ever more attractive and dangerous than when administered in a gilded pill. Good words and fair speeches to make the worse appear the better reason is a favorite device of the enemy, and peculiarly fitted to deceive the hearts of the guileless.

Does this seem a too highly colored picture of the tongue? It is from One Who knew what is in man, and needed none therefore to bear witness of him. And He Whom James served in this Epistle as in his life-ministry knew what it was to have a human heart and tongue, both bearing good and sweet fruits continually to His God and Father. It is to Him that the believer looks and on Whose grace he counts. For underneath the gloomy description of a still gloomier reality, there is a streak of light divine. Is it written that absolutely none is able to tame the tongue? By no means. None “of men” can tame it. Ah! we can thank God. He is our desire, our expectation, and our strength. It were a wholly unchristian thought to subjugate our own tongue. It is our confidence to look up to God for that which is altogether beyond our capacity. And He works His wonders in everything through Christ our Lord. If all the rude men of Nazareth bore Him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His lips, does not our God and Father use these to humble and to transform and to invigorate, so that the tongue, that once was our shame, should be by His grace truly our “glory,” according to the Hebrew phrase? Christ indeed was here perfect. “Never man spoke like this man,” said the officials who were no friends, to their superiors who were His foes. But we are His; and as He is our life, may we learn of Him in this respect as in

every other.

James 3:9-10

From this point our Epistle takes up the ground of manifest and gross inconsistency. None but the most heedless can regard lightly a fault so self-condemnatory; nor can God either originate or sanction so plain a disorder and misuse of that excellent possession, the speech, conferred on man by His Creator. Least excusable is the inconsistency in such as own their relationship with God and the Lord.

“Therewith we bless the Lord and (the) Father, and therewith we curse men that are made according to God's likeness. Out of the same mouth cometh blessing and cursing. Not so, my brethren, ought these things to be” (vers. 9, 10).

There is the article, and but one, to “Lord and Father.” Grammatically therefore the phrase admits of meaning “Him Who is Lord and Father,” no less than “the Lord and (the) Father” brought together under that link of objects united here expressly though in themselves distinct. This they could not be fittingly unless there were a common nature and glory. So we may see in such a phrase as “the kingdom of God and Christ.” Far be it from the heart or mouth to question in the least that Christ is God, which is declared comparatively so often. But ask for instance if we must, whether Eph. 5:5 means this, though the single article bracket's together both terms. So we may see in “the apostles and prophets” of Eph. 2:20, combined for the foundation, but given separately in Eph. 4:11.

The idiom is common enough even with proper names, as when the man in Acts 3:11 held fast “Peter and John” thus united, though in vers. 1 and 3 both names are presented historically without the article to either. Such is the reading of ample and good authority. But the Sinai, the Vatican, and the Alexandrine with half-a-dozen cursives insert the article before John, which if right would individualize, instead of combining in a special way, the two apostles. In chap. iv. 13, 19, there can hardly be a doubt that they are thus joined together. Both cases occur with Paul and Barnabas in chaps. xiii., xiv. Chap. xv. is instructive from varieties of form, each employed with exquisite propriety. Ver. 2 presents Paul and Barnabas, first severed, and then without emphasis as simple fact, as also in ver. 12. But in ver. 22 they are expressly combined in unity as in 25 (the order changed), as in ver. 35 the fact is merely stated historically.

There seems no sufficient ground then for doubting that “the Lord” in the usual acceptation of the term is here combined with “the Father” as objects united in our praise. That it is unusual, all admit; but so it is in many a phrase of holy writ, that our narrowness of thought may be corrected and enlarged out of the fullness of divine truth. On the other hand no one should stumble at predicating “Lord” of the Father, if such were the aim of the inspiring Spirit here. For though the crucified Jesus was made by God both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and He is in distinctive office one sole Lord, as the Father is simply in His nature one sole God (1 Cor. 8:6), it does not follow that “Lord” may not be applied to the other Persons in the Godhead. Thus in 2 Cor. 3 it is predicated of the Spirit in the last clause of the last verse; as it is of God rather than of Christ (Who is distinguished as His Anointed) in Rev. 11:15. It was the rarity of the combination, however

taken, which no doubt led to substituting “God” as in the common text, following the more modern MSS. for “the Lord.” But if we accept the ancient reading, our language, we must bear in mind, does not, like the Greek, admit but one article.

The grand principle is plain beyond all question, that no inconsistency can be more gross than to employ the tongue, now in blessing the Supreme, now in cursing men that are made according to God's likeness. We are objects of His loving counsels, begotten of Him by the word of truth, and should be the last to curse any, as being blessed ourselves of mere mercy. It is not that fallen men have any intrinsic moral worth, as we above all should know from our own humbling experience. So we at least should never forget how they were brought into being as in God's likeness. How unbecoming in man, how shameless in us who bless the Lord and the Father, to curse men so made! Time was beyond doubt when we lived in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another; but the kindness and love of God our Savior broke down our pride and purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, and gave us a heart touched with divine grace toward all mankind. Instead then of cursing others, we want them to obey the truth, share the blessing, and join us in blessing Him Who is the source and giver of it all.

The incongruity is heightened by the figure of the next verse (10), “Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing;” and by the quiet but pungent appeal, “Not so, my brethren, ought these things to be.” The consistency of the Christian in its perfection is ever and only in Christ; and He is the sole and constant standard for us.

What love in Him even for the vilest and bitterest of His foes Called to inherit a blessing, may we not render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that we are thereunto called. This is surely, dear brethren, what it ought to be.

Chapter 149

James 3:11, 12

In this portion follow fresh illustrations to impress on the readers the incongruity and the enormity of injurious speech, all the worse for utterances of piety and propriety interchanged with it, and beyond just question condemnatory of it, as indicating the lack of the fear of God and of regard for man. The inspired writer's sense of its evil kindles into glowingly indignant questions, to which expostulation he himself supplies the answer in a few pregnant words.

“Doth the fountain out of the same opening pour forth the sweet and the bitter? Can, my brethren, a fig tree produce olives, or a vine figs? Neither [can] salt water produce sweet” (vers. 11, 12).

Here as elsewhere, the homeliness of the examples lends the more force to the reproof. To take the first instance: who ever heard of the fountain from the same slit emitting sweet water and bitter? Nature itself rebukes so shameless a mixture, and issues so contradictory, in those who praise the Lord and the Father. The great apostle of the Gentiles drew weapons from the same armory in 1 Cor. 11:14, 16 for divine order, and in 2 Thess. 3:10 also; as he did repeatedly to his confidential fellow-laborer Timothy in his First Epistle (2:12-15, 4:3-5, 6:6-8). But nowhere have we more telling thrusts of this kind than in the Epistle before us; where the impossible in nature is made to expose and castigate the ethically inconsistent, especially aggravated as it was by the profession of relationship to God and by the claim to enjoyment of His favor. Is the new nature to be disgraced by that which the old universal nature repudiates even though fallen?

In the second the demand is still more peremptory. It is not, Does, but “Can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine figs?” And we have the repetition of “my brethren” in this second case, though so soon after its dignified affectionate introduction just before in verse 10, in order to send the appeal home to their bosoms. One of the learned men who, setting up to interpret the words, set at naught its spirit, dares to compare the figure with our Lord's in Matt. 7:16-20 in order to disparage His servant here. But it is only another sample of the ill-willed ignorance which so constantly appears where erudition is not subservient to faith; that is, where man assumes to judge God, instead of seeking to profit by His word. For the Lord was there laying down the error of expecting good fruit from a bad tree; whereas His servant in, order to rebuke the glaring inconsistency of calling on the Lord of glory and indulging evil speech, confronts it with the natural impossibility of a tree producing any but its own proper fruit. Both are plainly true, and each exquisitely adapted to its purpose. Unbelief blindly errs, but only betrays its sinful presumption to those that know God and bow to His word. It is possible that the first word of the last clause (ο■τε, neither) may have through hasty misapprehension given rise to the added ο■τως (“thus") of the Text. Rec. Then came an effort to make the phrase more pointed by reading ο■δεμ■α πηγ■ (no fountain). The Sinaitic Uncial has ο■τως ο■δ■. But even Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort decline to follow; for they with Alford, Lachmann, Tregelles, and Wordsworth, read the text which yields the translation given above. There is, it would seem, a certain strangeness in reading ο■τε rather than ο■δ■. But this appears to be explicable by the writer's carrying on in his mind the preceding clause. The insertion of the conjunction (κα■, “and") in the last clause is opposed to the weightiest

of the ancient witnesses, both MSS. and Vv. and loses the point of the true text, which varies the figure by a negation which is indisputable.

James 3:13

From the preceding illustrations, so pungent and powerful, against the inconsistency and unnaturalness of unloving and unworthy language in lips which were avowedly consecrated to the glory of Jesus according to the character of a new nature, the Epistle turns to and raises the question of the wisdom and understanding which becomes His followers.

“Who [is] wise and understanding among you? Let him show out of his good conduct his works in meekness of wisdom” (ver. 13).

It is the opening of a new paragraph which continues to the end of this chapter, and passes indeed into the following one by way of contrast. The appeal here is searching. For assuredly those who set up so zealously to teach others did not doubt their own wisdom and understanding. Yet are they not rare and precious qualities?

1 Cor. 12 speaks of the “word of wisdom” and the “word of knowledge” as given through the Spirit, and presents them in the front place when he particularizes the forms which “the manifestation of the Spirit” takes, as given to each for the common profit. On the other hand he puts in the last place “kinds of tongues” and “interpretation of tongues,” of which the light-minded and unspiritual Corinthians had shown themselves vain and had made a disorderly use. He is far from denying the divine source and character of either; on the contrary he declares that “all these things” (after giving a considerable list of powers then in action) “worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular as He will (or, pleaseth).” For He is sovereign as a divine Person. But they had not all the same spiritual value. Some gifts edified the assembly by revealing God's mind and counsels; others nourished and directed the new life of individuals in His will; some strengthened for service, others issued in praise and thanksgiving. Again, some were for a sign to the unbelievers, while others were directed distinctly to the believers. And as prophesying had this latter character peculiarly, so tongues and the former had a lower place, though to outward appearance far the more extraordinary of the two. But here we may notice, as in 1 Cor. 12:28 too, the apostle's uniform guard against an estimate altogether human and erroneous. Why not desire earnestly the greater but less showy gifts? “Brethren, be not children in mind, but in malice be babes, but in mind be of full age” (1 Cor. 14:20).

In our Epistle however there is no development of that which is so prominent in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, but a moral dealing with the danger there and then prevalent among those addressed. The aim is to correct the haste and the character of speech generally, and the readiness to teach in particular. From the beginning, not only of the Christian confession, but of Israel's history, we may observe what importance was given to wisdom and understanding. Weigh such plain instances as Deut. 1:13, 15, and 4:5-6. “Take you wise men, and understanding, and known, according to your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.” “So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers, according to your tribes.” “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as Jehovah my God commanded

me, that ye should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go in to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." Indeed the spirit of it runs through that remarkable book, as obedient heed to the word of God forms it. What else can be the condition of blessing for all in relationship with God, be it for earth or for heaven?

Here a similar object appears in the inquiry, "Who is wise and understanding among you?" and in the counsel that follows, "Let him show out of his good course of conduct (that becomes such a man, in deed and in truth) his works (not self-complacently or ostentatiously, but) in meekness of wisdom." What more holy, sober, or pertinent? What more sad than when wisdom seems assuming or harsh? It is abiding in Christ that produces fruit acceptable to our God and Father, But we need His words too, and prayer.

James 3:14

Having exhorted him who was reported wise and understanding to show in the reality of comely works, not mere words, his good conduct or practical life in meekness of wisdom, not in superstitious criticism or self-conceit, the Epistle turns to warn of the dark side.

“But if ye have bitter emulation and faction in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth” (ver. 14).

Such is man: self is his idol, self will his way. The profession of Christ in no way eradicates it, but makes it all the more sad and inconsistent, in Jew even more than Greek. As we see in 1 Cor. 3, so we read here. “Bitter emulation” in the disciple of the crucified Lord of glory! Alas! it was no hypothetical case, but a fact. “But if ye have “; and this not in the hasty speech, but “in your heart.” So early and everywhere did the Christian confessors slip away from the reason of their being, and rival the failure of Israel. So quickly did they forget that Christianity, while emphatically “faith” (Gal. 3:25), in contrast with the law (the previous tutor), depends on life from God, or a divine nature partaken of, as we have noticed in this Epistle and may in every other. Now what room is there in that new life for “bitter emulation”? Christ condemns it, root and fruit. In Him was none of it, but meekness of wisdom, and zeal for God. First and last the zeal of His Father's house ate Him up. When or where else do we hear of His taking disciplinary work in hand, expelling outrageous offenders, and pouring contempt on their profane trade? Though the Holy and the High, when does He contend for His own glory, when and where does He resent the slight and scorn of guilty man?

If Christ be as indeed He is the Christian's life, what is it for him to have “bitter emulation” in his heart? Is it not the indulgence in an evil work of the old man, and the dishonor of the Master by the servant? This was bad, but “faction” is worse; because it is not only the individual gratifying the vanity of an evil nature, but its spread to others too ready to exalt self and depreciate such as ought to be loved and honored. For is it not to this we are called here below? “Let nothing be (said the great apostle) according to faction or vain-glory, but in lowly-mindedness each esteeming one another more excellent than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). We are entitled to regard them as saints beloved of God; though by grace the same, we cannot but feel our own unworthiness. What do we know of them as we know of ourselves? On every ground bitter emulation and faction be far from our heart. So pleads meekness of wisdom, that we may show out of our good conduct the works that now become that excellent Name by which we are called.

But if we have in our heart these unclean things, bitter emulation and faction, “do not boast and lie against the truth.” Love, we know, is not emulous, nor does it rejoice at iniquity, but rejoices with the truth. But the vaunting, which accompanies emulation and faction, is against the truth: for the truth wholly exposes and condemns it as of the carnal mind which is enmity against God. He was the truth, Who was meek and lowly in heart, and bids us take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, and we shall find rest to our souls. For His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

If we cherish these evils so contradictory of Christ, while called by His name, what is it but “lying against the truth”? So trenchantly does the Epistle denounce what the enemy ever seeks to introduce under cover of zeal for the truth.

Chapter 152

James 3:15-16

Wisdom like faith shows its character by the spirit and conduct that accompanies and reflects it. Every good gift and every perfect giving cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, Who of His own will begot us by the word of truth. What is the source and character of any wisdom, however pretentious, that coalesces with bitter emulation and faction? Is it not a lie against the truth? Does it flow from anything higher than hearts governed by self-will, instead of being purified by faith?

“This wisdom is not descending from above, but earthly, natural, demoniacal. For where envying and faction [are], there disorder [is] and every bad deed (vers. 15, 16).

To describe it thus was to brand it as thoroughly evil and of the enemy. The tone of James differs from that of John and Jude, of Paul and of Peter; but all agree in testifying that Christ alone is, and shows us, the wisdom acceptable in God's eyes and suitable for His children. Man's wisdom is in truth his folly, for it is in disobedience of His word, and seeks independence of His will. The Lord of glory was the obedient man and gave the pattern of One on earth Who did not merely live through or by the Father but on account or by reason of Him. So perfectly was He the servant (and this is the perfection of man Godward) that He had no other motive in His living; and He lays this down for him that feeds on Himself-even he shall live on account of Me (John 6:57). He is the Bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the world; but more than this, He gives His flesh for the life of the world. Less than this would not suffice to meet its ruin and accomplish the blessing God had in His heart for the believer. To eat His flesh and drink His blood is indispensable, if we are to have life in ourselves, as was His purpose of grace about us. He that thus eats and drinks has the communion of His death, and has life eternal, with the assurance of being raised by Him at the last day, yea more-of abiding in Him, and of His abiding in him, this day.

No other wisdom therefore suits the believer. The wisdom of the first man, and of the world, has no link with heaven. It is at best earthly, and either seeks glory from men or yet more proudly tramples on other men as unworthy of a thought. The sage thinks he is the king, and will have not fellows but slaves, in the fullness of his self-complacency and disdain. The most offensive condition to his mind is to be a servant, to be God's bondman, This is love's place, and Christ took and filled it unfailingly; and by His redemption we can follow in His path, having Him as our life, which He truly is, and are free to cultivate this wisdom coming down from above. For we too can love one another, because love is of God; and as everyone that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God, so he that does not love never learned God, because God is love.

Further too, it is not only “earthly” wisdom, but “natural.” It has no true sense of God's mind any more than of His love. As the apostle tells us in 1 Cor. 2, a natural or soulish man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot gain knowledge of them, because they are spiritually discerned; whereas the spiritual man discerns them all, while himself is discerned by none.

Another word completes the sad picture of wisdom outside Christ; it is “demoniacal.” It is quite enough to render it accurately; for though demons may be distinguished from their prince, yet are they the emissaries of Satan and the instruments of his malicious power. How little do men believe that the wisdom of self, so coveted of mankind, is “demoniacal!” How little do the children of God seek that which is of Christ, the best proof that it is of God's Spirit! For He is here to glorify Christ; and this He does by receiving of Christ's, and announcing it to us.

But are not God's children exposed in their weakness to danger and evil? They are not in the flesh, but the flesh is in them; they are in the world with all its snares; they are the object of the evil one's incessant and subtle seductions. But greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. Have they not Christ? And Christ is God's wisdom no less than His power. Far from them to boast of wisdom or aught else in themselves. Indeed God chose the foolish things of the world to put to shame the sages. And of Him are they in Christ Jesus, “Who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Yet God does not fail to set even the weakest on their guard against the assumption of a wisdom that is not of Him. Its moral character betrays its evil source, when smooth language and fair-speaking might easily ensnare the unwary. The least intelligent of saints who keeps the Lord Jesus before him can discern “envying and faction;” and these allowed bring in speedily “confusion and every bad work.” By their fruits therefore the earthly wise become manifest ere long to those who are neither intelligent nor spiritual enough to discern otherwise. They are thus warned and kept by divine grace.

James 3:17

In this verse we have the qualities of divine wisdom drawn out for our cheer and profit; as in James 1:5 we were exhorted to ask it of God that gives to all liberally and without a reproach, though indeed even His own deserve blame.

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, uncontentious, impartial (or, unfeigned)” (ver. 17): few words but sound and deep, pregnant and penetrating, inspired of God as they really are.

Now that grace has given us Christ, that we are begotten of God and have His Spirit, how suitable to look unto the same source for wisdom that springs not up from the earth or from man! But we are encouraged already, by the goodness proved when we deserved judgment and everlasting shame, to ask for all we need in our new responsibility because of our new relationship. Earthly as we once were, our hearts rose not then above it; alas! we were prone to sink below it through the wiles of the enemy. Now that we are “heavenly” as the apostle Paul intimates (1 Cor. 15:48), we constantly want a wisdom that is from above. Nor is there any other good gift from the Father of lights of deeper moment for His children. Will He not give it liberally to all that wait on Him in faith, and refuse all doubt? The love He has shown us, and the assuring word He has written for us, rebuke every such questioning. If we have not, it is because we ask not. If we ask and receive not, it is because we ask amiss, that we may spend it on our pleasures. How could God consistently impart heavenly wisdom to those who mind earthly things? He gives it in honor of Christ for His own glory.

What then is the Spirit's delineation of this wisdom? It is “first pure.” How worthy of God and of the Lord Jesus by Whom we know what He is! Let God's child advance as he may, he cannot claim this. How much there is always to mortify in our members on the earth! Assuredly “whosoever is born of God doth not practice sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin (■μαρτ■νειν, the course and character of our fallen nature), because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). Hatred of sin and living to God characterize all His family. But it is only when Christ shall be manifested, that we shall be seen to be like Him. We shall see Him as He is; then and thus shall we be conformed to His image. We still bear the image of the earthly; not till then shall we bear that of the Heavenly. But everyone that has this hope founded on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure. We, though bathed all over, need the habitual washing of the word to wash our feet. We have to purify ourselves, because we contract defilement and are not pure as He was and is.

The wisdom from above savors of Him to meet our wants. It is first pure, “then peaceable,” an order much to be borne in mind. Even saints are apt to make peaceableness their prime object. But this would compromise the character and glory of God, Who will have the exclusion of all that defiles. Sanctified to Jesus' obedience and the sprinkling of His blood, we are bound to see first that His will be our aim and purpose of heart, however important it is also and next to promote peace. Such certainly is the spirit and working of the wisdom from above. So in the Gospels we see invariably in the words and ways of the Lord; and not otherwise do we read the Holy Spirit's

teaching in the Epistles.

Again, it is “gentle,” and “easy to be entreated.” What a contrast with human wisdom, so apt to be stern and proud, so impatient of question or difference! Where was its perfection ever seen, ever maintained without a flaw, but in our Lord Jesus? Therefore could He say, even at the close, “I am among you as he that serveth.” So He called on the greatest of His followers to be as the younger, and the leader to be as the servant. Heavenly wisdom feeds and fosters this gracious lowliness and waiting on others.

Next, it is said to be “full of mercy and of good fruits,” a precious help in the midst of faulty souls, and their evil ways. For of all men those who feel and act with divine compassion toward wrong-doers require themselves to walk in communion with Him Who is good to the ungrateful and the evil. There must be no real ground for insinuating that they are soft toward other offenders, because they would smooth over their own inconsistencies.

Lastly, it is “uncontentious, impartial” (or, it may be, “unfeigned”): eminently called for in their place. For if children of God, are we not to walk as children of light, not only personally but in our bearing toward others and our converse with them? How is not the light dimmed by yielding to contention and indulgence in party work! How contrary to Christ when we give occasion to any just charge of insincerity or hypocrisy in our spirit! Heavenly wisdom eschews all such tendencies, earthly wisdom lives in and avails itself of such ways. The spirit of strife is apt to draw even an upright soul into feelings and conduct altogether unworthy of the new life and relationship.

Chapter 154

James 3:18

THE beautiful description of the heavenly wisdom which the Epistle commends to the saints closes with its result in peace along the way.

“And righteousness' fruit in peace is being sown for those that make peace” (ver. 18).

In the practical walk of the believer the fruit of righteousness is the prime requisite, but “in peace “; as we have seen the wisdom from above is “first pure, then peaceable.” In the natural man, as in the world, self-will reigns, the enemy of all righteousness, in an overbearing spirit, the seed of an ever-growing harvest of contention, as the beginning of the next chapter clearly indicates.

Even in the Lord Jesus we find the same order, as in Heb. 7:2, “first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace.” Such is the application of Melchizedek, king-priest of Salem. It is indeed a type more than fulfilled in the order of Christ's priesthood even now, about to be fulfilled by-and-by in its exercise, when the battle is won over the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies at the end of the age.

When we look at redemption, if grace reigns as it does, it is through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. Only then, through Him dead and risen, could we justified by faith have peace with God. Therefore are the saints everywhere called on, walking righteously, to be in peace (if possible, as much as hangs on them) with all men. Nor do the Epistles to the Corinthians differ from that to the Romans; God hath called us in peace, says the First; rejoice, be adjusted, be encouraged, be of one mind, be in peace; and the God of love and peace would be with them. Such is the exhortation and promise in the Second. So to the Galatians the apostle writes, for as many as walk according to the rule of the new creation, peace be on them and mercy; as to the Ephesians, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, he would have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. What a place peace has in the Philippian Epistle every reader ought to see; nor is it less deep in that to the Colossians where he would have Christ's peace rule in their hearts; as he prays for the Thessalonians in the First that the God of peace would sanctify them wholly, and in the Second that the Lord of peace Himself would give them peace continually in every way. And the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts to pursue peace with all, and holiness, giving this however the primary and peremptory place in accordance with the doctrine elsewhere.

But the fruit of righteousness in peace, though acceptable to God, a blessing in itself, and a comfort to fellow-believers, is far from welcome to men in general, who know not God and do not obey the gospel but unrighteousness, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating each other. It is sown, as we are here told, “for those that make peace.” The will of man, no more than the wrath of man, works God's righteousness. Discord and every evil issue are the sad effect. Blessed, says the Lord, are the peace-makers; for they shall be called God's sons. But in that wondrous outpouring of blessing from His lips on the mount, we may notice that the four descriptions of the blessed are of the righteous class (vers. 3-6), before the three of the gracious sort (vers. 7-9), with a blessing supernumerary on the persecuted for righteousness' sake, and another yet richer on

those persecuted for His own sake. Righteousness necessarily precedes. For it is vain to think or speak of walking in grace, where we fail in consistency with our relationship. The fruit of righteousness in peace is being sown for those that make peace. Such are evidently walking in a spirit which grace produces; but the fruit of righteousness in peace is sown for them. Some contend strongly that we should understand “by” rather than “for.” Grammatically the clause is susceptible of either sense; but the former seems hardly so suitable to the bearing of the context. Let the Christian reader judge for himself.

James 4:1-3

The new chapter turns to the source of the bitter, contention against which from the first its warning, lay-" slow to wrath," to its disastrous result.

"Whence [are] wars and whence fightings among you? [Are they] not hence, from your pleasures that combat in your members? Ye lust and have not: ye kill and are jealous and cannot obtain: ye fight and war: ye have not because ye ask not: ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend [it] in your pleasures" (vers. 1-3).

These violent workings sprang from self unjudged. If deliberate and continuous they are called "wars"; if passing outbreaks, they are called "fightings" or "battles "; but they describe not effects of violence in the world, but among those addressed. The humiliating fact remains, that terms to describe them are drawn from the uncontrolled ways of men who knew not God. What a contrast with Him Who says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29, 30). "Blessed" He pronounces "the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed the persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake" (Matt. 5:3-11).

Next the proximate cause is stated. "[Are they] not hence, from your pleasures that combat in your members?" It was the gratification of fallen nature. The members of the body in this case play their part, unchecked by the will or fear of God: the throat, an open sepulcher; the tongue, deceitful; the lips, with poison underneath; the mouth, full of bitterness; the eyes, full of adultery; the hands, ready for rapine; the heart, prone to covetousness; the feet, swift to shed blood. How hopelessly evil, if grace had not given another nature through and according to the word of truth (which is indeed, as the apostle calls it, Christ our life)! And the new has its pleasures after its source, hating what God hates, and delighting in what pleases Him. His word is then the law of liberty.

But where Christ is not before the eye of faith working by love, how mournful the issue "Ye lust and have not; ye kill, and are jealous, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend [it] in your pleasures." Here the evil is traced to that unhallowed desire that is called "lust," whatever may be its object, and whether corrupt or violent. It is wholly in contrast with subjection to God and His word. It is therefore antagonistic to the affection and mind of the Holy Spirit, as is said in Gal. 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit. and the Spirit against the flesh; and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do the things that ye would."

Here therefore we have, traced in unerring lines, the inevitable failure of such a course. There are desires which come to nothing; there is violence to an extreme, and envy or jealousy to the full, yet still dissatisfaction; there is contention ever growing worse; there is no asking, and no answer of peace. If there be asking apparently, there is the reserve of selfishness; it is evilly done to squander on their pleasures.

James 4:4-6

Violence was denounced in the opening of the chapter. Hence we have corruption indignantly rebuked to the face.

“Adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore shall be minded to be friend of the world is constituted enemy of God. Or think ye that the scripture saith in vain? Doth the Spirit that took his dwelling in us long unto envy? But he giveth more grace; wherefore he saith, God setteth himself against haughty [men], but giveth grace to lowly” (vers. 4-6).

The shorter text as given here is attested by the great witnesses, both manuscripts and versions. The addition in later copies we can understand from the temptation to round the phrase and comprehend men and women; and this has tended to a literal sense instead of understanding it as a forcible and solemn appeal, the gender being easily apprehended from the nature of the offense. For the first duty of every Christian is fidelity to Christ; and assuredly there is no question of failure on His part. With the saints it is far otherwise.

Thus wrote the apostle to the Corinthians, “I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Here each individual is more in view; but the principle is the same, and the figure of departure quite intelligible. The world corrupts from simplicity as to Christ many who would turn from immoral ways at once. For it looks fair enough, and offers a variety of attractions suited to our nature. And the question is often raised, What is the harm of this? Is there any wrong in that? But this Epistle lays bare the character of the enticement. Are we seeking or accepting the world? Now friendship with the world is enmity with God. Did not the world crucify the Lord of glory? Is it Christian then to value its approbation, or to court its honor? Is it loyal to the Lord to walk in familiar ease with the system which shed His blood and put Him to the vilest ignominy? No one clears himself of that guilt save he who believing is washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Those who profess the name without the power are sure to weary of separateness to Christ and to hanker after earthly things. But the word is plain: “Whosoever therefore shall be minded to be friend of the world is constituted enemy of God.”

The written word of God is as distinctly opposed to such unholy commerce as the Spirit Who dwells in us revolts from its spirit. “Or think ye that the scripture saith [it] in vain? Doth the Spirit that took His dwelling in us long unto envy?” What did our Lord teach on the mount or in His discourses habitually, and in His answers to men? Separation from the world is everywhere enjoined, or presumed. And what can be more adverse to the envy which characterizes the world than the mind of the indwelling Spirit of God? Subjectively therefore as well as objectively what God gives in no way countenances friendship with the world.

No doubt the difficulties and the dangers are great for the saint here below. “But he giveth more grace;” and all need it. Not content with imparting settled “access by faith into this grace wherein

we stand” (Rom. 5:2), where is the Epistle, speaking ordinarily, which does not begin with “grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ?” This is general, of course; and so much the better for its purpose that so it should be. Here it is suited to the trial, and therefore appropriate to need. “But he giveth greater grace.” The more severe the strain, the greater is His outflow of goodness for seasonable help. “Wherefore he saith, God setteth himself against haughty [men], but giveth grace to lowly.” Not only 1 Sam. 2 and Luke 10, but the Psalms and Proverbs furnish abundant testimony to both its parts.

It is one of the deceits of the heart that, where we really know God's will quite well, we go to ask advice of one no more spiritual than ourselves.

James 4:7-10

The assurance that God giveth grace to the lowly leads to the next exhortation.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse hands, sinners, and purify hearts, ye double-minded. Sorrow, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned unto mourning, and your joy unto heaviness. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (vers. 7-10).

There is much that helps the soul, as it is due to God, that we submit ourselves to Him. Undoubtedly it becomes one that knows Him to cherish obedient lowliness in His sight; and were we ever in our watchtower, we should be habitually thus submissive. But in fact a little thing is apt to excite, and the uprising of another too often rouses our own pride, instead of being only a grief to our souls as it should be. Hence the need of subjection to God, which quiets the spirit and leads to gracious affections.

But there is an adversary ever at work with whom we are called to have no terms, no compromises, even where appearances are put forward ever so plausibly. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Christ is the test: the devil always works to thwart and defame the Lord Jesus. He may preach righteousness, he may stimulate zeal; but he never exalts Christ's name in truth, any more than leads to suffering for His sake. Detested and resisted he will flee from us. To gratify flesh and the world are his ordinary snares. Let us never forget that to faith he is a vanquished enemy. Let us resist him in dependence on the Lord. On the other hand, we are called to “draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”

The new and living way is now open to Him Who sent His Son that all obstacles might be removed in the love that wrought and gave us a redemption worthy of Himself and of His Son. His written word now imparts the revealed certainty of His will in thus putting us in relationship with Himself, as we were shown early in this Epistle. As He speaks freely to us in His love, so does He encourage us, “always confident,” to draw nigh to Him. Our asking of Him, whatever the need, the danger, or the difficulty, is grounded on His having addressed Himself to us in grace. And Christ, as He was “the faithful witness” of Him to us, is no less of us to Him, so as to keep up faith's assurance alike when we draw nigh to God and when we resist the devil.

But the thought in the next words seems an example of the peculiarity of an Epistle addressed to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. “Sinners” and “double-minded” persons are appealed to as such. Such appeals are nowhere found in the Epistles addressed to the saints in the N.T. Here the scope is so wide as to include souls not yet converted, though we have also seen a great deal in the Epistle which supposes the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is more here and to come in accordance with its being written to the ancient people of God as a whole, in whatever degree each believer may draw profit from all. The difficulty of the exhortation is thus accounted for, and the authority of the word maintained, without yielding to any strained interpretation. Nevertheless it is a call to faith in all these verses, and not to the slow process of human effort; for cleansing of

hands and purifying of hearts, no less than for submission to God and drawing nigh to Him before, or for sorrowings that follow. The verbs are all in what is called the aorist, and therefore imply that God calls for each and all of these calls to be done once for all as a settled thing for the soul. This grace alone could effect. Man otherwise must labor in vain. God gives to faith what He demands.

Still where faith is, there is repentance also; and God will have evil felt and judged in those who are blessed of Him. Hence the summons, “Sorrow, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned unto mourning, and your joy unto heaviness.” As the Lord said, Blessed they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. The Epistle of James will no more allow the moral side to be forgotten than the apostle Paul in showing us the characteristics of genuine repentance. How could it be otherwise, if we stand in faith before God confessing our sins? To make repentance only a change of mind is a serious dereliction from the truth. Sin is ignored as it is in God's sight, and any divinely given sense of our ruin.

But a larger call follows, and of deep practical moment. “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” This too is a call to have it done once for all, like the rest, an accomplished act, and not a mere process going on. But as in the other cases, so in this, the believer is bound ever after to watch against every inconsistency with what is so done.

James 4:11-12

The next admonition is on evil speaking and the judicial spirit which is so often its root.

“Speak not against one another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against law and judgeth law; but if thou judgest law, thou art not a doer of law but a judge. One is the law-giver and judge that is able to save and destroy; but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor” (vers. 11, 12)?

Here was the suited place to apply particularly what the Epistle had in chap. 2 guarded against in a general way, when on all it impressed slowness in speaking as well as in wrath. This was pursued again in chap. 3 to the strict government of the tongue from over readiness to teach; seeing that fair words and foul from the same lips ought not so to be, and may easily prove occasion of stumbling. Here it follows the exposure of the inward spring of self will in violence and corruption, without duly heeding scripture and the Spirit Who leads to prayer with subjection to God, and confidence in Him and His grace.

The exhortation is as to our ordinary but God-fearing intercourse. The necessities of godly discipline are not in question. Holy love is bound to rebuke what is wrong in those guilty of it, and to warn those who may be endangered by the evil example. Wrong in these cases must be laid bare though it ought to be in sorrow; but it is due to the Lord, and for the profit of those concerned. If there be a public snare and peril, this makes a corresponding admonition to be a duty, and is love in truth.

But to spread disparagement or discreditable imputations without a call from God according to His word, and with no effort to seek the good of the alleged evil-doers, is not only far from Christ, but beneath even a Jew. There is neither truth nor love in detraction, but constant liability to false witness: a multitude must not be followed to do such uncomely turns, any more than to favor a poor man in his cause. The nearness of our relationship is apt to lend occasion to freedom of speech, but it clearly ought rather to enforce on us the greater caution. “Speak not against one another, brethren.” Entreaty or remonstrance may be called for; but angry and especially habitual depreciation is unworthy of those that bear the Lord's name. Is it to injure? How does He regard it? “He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against law and judgeth law; but if thou judgest law, thou art not a doer of law but a judge.” Not only the uncharitable act, but the judicial assumption which it must involve, are here exposed with transparent soundness. The brother spoken against may be innocent; the evil-speaker is certainly in a false position and an injurious state. The authority which all acknowledge condemns him, at least of being censorious, usurping the seat of judgment, and disputing the authority he invokes. Nor is God mocked: for we reap as we sow, if of flesh, corruption; if of Spirit, life everlasting.

“But if thou judgest law, thou art not a doer of law but a judge.” How true it is that the readiest to blame others are the least careful over themselves, and need most correction for their heedless ways and their hasty judgments!

How solemn too the appeal to conscience! “One is the law-giver and judge, that is able to save and destroy.” How grave is the rebuke to any who so offend! “But who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?” Grace and self-judgment can alone enable us to abhor the evil and cleave to the good: may we cultivate both.

James 4:13-15

THENCE the Epistle turns to that unbelieving spirit and inconsiderate speech too often borrowed from the world by those who know and ought to feel how all things hang on God's will.

“Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go to this city here and spend there a yeah, and traffic and make gain, whereas ye know not what [will be] the morrow. Of what sort [is] your life? Why, it is a vapor that appeareth for a little and then disappeareth, instead of your saying, If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that” (vers. 13-15).

It is plain that the levity of the sentiment goes deeper than the words, and betrays the readiness of man's mind to leave God out of the ordinary round of life, especially in the affairs of business. But to bring Him in and to refer to His will with integrity would cover the greater part of every day. Christ, yea Christianity also, shows that as there is nothing too great for us to receive from God, so there is nothing too little for God to direct us in. His will embraces all that is humble, all that is glorious. Christ is not the witness only but the fullness in both. Who ever came so low? Who is now gone so high? And He is the life of every Christian, who is therefore called to walk as He' did. But there we fail, as Christ never did; in Whom nothing is more wonderful than His unwavering obedience; He is indeed the only Man Who always did without exception the things which pleased His Father.

It is then our duty, as it is our privilege, to consult the will of our God and Father day by day, and throughout each day. In our prayer and in His word we find the means; or, as our Lord Himself put the case perfectly, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you.” For He begins with our constant reliance on Him, and He ends with the assurance of our having what we ask; for, so doing, one only asks what is according to God's will.

After knowing so blessed a reality as Christ's walk on earth, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps, is it not then a dead loss and a deep wrong, that any Christian should walk as the heathen that know not God? One can understand Elijah taunting the recreant Jews who followed Baal, and especially Baal's priests who vainly called on that demon to answer by fire. “Cry aloud: for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked.” But he who believes on Christ knows Him active in the richest love to bless now and evermore, God revealed too as His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Are we not then to lay before Him every difficulty and every desire? Are we not to respond to His grace by our devotedness? Are not we too sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience, and this obedience, not of a Jew under the law, but under grace, yea expressly to an obedience like His own, of sons with the Father? As children of obedience, it is not for us to fashion ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance; but as He that called us is holy, so may it be with us in all manner of living. Now the main spring of this practical course is seeking to walk in His will.

But Christian profession, and perhaps especially among the Israelites, was fast slipping into worldliness and naturism, as we hear it pungently described in these verses. Not only is it

unworthy of God's child; it is practical impiety. Who and what is a man that fears God to talk of his plans for to-day or to-morrow without a thought of Him? Who and what is he to leave where he is and go to this city here, to spend there a year? And how? To traffic and make gain! “Whereas,” says our Epistle, “ye know not what will be on the morrow.” How simple yet withering! “Of what sort is your life? Why, it is a vapor that appeareth for a little and then disappeareth.” Of course no more is here spoken of than our earthly existence, our life in the world. Instead of that, we ought to say, “If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that.” Impossible to resist the force of this appeal. Our living here below falls as much under the Lord's will, as our doing this or that. How wretched to ignore Him! How happy to know His will and to do it!

James 4:16-17

The closing verses disclose the root of this practical leaving God out of daily life and language, but deepen the censure by pointing to that unselfish goodness to which every one is called who has the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is wicked. To one knowing to do a comely thing, and not doing [it], it is a sin to him” (vers. 16, 17).

The only befitting state of a creature is dependence on God; with this all vauntings, as if our life were within our own power and every act of it free for our own disposal, is wholly at issue. Bought with a price, we with such feelings and ways defraud Him to Whom we belong; and all the more, if according to God's own will we derive our new nature from Him by the word of truth. We are called to keep up the family character. Of this He Who had sovereign rights has set us the perfect exemplar; for Lord of glory as He is, He came down to be a bondman and was to the uttermost. Love animated Him in an obedience which never flagged; as love sent Him on our behalf, not only to save us when lost, but to conform us in heart and to fashion our ways and words. What can be more opposed than vauntings, unless it be to glory in them? Instead of it, let us be ashamed when we consider what we are in such godless pride, and what He was, Who though rich for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich, but rich only in the unseen and eternal. Are we any better in ourselves? Is it not solely in Him? How senseless, unworthy, and inconsistent to glory in our vauntings! Truly “all such glorying is wicked;” it savors not of Christ, but of the devil's inflation.

But we cannot, as confessors of the Lord Jesus, deny what we have by faith seen and heard of Him. In virtue of life in Him we know the thing that becomes the Christian; for we are not ignorant of that which was manifested in Him, Who was its fullness and never allowed the entrance of the least foreign element. It is not here goodness in the form of benevolence (■γαθ■ν), though we are surely to follow Him in that path also (Gal. 6:10). Here it is what is honorably right (καλ■ν) in one who professes not to be a man only, but to be born of God. If knowing it therefore, we are engaged to do it; and if one does it not, to him it is sin.

It is evident that this goes far beyond the Puritan and even more widely human perversion of 1 John 3:4, which pervades systematic divinity. It ought to be absurd in any intelligent eyes to think that James penetrates more deeply than the beloved disciple. No law is in question but “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;” it is the law of liberty, not of bondage. John however does not speak of “the transgression of the law,” which has its own proper expression elsewhere; he presents the true and faithful character of sin, even where law was unknown: sin is lawlessness. It is the principle and exercise of self will, and not only breach of the law. Being a reciprocal proposition, lawlessness is sin as truly as sin is lawlessness. Here our Epistle applies the truth on the positive side. God's will is that we should do a thing that is right or comely when we know it: if we know and do it not, we sin. It is our own will that hinders; and this is always sin.

James 5:1-6

The address at the beginning of the Epistle helps not a little to account for the peculiarity of the denunciation of the rich with which our chapter opens, as well as other passages afterward and before it. If directed to the twelve tribes that are in the dispersion, there is no difficulty; if it contemplated like Peter's two Epistles only such as are saints, not a little would sound harsh, to say the least. But as the inspired writer was led to take wider ground from the start, the true key of interpretation is put into our hands thereby.

“Come then, ye rich, weep howling over your miseries that are coming on. Your wealth is corrupted, and your garments are become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted through, and their rust shall be for a witness to you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye laid up treasure in [the] last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who reaped your fields, that is kept back of you, [or, from you] calleth out; and the cries of those that reaped entered into the ears of Jehovah of hosts. Ye lived luxuriously on the earth and indulged yourselves; ye nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye condemned, ye slew the just one: he doth not resist you” (vers. 1-6).

The day of the Lord could not but be prominent before a godly Israelite imbued with the reiterated warnings of the prophets; and it is still hanging over man on the earth. The covenant people of old were prone to regard themselves as exceptions; but for their delusion they had no warrant or even excuse from scripture. The more privileged, if faithless, are the more guilty. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” The gospel brings in grace, and through faith deliverance; but the moral principles of divine government are immutable. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness.

The poor are sinners no less than the rich; each have their special snares and dangers. But it is far harder for a rich man than for a poor to follow Christ truly. Therefore, said He to His disciples, “Verily I say to you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of the heavens. And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Here however they in a general and unsparing way are warned solemnly of their miseries that are coming on. The reader may profitably compare Isa. 2:7 to the end: only idols are not set forth by the Epistle as in the prophecy. But that day will deal with every one that is proud and lofty, and with every one that is lifted up, with every high tower, and every fenced wall, with all the ships of Tarshish and with all pleasant works of art. God is against their cherished wealth, and their endless store of raiment. To his eye that saw under the surface all was corruption, their gold and silver rusted throughout, the rust a witness to them and to eat their flesh as fire, The selfish unbelief that laid up treasures in closing days was no trifle in God's sight.

But they are charged with wanton cruelty and fraud in their dealings with the laborers who reaped their fields. Their very wealth tempts the rich to withhold payment of wages to the poor; their own things are alone of moment in their eyes, while they postpone to a convenient season the claims of such as live from hand to mouth. But the debt cries aloud to Him Who ever feels for the poor, as He showed Who alone made Him fully known. Yes, the cries of the reapers, which may not have reached the rich, entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts, and His blow would fall when least expected.

The rich are next arraigned for their luxurious living on the earth, as if the God of heaven regarded it not. In a world of wretchedness and want, they indulged themselves, as if they were not stewards and had no account to render; they nourished their hearts in a day of slaughter, as heedless as the beasts slain for food of man.

Another charge follows, still more tremendous: “Ye condemned, ye slew the just one: he doth not resist you.” This made their guilt less excusable. “He did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again, when suffering, threatened not, but gave [himself] up to him that judgeth justly.”

James 5:7-11

At this point the Holy Spirit brings in the coming of the Lord. It is indeed a truth of the utmost moment and of the largest application practically; and all the inspired were led to interweave it into their communications.

“Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for (or, over) it, until it receive early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur (or, groan) not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged. Behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of [the] Lord. Behold, we call them blessed who endured. Ye heard of the endurance of Job, and saw the Lord's end; for the Lord is full of compassion, and merciful” (vers. 7-11).

What motive to long-suffering so powerful as the Lord's coming! Good shall then be at ease, and evil be smitten down all over the earth. He will have the glory to Whom it is due. The heavens and earth shall be united under His headship Who is Heir of all things. His own, even in the body conformed to His image, as they once suffered with Him, shall then be glorified and reign with Him. Israel no longer idolatrous, the Jew despising no more their Messiah, shall have Him their King, Jehovah's anointed King, on His holy hill of Zion. All the nations will bow in willing subjection to His righteous scepter, envious no more of His choice; all that see the elect people in that day shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed. In their Father's kingdom on high shall the righteous shine forth as the sun; and, below, the Son of man shall send forth His angels, who shall gather out of His kingdom all stumbling-blocks and those that do iniquity. Then Jehovah will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel. And Jehovah will sow her unto Him in the land, and will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy; and He will say to them which were not His people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, My God. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatting 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. The sucking child too shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

Such are the consequences of that glorious event. But His presence is more than all the rest to those that love Himself. Nor is there any truth which has a mightier effect (next to faith in His person, His love, and His death) in detaching from the world and its snares on the one hand, and in sustaining under its hatred and persecution on the other. Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. It is not the providential dealing with Jerusalem and the Jews, any more than death ridding sufferers from the troubles of this life. These are the misinterpretations of fallen Christendom. The truth is the hope of His own coming, which will first act on all the saints dead or

living to give them consummated blessedness, and next on the land and people of Israel, as well as on all the earth.

Doubtless we have to await the moment of the Father's will. So does the farmer for the good produce of the earth, till it receive the needed rain from above, both early and later. How much more should we stablish our hearts in patience, whose hope is so much more excellent till the last believer is called! for the Lord's coming hath drawn nigh. Can we not trust Him Who gave us His Son, and with Him all things?

There is another danger, besides impatience, which it corrects. We are apt to murmur, or groan, one against another. How unwise, ungracious, and unbelieving! With what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again. To judge is to be judged. How much better to wait in patience, overcoming evil with good! Why should we judge? “Behold, the judge standeth before the door.” The time is at hand.

Incredulity says that this was the error of the apostolic church. On the contrary it was the simple strength of their hope; and they reaped the blessing it gave them. If they fell asleep, it was also to wait with Christ, instead of only for Him. It is the true, intended, and constant hope of the Christian, as living now as from the day of Pentecost. Christ Himself is waiting for that moment; so all saints were once, and all ought to be now.

Nor is our Lord the only pattern for us. “Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord.” We tread the same path with yet brighter hope, though in substance the same. Yet another incentive is added, of no slight force. “Behold, we call them blessed which endured. Ye heard of the endurance of Job, and saw the Lord's end; for the Lord is full of compassion and merciful.” A whole book of scripture is devoted to this aim. How fully Job was vindicated against the detraction of friends! And how blessed of Jehovah, when self was judged! Let us be of good cheer, not hearing only, but truly profiting.

James 5:12

From the need of patient endurance we are next warned of the danger of light or thoughtless asseverations in ordinary speech: a common habit among both Jews and Greeks, but wholly unworthy of Him Who is the truth, the great exemplar for all who confess Him Lord. “But before all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and nay nay, lest ye fall under judgment” (ver. 12). As sinning with the tongue is throughout denounced, so here in particular the lack of reverence. For though the oaths is question refer to the creature rather than to God, though they may affect care for His name by substituting other forms for His; who entitles men to adopt anything of the sort in daily intercourse? He is the Judge, Who has assured us that of every idle word that men speak they shall give account in the day that comes; “for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Indeed on the mount, in the great series of discourses of which the first Gospel gives the summary, the Lord had pronounced on the same wrong. “Again, ye have heard that it was said to those of old time, Thou shalt not perjure thyself, but shalt perform to Jehovah thy vows; but I say to thee, Swear not at all: neither by the heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. No more shalt thou swear by thy head; for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your word be yea, yea; nay, nay; for that which is more cometh of evil” (or, the evil one). The selfsame duty is enforced as in this Epistle.

It is a total mistake to conceive that by either a judicial oath is forbidden. The specimens given preclude such an inference. They are not such as the magistrate puts in a court or other occasion; they were, or might be, the common phrases of every day. The sense therefore is clearly given by the A.V. rendering of “your communication.” It was not an answer to the demand of one entitled to ask in God's name. This every one is bound to give. So our Lord was silent till the High Priest adjured, or put the oath, with that authority; as the O.T. claims it in Lev. 5:1. Here it is only the case of man with man. Even without a magistrate, but on an adequately solemn occasion we have the apostle confirming what he taught the saints by an equivalent, as in Rom. 1:9; 9:1, 2 Cor. 1:23, Gal. 1:20, Phil. 1:8, 2 Thess. 3:5; so he adjures his brethren in 1 Thess. 5:27.

It is quite enough that in our converse with brethren or other men our yea should be yea, and our nay nay. “That which is more cometh of evil.” The believer is as responsible to speak as to act in the presence of God. This is his habitual privilege, and safeguard. It may be forgotten by others, or by himself to his loss. The evil one is a liar and the father of it. No small opportunity would it be to him if the Christian were not always watchful to speak truly, and needed such expletives to gain credit for it.

James 5:13-15

From this earnest exclusion of an approach to profane speech, we are next exhorted to the course that befits in suffering or in joy, as well as sickness.

“Doth any among you suffer trouble? let him pray. Is any happy? let him sing praise. Is any sick among you? let him call to him the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save (heal) the sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him” (vers. 13-15).

We are short in Christian intelligence if we do not know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those that are called according to purpose. God often sends trouble as chastening for the good of His children. Sometimes as in 1 Cor. 11 it is because of positive sin; but they totally mistake who suppose that it is restricted to that. Heb. 12 puts it on ground quite independent of so sorrowful an occasion, and treats it as flowing from His Fatherly love, and for profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. It is as much or more to hinder sin as in consequence of its indulgence. It often is a trial of faith and an honor from the Lord, as the apostles so well knew, and many a simple saint in no such prominence. For the disciples as such are called through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of God.

But in any case “doth any among you suffer trouble? let him pray.” God is the resource in trouble; and the saint, instead of only bearing it or sinking under it, is exhorted to “pray.” He is encouraged to expect blessing in crying to God about the trouble. It is a practical victory over the enemy who seeks our loss by it, if our mildness or forbearance be made known to all men, and our requests be made known to God. With unbelief it is the contrary: insisting on our rights as and with men, as if God entitled any to such a plea; and making demands or requests on men, instead of looking only thus to God.

Then there is a time when one experiences circumstances of joy. “Is any happy? let him praise.” For gladness has its dangers no less, perhaps more, than trouble. It is apt to elate the spirit, throw us off our balance in the Lord, and expose us to levity in feeling, word, and deed. The resource is to turn to Him in praise. Singing is not only due to Him Who gives happiness, but a safety-valve for His feeble ones, who easily at such a time slip from dependence. His praise recalls us to Himself.

There may also be the general or special need created by sickness. “Is any sick among you? let him call to him the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of [the] Lord.” It is good where any dealing of the Lord leads us to turn to Him, expecting not evil but good. In those days too elders of the assembly were there, men of moral weight and spiritual judgment, whose place it was to intervene in difficulties of a personal as well as public nature. They might not be evangelists or teachers; but apt to teach they were required to be, men able to take up in love and truth and faithfulness the burdens of their brethren. The sick man is exhorted to summon such as they are to pray for him with that application of oil which Romanism has distorted so wholly from God's mind. Extreme unction is a mere invention of superstition, to

smooth the way when hope of recovery is gone.

It is remarkable that the inspired writer, though encouraging honor to the elders, attaches healing virtue, not to their official place or special art but to prayer, and this of an efficacious sort through faith. He says, “And the prayer of faith shall save [or heal] the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” What a contrast this is with the gloomy superstition which sends “a priest” to absolve him and give extreme unction, because his death is regarded as inevitable! For if he recover, he will need the same hateful parody over again. Yes, unclean and drunken harlot, dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, with no resurrection as being without life, nothing but a system of darkness and death.

Then comes the special character of the sickness, carefully discriminated from the common. “and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him.” It is a nice and notable point in the true rendering of the clause that the sins are in the plural, the forgiveness is in the singular. It is right that each and all should be judged in order; but grace gives the forgiveness in full.

James 5:16-18

Verses 14, 15, fully present the blessing which rested on the assembly, and the honor God put on the elders. They were encouraged to pray for the sick and assured that the prayer of faith should heal him, and the Lord raise him up. The added clause took notice of sins done, which might trouble the heart, but it assures forgiveness. This leads to a more general statement which follows.

“Confess therefore your sins [or, “offenses” as in the common text] to one another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. A righteous [one's] supplication hath much power if it work. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed prayerfully that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth sprouted forth its fruit” (vers. 16-18).

Here we find Christians exhorted, where failure came in, to confess their sins mutually, and so to pray, that healing might be granted. For there is a divine government which has ever thus dealt with the saints here below, as we may see in the Psalms as well as in the history of the ancient people of God. So there was outside Israel, as in the book of Job. Neither the gospel nor the church has changed this. The saving grace of God has appeared, as it did not till Christ and His work; but as surely as we call on a Father, He judges without respect of persons according to each one's work, as the Lord taught the disciples in John 15. Sovereign grace abides in all its efficacy; but God does not fail in faithfulness to deal with us if unfaithful. We are therefore enjoined to pass the time of our sojourning in fear, not as if we doubted but on the contrary as knowing consciously that we were redeemed with Christ's precious blood as of an unblemished and spotless lamb.

This is the more consolatory in the present anomalous state of Christendom, where tradition has wrought boundless havoc with the truth, and ecclesiastical order has been swamped with inventions of men to please human activity and hide the ruin which lawlessness has everywhere brought about. Properly elders needed apostolic authority, direct or indirect. Where this was not, and elders were lacking or even men not easily found who had the qualities on which the apostle insisted to Timothy, the saints could and ought to confess their sins to one another with prayer; nor would the Lord's grace fail toward the need. A righteous one's supplication avails much, where really at work.

For this Elijah is cited, as one of like nature with ourselves, as indeed his inspired history reveals. But it also reveals how, as a judgment of God, rain should not fall for three years and six months because of a people rebellious and even apostate. Here we have, not the solemn sentence the prophets pronounced from God, but the inner work in the soul which preceded it, for which we are wholly indebted to this Epistle. He prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth sprouted forth its fruit; but we learn this second praying in the history as well as in the Epistle. Miracles it is a proud unbecoming thought to expect in the actual confusion that exists, yet with God and His word acknowledged. But God hears prayers with fatherly pleasure, and never fails to answer that which faith pours into His ears.

James 5:19-20

It is faith, practical faith, which has been urged, faith exercised in energetic prayer. The Epistle does not close without an earnest pressure of love in a similarly active way, and indeed in manifest connection.

“My brethren, if any among you should err from the truth, and one turn him back, let him know that he that turneth back a sinner from the error of his way shall save a [or, his] soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins” (vers. 19, 20).

One of the saddest results of spiritual weakness among Christians is the rarity of restoration. Discipline even in extreme degree is no less due to our Lord, to our sacrificed Lord (1 Cor. 5:7, 8), than requisite in the best interests of the saints. For true love of our brethren is inseparable from loving God and keeping His commandments (1 John 5:1, 2). But our God attests often and clearly and strongly His deep concern in the recovery of the straying and fallen; where self-righteousness displays its bitterness and indifference. Zeal for the credit of a sect or party and anxiety to stand well morally are as far as possible from the love we owe to Christ's body and every member of it.

For we are exhorted to forgive (or, show grace to) one another, as God also in Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32); yea to be imitators of God, as beloved children, and to walk in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. But this love divine is meant to arm us against fellowship with the ways of darkness, seeing that we are light in the Lord to walk as children of light, the fruit of which is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth (Eph. 5:7-9). Hence the spiritual in a spirit of meekness are to restore one taken in some fault, “considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” Hardness is unworthy of a Christian. “If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he should sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times return to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3, 4).

So here, if one brought back him that erred or was led astray from the truth, let him know that in such a recovery he that brought him back from his way of error should “save a soul from death.” Here it is not a striking answer to the prayer of faith, but a rich cheer to the love that sought and won the wanderer. To have the sick healed and raised up as the fruit of prayer may strike the eye more; but how blessed to “save a soul from death”! Thus would our God encourage a spirit of grace in the thankful knowledge that love has its victories in a world of self and hatred and evil; and this, not only in regard of him that erred from the truth and its way, but in furnishing occasion, for that which is so pleasing to God in His government-to “cover a multitude of sins.” If love do not flow, wrongs multiply, and God chastens, it may be severely; for where is Christ in such a case? But if love prevail through His grace, God is glorified, and love covers a multitude of sins, which otherwise must draw out His rebukes.

Chapter 167

Jesus and the Resurrection

Acts 17:18

“He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.” That is to say, the apostle preached a person and a fact-a supreme Person and a supreme fact about Him. And he coupled the two together in a way that modern preachers sometimes fail to do, but which is characteristic of all the summaries of the apostolic discourses recorded in the Acts. Clearly God's way of putting things must be infinitely wise, and the order of the presentation of the truth by the first inspired preachers may well serve as a model to speakers of to-day.

Christianity then is a religion of facts, having a Divine Person, yet man, for their center. Merely human religions give us theories, speculations, philosophies; sometimes ingenious, sometimes foolish, always vain and unsatisfactory. They can give nothing else; though they can darken wisdom by a bewildering maze of words. They may couple with the system its founder, or promoter; such serve only as distinguishing labels, so to speak, and affect in no degree the value of the religion or philosophy in question. But in Christianity how different! How impossible to separate Jesus from the truth that He proclaimed Himself to be. Hence when Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, he preached the central truth of the Bible, and the seal God had put on it.

Another point to note is that our Lord was preached unto the men of Athens by His most personal name—Jesus. In truth everything—all the glory of God, all the blessing of man—is summed up in that name. In the power of (■ν) that name every knee must bow, of cultivated Greek no less than of rude Scythian. It was useless for Paul's hearers to boast of their great men, of that long roll of poets and philosophers, of artists, and heroes. They were less than nothing when compared with One Who had lived obscurely in a remote corner of the great world-empire of that day, yet was the only Savior and Lord of all. Such truth, no doubt, can hardly have been welcome to the fastidious taste of these Greeks; though as long as their curiosity was diverted, and the strange preacher seemed to be merely commending two new divinities to their notice (for in their ignorance they took the “Resurrection” for the name of a god, or rather goddess), they probably accorded him a ready, if somewhat languid, hearing. It was really refreshing to their blas■ minds to hear something so singular. For these Athenians were the product of a decadent civilization, and like many of the present day, who, having abandoned the faith, are ready for any novelties, however dangerous or absurd; as in fact, like many to-day, their chief occupation was “to hear or to tell some new thing,” something newer than the last (for this is the full force of the very expressive phrase in the Greek, τι καιν■τερον). But now they heard of what was novel indeed, yet God's sober and solemn truth, which would judge them in that appointed day, of which the apostle subsequently told them in his sermon on Areopagus.

And so Paul preached unto them Jesus, the infinite and eternal Son of God. They of course were not unfamiliar with stories of gods becoming men; such fancies were the theme of many a classic tale, and formed the stock-in-trade of much of their poetical lore. But how different was this talk! Their gods had not seldom appeared in human form for purposes, of which most even of them

would have been ashamed. But God becoming man to die; God veiling His glory and manifesting His love; God in the Person of His Son, walking on this earth in stainless purity! Here was a new thing, which must have seemed strange to these philosophers, so proud of their country's wisdom and so scornful of others. Alas! but few received the truth, and, as has often been observed, the Lord had more people in dissolute Corinth than in intellectual Athens.

But, turning from those who were the immediate subjects of Paul's addresses at Athens, it is not difficult to perceive why the resurrection was singled out for presentation among other important facts in our Lord's life. For, as said above, it put the seal on all that had gone before, as necessarily presupposing the Savior's death with all its weighty consequences. In fact once establish the truth of this stupendous fact, and everything else follows by implication. Nor indeed is there a fact in history so well attested. We know how a learned divine, who flourished earlier in the century, showed that there was better evidence, on merely human grounds, for the truths of the gospel than for most of the readily accredited facts of secular history; and that the story of so recent a celebrity as Napoleon I. might be better doubted, if the same methods of criticism were employed as men bring to bear on the sacred history. No doubt the believer in Christ has far higher grounds of trust than the soundest of critical canons. He has the witness of the Holy Spirit. No syllogism can persuade one who sees the light, that he does not see it. That which makes manifest is light. But in fact all is wonderfully bound up together; the wonderful works, as one has said, and the wonderful words can only have proceeded from the wonderful Person. Was not His very name of “Wonderful” predicted of old? And how blessed that it is a Person Who is preached: so emphatically is this the case that scripture never says, “Whosoever believeth in the atonement shall be saved,” though it is by Christ's “death” alone that any are saved. It is “whoso believeth in the Son.” For to acknowledge and have the Son is to have the Father also. And he who believes in His person will believe also in His work. This is in short to believe in “Jesus and the resurrection.” “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” R. B.

Chapter 168

Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Contrasted—1

I am not without hope that, under the gracious teaching of the Spirit, the simple statement of the distinction we are going briefly to examine may be blessed to souls. Happy is it when we are brought to ponder on the riches of grace which God has lavished on us; and this in the spirit of children, not desiring to prove our own notions, but to learn the thoughts, purposes, and ways of God. Happier still when, in the communion of Him Who dwells in us, our delight is to be shown the various glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to adore.

His various glory, I repeat; for this the natural mind relishes not, but it is exactly what the Spirit loves and leads into (John 16:13-15). Hence it is that to unbelief the scripture is a blank without heights and without depths. The purity of its sentiments, and the simple grandeur of its style, may be allowed and admired. But there are no land-marks, no chart, no star of Bethlehem to direct and cheer the believer's way. His conscience is not in the presence of God, and therefore there is no true Christ in his heart. The Bible to him may be a very wonderful book, but that is all.

For professors of Christ is another snare. If it seem to be owned practically as that which reveals the divine way of salvation, almost everything in it is made to bear on this one point. Warnings, threatenings, exhortations, invitations, instructions, commands, prayers, ordinances-nearly all that Old and New Testaments utter is made to converge on what, to the flesh, really amounts to this, God helping us by His Son and Spirit to save ourselves. From this quagmire God would mercifully extricate His people; has He not taught all His children with more or less intelligence to rest upon the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ? Then it is that the vast field of the written word opens apace: the different displays which God has made of His character; and the effect of these dealings upon believers and unbelievers in the several dispensations, summed up in the person of Christ, whether viewed once here below, now in heaven, or by-and-by returning again. Thus His child, led of the Spirit, grows in knowledge, and begins to see the revealed past, present, and future, in their just proportions, because he begins to learn all in Christ, Whose mind he has (1 Cor. 2). In other words, he is learning to prove the things which differ.

Now, it may be a narrow, but certainly it is an important, part of the things which differ, that is suggested by the title to this paper. Nor would I pretend to sketch minutely the ways in which the estimate formed by a godly Jew respecting Christ's advent is distinguishable from the hope set before the church in His future presence. Let us content ourselves with certain broad essential differences, which are nevertheless often confounded by Christians to the obscuring of their proper portion, and so far to the detriment of their souls. The testimony of scripture is so full and distinct that little reasoning is necessary; still its importance may well demand ample quotations.

The advent of a glorious Messiah to the earth was characteristically a Jewish hope. I speak not of traditional fables, but of the truths which the Jews saw and held fast in their scriptures. To such believing Jews, Messiah was the center and security of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He was the accomplisher of all righteousness, blessing and peace in their land, Immanuel's land. By Him they expected to be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all

those that hated them, that so they might serve the Lord without fear all the days of their life. He was to cut off all the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the righteous; to save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they might dwell there and have it in possession, and thus the seed of His servants should inherit it, and they that love His name dwell therein.

This is plain in the Psalms as the character of deliverance pleaded by the Jewish remnant-not a rapture out of the earth, but a destruction of their enemies in it; a divine vengeance upon their enemies on earth, not a gathering to Jehovah for heaven. They looked, and will look, for Jehovah to go forth and fight against the nations He will gather at the latter end against Jerusalem; they will look for His feet to stand upon the Mount of Olives, and Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. Then, with David their king over Israel, restored as it were, from the grave and Ephraim and Judah united perfectly and forever under the rule of the true Beloved, they expect to dwell in their land, and the heathen shall know that God Jehovah sanctifies Israel when His sanctuary shall be in their midst for evermore. They might read of a Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, but their hope was the presence and reign of the Messiah here below, in special connection with the Jewish nation and land. The following texts will still more plainly show the truth we have been stating.

“Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel” (Psa. 2:6-9). “For Jehovah the Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet” (Psa. 47:2, 3). “Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge” (Psa. 48:1-3; 65; 67; 68). “He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. 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 be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be Jehovah Elohim 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” (Psa. 72:4-19). I need not go more minutely through the Psalms, beyond directing attention to Psa. 128, as evidently in accordance with the remarks already made. So also Psa. 132:13-18. The inspired praises of Psa. 146-150 will

then have their literal fulfillment. It is earthly joy under Messiah's dominion, and all is in unison with the thoughts, feelings, associations, hopes, and triumphs of His people Israel. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 169

Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Contrasted—2

The prophets are equally explicit. “In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when Jehovah shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain” (Isa. 4:2-6). “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this” (9:6, 7). “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And 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' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah 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 nations, 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 shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; 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 dryshod. And there shall be a 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” (11:4-16).

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones upon high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously” (24:21-23). “And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the wail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall he take from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill” (25:6-10). “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Jehovah in the holy mount of Jerusalem (27:6, 12, 13). “Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Jehovah will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us” (33:17-22). (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 170

Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Contrasted—3

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of Jehovah and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not he found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Is. 35:1-10).

The whole of chapters 60; 61; & 62 are closely in point, but can only be referred to now. “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah” (Is. 65:17-25). “Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and

with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh: and the slain of Jehovah shall be many" (Is. 66:10-16).

"And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jer. 3:16-18). "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, Jehovah liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, Jehovah liveth, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land"(Jer. 23:5-8). To this we may add as most express, chaps. 31; 32; 33.

In Ezekiel, the reader may consult chaps. 16; 20; 36; 37; 39; 40-48; also Dan. 7; 8; 9; 12; Hos. 1; 2; 3; Joel 2; 3; Amos 9; Obadiah; Mic. 4; 5; Hab. 3; Zeph. 3; Hag. 2; Zech. 2; 8; 9; 10; 12; 14; and Mal. 3; 4.

Another distinction which may be briefly noticed is, that the Jews had the revelation of outward circumstances and ordered dates whereby to regulate their expectations. We need do little more than refer to the communications of God made to Abraham in Gen. 15, as well as others subsequently, for illustrations of this. "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:13, 14). Now it will not be disputed that the father of the faithful rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad (John 4:53); but it was through, and at the end of, a long course of years and trying vicissitudes as regarded his seed. Abraham was in no way waiting for that day as if it might happen in his own life or shortly after. He was perfectly certain that the day of Christ could not come for some centuries at least. Full well he counted upon that day bringing in deliverance to his family, and hence his joy. (See Gen. 49:10). Again, passing over intermediate predictions, the word brought by Gabriel to Daniel is even more detailed and with chronological points of a very defined character. "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (Dan. 9:25, 26). Hence it is plain that, if we suppose a godly Jew of that age to have understood the prophecy of the seventy weeks, he could not expect Messiah to come and be cut off till the expiry of nearly five hundred years. Ignorance might seek the living among the dead, but

no believer with intelligence of this divine prediction could possibly look for the arrival and cutting off of the Christ previously to the revealed epoch. It would have been faith in him to have said, “I expect the Messiah after so many years, not before; for so hath the mouth of Jehovah spoken.” (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 171

Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Contrasted—4

With the church, on the contrary, the case is wholly different. Her hope is not the times of restitution of all things, but to be with the Christ in heaven as His bride; and as her hope is unearthly, so is it wholly unconnected with the times and seasons which characterized the expectations of Israel. Not that we are ignorant of these dates and epochs; but we know perfectly that the day of Jehovah so comes as a thief in the night-a day of destruction whence there is no escape. But we are not in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. We are already children of the day, and when the day arrives, we shall come with the Sun of righteousness Who ushers it in. We shall have been with Him before the day breaks; for we know Him as the bright, the Morning Star, and the morning star He will give to him that overcomes.

Certain times and seasons, as we all are quite aware, must precede the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1). Thus we know that one week remains out of the seventy of Dan. 9, when the prince that shall come—a Roman prince-shall confirm covenant with the mass of the Jews for seven years. But, like another traitor and son of perdition, he shall put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he shall break his covenant (Psa. 55:20). The covenant with death shall be disannulled (Isa. 28). “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” This is followed by the abomination of desolation for its allowed term, “even until the consumption.” (Compare with Dan. 9; chap. 7:19-26). “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7). “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1). The church knows these revealed periods, but knows them as connected, not with herself, but with Jerusalem and the Jewish people, Daniel's people.

The church does not wait to be gathered under a Messiah on earth, but to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4); with Him in His Father's house; with Him when the successive judgments (symbolized by the seals, trumpets, and vials) are falling on the earth; with Him when the marriage-supper of the Lamb is celebrated above; with Him when He wars with the beast and the false prophet; with Him, when we reign together for a thousand years; and with Him in the subsequent eternal state. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Surely, it is a blessed hope that the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ is to set to rights all things here below which are now out of course. Creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and Israel be no longer blind but seeing. All Israel shall be saved, when the Redeemer comes out of Zion, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob. And if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles: how much more their fullness? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?

If we look above, the long usurped possession of the air (Eph. 2:2; 6:12) shall be rescued from Satan and his angels; no longer shall he be permitted on high to accuse the brethren of Christ in the presence of God (Rev. 12); no longer will there be conflict with wicked spirits above. That old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, shall be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, before the last vain struggle when he is thrown into the lake of fire.

But it is important to see that not any nor all these things are our proper hope, which is to be translated, and meet the Lord Himself in the clouds. As it is said in John 14, “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.” Is this on earth, or in heaven? Is it merely the honors of a displayed kingdom? or is it not the nearer and higher intimacy of the Son of God in the home of the Father on high? The disciples did not ask, nor did the Lord indicate, dates or signs when their rapture should be.

But in the prophecy of Matt. 24 He does give the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age. In then meeting the inquiries of the disciples from their own Jewish point of view, He enters into the general facts respecting Jerusalem and Judea, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, &c., which were but the beginning of sorrows. The end was not yet, which should not come before the gospel of the kingdom was preached in all the habitable earth for a witness to all the nations. From ver. 14 He describes the particular marks of the closing crisis up to His manifestation to all the tribes of the earth, and the complete ingathering of His elect (Jews) from the four winds. Of His elect earthly people this gathering must be, because when Christ, our life, appears, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. Thus the church and Christ are manifested at the same time in glory; whereas the elect described in Matt. 24 are only gathered after the Son of man's appearing, and cannot therefore be the church. All the context, the more it is examined, proclaims them to be Jewish disciples, who at the signal of the setting up of the abomination flee, and so escape the unparalleled tribulation of those lawless scenes of the end; for their simple trust is in the Man of God's right hand, “the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.” (Compare Psm. 79; 80)

But, as we have seen before, the passage in John's Gospel has nothing to do with Jerusalem, or the earth, or earthly circumstances. John never speaks of a special tribulation for Jewish disciples at a particular time and place, but of the general tribulation we should count upon in the world at any time (John 16:33). So His coming is not merely deliverance to a persecuted Jewish remnant on earth, but to receive us to Himself in heaven, without one hint of time, place, or circumstances, that we might ever wait for Him as our hope. (To be continued, D.V./

Chapter 172

Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Contrasted—5

Doubtless the church is to reign over the earth, the bright witness of the Father's love; for the world shall then know that He loved her as He loved His Son, both being displayed in the same glory. And how blessed the ministry of the church in that day, serving the gladsome earth according to the grace which has called, kept, and glorified herself on high, the Bride, the Lamb's wife! We shall inherit the earth; we shall judge the world and angels too in that administration of the fullness of times, when all things shall be gathered together in one in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him in whom we also thus obtained an inheritance. Joint heirs with Him, we shall share all He will rule as the exalted Man. And God hath put all things under His feet. Though we do not yet see all things put under Him, we do see Himself exalted; and when the day arrives for Him to take the dominion, it will be manifested that He is head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

The Old Testament prophecies, it cannot be denied, are full of the earthly glory. In the New Testament we have the mystery of God's will made known to us, involving the inheritance of things in heaven as well as things on earth, and the church co-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, as His body (Eph. 1:9-14). No prophets of ancient times had ever uttered such thoughts. It is not merely that such a portion was not understood; but it was not even revealed. It was kept hid in God, and is now revealed, we are told, to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The old prophets had spoken of times of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah, when Israel, or at least a Jewish remnant, repent and are converted; they had largely depicted the times of the restitution of all things, when Messiah comes from the heavens which now receive Him (Acts 3). No doubt they foretold the rule of the heavens (Dan. 4), and anticipated the joy and peace of the world under that kingdom.

But the old prophets, however inspired, never predicted, much less did any know, that Christ will have her who is His body and spouse associated with Him, and enjoying all His love and glory in the heavenly places; though they did celebrate the time when the land shall be married, and Jehovah shall make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The bride they sing of, in the Song of Solomon and the Psalms, is an earthly bride. Very different is the church of which Paul speaks in Eph. 5. Very different the marriage of the Lamb, of which John tells in Rev. 19, as far above the espousal of the Old Testament as the heavenly glory of Christ exceeds His earthly, though all be perfect in its place.

Further, be it noted that, whether it be deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 2), whether it be judgment of the Gentiles in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3), with both we find wonders displayed in the heavens, and in the earth blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke; the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. Nothing of the kind is ever connected in scripture with the catching up of the church, whose only sign is the descent of the Lord Jesus to summon her into His presence in the air. His descent, and the saints' consequent rapture, are nowhere described as events which the world is to behold. To them that

look for Him Christ appears, but to none else, so far as scripture shows, until He is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. His public revelation, in order to judge, is called “the day of the Lord,” “the appearing,” &c.; and it is certain that many signs will precede that day, and His “manifestation” to every eye. The apostasy must be ripe, and the lawless one be without hindrance; and the great tribulation be, out of which comes the innumerable Gentile multitude of Rev. 7, as well as the future unparalleled tribulation in Judea. But this is not all. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 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” (Matt. 24:29-31).

But I would not dwell further upon these points of contrast, only praying that we may remember day by day, that our place, the church's only right and befitting place, is to wait for Christ from heaven. It is not judgments that we expect to be in; it is not the hour of temptation we have to dread for ourselves (Rev. 3:10). Our business is to wait, as a heavenly Bride, for our heavenly Bridegroom. Those who link the church with earthly circumstances must be miserably disappointed: not so the hearts which the Spirit directs, animates, and sustains in the longing cry, Come, Lord Jesus. May it be so with us, brethren, increasingly as the moment, unknown to us, draws nearer! Amen. (Concluded).

Chapter 173

Kingdom of God: Part 1

There is no phrase which it is more important to understand in connection with prophetic inquiries than “the kingdom of God.” To ascertain the origin and force of this expression, in the scriptures of truth, is the object of my present communication.

It must be obvious at the outset that our inquiries must commence farther back than the actual use of the phrase in the New Testament. No one can observe the way in which it is used by John the Baptist, as well as by our Lord Himself and His disciples, without perceiving that it was an expression with which their hearers were conversant. It was no new expression, and the mere utterance of it communicated no new thought to the minds of men (that is, among the Jews, of course). It would be of little moment to inquire what their thoughts of this kingdom were. The only source from which they could receive right thoughts on the subject is as open to us as to them; and open to us, blessed be God, with this difference in our favor, that the Holy Spirit, by whom holy men were inspired to write the scriptures of the Old Testament, now dwells in the saints-dwells in us, for this purpose among many others, to open to us fully, as the friends of Christ and members of His body, what was hid from saints in former ages, yea, what was but very obscurely seen by the prophets themselves.

Even the prophets of old are represented as “searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.” Yes, it was not to themselves, but to us, that they ministered those divine communications of which they were made the vehicles; and we are thus in better circumstances for understanding those communications than even the holy men through whom they were made and recorded. And it is this, and this alone, the teaching of the indwelling Spirit, the Comforter, that can enable us to understand those varied testimonies to the grace and glory of Christ. It is not any natural clearness of judgment or any amount of humanly-acquired information, that will make us well instructed scribes in the kingdom of heaven. We are ignorant alike of the “old things” and the “new” which pertain to that kingdom, except as we sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him, Whose voice it is by the Spirit that we hear in the prophets of the Old Testament, as well as in the apostles and prophets of the New. May it be in the spirit of child-like submission to Him and dependence upon Him that we pursue our present inquiry; and may it be, through His grace, fruitful in instruction and blessing to our souls!

There is one point on which there can be no question. God is often spoken of as a King. “Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God; for unto thee will I pray” (Psa. 5:2). “Jehovah is King forever and ever” (10:16). “Jehovah sitteth upon the flood; yea, Jehovah sitteth King forever” (29:10). “Thou art my King, O God” (44:4). “For Jehovah Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth” (47:2). “Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises; for God is the King of all the earth” (vers. 6, 7). “They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary” (68:24). “For God is my King of old” (74:12). “For Jehovah is a great God, and a great King above all gods” (95:3). “With trumpets and sound of

cornet make a joyful noise before Jehovah, the King" (98:6).

All these citations are from one book of scripture, and many more might be quoted. See also the following, "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). "For Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King" (38:22). "I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King" (43:15). "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" (Jer. 10:7). "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 14:16). We cannot suppose that God would have so largely spoken of Himself as King if it had not been important for us to know Him in this character; and it will be found on examination of some of the above passages, along with many others of like import, that we have very explicit and copious instructions in God's word on this subject. May it be ours to receive it in simplicity of heart and godly subjection to the authority of the written word!

The first point to which I would solicit attention is this, that while God, the everlasting King, unquestionably reigns uncontrolled over all the works of His hands, visible and invisible, overruling by His power even the rage and rebellion of His enemies, it has pleased Him, at various periods for the display of His glory as King, to delegate His authority over a certain sphere, putting those entrusted with it under responsibility to Himself to exercise their delegated power and rule according to His will. Adam, for instance, was made ruler over all the lower parts of creation, as we read (Gen. 1:26), "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." The fulfillment of this we see in verse 28. The whole passage is referred to in Psa. 8:4-8, which is again quoted by the apostle in Heb. 2:6-9 as a prediction of the future dominion of Christ, the Son of man, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

I dwell not on these passages except just to remark that Adam, failing to exercise his delegated power in obedience to Him Who had entrusted him therewith, God's purpose to put this earth under the dominion of man was not to be set aside. The full remedy for the failure of the first man being found in the obedience unto death of the Second man, the Lord from heaven, He becomes the inheritor of the dominion and glory forfeited by the first. And for Him it waits. We see not yet, as Paul says, all things put under Him; but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor; also in due time we shall see His dominion established over the whole sphere of Adam's delegated rule, and then will be fulfilled the first verse and the last verse of the eighth Psalm, which treats of these things: "O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" But more of this anon.

Before this great and final result in the universal blessing of Christ's acknowledged dominion was to he accomplished, further trial was to be made of man in various ways. Not to dwell on intermediate events, we find one nation selected of God to enjoy the blessing of His kingly authority, and it is in connection with this nation that we first find God spoken of as King. But, before pursuing this, I would notice for a moment a remarkable passage, which shows alike the foreknowledge and providence of God, and the exceeding importance of the subject on which we are entering, viz., the connection of God, as King, with the nation of Israel. The passage alluded to is Deut. 32:8, 9, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of

Israel. For Jehovah's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Thus it appears that long before the children of Israel existed as a nation, long even before the call of Abraham, God had His eye upon that nation, and made it the center of all His providential arrangements in dividing the earth amongst the progeny of Noah. The perfect divine wisdom of these arrangements will be manifest in that period of universal blessing of which the eighth Psalm treats, as has been noticed, when, according to another scripture, "they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem" (Jer. 3:17).

The first passage in which Jehovah's reign is definitely spoken of is in the song of triumph chanted by the victorious hosts of Israel, when they had passed safely through the Red sea, and left Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen "sunk as lead in the mighty waters." They not only celebrate the triumph already accomplished for them by their mighty captain and deliverer, but they anticipate those further victories pledged to them in the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And then they add, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Jehovah, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, the sanctuary, O Jehovah, which thy hands have established. Jehovah shall reign forever and ever" (Ex. 15:17, 18). Connect this with the passage already quoted from Deut. 32, and you can hardly fail to see how the reign or kingdom of God is connected with the place which He had made for Himself to dwell in, and the nation of which He says, "Jehovah's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

In Ex. 19 and the following chapters, we find God exercising His kingly government over this nation which He had separated to Himself. He gives them laws, and statutes, and judgments to be observed by them, with suited penalties for any breach of those enactments. We do not stop here to consider the character of that covenant of works under which they were thus, with their own full consent and choice, placed. Their immediate failure under that covenant, in chap. 32, and the renewal of it, with certain modifications, through the intervention of Moses as mediator (typical, no doubt, of the mediation of Christ), are points of extreme importance to any who would understand God's recorded dealings with them.

But I cannot enter into them here further than to notice, that in chap. 33 nothing less than Jehovah's actual presence with them can satisfy Moses, who pleads on their behalf; and this is pledged to him in verse 17. In consequence we find that when Balaam (inspired as a prophet, though a worthless and wicked man) pronounces a blessing upon Israel, he says, "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent..... He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel; Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Num. 23:19-21).

This then was what distinguished Israel from all the other nations of the earth. These were under the controlling power of God's invisible government in providence; but God was present in Israel as their King. The symbols of the divine presence, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, went before them from the time when Pharaoh pursued them into the very bed of the Red sea, till they crossed the Jordan at the close of their forty years' wanderings in the desert. Their laws they received direct from His mouth; all their officers and judges were constituted such by His appointment; and in every time of difficulty and danger He was present to be consulted by them, nor did He ever fail, when they were obedient to His voice, to guide and preserve them.

And when they crossed the Jordan, He still accompanied or went before them. The cloud of the divine glory, which had journeyed with them in the wilderness, now rested between the cherubim which overshadowed the mercy-seat; and after their conquest of the land under Joshua, the tabernacle of the congregation, enclosing alike the ark of the covenant, the mercy-seat, and the shekinah and cherubim above, was set up at Shiloh, which from that time became the seat of government. It was there, “before Jehovah,” that Joshua divided the land among the tribes for an inheritance” (Josh. 18:1-10). The house of God was there during the period of the Judges, and up to the time of Eli and Samuel. It was in the days of the latter that the people, wearied of being under the direct government of God Who from time to time appointed judges over them, and desiring to be like the nations which surrounded them, asked Samuel to make them a king over them. This displeased Samuel, and he prayed to Jehovah. What was the answer of Jehovah to him? “And Jehovah said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7). This is very plain. Up to this time the government of Israel had been a pure theocracy. God was their King. He might act by Moses at one time, who is himself said in this sense to have been king in Jeshurun, (see Deut. 33:4), or by Joshua at another, or afterward by the judges who were successively raised up. Still, God was their King. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 174

Kingdom of God: Part 2

All kings have their ministers and officers by whom they exercise their government, and God had His. But He Himself was King. And hence, when the people desired to have a king like the nations round about them, God said to Samuel, “They have not rejected thee” —he was but a minister, a subordinate ruler— “but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.” And yet He acceded to their wishes. First, He let them have a king after their own choice, a great man after the flesh, “higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upwards” (1 Sam. 10:23, 24). Of him God says, “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos. 13:11). His reign terminated in death and disaster, and defeat both to himself and to the nation. Such is ever the fruit to self-willed man of his own perverse ways; and to teach Israel this lesson their first king was given them. But God had a deeper purpose in permitting them to have a king. In His eternal counsels He had determined that all things should be subjected to the sway of Christ, the faithful and unfailing heir of all those dignities and glories committed for a while to one and to another, but forfeited by all through unfaithfulness and sin. Just as Christ is to inherit in the millennial earth the lost and forfeited dominion of the first Adam over all this lower creation, so it is the purpose of God that He should inherit the throne of Israel. As the first unfolding of this purpose, we find that when Saul by disobedience had forfeited the kingdom, God sent Samuel to anoint one to be his successor, who was a man after God's own heart.

He had not the attractions which were possessed by Saul; even the prophet supposed that his elder brother had been the one to whom he was sent. But David was the man of God's choice. Although rejected for a time and driven out by the willful one who actually occupied the throne, he was kept from avenging his own quarrel or lifting his hand against Jehovah's anointed; and in due time, when Saul and his family were set aside, he was exalted by the hand of God Himself to the throne of Israel. One need not say how in all this David was the type of a greater than himself, rejected for a while, and meekly submitting to be so, but in the end receiving from the Ancient of days a kingdom and dominion and greatness under the whole heaven, so that all peoples, nations and languages, are to serve Him. Still less need I remark, that this inheritor of a greater glory than David's was David's Son according to the flesh. David had many sons, and a long line of descendants. But there is one called David's Son, in distinction from all the rest, He who is “the root” as well as “the offspring of David, the bright and morning star.” God's eye was upon Him when He made choice of David to sit upon the throne of Israel. And the covenant God made with David can only be understood in the light of this fact. It was when David had built Jerusalem, the place which Jehovah had chosen to put His name there, and had brought up the ark of Jehovah to Jerusalem; then when he had it in his heart to build a house for Jehovah, the prophet was sent to forbid this, but at the same time to assure David of the faithful mercies of his God.

Not to him only were these mercies pledged, but to his seed after him. “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son. If he commit

iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-16). There are evidently two things contemplated in this prophecy: the mere natural seed of David, Solomon and his successors on the throne; and also that blessed One, Who, besides being the seed of David, is God over all blessed forever. If the mere natural seed of David, Solomon and others, were not regarded here, there could have been nothing said of their committing iniquity and being visited with stripes. And if David's seed had not included the Messiah, David's Lord, there could not have been this unqualified promise that His house, His throne, His kingdom, "should be established forever." Solomon was doubtless regarded, and that very prominently, in this prediction. He was the immediate successor of his father, and he did build a house for Jehovah in Jerusalem. Under his reign Israel for a little season enjoyed the extent of the dominion secured to them in the covenant with Abraham. Compare Gen. 15:18-21 with 2 Chron. 9:26.

In his reign Israel attained a pitch of glory, as well as an extent of dominion, unknown in any other period of the history. Read the whole of 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chron. 9; and if you compare these with Isa. 60, which is a prediction of the future reign of Christ, you will not wonder that the one is so interwoven with the other, the type with antitype, both in the passage we are considering, which is God's covenant with David, and in the seventy-second Psalm, which is such a magnificent prophecy of millennial times, as typified by the peaceful reign of Solomon. But Solomon committed iniquity, and he and his successors were chastened with the rod of men. And even before Solomon succeeded to the throne, the failure and disorders of David's house were such that he was quite sensible that there was to be no immediate fulfillment of the highest promises made to his seed.

The last words of David show again clearly enough that he looked forward to a greater than Solomon, to One Whose coming (after the manner therein described) is even yet future. "David, the son of Jesse, said; and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God" (here is the distinct confession that there was no present fitness in his house for the introduction of blessing like this; that He of whom the Rock of Israel spoke had yet to be looked for in the distance. But His coming was no less sure because it was not immediate), "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." How evident that the dying monarch and Psalmist of Israel here looks forward to the day in which "the Son of man shall send forth His angels to gather out of His kingdom all things which offend and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

It is only thus that we can understand such a psalm as the eighty-ninth. There we have the faithfulness of Jehovah pledged to David and his house. “My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted... Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” Such are Jehovah's words.

But immediately after we have a strain of affecting lamentation... “But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown, by casting it to the ground. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. All that pass by the way spoil him; he is a reproach to his neighbors. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame.” Nor is this a mere passing stroke of the rod immediately followed by the sunshine of God's favor. It is of such continuance that the prophet asks, “How long, Jehovah? Wilt thou hide thyself forever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire?” Yea, so long delayed is the fulfillment of this covenant of mercy with David's seed, that the Psalmist goes on, “Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou swearest unto David in thy truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom [the reproach of] all the mighty peoples; wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Jehovah; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.”

How this reminds one of the scoffers of the last days, saying (in 2 Pet. iii. 4), “Where is the promise of His coming?” And how the context of this latter passage lets us into the blessed secret of the delay, which is such a trial of faith to the poor persecuted remnant, whose cry we hear in the psalm from which we have so largely quoted! Blessed God, Thy long-suffering, Thine unwillingness that any should perish, is what affords occasion to the enemies to reproach, while waters of a full cup are wrung out to those who wait for Thee. But Thou shalt appear to the joy of these; and all Thine enemies shall be ashamed.

(To be continued, D.V.) (continued from p. 350).

Chapter 175

Kingdom of God: Part 3

It would obviously be beyond the limits of a paper like the present to notice all the passages in the prophetic scriptures, which speak of the reign or kingdom of David's Son and Lord. But there are two great divisions of the period during which the prophecies as to it were delivered; the one prior to the incarnation of Christ, the other subsequent to it. Then again, the former of these divisions is subdivided by an event of much greater importance than is generally attached to it; I mean the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the Jewish nation. Until this event occurred, God had a nation or kingdom on the earth. In that kingdom the descendants of David's royal line wielded the scepter and occupied the throne as the anointed ones of God. They held their dominion by virtue of God's gift of it to David and his seed, God Himself having still His dwelling at Jerusalem; and it was by His laws that the royal authority had to be exercised. It was God's kingdom. It is true that many of the kings rebelled against God and set at naught His laws.

And here it was that the ministry of the prophets came in. They testified against the sins of the nation and its kings, foretold the judgments by which those sins were to be punished, and called both kings and people to repentance. Further, for the comfort of any who, either then or afterward, should hearken to their voice, they foretold the glories of the coming kingdom of the true Son of David, the heir of all the blessings promised to David and his seed. This prophetic ministry in its most definite form began with Isaiah (in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah), and includes his prophecies, with those of Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Micah.

After the overthrow of Jerusalem and captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, things were entirely changed. It was not that there was any transfer of royal authority from the house of David to some other family in Israel, as there had been from Saul and his house to David and his seed. No; the covenant with David and his seed is not broken; so far from this, the captivity was a part of the chastening promised in the covenant if the children of David should fail to walk in his steps. But there was a transfer of power, a transfer of it from Israel altogether to the Gentiles. Yet this transfer of power to the Gentiles did not constitute them God's kingdom. Israel had ceased to be such.

The city which He had chosen for His habitation was entirely destroyed; His presence was no longer manifested in the magnifical temple which Solomon had built for his glory. Ezekiel had seen that glory remove first from the temple (see Ezek. 10:18, 19), and then from the city altogether (11:23); and the temple where that glory had once dwelt was now burned with fire. Israel was given over into the hands of the Babylonish empire. To the king of Babylon it was said, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heavens hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all” (Dan. 2:37, 38).

But, large as was this gift of power, it did not constitute Nebuchadnezzar God's anointed, nor did it make his empire the kingdom of God. All that had made Israel such was now removed from the guilty nation, but not bestowed on their Gentile oppressors. There was no shekinah at Babylon; no sacrifices there to the God of heaven; nor was there any divine code of laws to regulate the

exercise of the imperial power with which the monarch was invested. One of the first acts of that power was to establish idolatry and punish with death all who refused to worship an idol. And all that is foretold of Gentile dominion is its being used in one act of rebellion against God after another, till it is destroyed at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But then, we are told, “the God of heaven shall 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” (Dan. 2:44). This is quoted from a prophecy delivered and recorded during the latter subdivision of the period preceding the birth of Jesus.

Again, Ezekiel in a manner belongs to both subdivisions. He was himself a captive in Chaldea, but his prophecy was in part addressed to those who still remained at Jerusalem. Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, belong to the period which succeeds the carrying away captive to Babylon. These last prophesied to a poor feeble remnant who had been permitted to return. Not that the dominion was restored to them, or the kingdom of God again set up. No; they were tributaries and subjects of the king of Persia; and the chief end for which they seem to have been restored to their own land is, that among them Christ might be born, and that to them He might be presented as their long-expected king; the Seed of Abraham and the Lord of David, as well as the Seed of the woman and the Son of God.

But let us pause at this point, before considering this great crisis in the history of the world as well as of Israel, and let us glance at some of the principal points in the Old Testament prophecies touching Christ's kingdom. In doing this, I can only refer to the passages without quoting them; and let those who may be interested in the inquiry consult them, with their contexts, in God's holy word. There seem to me to be four great leading traits in the prophetic picture of the kingdom so often spoken of. There are, of course, innumerable details: I confine myself to the grand leading features.

He who is to reign as king is the Lord Jesus Christ. (Psa. 2:6-9; 24; 25; 72; 110; 118:22-26; Is. 4:6, 7; 11:1-5, and 10; 32:1, 2. Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:14-17; Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:22-25. Dan. 7:13, 14. Mic. 5:2-4. Zech. 6:12, 13; 9:9, 10). All these passages, and many more, under various names and titles, set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as the One who is to reign in Israel and over all the earth.

Jerusalem or Zion is the place of the special display of the glory of Christ on earth in His kingdom. (Isa. 1:26, 27; 2:3; 12:6; 24:23; 27:13; 38:20, 23; 60:14; 62:1-12; 66:10-29, Jer. 3:17; 33:10, 11, Joel 3:16, 17; Mic. 4:7, 8; Zeph. 3:14-17; Zech. 2:10-12; 8:2-8; 14:16-21). I say on earth; because the rejection of Christ by Israel and the putting off, as it were, of His reign, have made way for the unfolding of God's purpose, that His Son should have a heavenly Bride as well as an earthly kingdom; that He Himself should have a family in heaven, as well as a kingdom on the earth. But as to the kingdom of Christ on the earth, it is clear from all the passages cited as well as from others, that in it Jerusalem has the chief place; that it is, so to speak, the center or the metropolis of Christ's kingdom on the earth-” the city of the great king.”

In the kingdom of Christ, the Gentiles are to be subject to Israel; they are to hold a subordinate or inferior place. This is important; for under the present dispensation the great truth is, that “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free.” For proof that it will not be thus in the kingdom of Christ, as foretold in the Old Testament, see amongst others the following passages: Isa. 11:10; 14:1, 2; 49:22-26; 60:3-16; 61:5-9; 66:12; Mic. 5:7, 8; Zech. 8:22, 23.

The effects of this reign of Christ will be universal righteousness and peace. (See Psa. 72 Isa. 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 25:7; 59:19; 60:1-22. Mic. 4:1-5; Zeph. 3:9, 10; Zech. 14:9).

The light shed on this subject by the further revelation of the New Testament may be considered, if the Lord will, in another communication. Meanwhile the Lord grant us, in deep reverence of spirit, and yet in the joy which His own presence alone can inspire, to pursue these meditations on His word, and to be by them more and more separated from all else to Himself! W.T.

(concluded from p. 364).

Chapter 176

Latter Times and Last Days (Duplicate)

It is sorrowful to have to look at departures from God and His truth. It has been said of the Lord, that His soul tasted some of its bitterest grief, when He looked on the treachery of Judas; and ours should be thus affected when we think of the corruptions of Christendom, which are as the kiss and the treason of that apostle again.

“The mystery of iniquity” had begun to work, we know, in the times of the apostles. And as the small seed cast into the ground carries with it the form and character of all that which the harvest is afterward to manifest and to yield, so the leaven that was working secretly then, to the keen eye of the Spirit in the apostles, had in it the varied evils which, in the progress of corruption, were to be manifested in Christendom: so that Paul guards Timothy, even then, against the pravities of both “the latter times” and “the last days,” as though Timothy himself were in the midst of them.

But these pravities are different. In “the latter times,” there was to be a departure from the word of God, or from the religion of “the truth,” which alone is “godliness.” Consequently there would be the giving heed to something beside the word or the truth, to “seducing spirits,” and-to “doctrines of devils” or demons. Then there would be speaking lies “in hypocrisy,” making an exhibition of religion; and all this, man's religion or what man has got up, would “sear the conscience,” deaden it to God's religion or the religion of “the truth,” fortified, as it would be, by man's forbiddings and “abstinences,” which must be complied with and practiced, though so contrary to the thoughts and gifts of God (see 1 Tim. 4,).

“The last days,” on the other hand, were not to be religious but infidel, Superstitious vanities were to yield to man's will and independency. He was to be a lover of “himself,” and in the train of that, “heady,” “high-minded,” “disobedient to parents,” “covetous,” and such like-all qualities and characters making him as one who had broken the bands, and cast away the cords; not religious, but willful. And in the midst of all this, there was to be “the form of godliness “-the appearing to return to that from which “the latter times” had departed, “godliness,” or the religion of “the truth"; but when looked at a little within, no “power” would be found, though so much “form” (2 Tim. 3).

Now here we see a great moral reaction: all the cords and bands of the latter times cast away, and man indulging and admiring himself-religious vanities gone, but human independency asserted.

And these things have had their day. In the two great characteristic eras in the history of Christendom we get them-in the times before and since the Reformation. In the times before there was man's religion, opposing itself to “the truth,” and having its own vanities; in the times since there has been man's pride, asserting his independency and breaking off all bands. These have been the characters of the two eras. Of course something of the second was known during the time of the first, and much of the first still lives in the second; but these different pravities are the characteristics of the two eras.

And what is a very solemn truth, I judge that the history of corrupted Christianity will close by a kind of coalition between the two pravities. And of such a state of things we get the pattern in the

time of our blessed Lord, when there were both man's religion and man's independency combined against Him,-the unclean spirit who had gone out, having himself returned and brought with him other spirits more wicked than himself. There was Jewish religion, which would not let its votaries go into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled; and there was Jewish infidelity, which could say, “We have no king but Caesar.”

This is a solemn, fearful prospect. Surely there is real godliness in the midst of it all, but the sight is dreadful.

And there was the counterpart of what I have been here tracing in the wilderness. There was, first, the calf, and then the captain-the two ensigns of Israel's departure from God during their journey from Egypt to Canaan, the two distinct standards of rebellion set up at different eras.

The calf was the ensign of man's religion. Man had his own gods then, and in eating and drinking, and rising up to play, man exhibited his religion, spake “lies in hypocrisy.” The captain was the ensign of man's infidelity. Man was his own god then, setting up himself to be his own leader, as though answerable to none, breaking all bands, “heady, high-minded.”

Thus, by either the calf or the captain, man is ever working against God and his truth. It is either false religion or a spirit of independency that is moving him. And reaction is always to be dreaded, even by the true worshippers and saints of God, as is also the spirit of the times in which they live. Both of these must be watched against. If the present time exhibit much of the spirit of human pride and independency, of course the saint has to guard against his being drawn into the stream, and carried along the current which has set around him. But he has also to guard against reaction. He has to watch and pray, that he may not, through dread and hatred of the present form of evil, look for relief by a return to the previous form of evil. I believe there is very much of both of these at present. I see people, who should have stood only in godliness, dropping into the current of these times; and in the revival of high church principles, and return to ecclesiastical ceremonies and observances of human imposition, there is evident unhealthy reaction among men of a sensitively righteous order of mind, who have marked the evil that is now predominant, and have sought relief from it, but have been turned back by Satan to the religiousness of man, and away from “godliness” or the religion of “the truth.” In avoiding the evil of the last days, they have returned to that of the “latter times,” at least in measure.

In the midst of all this condition of things, I believe the poor saint of God, “who walks in the truth,” as John speaks, may now see himself. His path is narrow. Errors on both sides threaten and attract him. The calf and the captain are erected as the standards of rival parties. The word alone is to work his passage through both, and the Spirit to lead him along it; he is to “purify himself by obeying the truth through the Spirit.” He has been baptized to the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and his soul is to know its living communion according to this. He has to continue in the things that he has learned, knowing the holy scriptures, which are able to make a child, a fool in this world's wisdom, wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. He is to know that, as a sinner, he is cast only upon God-as a sinner, God, and not man, has to do with him-and taking his sin, yea, and his sins too, into the presence of God, he is to see them there, by faith, washed away by the precious blood of a precious sacrifice. He has to keep his conscience unclouded, so that his living communion with the Father and the Son, in the life of the Holy Ghost, be not broken, and to walk in the love of the Spirit with all who are Christ's, and in the charities of

the gospel with all men-doing withal what service among the saints he may be fitted to do by gift of the Spirit, and what service to others he may have opportunity or power to fulfill-waiting daily for the Son from heaven, Who, he is to know, has delivered him from the wrath to come. J. G. B.

Chapter 177

Sanctification, or Setting Apart to God

1 Peter 1

THE Jews under the law said indeed, trusting to their own strength, We will do all that Thou hast spoken. They undertook to do everything when it was prescribed to them as a condition. But here it is much more; it is the Spirit that makes one say, “What wilt thou have me do?” It is submission, it is the principle of obedience really produced in the heart “I know not what Thou wilt, but here am I to do Thy will.” It is obedience without reserve. There is no question here of rules that man cannot accomplish, but of the whole will changed, no more to do one's own will but to do God's will.

The book of the law was sprinkled, as well as the people. That in fact gave its efficacy to the requisitions of the law. But the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, gives to the changed heart the purification and the peace which belong to those who are placed under the efficacy of His blood. We are placed there as the Jews were under the blood of the goat of atonement, not however for a year only but forever.

Take a soul, then, that the Holy Spirit has hewn out of the quarry of this world, being honest, amiable, kept by the good providence of God, but withal doing its own will. Well, God has found it there in the world and of the world, notwithstanding all its good qualities; and He has to put His love in its heart, in order that it may, without hesitation, only care about the will of God to do it. But, thus separated, it is under the blood of sprinkling, it is cleansed from all its sins.

This is the first principle; the separation wrought by God Himself, Who places us outside of this world, or rather of the things of this world, and makes us Christians. Without this there is no Christianity.

God acts effectually; He does nothing by halves, and that is all His work. God does not deceive Himself. He must have realities. He does not deceive Himself as we deceive ourselves, and as we try to deceive others, although we deceive others less than we deceive ourselves.

I would point out to you the meaning of the word sanctification. It is rarely used in the scriptures in the sense in which we generally use it, that is to say, in the progressive sense. It is only three times spoken of in this sense. It is said, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness (sanctification), without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess. 5:23). These two passages show that I do not set aside this sense of the word.

But it more particularly designates an act of separation from evil, a setting apart for God. If we have not laid hold of this meaning, there will be an entire mistake as to what sanctification is. In the two passages quoted above, the word has an everyday application. In the sense in which it is used by the apostle in the beginning of this Epistle, it is perfectly in the sense. Of taking a stone out of the quarry of the world to fashion it for God. Sanctification is attributed to the Father in more than one place in the Bible; see Heb. 10:10. Now, it is by this will that we are sanctified; by the offering once made of the body of Jesus Christ. It is by the will of God that we are sanctified.

1. There is the first thought, the will of God which is to set us apart (to sanctify us);

2. And the means, namely, the offering of Christ.

And it is always, with scarce more than a few exceptions, which we have already quoted, in this manner that it is spoken of in the Hebrews. Sanctification is attributed to God the Father in another passage also, Jude 1 [though the better reading says, “beloved “].

The Father having willed to have children for Himself, the blood of Jesus does the work, and the Holy Spirit comes to accomplish the counsels of the Father, and to give them efficacy by producing the practical effect in the heart. The soul separated from the world is sanctified by His vital act. There is the old trunk which pushes forth its shoots, but God acts in quickening, and His act, which takes place by the Holy Spirit, works the daily practical sanctification. The heart each day more and more realizes it. It is not like a vase, because in man it is the heart which is set apart. Thus, when life is communicated, and thereby the man is sanctified, there is a daily work of sanctification which applies to the affections, to the habits, to the walk, &c.

Let us see how God does this (verse 3).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Such is the way God does it. He sets us apart for Himself. It is not by modifying what was bad in us, but by creating us anew. He makes afresh a new creature, for the old man cannot be made subject to the law. He gives a new life.

If one be not thus born anew, one belongs yet to the world, which is under condemnation; but when God acts, it is altogether another thing. Being born in Adam, we have need to be born by Christ. When the heart is visited by the Holy Spirit, it is born anew by a life which is not of this world, which urges it to another end—Christ. It is not by precepts addressed to the old man; it is by another life. The precepts follow afterward. That is to say, that this life of which we speak, which is the new birth, belongs not to this world, neither in its source, nor in its aim; it cannot have a single thing in common with the old life. This life is found here below in the body; we eat, work, &c., as before: but this is not what Christ came for. Christ came to make us comprehend quite another thing from the life here below, into which He entered. And such is the rule of the Christian's conduct. He has for object, for aim, and for joy, what Christ has for object, aim, and joy; his affections are heavenly, as those of Christ.

If the life of Christ is in me, the life and the Spirit of Christ I have cannot find joy in that wherein Christ finds not His joy.

The Spirit of Christ in me cannot be a spirit differing from what was in Him; and it is evident that he who is separated from this world for God cannot find pleasure in the life of sin of this world, or prefer it to that of heaven.

We know well that the Christian often fails in this rule; but this hinders not that there is nothing in common between the life of heaven and that of the world. It is not a question of prohibitions as to using this or that, but of having altogether other tastes, desires, and joys. Hence it is, on that account, people imagine that Christians are sad, as if they were absorbed by only one thought. It

is that our joys are altogether different from those of the world; for the world knows not our joys.

No unregenerate person can comprehend what renders the Christian happy. In other words his tastes are not for the things of this world. His thoughts rise higher. This is the joy of the Christian, that Christ is entered into heaven, and has Himself destroyed all that could have hindered us from entering there.

Death, Satan, and the wicked spirits, have been conquered by Christ, for the resurrection has annihilated all that was between him and the glory. Christ placed Himself in our position. He underwent the consequence of it. He has conquered the world and Satan. It is written, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you “: if he is already conquered, we have not to conquer him, but to resist him. When we resist him, he knows he has met Christ, his conqueror. The flesh does not resist him. Jesus gives us a living hope by His resurrection from the dead; in this way, and being in Him, we are on a foundation which cannot fail.

Christ has already shown that He has won the victory; and what grace is here presented to us! Even that of obtaining “the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the power of God through faith,” &c.

The treasure is in heaven. I have nothing to fear: it is in perfect safety. But this is what I fear for myself, temptations, all sorts of difficulties; for I am not in heaven. This is true, but what gives every security, is not that we are not tried or tempted, but that we are kept in the trial here below, as the inheritance is kept in heaven for us.

Here is the position of the Christian, set apart by the resurrection of Christ, and regenerated. It is that, in waiting for the glory, we are kept by the power of God, through faith, separated from the world by the power and communication of the life of Him Who has won the victory over all that could have hindered us from having a part in it. And why are these trials sent to us? It is God Who works the soil, in order that all the affections of the heart, thus sifted, may be purified and exercised, and perfectly in harmony with the glory of heaven and with the objects which are set before us.

Is it for naught that gold is put in the furnace, or because it is not good? No, but to purify it. God, by trials, takes out of our hearts that which is impure, in order that when the glory arrives, we may enjoy it.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 178

Letter From an Old Disciple to a Young Sister in the Lord

I duly received your kind and loving note. It was very welcome and very acceptable. And now I am proving my willingness, at least, to respond to your wish, though I am nothing of a letter-writer. But I have asked the Lord to give me a word for you, and He never fails. Still, so poor and weak am I, that though He may graciously give me a word, and present a sweet and profitable line of truth for me to pursue, I may spoil it in the detail.

The flesh ever seeks to intrude itself, and if allowed to get in and show what it can say and do, the fair work of the Spirit will be marred. Hence the need, my dear young sister, of constant watchfulness and prayer.

The blessed Jesus is our perfect example in this—watching and praying, when the deep, and dark shadow of Calvary was gathering thick around Him. He separated Himself from His disciples, that He might “offer up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.”

By watching He saw and anticipated all that was coming. By prayer He passed through it all before it came, in spirit with His Father. So when the deep trial actually came, He was perfectly prepared for it, having gone through it all beforehand in deep and blessed communion with His Father.

Hence the beautiful tranquility of soul which He manifests in the presence of His enemies. With what sublime dignity He meets Judas, officers, men, chief priests, multitude, Acts In the calm fortitude of One who could truthfully say “Not my will, but thine be done,” and who sought only the Father's glory, He could say, “Whom seek ye?” “I am He.” Oh! what majesty and holy courage, combined with simple child-like dependence on His Father in heaven.

The deeper the trial, the thicker the darkness, the heavier the sufferings, He is just the more profoundly subject to His Father's will, and the more entirely cast on Him. The Father's glory, the children's salvation, He kept full in view; which led Him to look beyond the hour and power of darkness “to the cloudless morning” when the “countless multitude” of ransomed hearts will cluster around His blessed person, beating with perfect love and endless joy to this ever blessed name, in the bright and eternal effulgence of the Father's glory. “Praise the Lord, who died to save us; Praise His name forever dear.”

This, my dear child in the gospel, is your only safe and perfect example, looking to Jesus whether joy or sorrow lies before you. Before it actually comes, seek to go through it all in secret with the Lord, so that you may not be taken by surprise and thrown off your guard when called to enter upon the scene. If you have in spirit gone through the trial with the Lord in private, He will be with you and carry you through it in public to His glory; and that's all you have got to care about it.

Read first the scene in the garden as described by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then add John. When Christ was watching and praying, the disciples were sleeping. Ah! what a lesson. Sleepiness and self-confidence characterized the bold and loving Peter; perfect subjection to God,

and simple dependence on Him, characterized the dependent “Son of man.” But when the hour of conflict arrived, who stood in the fight alone? Those who had neither watched nor prayed were unprepared; therefore they all forsook Him and fled. Of the people there was none with Him. Ah! what a practical lesson we get here.

And now, my one-year-old, let me ask you, Have you learned (when you know, feel, or fear any trial or difficulty coming upon you) to go away by yourself and lay it all out before the Lord, and in true, sweet, and blessed fellowship with Him go over it all, round it all, through it all, thus honoring the Lord by watching and prayer, knowing that He will honor you, His dependent one, when the difficulty comes, or prevent it from coming altogether? Oh! how different would be our walk and testimony, our practical exhibition of Christ, were we thus to watch and pray. The blessed Lord Himself, my dear young Christian, effectually teach you by His own blessed Spirit; for I, in measure, feel ashamed to speak about things which I have realized so little. But the Lord is very patient, He has borne long with me. I know, and it is a great deal to know, that His precious blood cleanseth from all sin.

Two things make me very happy:-

l. I am washed in the blood of Christ;

2. I am made in Christ the righteousness of God.

Therefore I am fit to be in the holy presence of God without a veil, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

I state this for you to try yourself on the same ground. Of course you are on precisely the same ground: so is every believer; but all don't know it, because of looking to themselves.

May you be kept, my dear child in the faith, living, walking, and acting in the holy presence of our God and Father, with a single eye and an undivided heart for the glory of His Son, your living Savior, by the divine power of the Holy Ghost.

With very much love in Christ, I am faithfully yours in the immortal bonds of the ever blessed gospel. A. MILLER. London, 1st June, 1855.

Chapter 179

Life and Union

Scripture never speaks of union with Christ while on earth—never. It always speaks of union with an exalted Head. And it is evident to me that, when Christ breathed on them after His resurrection, He conveyed an accession of living power. The second Adam is a life-giving Spirit; and as God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, so here Christ breathes upon them. He does not send down the Holy Ghost from heaven, so that they should be the habitation of God through the Spirit; but He does what He never did before the resurrection; and I have no doubt that this was life more abundantly.

The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus it is that has made us free from the law of sin and death. He quickened Lazarus; yet it was not a question of his soul, but victory over death by power, in answer to His cry to the Father, though He were in living power then the resurrection and the life. But His resurrection was another thing. It was according to the power of an endless life; and this was not Lazarus' case. We are quickened together with Him; and this is so true, that (notwithstanding Lazarus, and other persons raised to life during the period recorded in the Old Testament) He is the first-fruits of them that slept. All these cases belonged to, and were brought to pass in, the old thing, through the power of God in it. If man had not been in the state he really was, totally and fundamentally corrupt, so that atonement was absolutely necessary, there was power, living power, in Him (the Father had given Him to have life in Himself; in Him was life) to restore all.

Adam was not, in fact, the head of the race, till fallen and in sin; so Christ is not a corporate Head till He has wrought out righteousness, and we can be made it in Him; and then we belong to the new creation. Whereas, divine and perfect as He was, He, supposing He was the new thing, was come into, and dealing with, the old-God's last dealing, we may say, with it (save a peculiar special intervention with Israel), and therefore abode alone till the foundation was laid of the new thing, the new creation, in His death (by which He passed out of and closed the old) and His resurrection (by which He began in power the new, breaking the bonds of Satan, who had conquered in the old, in his last strong hold-strong by God's judgment). Hence when, in instructing us what the church is, the apostle speaks of the new creation, he speaks of our being risen and quickened together with Christ, and set in heavenly places in Him, the middle wall of partition being broken down to make both one, making peace, and to present both in one body by the cross.... Accordingly, it is a serious thing to make the death of Christ necessary only to the ordering of the church, and not to its founding and existence, and to make Christ alive in the earth before that solemn, and, in the literal sense of the word, all-important act, the center of union, when the apostle says it could not be till after-nay, when Christ says that He abode alone till then.

It has been urged, and rightly urged, that incarnation was not union. But the Lord affirms there could not be union without death: He was to die, to gather. We are baptized into one body. That life was communicated, I fully recognize; but I do not see that this is necessarily union, in the sense of forming the body, which is everything to the church. I find it distinguished from heavenly

things in Christ's conversation with Nicodemus. He had spoken of earthly things, when speaking of regeneration; for the Jews, taking earthly things of God, must be regenerate. But with this He contrasts the heavenly things, and, when He mentions these, states to Nicodemus that the Son of man must be lifted up.

That God forgave from Adam's sin downwards in respect of the cross is plain, and stated in Rom. 3:25; and that He communicated life to the O.T. saints I do not doubt. It is too clear to reason on it here; for, without it, none shall see nor enter the kingdom of God. But Christ is never spoken of as the Head of the body, the church united to Him, until He was Himself exalted to the right hand of God, and had accomplished the work which made the church's whole place before God. It was not, therefore, merely arranging the church's form that was in question; it was doing the work which could give it a place before God, lay the foundation for its existence, and make the peace, reconciling Jew and Gentile in one body unto God by the cross.

J. N. D.

Chapter 180

A Millennial Picture

Exodus 18

THIS chapter is the termination of the first part of the book of Exodus. Up to this point, the dealings of God with Israel had been in sovereign grace. When He first looked upon them in Egypt, there was no cause in them to draw out His favor. They seem to have sunk almost to the level of the Egyptians around them and to have forgotten God's name. But Jehovah remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so in the grace of His heart came in and gave them a great salvation. Egypt was judged and its power broken. Israel was brought forth by divine power, after having been screened from the holy judgment of God by the blood of the Paschal lamb. Law had not yet been spoken of; all was grace. This being so, all their murmuring was borne with, and their needs supplied. The tree was shown that could sweeten the bitter waters of Marah (chap. 15), bread from heaven and quails were granted (chap. 16), and water was made to gush forth from the flinty rock (chap. 17). Whatever their perverseness, we read nothing of the plague in the camp, nor of burning fiery serpents.

Chapter 18 closes this section, and then we note a change. Grace not having been appreciated, terms of law were proposed, and eagerly accepted by the people, not knowing their own hearts nor the God with Whom they had to do. It was necessary that the question of righteousness should be raised with man ere the Deliverer was sent forth; this was the suited opportunity. Israel's after history shows sadly what man is when tested by law, even though possessing every advantage and favor.

It is fitting that the section of grace should, close with a millennial picture. Grace ends ever in glory, either in heaven or on earth. Moses stands forth here as a type of Christ; first sentenced to death by the power of the world; then given back from death, as it were; afterward being used of God to deliver Israel from all their foes. He is now seen as their ruler establishing order and government among them. The people had been borne on eagles' wings and brought to God; Moses now takes his place in their midst as their divinely appointed leader and king. Remarkable foreshadowing of the One, Who has more honor than Moses, our Lord Jesus! This will He do for Israel in the end of the age. Once more they will stand before God on the ground of grace, all human attempts at righteousness being flung aside by them forever.

Zipporah was there also, a well-known type of the church of God. Moses was a husband by blood to her, herself being witness (Ex. 4:24-26). She became united to the deliverer during the period of his estrangement from Israel, through their rejection of him. While Israel's deliverance was proceeding, she was sent home, but now reappears to share in the general joy. This is what is happening, and will yet happen as regards the church of God. Christ is at the moment in the distant land as far as Israel is concerned, but souls are being united to Him on high by the Holy Ghost to be His body now and His bride in the approaching day. Israel's deliverance will be wrought out during the trouble unparalleled of the closing days (Dan. 12:1); but then the heavenly bride will be safely sheltered in the Father's house, to appear with the Lord when He comes to

inaugurate His season of earthly glory.

Eliezer is brought in at this point in a very striking way. Gershom's name shows that Moses' heart was yearning after Israel while separated from them, in contrast with the names of Joseph's sons, which show the satisfaction and joy his heart' found in other relationships while apart from his brethren after the flesh (Gen. 41). Eliezer is introduced no less suitably in Ex. 18:4, “and the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” Most seasonable after the great deliverance just experienced, not only by himself but by the whole people of God.

Jethro too has his place. “He heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel His people, and that Jehovah had brought Israel out of Egypt” (ver. 1). “And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Jehovah had done to Israel whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians” (ver. 9). He looked on unselfishly and praised Jehovah for all His goodness, owning Him to be greater than all gods. Thus will it be in the day of Christ's glory. All parties will fall readily into the places divinely assigned to them, none envying the other his portion of joy. The dead and risen Deliverer will have His heavenly bride in closest association with Himself on His throne; the tribes of Israel will be at rest from all their oppressors, and be in the enjoyment of the grace of God, which alone can bless a ruined people; and the Gentiles will praise God's ways of grace and power, and themselves enjoy it in connection with the people of God's choice. Haste the happy time!

W. W. F.

Chapter 181

Nothing but Christ (Duplicate)

The Epistle to the Hebrews calls us to leave all for Christ. Whatever be the objects in which we have been able thus far to glory, it is necessary to abandon them now, and to receive in their stead Jesus the Christ of God. Angels give place to the Son; Moses, the servant of the house, gives place to Christ, Who is the Builder of it; Joshua, the ancient captain, who led Israel into Canaan, gives place to Christ, the Captain of Salvation, Who now conducts the children to glory; Aaron, the carnal and dying priest, gives place to the true Melchisedec, Who lives and serves in the heavenly temple forever; the old covenant gives place to the new, which Jesus administers; and at the same time the old ceremonial or earthly ordinances give place to the spiritual and efficacious ministrations of the heavenly Priest; finally, the blood of the victims gives place to the blood of Christ, offered through an eternal Spirit.

Such is one of the principal characteristics of this divine and glorious Epistle, which thus annihilates all that in which man puts his confidence, in order to establish the Lord Jesus, the Son of God and the Christ of God, as the object of glory and only refuge of poor souls.

But this was a doctrine hard to hear, particularly for a people such as the Jews, who had in so many ways put their confidence in the law and legal righteousness. Amongst us also at the present day, when, amid so many religious forms, men propose with authority other foundations of confidence than Jesus, which other men blindly receive, we have to consider carefully what are the bases of this doctrine. In these days, when all creation groans, the soul thirsts after the simple gospel, which preaches to us the perfect satisfaction of Jesus. And it is the design of the Holy Spirit, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to unfold to the eager soul the reasons for which it can thus embrace Jesus as all that which forms the object of its confidence and glory. This Epistle declares what authorizes it to appreciate Jesus thus—to estimate Him as having no equal—to know Him, in a word, as the full and only stay of the poor sinner.

But how does the Holy Ghost assure us of these truths by this Epistle? How does He show us that it is our salvation to leave there every other prop, in order to have none but Christ alone for our stay? He shows it to us in the only way in which it could be done, namely, in presenting to our soul the appreciation which God makes of Christ.

That which warrants the value I attach to Christ is, that God has already, and plainly, made known to me the worth which He possesses. If my soul confides exclusively in Him, I cannot be grounded in so doing but by seeing the foundation of Israel's confidence at the time of the sprinkling of the blood in Egypt. God had prescribed this blood: such is my divine and sure warrant; and the Epistle to the Hebrews assures it to me. It speaks to me of the high value God sees in Christ; it tells me how clearly, simply, and exclusively, He has put upon Christ all that can bring relief to the soul. Such is the reason why this admirable Epistle lingers with so much complacency upon Christ in all His different relations with us, in all the ministrations He accomplishes for us. There is what explains the numerous quotations (chap. 1), which establish Jesus far above angels; there is what explains the glorious commentary which chapter 2 furnishes on the dignity of the Son of man; the

declaration of His great superiority over Moses (chapter 3); the abundant and varied testimonies (chaps. 4-6) borne to His priesthood, surpassing in quite another way that wherewith Aaron had been honored, or that which the law ever conferred. There is the reason why He is represented as anointed and consecrated by an oath, and seated in the heavens in the midst of the sanctuary, as well as at the right hand of the Majesty there (chaps. 7, 8).

In all this we have the hand of God Himself exalting the merit of Jesus, weighing Him in His dignities known in heaven and on earth. The soul is invited in the most pressing manner to come and be present at this grand work, at this divine proof of the merit of Jesus. Just so the congregation of Israel was commanded to wait at the door of the tabernacle, in order that each for himself should contemplate and know how God was pleased with the priest; so that each, however large the congregation was, should have personally, individually, all liberty to resign themselves to the care and intercession of Aaron (Lev. 8; 9). It was a matter which concerned each individually; and the same liberty and more should also appertain to every one of us individually.

Our soul is a thing which concerns ourselves; for it is written that “none can by any means redeem his brother;” and it is ourselves who should know the divine remedy, ourselves who should possess it. It is not a faithful brother who can hear and believe for us; it is not the church which can represent us. We must be at the door of the tabernacle ourselves; we have ourselves to know the worth of Jesus in the eyes of God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is commissioned to reveal this secret of the holy of holies. It is addressed, not to a certain order of privileged persons, but to us all; in order that there we may each contemplate Jesus, such as He is there weighed in the balance of the sanctuary; and that we may gather the blessed fruits of this ensured supply which has been stored in Him. It is not the question in this Epistle of a particular church, nor of a class of privileged persons, as is very often thought and said; but it is the voice of the Spirit addressing itself directly to the soul, in order that it may learn to know for itself Him in Whom God has placed the help which is necessary to it.

In this Epistle our soul breathes, in some sort, the perfume of the plain which the Lord has blessed. Here faith breathes the perfume of Christ; it enjoys Christ, as God Himself enjoys Him; and we have the divine light in our heart, we are converted from darkness to the light of God. In a word God becomes our own.

There is yet another thing in this Epistle; it makes us also understand in what characters God has set this exclusive value on Christ, and these characters are such as fully answer to our necessities. The victory, or the sacrifice, 9:14; the priest, 7; the prophet, or teacher, 2:1-4; the captain, who brings His own to glory, 2:10; and in all these qualities, as in each of these separately, we see Him estimated in the most exact manner by the hand of God, and we find Him perfectly what it is needful He should be for persons so wretched as we are. According to God Jesus is a victim perfectly suited to purify, a priest perfectly suited to intercede, a prophet perfectly suited to instruct, and a guide perfectly suited to transport us safe and sound into glory. There is that precisely which we need. This Epistle traces our book of travels, in leaving our place of exile as sinners, up to our dwelling in glory, where we shall be in the companionship of Jesus. Yes, we clearly read there our titles, and we rest on Jesus as the Victim, the Priest, the Prophet, and the Guide, because God has given Him all that is possible of worth in these qualities with which He is endowed for us; and God has appreciated Him because of His work, because of His person,

because of His obedience, because He has shed His blood and fully accomplished the will of God for us. There, in this Epistle, the soul may read its titles, not according to the estimate which itself makes of them, but according to that which God makes of Christ.

Chapter 182

The Offerings of Leviticus: 13. Offerings for Sin and Trespass

Lev. 4-6:7

Now we come to a new and necessary class of offerings. Unlike those which have hitherto occupied us, they were not voluntary nor for a sweet savor. They were compulsory, to clear the conscience, to make reparation, and to vindicate God's honor injured by wrongs in His people to God or man. Forgiveness was sought and secured thereby; and as it was needed by all from the highest to the lowest, so it was imperative on each guilty individual, and no less by the assembly as such when it had failed corporately.

The sacrificial character was preserved at least as carefully in these offerings for sin, &c., as in the Holocaust or in the Thank offering. The notable principle of transfer was ineffaceably maintained in both classes. It was the provision on God's part for those hopelessly lost otherwise. Grace has given Christ for saints as well as sinners; the love of God goes out fully to both, if the form differ as it must. Alike they are typical of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus; alike they attest through faith in His death man's acceptable approach to God, his guilt effaced. But the application of the transfer is as notably different; for in the sacrifices of sweet savor the transfer is from the acceptance of the offering to that of the offerer, in those for sin or guilt the offerer's evil was transferred to the offering. For in very deed Christ's own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree. Cf. also Eph. 5:2.

How does divine mercy shine in either case? Each is most admirable, both are requisite to present an adequate insight into the work of Christ. Yet are they but shadows, not the very image; and they leave much unexpressed which even Himself left among other things for the Holy Spirit to guide His disciples into, when His own redemption accomplished on earth and His session in heavenly glory should prepare them to receive all the truth. But where is Christendom now? where are those who boast highly of themselves, and slight the inspired word of God?

“Safety” is all but universally the evangelical measure of the gospel; some add “certainty,” others “enjoyment” too. But the system of all in their respective way is utilitarian. They make man's wants the horizon of their faith, and can dimly see “the salvation of God,” as scripture habitually presents His mind, because it is filled with His glory in His Christ. Salvation accordingly goes far beyond these human thoughts of safety. The once sinful woman, now penitent (whose faith drew her into the Pharisee's house to stand weeping behind the Lord as He reclined at meat, lavishing on His blessed feet every mark of sorrow, love, and reverence), was as “safe” when she entered as when she left. But only before leaving she knew from Him that her sins, her many sins, were forgiven; and when unbelievers questioned His title to forgive, He added, “Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.” Is not this much more than safety? It is salvation. With this fact in Luke 7 observe the Lord's teaching in Luke 15. The prodigal son in his rags was “safe” enough assuredly when the father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. But it was salvation according to God's gospel, when the best robe was put on him, and the slain fatted calf was eaten with glad hearts, yet to the joy far deeper in Him Who created it than in the prodigal with all who shared it. And the Son was

just the One thus to make known the Father's love. How miserably short of the truth fall the Catechisms of man! and this because Christ is not all.

So in these offerings revelation begins, not (as man would) with that which his misery and guilt stand in need of, but with the witnesses, as far as could then be consistently imparted, of Christ's perfectly acceptable work, and positive excellency, and sweet savor to God, made over fully and forever and now to the believer. It is the more striking. that Leviticus should open thus from God's side; because, in fact, defiled and guilty man had to commence with his offering for sin or trespass.

Without the removal of the delinquency by the prescribed offering it would have been lack of conscience in man, and a wrong to God instead of honoring Him. Where all was thus cleared righteously, he was free and encouraged to let out his heart Godward by presenting the offerings of sweet savor. The reader of the N. T. may see in the opening verses of Eph. 1 a characteristically high expression, yet analogous to this. For instead of rising as Rom. 3 does from the remission of sins by the blood of Christ to the bright triumph of faith in constant grace, the hope of glory, and even boasting in God Himself, as chap. v. shows, we have the God and Father of our Lord Jesus beginning with His eternal purpose, and blessing the Christian with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, and then descending to point out the possession of redemption in Him through His blood, the remission of offenses.

There is another preliminary remark which it seems well to point out in the offerings for sin. In none is there more stringent requirement of holiness. Like the Minchah or Meal offering, those for sin might have been thought rather lower from representing, one, the concrete person of our Lord in His life, the other, His identification with the consequences of our sin in divine judgment. Both are called, and they only, “most holy.” See Lev. 2:3, and 6:17, compared with 6:25, 29, 7:1, 6. So even when the body of the victim was carried forth without the camp and burnt with fire, all the inward fat was burnt on the brasen altar. How perfectly this separation to God at all cost was verified in Christ suffering for our sins, though all His life and services bore unswervingly the stamp of holiness Therein indeed the Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him in such a sort and to such a depth as He never was before, and could never be again, though the entire course here below was to the glory of His Father. No wonder that God thereon glorified Jesus in Himself, and this immediately, before He receives the kingdom and returns to introduce it visibly in power.

Chapter 183

The Offerings of Leviticus: 14. Sin Offering for the Priest

The Sin Offering for the High Priest

Lev. 4:1-12.

IN this chapter four cases demanded a Sin offering. The first two had no limit in the consequence entailed. It was all over without that for the entire people of God; for in both cases the communion of the whole camp was interrupted: in the second because the whole assembly of Israel had sinned and were guilty; in the first, because the high priest had sinned, which had the same result for all as for himself. We shall see how grace provided against that which was in itself ruinous. In the last two cases of the chapter the ill result did not go beyond the individual concerned.

“And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin inadvertently against any of Jehovah's commandments, that ought not to be done, and do any of them; if the anointed priest sin to the trespass (or, guilt) of the people, let him offer, for his sin which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish to Jehovah for a sin offering. And he shall bring the bullock to the entrance of the tent of meeting before Jehovah; and he shall lay his hand upon the head of the bullock, and slaughter the bullock before Jehovah. And the anointed priest shall take of the blood of the bullock, and bring it into the tent of meeting. And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle of the blood seven times before Jehovah, before the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Jehovah, which is in the tent of meeting; and he shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And all the fat of the bullock of the sin offering he shall take off from it: the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is on the inwards, and the two kidneys and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the net above the liver which he shall take away as far as the kidneys, as it is taken off from the ox of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of burnt offering. And the skin of the bullock, and all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, and its inwards and its dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall it be burnt” (vers. 1-12).

As the law, we are told by divine authority (Heb. 7:12), made nothing perfect, so it spoke of nothing perfect for the most guilty. It was exactly a ministry of death and condemnation. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law, being a system of human righteousness, could not be but partial, as the test of fallen man, not the transcript of God, nor yet the rule of the new creation. It provided, as we see here, for no more than inadvertent or unwitting sin. If this were all that the gospel meets, who could be saved? No more is here contemplated (ver. 2).

Then comes from ver. 3 the particular case of the anointed or high priest. If he should sin to make the people guilty-this is the true force of the phrase, and the real effect of his sin in the ways of Jehovah. “According to the sin of the people” as it stands in the A. V. seems doubly defective, and

scarcely in fact an intelligible proposition, unless one consider it to mean tantamount to the sin or rather guilt of the people as a whole; which, though true in itself, hardly appears to be intended here. The R. V. gives the meaning. If the anointed priest “sin so as to bring guilt on the people,” i.e. without their sinning.

As the high priest represented the people, so his acts brought, not only blessing on them, but also the guilt of his sin. How blessedly in contrast is the High Priest of our confession, a great High priest, passed through the heavens as He is, Jesus the Son of God! For though tempted in all respects in like manner, it was apart from sin, not merely from sinning, but sin absolutely excepted. In Him was no sin; on the contrary He was holy (and graciously so), harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens.

But if the anointed should sin, as indeed was not infrequently the case, “let him offer for his sin which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish to Jehovah for a sin offering.” It must be the largest offering. Option was not permissible. He must bring this victim, and no other. “And he shall bring the bullock to the entrance of the tent of meeting before Jehovah; And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the bullock, and kill the bullock before Jehovah” (ver. 4). As Jehovah's command had been infringed, the high priest must bring the prescribed animal before Him to the appointed place, and there slay it before Him, with his hand laid on its head: the token of transferring the guilt to the victim-how precious for the sinner

“And the anointed priest shall take of the blood of the bullock and bring it into the tent of meeting; and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle-of the blood seven times before Jehovah, before the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Jehovah, which is in the tent of meeting; and he shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting” (vers. 5-7). Without or within the sanctuary what is done is “before Jehovah.” He is the One Who has to be vindicated. Blood is brought not only “to” but “into” the tent of meeting, and sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary. Only on the solemn and single day of atonement did the high priest go with incense within the holiest and sprinkle of the blood upon the mercy-seat and before it. Here it was only within the holy place, where he put of the blood upon the horns of the golden altar; and all the rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the brazen altar.

“And all the fat of the bullock of the sin offering he shall take off from it,” &c. Just as was done with the ox of the sacrifice of Peace offerings (8-10, compared with iii. 3-5), so the priest was to burn it on the brazen altar: a blessed witness, not only in the blood but in the fat, of the intrinsic acceptability of Christ sacrificed for us and our sins. These were shadows most instructive: His the one offering infinitely agreeable to God, everlastingly efficacious for us that believe on Him.

Still there is the witness not less plain that it was a Sin offering; and so we read in vers. 11, 12 what quite differs from the eating of the Peace offering. “And the skin of the bullock, and all its flesh, with its head and with its legs, and its inwards and its dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out shall it be burnt.” There too does it differ from the Burnt offering which was burnt within the court on the brazen altar. The Sin offering must be burnt without the camp: holy, most holy, but thoroughly identified with the sin thereon confessed. How it was all more than verified—enhanced on every side to the highest degree—in Him Who suffered

for our sins

Chapter 184

The Offerings of Leviticus: 15. Sin Offering for the Congregation

Lev. 4:13-21

The first of these compulsory offerings attested the specially representative place of the anointed priest. His sin involved the whole congregation of Israel. Communion for all was at once interrupted. Now we learn in the second case of the Sin offering that the high priest was identified with the congregation in its collective defilement. It was not so ordinarily when an individual sinned, no matter how high his position, though this too had its effect as we shall see. But in the former cases there was a suspension of communion for all; and the requisite Sin offering must be to restore.

“And if the whole assembly of Israel err [or, sin inadvertently] and the thing be hid from the eyes of the congregation, and they have done any of all the commandments of Jehovah which should not be done, and are guilty; and the sin wherein they have sinned against it is become known; then the congregation shall present a young bullock for the sin offering, and bring it before the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before Jehovah; and the bullock shall be slaughtered before Jehovah. And the anointed priest shall bring of the bullock's blood into the tent of meeting; and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before Jehovah before the veil. And he shall put of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before Jehovah, which is in the tent of meeting; and he shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the tent of meeting. And all its fat shall he take off from it and burn it on the altar. And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them; and it shall be forgiven them. And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bullock: it is a sin offering of the congregation” (vers. 13-21).

Jehovah would have the sin judged in every case; but in every case He provides for its removal from before Him. There was, there could be, no respect of persons in His sight. Yet He makes a difference according to position, and especially in the anointed one who represented all. How blessed for us that He Who bore all our sins in His own body, before He entered into the holies for us, is there now not only to sustain us in our weakness and represent us in His perfectness, but as the Advocate for us with the Father if any one sin! It was He Who when here was tempted in all things in like manner, sin excepted. “Such a high priest became us” is the wonderful word of God, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens: no need ever had He as the high priests, His types, to offer up sacrifices for His own sins. All the more was He alone competent to act efficaciously for those of others; and this He did once for all, having offered up Himself, a Son perfected forever. But the assembly-ah I this is another matter. They indeed could sin, and sin as a whole. For this He made atonement, as we see here in the shadow, that it might be forgiven them. It may be noticed that in the counterpart of the great priest this assurance is omitted. That his sin when atoned for was forgiven him cannot of course be doubted;

but the omission points to the only One Who had no sins to be forgiven, though He be the One Who made atonement for all.

But Jehovah would have His people exercised in conscience as to any sin of theirs when it became known; and so the congregation was to present a young bullock for the Sin offering and to bring it before the tent of meeting (ver. 14). As all could not lay their hands upon the victim's head, the elders of the congregation were directed to lay theirs representatively (15). When it was killed before Jehovah (for sin ever refers to God), the anointed priest was called to act on behalf of the congregation as in his own case, not so in those that follow: any priest was competent ordinarily, here the high priest only. And he must bring of the bullock's blood into the tent of meeting (16), dip his finger in it, and sprinkle it seven times before Jehovah before the veil, as for his sin (17). He must as then put of the blood on the horns of the golden altar that is before Jehovah; for the communion of all had to be restored. It is the more in striking distinction from the individual cases, because in all the others the blood of the sin offering that remained was all poured out at the bottom of the brasen altar (18). And there all the fat was burned, not outside but on the altar (19), and with the same particularity as in the Sin offering for the anointed priest (20). There was thus the fullest witness to the intrinsic holiness of the victim; while verse 21 carefully shows how thoroughly it was identified with the sin of the congregation, and burnt on a clean place outside the camp, where as a whole the carcass was carried. The word for burning even was carefully varied as before to suit the twofold truth.

What wondrous forethought such minute differences indicate! What jealousy for the honor of the Great Priest, so long before the time of His manifestation! and for that of the incomparable sacrifice of Himself, so acceptable to God, and efficacious for sinners! Not only is the book the authentic and the genuine writing of Moses, but it approves itself to be the work of God through him. Who but He Himself could have foreseen all?

Chapter 185

The Offerings of Leviticus: 16. Sin Offering for the Ruler

Lev. 4:22-26

THERE is an important difference which presents itself here. The guilt attaches to the party concerned; others are not involved. The first case is that of a ruler, or principal man.

“When a ruler sinneth and through inadvertence doeth any of all the things which Jehovah his God hath commanded not to be done, and is guilty; if his sin wherein he hath sinned come to his knowledge, he shall bring his offering, a buck of the goats, a male without blemish. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the burnt offering before Jehovah; it is a sin offering. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out its blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering. And he shall burn all its fat on the altar, as the fat from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall make an atonement for him from his sin; and it shall be forgiven him” (vers. 22-26).

Peculiar care is taken to impress a chief with his responsibility. In his case only do we hear of Jehovah “his God.” His position honorable and public renders his offense the more serious. For Israel were bound to own their God with them in the world, and making one to differ from another in a way that the nations never conceived (Eph. 2:12). In his measure he was to rule as well as walk in the fear of God.

Nevertheless it was not of the same large consequence as when the high priest sinned or the whole congregation, which demanded a steer. For the ruler a buck of the goats was enough, but an unblemished male was requisite. No latitude was left in any respect or degree more than in the graver cases. As there was nothing to hinder his compliance, so his God would have the sin felt and judged, when it came to his knowledge.

The ruler brought his offering then, and laid his hand on its head, and killed it in the place where they killed the Holocaust before Jehovah. It was for sin; and death alone could expiate sin, the victim's death for him who, by his hand laid on its head, transferred his guilt by God's provision to the slain beast. Whatever the difference in the form, they every one agreed in this; and they all pointed to Him Who knew no sin, yet Whom God made sin for us, that we might become divine righteousness in Him.

But it will be noticed that the priest was to take of the blood with his finger, and put it on the horns of the brazen altar, as well as pour the rest of the blood at the bottom of the same. No more was needed than to meet the individual's need, even though a prince, at the altar which is the means of the individual's approach to Jehovah. Only his communion had been interrupted as it was now restored. Had it been either the high priest or the congregation as a whole, the golden altar would have been defiled, and the blood must have been sprinkled on its horns. Here the brazen altar being alone in question, the blood was put there accordingly, and the individual Israelite, even if a ruler, returned to the enjoyment of his privileges.

It is of all moment to appreciate the contrast the Epistle to the Hebrews establishes for the Christian by Christ's work. It is done once and forever. There is no repetition. Not only is the believer now sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, but he is perfected by it in perpetuity, i.e. without a break. This is due exclusively to the absolute and everlasting efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. Less than this would be His dishonor, which God would not tolerate. Would that believers now knew what a standing His blood has given them!

Hence it is that not in the Epistle to the Hebrews do we find provision for failure, but in the Gospel of John (13) and in 1 John 2:1. It is not fresh sprinkling of Christ's blood, or repeated recourse to it; but according to the figure, washing the defiled feet in the water of the word, and according to the doctrine of the advocacy of Christ—Jesus Christ righteous as He is, and the propitiation for our sins. He pleads for us and works in us by the Spirit and word of God the self-judgment needed to restore the communion which one's sin interrupted; as we may see practically in Simon Peter with all its detail and rich comfort and blessing through grace.

We need, as Christians, both these truths fully held, without sacrificing one to the other. If we do not rest on the one offering of Christ in all its everlasting and uninterrupted efficacy, we cannot know the perfect clearance before God which the Epistle to the Hebrews claims for faith. If we do not bow to the doctrine of 1 John 2:1 in accordance with John 13, how can we taste the grace that restores us to the enjoyment of the communion interrupted by a sin? Our God would have us enter into our portion as worshippers once purged; but as our Father He loves us too well to allow anything in our walk unworthy of the grace wherein we stand. And here it is that the advocacy of the Savior applies, to the cleansing of defilement by the way, while He abides as our righteousness and the propitiation too in all its value.

Chapter 186

The Offerings of Leviticus: 17. Sin Offering for One of the People

Lev. 4:27-35

IT is full of interest to notice the care bestowed by Jehovah on the Sin offering for the ordinary Israelite. He marks the difference between him and a ruler or chief man, by demanding “a male without blemish” from the latter, “a female without blemish” from the former. They were to bring a kid of the goats; but there was this distinction; and Jehovah directed it. He provided in His goodness for both; but He did not leave it to man's discretion; He directed each how to efface the sin.

“And if one (a soul) of the people of the land sin through inadvertence in doing any things which Jehovah hath commanded not to be done, and be guilty; if his sin which he hath sinned come to his knowledge, then he shall bring his offering a goat, a female without blemish for his sin which he hath sinned. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and slaughter the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. And the priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put [it] on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar. And all the fat thereof shall he take away, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet odor to Jehovah; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him” (vers. 27-31).

Jehovah would have the lowliest soul among His people feel that He entered into his concern about his sin, done unwittingly, and now troubling him when known. He therefore would impress it on his soul when he brought the unblemished female goat, by the stress even then laid on “for his sin which he sinned.” For the gracious effect of the offering is felt all the more if the sin be also. To the ruler it was but “the goat,” and “it” in ver. 24 though with “it is a sin offering” at the end. Here (ver. 29) it is “he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and slaughter the sin offering.” Yet more striking is the consolation given to the poor Israelite in ver. 31; where he alone is expressly assured, that the fat burnt by the priest on the altar should be “for a sweet odor to Jehovah.” “Before Jehovah” was said in the ruler's instance about slaying the offering, as it was yet more emphatically where the whole assembly sinned, and about the use made of the blood. But He deigned to consider the lowly man by the special expression of the mark of communion in the burning of the fat for him when the offering for his sin was made.

Nor is this all. For the poor man alone was there an alternative offering. He might have a difficulty in providing a goat, and yet might find a sheep or lamb more readily. Hence for him alone this was permissible.

“And if he bring a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and slaughter it for a sin offering in the place where they slaughter the burnt offering. “And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the blood thereof shall he pour out at the bottom of the altar. And all the fat thereof shall he take away, as

the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them on the altar with (or, upon) the fire offerings to Jehovah; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin which he sinned, and it shall be forgiven him" (vers. 32-35).

Here again we should not overlook the kindness of Jehovah in giving consolation. The blood of the lamb was no less efficacious as a figure than that of a goat. There was no loss incurred by the alternative. But in the dealing with the fat there is indeed the peculiar mention of burning on the altar "upon the fire offerings to Jehovah," as in chap. iii. 5; although there it was a question of Peace offerings, here of an offering for sin. Gracious acceptance was implied, and not merely the removal of the sin or its forgiveness.

Chapter 187

The Offerings of Leviticus: 18. Sin (Trespass) Offering

Lev. 5:1-13

This section, it may be observed, is a sort of appendix to chap. iv., and of transition to the proper Trespass offering which begins in chap. v. 14. For this reason, while it falls under the same revelation from Jehovah to Moses as the chapter before, it is called both a Trespass offering and a Sin offering in ver. 6. Four distinctions in the circumstances calling for the offering are laid down in the four opening verses. They were defilements incurred by special inadvertent offenses against ordinances of Jehovah; as in chap. iv. provision was made for inadvertent sins in general which simply violated the conscience.

"'And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of an oath, and he is a witness whether he hath seen or known, if he do not inform, then he shall hear his iniquity. Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and it be hid from him, he also is unclean and guilty. Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, any uncleanness of him by which he is defiled, and it be hid from him, when he knoweth, then he shall be guilty. Or if a soul swear rashly with his lips, to do evil or to do good, in everything that a man shall say rashly with an oath, and it be hid from him, when he knoweth, then shall he be guilty in one of these. And it shall be when he shall be guilty in one of these, that he shall confess wherein he hath sinned; and he shall bring his trespass to Jehovah for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin" (vers. 1-6).

Adjuration was all the more solemn for an Israelite, as Jehovah dwelt in their midst to judge. It was not secret providence, or waiting for a final assize. He was there to deal according to His law and their relationship as His people. Even in a day of utter ruin and in proceedings which mocked all righteousness, we hear our Lord, silent before man's profound hypocrisy and false witness, at once answer the wicked high priest when adjuring Him, though He knew it would seal His condemnation unto death. Did one shrink and keep back or prevaricate, one must bear one's iniquity if left there. Then came cases of defilement from contact with death, either unclean beasts or cattle, or crawling things, or again from uncleanness of man, whatsoever its form. Lastly, there might be defilement from a hasty vow unperformed, it mattered not what its shape, "to do evil or to do good," which on reflection one shirked, dreading to do or not to do. Think of Jephthah's vow!

What then was he that feared God in such circumstances to feel, when it comes before his soul? Was he not guilty? If in any of these cases he was defiled, he was called on to "confess wherein he hath sinned," not after a vague general sort. It is the first time we hear of it. Was it not due to carelessness before Jehovah? But more; nothing but sacrifice could remove the stain. "And he shall bring his trespass offering to Jehovah for his sin which he hath sinned." What more specific for the clearing his guilt away? Here, as in the Sin offering for one of the people, a female sufficed, lamb or goat, and was called an offering for trespass and sin; and the priest should make atonement for him to clear him from his sin.

The tender consideration of the poor (to us the young or feeble in faith) is marked in the alternative that is next given.

"' And if his hand be not able to bring a lamb, then he shall bring to Jehovah for his trespass which he hath sinned two turtle doves or two young pigeons; one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering. And he shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer that which is for the sin offering first, and pinch off its head at the neck, but shall not divide it asunder; and he shall sprinkle of the blood of the sin offering on the wall of the altar; and the rest of the blood shall be wrung out at the bottom of the altar. And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the ordinance. And the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin which he hath sinned; and it shall be forgiven him" (vers. 7-10).

Jehovah was even more minute in His concern for him who could not bring a sheep or goat. The victim's blood was sprinkled unusually, or at least there is a fuller expression given to it. The offering of less pecuniary value He prized for the conscientious soul, and gave a witness of acceptance as well as of the sin judged and gone. The same principle is yet more conspicuous in a third case. "But if his hand cannot attain to two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then he that hath sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil on it, nor shall he put frankincense thereon, for it is a sin offering. "And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it, the memorial thereof and burn it on the altar with Jehovah's fire offering: it is a sin offering. "And the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin which he hath sinned in one of them, and it shall be forgiven him; and it shall be the priest's as the oblation" (vers. 11-13). Here we have the most abject need of all: even pigeons are beyond the means. But grace has its resource for the least condition of faith. His pity was shown, not in dispensing with an offering, but in suiting the need. Though no part of this form of the offering could have the character of Burnt offering like the second bird, Jehovah would accept an offering of fine flour. But unlike the oblation proper, neither oil nor frankincense must be there. It was for sin. The quantity was just that of the manna for a day's food. Of this the priest took his handful to burn according to the Fire offerings to Jehovah, though for one ceremonially unclean; and as this was valid to atone, so the rest became the priest's as in the ordinary oblation of meal. Truly God was good to Israel, even to such as owned their uncleanness in the humblest way He prescribed. Here again, as has been already noticed elsewhere, the lowest form of an offering passes from its proper distinctness into assimilation with others: in the second alternative, with the Burnt offering; in the third with the Meal offering. The stronger the faith, the less can one relish vague apprehension of Christ's work: one seeks, cherishes, and enjoys God's side as well as our own in the fullness of divine revelation. The weaker it is, the more one is disposed to be content with a view so misty that the wondrous and instructive differences in its manifold relations vanish in a comprehensive but hazy sense of efficacy. The value of Christ is the same to God, whatever shape the offering might take in God's condescension. The absence of blood-shedding in the last instance is just the exception which proves the rule. Jehovah testifies His consideration for such poverty as could bring no animal to die, where there was real concern about the trespass and an offering to Him in acknowledgment of it,

Chapter 188

The Offerings of Leviticus: 19. Trespass Offering

Lev. 5:14-19

A fresh intimation from Jehovah introduces the proper Trespass offering. “” And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, “If any one commit a perfidy, and sin inadvertently in the holy things of Jehovah, then he shall bring his trespass offering to Jehovah, a ram without blemish out of the flock, according to thine estimation by shekels of silver after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering. “And he shall make restitution for what he hath done amiss in [lit. from] the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering; and it shall be forgiven him” (vers. 14-16).

We may discern another shade of evil met in the Trespass offering as compared with the more general and public one for sin. The word for the latter is chata which literally signifies departure from right; whereas asham, which is translated trespass expresses guilt. It was an act of treachery (maal) in the holy things of Jehovah, though supposed to be done not presumptuously but through inadvertence. Still, though not a moral wrong before the eyes of others, it was a secret perfidy against Him with Whom they stood in holy relationship, and guilt was contracted thereby. Hence for one who had failed thus in his responsibility a ram without blemish was required in every case. Compare also Lev. 19:20-22, where the offense, though morally wrong also, is viewed as guilt against Jehovah, and the ram of atonement was required as in Num. 5:5-10, whereas in Num. 6, as a modified case, a lamb was offered. We shall see appended to this first instance an added provision in vers. 17-19; but there is no difference allowed in the victim Jehovah required. A new ordinance follows which in the English is so strangely relegated to chap. 6, but in the Hebrew text continues the fifth chapter as vers. 20-26, and treats of a trespass done to a neighbor, a failure in responsibility which Jehovah counted an act of treachery against Himself; but there also an unblemished ram must be brought by the guilty soul. We may and surely ought to inquire why this animal and no other was suitable to meet the occasion.

Now, in setting apart Aaron and his sons to Jehovah for their priestly place and functions, we know that a ram of consecration had its distinctive importance. There were indeed two rams, one of which was for an olah or Burnt offering, that followed the bullock slaughtered for a Sin offering. But the special feature of that rite was the second ram, the ram of consecration, the blood of which was not only sprinkled like that of the first ram on the altar round about, but, before that, Moses was directed to put of it, first on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot, and then on those of his sons also.

The ram accordingly was the fitting animal to offer for the inverse question of desecration; and such was just the aspect of evil which was met in the Trespass offering. It was not simple wrong for which the Sin offering was provided, but treachery in relation to Jehovah. And this is confirmed (ver. 15) by Moses' “estimation in silver by shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary.” For as gold typifies divine righteousness in God's presence, silver figures His grace rather, as we may see in the atonement money for the children of Israel, and indeed wherever it appears.

There was another element distinctive of the Trespass or Guilt offering. “He shall make restitution for what he hath done amiss in the holy thing.” More than this; as Jehovah commanded the tithe of the Israelite's increase as blessed of Him, so He demanded as the fine of the Trespass offering the fifth part, or a double tithe. All this was to go to the priest; which again keeps up the relative character already seen. “And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering; and it shall be forgiven him.”

The appendix which follows adds words even more precise as to ignorance and worthy of all attention.

“And if any one sin or do against any of all the commandments of Jehovah what should not be done, and hath not known, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock according to thine estimation for a trespass offering unto the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his inadvertence wherein he sinned inadvertently, and knew it not; and it shall be forgiven him. It is a trespass offering: he is certainly guilty before Jehovah” (vers. 17-19).

Here while inadvertence is stated plainly, the case goes beyond this. But though the ram was the normal victim required for this character of evil, the demand was modified where the ritual failure differed. Thus for the leper's cleansing (Lev. 14) a lamb was to be offered as a Trespass offering, and the priest put its blood on the person of him that was being cleansed, as Moses did on Aaron and his sons on the day of their consecration, where the oil followed the blood (vers. 12-18). Then came the Sin offering (ver. 19), and after it the Burnt offering. Thus the distinction of Trespass and Sin is made clear, whatever be the “great controversy” as to the difference among theologians, and the uncertainty of their sound to this day. And it is intelligible why in the consecration of the priests the Sin offering (whether bullock or calf) was brought, but no Trespass offering, any more than on Atonement Day, the tenth of the seventh month.

We may see too, in the visions of God vouchsafed to Ezekiel of the coming kingdom on the earth, there is provision for the Burnt offering, the Sin offering, the Trespass offering, and the sacrifice of the Oblation (40:38, 42; 42:13; 44:29). The Epistle to the Hebrews is in no way at issue; for it treats of the abolition of these shadows for the Christian only. Vain self-sufficiency denies the future hopes of Israel in Jehovah's mercy, and, counting itself the sole object of grace, seeks the exaltation proper to Israel, and loses its own special privileges of suffering with Christ while awaiting glory on high.

It is distinctly laid down that, though the person in question “hath not known, yet is he guilty.” Jehovah would exercise His people in the sense of what was due to His relationship and their privilege who had the sign of His presence in their midst. He would have them read or hear His word with serious spirit and submissive heart. It was no matter of conscience, or of open immorality, such as the Sin offering was prescribed for; but perfidy in respect of those commandments of Jehovah in their favored position toward Him.

Hence the necessity of diligent heed to His statutes and judgments. Ignorance was no tenable excuse. They were Israelites, and Jehovah had imposed commandments with which they were responsible to comply. If any one did not know, yet was he guilty. Indifference to His requirements must have been the antecedent state; and what is this in His eyes? What did it detect in the

Israelite? Was Jehovah to be blind, because he failed to know what was plainly written in His law, though not in the ten words? He was guilty, and must bear his iniquity (avon). Therefore was be to bring an unblemished ram from the sheep according to Moses' estimation for a Trespass offering unto the priest. Neither inadvertence nor ignorance availed to screen his guilt or do away with the offering indispensable for it. But it should be forgiven him that thus offered. Even with greater energy is the language here, “It is a trespass offering: trespassing he trespassed before Jehovah.” Man otherwise might have readily excused it.

Chapter 189

The Offerings of Leviticus: 20. Trespass Offering

Lev. 5:20-26 (6:1-7)

There is another form of the Guilt offering, which meets treachery against a neighbor, or falsehood as to something lost. This Jehovah counted against Himself indirectly, as the former case affected Him directly. Ignorance is not supposed in question with a neighbor, but it might easily be alas! in the things forbidden to be done by the commandments of Jehovah. It is obvious that these seven verses, though a fresh precept which Jehovah spoke to Moses, are the proper conclusion of chapter 5 as in the Hebrew Bible. They ought not to be the opening section of chapter v as in the English Bible. Why the Revised V. did not rectify the mistake seems strange; but it shows how hampered they were by prejudice or restriction. For it severs the true complementary link with chapter:14-19, and interferes with the due order for “the laws of the offerings” which begin with what is thus made verse 8 of chapter 6.

“And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, If anyone sin, and commit a perfidy against Jehovah, and lie to his neighbor as to a matter of trust, or a loan, or a robbery, or a cheat to his neighbor; or have found what was lost and lieth therein, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein, then it shall be, if he hath sinned and hath trespassed that he shall restore what he robbed, or what he defrauded, or the trust entrusted to him, or the lost thing which he found, “or all about which he swore falsely; and he shall restore it in the principal and shall add the fifth part more thereto; to whom it belongeth shall he give it on the day of his trespass-offering. And his trespass offering he shall bring to Jehovah, a ram without blemish out of the flock according to thy valuation as a trespass offering unto the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him before Jehovah, and it shall be forgiven him concerning anything of all he did to trespass therein” (vers. 20-26).

What grace on Jehovah's part thus to regard wrongs against a neighbor as wrongs against Himself also, and to require a reparation and a like Trespass offering! Yet was it due to His glory and needed by man that a distinct ordinance should draw the line between them. The trespass against a neighbor brought out a new speech from Jehovah to Moses, instead of being a simple appendage as verses 17-19 were to verses 14-16, an appendage which refused to allow the excuse of ignorance in the holy things of Jehovah.

Yet there is, as might be expected, no small variety in these wrongs which demanded a Trespass offering. The first form of the guilt here denounced appears to be a failure in private trust. It might be any valuable or document of use, committed to the custody of a friend; it might be only an animal, or a book lent, an ax borrowed, or money confided however little. But Jehovah took notice and bound up the trustful Israelite's rights with His own name. The next would seem to be a matter public, of barter, or of virtual partnership perhaps in business, where the evil done was not viewed as a wrong but as a failure in responsibility, however fair in appearance. Here our version like the Septuagint renders it “in fellowship,” as distinct from the preceding case of private trust. The Vulgate translates loosely and confounds the two. The better Jewish authorities distinguish the

second as a loan, from the former as a deposit. Then we have a violent exercise of power, followed by one of deceit as in withholding wages, &c.: both apt to be common and covering many a failure which Jehovah resented. Next, we have the finding of what one's neighbor lost, and falsehood about it, even to perjury.

In every such case Jehovah demanded a Trespass offering as rigorously as in His holy things. Not only must there be restitution of the principal, but a double tithe, or fifth part, rendered as a penalty. And as His own honor was concerned, in the failure to maintain the holy relationship of Israel, an unblemished ram was prescribed as the one unvarying Trespass offering permissible. By this, and this only, the priest should make atonement for the guilty offerer, “and it shall be forgiven him,” with the striking addition here only “for any one of all which he did to trespass therein.”

But it is well to take note of the difference in the order prescribed between the guilt in Jehovah's holy things (14-19) and that incurred in the cases of one's neighbor (20-26), with which we are immediately concerned. In the former the offering took the first place; in the latter the reparation. Both were required. Jehovah regarded either as His dishonor: and the ram was equally necessary as the reparation with the added fifth part. But the difference of order was made to impress the Israelite's heart with what touched Jehovah directly as compared with what was indirect in defrauding the neighbor. Who but God could have provided thus holily for His people in distinctions so nice and profitable? Neither Moses nor Aaron, nor Samuel nor David, still less men later in a dark, fallen, and comparatively careless state. It was Jehovah from the beginning.

It was not yet nor could be under the law to proclaim remission of sins absolutely and forever to every believer. This awaited the Lord Jesus and His accomplished work of redemption in the gospel. For “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from every sin.” But it was no niggardly comfort the righteous Jehovah even then and thus gave the penitent Israelite, conscious of having sinned shamefully, and of desecrating the holy standing of His people.

Chapter 190

The Offerings of Leviticus: 21. The Law of the Burnt Offering

Lev. 6:1-6 (Or, 8-13)

WE followed the Hebrew text in taking the first section of the sixth chapter (vers. 1-7) as the end of chap. v. to which it unquestionably belongs; so that chap. vi. begins with the new subject, the laws of the offerings, and chap. vii. concludes it.

These laws add supplementary particulars of distinct moment, which bring into relief the characteristics of each, especially marking where communion was permissible and enjoined. The first, or Burnt Offering, was the exception, though even there the skin of the victim was the priest's perquisite. The portion of man, where and as far as it was allowed, is noticed carefully.

“And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This [is] the law of the burnt offering: this, the burnt offering, [shall be] on the hearth upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen raiment, and his linen breeches shall he put on his flesh, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire hath consumed the burnt offering upon the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place. And the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not go out; and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. Fire continual shall be kept burning upon the altar; it shall not go out” (vers. 1-6).

Spoken to Moses, this was a command for the priestly house. All that composed it were concerned; and they, as we are taught, point to Christ and His own, as Son over His house whose house are we (Heb. 3:6). The law of the Burnt Offering is here set out clearly. It was to be on the hearth upon the altar all night unto the morning; whereas save for this it might have been thought that it was but for the day, that the offerer might rejoice in seeing that which was for his acceptance. Here on the contrary stress was laid on its burning “all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it.”

Here as elsewhere we discern the bearing of these types, save in an exceptional reference. It is for the comfort of faith now in the day of temptation in the wilderness. The morning without clouds has not yet dawned. It is the night still for Christ rejected of men, though the night is advanced, and the day has drawn nigh. But all through the darkness rises up uninterruptedly the witness of our acceptance. Propitiation is made for every one associated by faith with the Burnt Offering. Man may slumber, the world be wrapt in darkness; but the offerer had the satisfaction of knowing that the fire that was kept ever burning upon the altar consumed that which was on his behalf a Fire Offering, an odor of rest to Jehovah.

What is here so carefully enjoined can scarcely be said to appear in chap. 1, which enters fully into the general instruction as to the Burnt Offering, and its several kinds, the immaculate purity requisite for each, the presentation of the victim, with the priest's sprinkling of the blood, cutting it

in pieces, and washing as specified, here passed over, save the fact of laying all on the wood upon the fire of the altar. Here, not there, is the stress laid on the continual burning all the night through till the morning. While Israel slumber during the dark, the sweet savor rises in unfailing efficacy for him that offered: even Israel are kept, however impenitent yet, for the blessing that will surely come, when they say, Blessed He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.

Then in vers. 3, 4 we read of the careful clothing of the offering priest with the linen garments that spoke of spotless righteousness. These were what the high priest wore when he entered into the holy of holies on atonement day; and these the priest must put on even when he should take up the ashes of the Burnt Offering that the fire had burnt upon the altar to put them beside it. But of these he divested himself for other garments to take away the ashes at last to a clean place outside the camp.

Lastly in vers. 5, 6 the burning of the fire on the altar is again emphatically mentioned. Not only was the priest to burn wood on the fire of the altar every morning and to set in order then the Burnt Offering, but thereon also was he to burn the fat of the Peace or Prosperity Sacrifices. And the law concludes with the fire to burn continually upon the altar; never was it to be extinguished. Is it possible that any shadow could more forcibly point to acceptance maintained with unchanging savor of rest before Jehovah?

It appears to me not to be the truth intended by the type, that the ever burning fire during the night pointed to the smoke of the torment of the lost ascending forever and ever. Rather did it testify the wondrous meeting-place with God for a sinful man who brought the Burnt Offering. But the unbeliever either foregoes the Burnt Offering, or treads under foot the Son of God, and profanes His blood as a common thing. So the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks, not of God abstractly but of “our God” as a consuming fire. It was a sacrifice wholly burnt for acceptance. It shadowed Christ giving Himself up absolutely to God in death for us; and nothing but a sweet savor rising up, however tested to the uttermost. Therein was God glorified as to sin in Him Who knew no sin; and the issue for the believer is an efficacy perfect and everlasting.

So will it be for Israel at the end for the age to come, when they wake up from their long sleep in the dust of the earth. They will behold, as it were in the morning, the Burnt Offering despised during the dark night. They will penitently acknowledge their shameless unbelief, when they considered the Messiah as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; whereas they will thankfully own that He was pierced because of their transgressions, bruised because of their iniquities-that the punishment for peace to them lay upon Him, and through His stripes came healing to them. The fire ever burning on the altar is in contrast with the smoke either of Babylon or of the Beast's worshippers (Rev. 14:11, 18:8-10, 19:4). It is Christ the holocaust to God for all believers.

Chapter 191

The Offerings of Leviticus: 22. Law of the Meal Offering

Lev. 6:7-11 (Or, 14-18)

Under this law comes to light the great prominence given to the eating of the Minchah, or Meal Offering, by Aaron and his sons. This is one of its most marked characteristics. All the males among the children of Aaron were to eat of it. Here too is one of its strongest points of contrast with the Olah or Burnt Offering, whereof no part was eaten but all rose up to God. However requisite and important the Minchah, it only accompanied the Burnt Offering; and so here it is not a fresh or separate word from Jehovah but a sequel as in chaps. i. “And this is the law of the meal offering; the sons of Aaron shall present it before Jehovah, before the altar. And he shall take of it his handful of the fine flour of the meal offering and of the oil thereof, and all the frankincense which is on the meal offering, and shall burn [it] on the altar: a sweet odor of the memorial thereof to Jehovah. And the remainder thereof Aaron and his sons shall eat: unleavened shall it be eaten in a holy place; in the court of the tent of meeting shall they eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven. As their portion I have given it of my fire offerings: it is most holy, as the sin offering and as the trespass offering. All the males among the children of Aaron shall eat of it: an everlasting statute in your generations, from Jehovah's fire offerings; what [or, who] ever toucheth these shall be holy” (vers. 7-11).

Varieties of form such as came before us in chap. 2 are wholly omitted now. From the law here given we could not gather anything as to this, but the one great general truth: the shadow of Christ, not giving Himself up in atoning death to Jehovah without blemish and unreservedly, but in the perfectness of His life on earth, all pure and in the Spirit's power, the fire only bringing out His matchless fragrance, the one like the other a fire offering to Jehovah for an odor of rest. Yet even the early chapter gives us the marked difference from the Burnt Offering. For the Meal Offering had only the priest's handful of its flour and oil with all the frankincense taken out and burnt as its memorial on the altar: the rest went to Aaron and his sons.

But the law opens with “the sons of Aaron” offering it “before Jehovah before his altar.” One might be the offering priest, to leave the memorial (ver. 8); but they were all concerned. It was priestly food, not properly man's, whatever might be true of the corn and the oil generally. This was the Minchah or Meal Offering to Jehovah, following the Burnt Offering, and not otherwise. For the offerer in either case was an Israelite, a sinful man, though the offering was not in view of his sin or guilt like their appropriate offerings, but of the divine provision for his acceptance in drawing near. None but One could answer to this absolute fitness for being offered before Jehovah, before His altar. Every other needed first an offering for sin. Death in the Burnt Offering was rather and fully the glorifying of God in the suffering Son of man, Himself morally glorified therein as God was. The fire of God drew out nothing, again, from all His activity here below, from the smallest no less than the greatest, but perfect fragrance before God. Only He could estimate it aright; so that “all the frankincense” with a sample of all the rest was burnt to God.

But here stress is laid on what remained: “and the remainder thereof Aaron and his sons shall eat,” not Aaron's sons only, but Aaron with them (ver. 9). It is the entire priestly house, Christ and His own, whose house are we, those who now partake of a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1-6: cf. Heb. 2:11-13). The manna figures the Lord given from heaven for Israel's food: and in John 6 the Lord declares Himself the bread of life for every one who beholds the Son and believes on Him, the Living Bread that came down from heaven, so fully and freely that if any man (not the Jew only) eat of this bread, he shall live forever. It is for the sinner that believing on Christ he may have life eternal. But by grace through the same faith we become also a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2) and, so brought nigh to God, we eat in a general way what pertains to the family (as the daughters did equally with the sons), the offering of the holy things, the first-fruits of a goodly land, etc.

Besides that holy fare, there was the more restricted privilege as here, of which the males alone partook. These types find their counterpart now in those that are Christ's, where feeding on Christ pertains to the sanctuary, and appropriation their right according to the believer's realization of his nearness to God. The more we make our own the place in His presence by the work of Christ, the more also we enjoy Him as the food of our souls, not now merely as indispensable to having life, but in the way of communion and appreciation in the Spirit of all the perfection that God found in Him when thoroughly tried in His path here below. Hence it is that the Gospels afford to the spiritual mind such especial delight and divine joy in that which they furnish of Christ here below; whereas those who do not enter into their present nearness to God by His atoning work turn rather for comfort to the Epistles, especially such as those to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, besides the first of Peter. This is well and of God; but as priests we are entitled to far more of Christ.

It will be observed that the right sense of what follows in ver. 9 is not “with unleavened bread,” but itself unleavened was to be eaten, and this not in “the holy place” but a holy place, rather in the court than in the house appropriated exclusively in its use to Jehovah, as indeed the last clause specifies expressly.

In ver. 10 the exclusion of all corruption is carefully repeated, as we know it was in the original institution of Lev. 2 So of Christ the written word declares that not only in Him was no sin, but that He knew none. What a contrast with every other man! Yet did He become very near, and knew manhood incomparably better than the first man (when created, made of full growth, instead of “come of woman” like the Second): a babe, a youth, a man, tested as none ever was, least of all Adam before he fell. Yet as become flesh, and put to the proof beyond all in a world of evil He is the Holy One of God, as demons cried out; and as the Father's voice said, This is My Beloved Son in Whom I found My delight. If the Burnt Offering witnessed the perfectness of His work in death, the Meal Offering shows us the no less perfectness of what He Himself was here below under all conceivable trials. What a privilege to feed on Him thus given of God as our portion of His fire-offerings! Assuredly it is “most holy,” as the Sin Offering and the Trespass Offering, where absolute freedom from taint must be: else how could there be atonement before God? How forgiveness for the offender? It could be in none but Christ, Whom unbelief would fain lower to level up wretched self and dishonor God, making His glory as impossible as man's deliverance through the wreck of Christ's person and work.

The last verse (11) reiterates solemnly the exceeding privilege Jehovah secures forever to “all the males of Aaron's children” in partaking of the Meal Offering (in communion with Himself of Christ). As man He was the delight of God on the earth, only appreciated by those free of His presence; for even converted Israel will own, as their exceeding sin, that in seeing Him of old there was no appearance in Him to give them pleasure. He was despised and forsaken of men; not because of a single flaw in Him Who was wholly perfect, but because man alike was blind and evil, yea, God's enemy. But Christ being what He was and suffering atoningly as He did, all is changed now for the believer. “Whatever [or, whoever] toucheth these [Jehovah's fire-offerings] shall be holy.” Not only was the Meal Offering “most holy,” but all that came in contact with it was separated from common use to Jehovah.

Chapter 192

The Offerings of Leviticus: 23. Law of the Meal Offering of Aaron and His Sons

Lev. 6:12-16 (Or 19-23)

There is a new divine communication for the next law. It was indeed a special case, peculiar to Aaron and his sons, and limited to the day of his anointing. The general word of the Meal Offering on the contrary fell under that of the Burnt Offering, of which it was the regular supplement. Hence, as it had no separate application, it had no separate law here any more than in the institution of Lev. 1; 2 First and last they were bound together. So should we honor the Lord Jesus in our faith: not only His devotedness in giving Himself up to death sacrificially, but in all the holy and obedient activities of His life. In Him the Father found His delight; and so His voice declared. But is it not full of instruction, that in revealing those divine pictures the Burnt Offering stands first, not the Meal Offering? This simply and always follows as an adjunct, whatever might be the reversed order in the sequence of Christ and His work. How differently they speak who dwell on the Incarnation to disparage the Atonement? God sets aside what we might deem the order of nature, even in Christ Himself and His work.

“"'And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, “This [is] the offering of Aaron and his sons, which they shall present to Jehovah on the day when he is anointed: the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour, as a continual meal offering, half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening. “In a pan with oil it shall be made; saturated thou shalt bring it in; baken pieces of the meal offering shalt thou present, a sweet odor unto Jehovah. “And the anointed priest that shall be in his stead from his sons, shall make [or, offer] it: an everlasting statute, it shall be wholly burnt unto Jehovah. “And every meal offering of the priest shall be wholly burnt; it shall not be eaten” (vers. 12-16).

In the Meal Offering ordinarily, where an Israelite made his oblation to Jehovah, after his portion was taken by the offering priest and burnt on the altar, the remainder was for Aaron and his sons. It was Christ an offering to God throughout all His days here below, wholly separated to God's will and glory. None but those who draw near to God, the priestly class, could appreciate Christ thus; not the Israelite simply as such, but those only who were free of the sanctuary, It was theirs to feed on Christ thus living on account of the Father. So in the First Epistle of John the fathers in the Christian family, as distinguished from the young men and the babes (the παιδια, not the τεκνα who embrace all the three): they are described as knowing Him that was from the beginning, that is to say, Christ as He was here below declaring God and manifesting the Father.

All disciples believed that He was the Christ and were born of God (1 John 5:1); only the fathers knew Him that was from the beginning; only they found their delight and their food in His person as He walked on earth perfect God and man in one Person, solving all questions as they arose day by day, as only God could manifested in flesh and by ways no less than words. It is not meant that any, even of the twelve, could be thus characterized while He was here. Not even they then were “fathers.” It was when the Holy Spirit was given that such a class began to be; and thank God, it

was not confined to apostles or prophets, to evangelists or pastors and teachers, who might or might not be fathers. It in no wise depended on such gifts, but a Spirit-taught entrance into Christ as here manifested, and as He is presented in the Gospels. Fathers have communion with Him there and then. How comparatively few such appear to have ever been! Biographies and autobiographies, writings and letters, even of the most valued servants of the Lord, abundantly prove it, as does living experience.

But the essential difference of the Meal Offering before us is that it was wholly burnt to Jehovah. Of the tenth part of the ephah, or the omer here prescribed, the same measure as of the manna for an Israelite (Ex. 16), no part was reserved for priestly food. For a Meal Offering perpetual it was to be half in the morning and half in the evening; but not a morsel was to be eaten: the whole must be burnt on the altar. The reason is plain. It was for the priests, and therefore wholly went up to Jehovah. What an Israelite offered for himself, they were privileged to eat, all the males in a holy place; but their offering on the day of anointing was all for Jehovah, like the Burnt Offering. It was no question of fellowship with others, but of Christ wholly offered up as a sweet savor to Jehovah on their own behalf.

Chapter 193

The Offerings of Leviticus: 24. Law of the Sin Offering

Lev. 6:17-23 (Or, 24-30)

The right division of chapters fails here again. As verses 1-7 of the A.V. (assigned to chap. 6) ought to belong to chap. 5, so verses 24-30 ought not to be severed from chap. 7:1-21, of which it forms the proper beginning. They all were expressly parts of one communication from Jehovah.

“And Jehovah spake to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, This [is] the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, the sin offering shall be slaughtered before Jehovah: it [is] most holy. The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it; it shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting. Whatsoever toucheth the flesh thereof shall be holy; and if there be sprinkled of the blood thereof on a garment, that whereon it was sprinkled thou shalt wash in a holy place. But the earthen vessel wherein it was sodden shall be broken; and if it was sodden in a copper vessel it shall be both scoured and rinsed in water. Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: it [is] most holy. And no sin offering whereof blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy [place] shall be eaten: it shall be burnt with fire” (vers. 17-23; or, 24-30).

No slight even in appearance could be tolerated in the Sin Offering. Undoubtedly it had a character as remote as possible from the Burnt Offering, as this was to impart acceptance, that was to get sacrificial quittance from positive sin. But the Sin Offering must be slaughtered before Jehovah in the place where the Burnt Offering was slaughtered. So indeed Christ alone was the adequate fulfillment of both in His death on the cross. Yet He was the last One in the universe to be thought of: grace alone gave Him, one with the Father and His dearest object throughout eternity. On earth too He became flesh. He was the Holy One of God. Yet never was holiness so proved and manifested as when God made sin for us Him Who knew no sin. Always absolutely separate to God from all evils and doing nothing but the things which pleased His Father, on the cross He gave Himself up without reserve to God and His glory, to suffer the judgment of sin, cost what it might; and it cost Him everything, even what was the extremest horror to Him Who, being His beloved Son, became His righteous Servant, the True and faithful Witness. What was it for Him, abandoned by disciples, rejected by Israel, crucified by Gentiles, to cry, “My God, my God, why forsakedst thou me?” He was made sin for us. This He has left us who believe to confess as the answer. No wonder that even of the type the descriptive word is “most holy” (vers. 18,22 or, 25, 29).

“The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it.” Singled out thus the offering points to none other than Christ; and here in His eating the Sin Offering is meant, not of course His work in suffering for sin, but His identification with him for whom the offering was presented. If holiness was conspicuous in the victim and righteousness in the judgment executed, what grace was in Christ thus making the offerer's sin His own? So we know in His advocacy with the Father “if any one sin” (1 John 2:1). His atoning death was not all. It is as alive again for evermore that the offering priest's eating the Sin Offering is realized in Christ; as here it was directed to be eaten in a holy place, in the court of

the tent of meeting (26 A.V.).

The sanctifying power of this offering was strikingly attested in vers. 27, 28. “Whatsoever toucheth the flesh thereof shall be holy; and if there be sprinkled of the blood thereof on a garment, that whereon it was sprinkled thou shalt wash in a holy place. But the earthen vessel whereon it was sodden shall be broken; and if it was sodden in a copper vessel, it shall be both scoured and rinsed in water.” It was for God on behalf of sinners. For no other, no common, purpose could it be. For vessels of earth or copper no trace must remain. To the offerer it brought forgiveness of the sin.

But ver. 29 lets us into a truth, larger far than ver. 26, though not to be compared for its depth. “Every male among the priests shall eat thereof.” This was not confined to the offering priest. All the priestly males were to eat of it. Those who have access to God are called to identify themselves with a brother's sin; as Christ does pre-eminently, so they too are to follow, strong in the grace that is in Him, confessing another's sin as their own. For if He loves them, did He not both wash them from their sins in His blood and make them a kingdom, priests to His God and Father? Here it will be observed that we have the repetition of “it is most holy.” Wise and opportune this is. For many a male among the priests might on the one hand forget to eat, as did even Eleazar and Ithamar (chap. 10:16-18); as others more profane still might grievously transgress in their eating like Eli's sons (1 Sam. 2:12-17), so that men abhorred the offering of Jehovah. Indeed “it is most holy,” and to be eaten only in a holy place.

Ver. 30 draws the line between these ordinary Sin Offerings, where the priests thus partook of them, and the more solemn cases wherein the victim was burnt in a clean place without the camp, the blood being carried into the sanctuary for propitiation. So it was, if either the anointed priest sinned, or the whole congregation, as in the earlier cases of Lev. 4. In neither did the priests eat; in both communion for all was interrupted and must be restored. And the contrast is yet more marked in the day of atonement, when the foundation was laid for all, priests and people, during the year. All fasted, none eat, on that day. There was another exception, characteristic of the wilderness and therefore only given in Num. 19, the institution of the bête noir of the Rationalists, which, perplexing them beyond most things, becomes the occasion for their rancorous abuse of God's word. For their principle of unbelieving, or as they say scientific, criticism blinds them, so that they can perceive neither its intrinsic truth nor its suited place. But there the Red Heifer stands, wholly burnt (save some of the blood previously sprinkled seven times before the tent of meeting) without the camp, and the ashes kept as a purification for sin. It has its own distinctive traits, full of instruction spiritually for us of heavenly calling as exposed to the defilement of the desert world through which we pass to the rest of God.

When therefore it was a question of propitiating blood brought into the sanctuary, there was no eating on the part of the priests. The victim was burnt without the camp. How brightly and on both its sides was this fulfilled in Christ, glorified within, crucified without! Our place is with Him in both respects. Where it was only the restoration of an individual, the priests were called to eat of the Sin Offering, as we now sympathize in loving intercession.

Chapter 194

The Offerings of Leviticus: 25. Law of the Trespass Offering

Lev. 7:1-7

There need be no surprise that the same word of Jehovah should include the law of the Trespass offering and that of the Sin offering, as they are closely allied. But it embraces other regulations more widely as we shall see.

“And this [is] the law of the trespass offering: it [is] most holy. In the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered shall the trespass offering be slaughtered; and the blood shall be sprinkled on the altar round about. And he shall offer of it all the fat thereof: the fat tail, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that [is] on them, which [is] by the flanks, and the net above the liver which he shall take as far as the kidneys. And the priest shall burn them on the altar, a fire offering to Jehovah: it [is] a trespass offering. Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: in a holy place shall it be eaten; it [is] most holy. As the sin offering, so is the trespass offering; one law [is] for them: it shall be the priest's that maketh atonement therewith” (vers. 1-7).

The notion was advocated by one who was once well-known to many, and his thoughts still more widely read, that the Sin offering was for sin in the flesh, and the Trespass offering for acts of evil. But this is wholly untenable. No such distinction was meant, nor could it be in O. T. times: it was Christ Who made that difference manifest. Moral evil generally as we have seen was contemplated in the one case; in the other, wrongs done to Jehovah in holy things or to a neighbor, yet against Him by violation of confidence; and reparation was due accordingly.

Here, in its law, the Trespass offering is pronounced “most holy.” Granted that the offering was to meet special delinquency whether against God or against man, not moral wrong simply, but failure in their relationship before Jehovah. The more imperative that the Trespass offering should be most holy: even if in human things, it was “against Jehovah,” and it demanded adequate satisfaction in both respects. It is found perfectly and alone in Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and it produces results even now manwards as well as Godwards. See Saul the persecutor become Paul the sufferer; see the proud abusive man a lowly servant of God and of man for Jesus’ sake. And never did the holiness of God so stand out and receive so immeasurable an evidence as when God made sin for us Him Who knew no sin, yea, a curse for those accursed; that those who believe on Him should be cleared forever.

Here therefore are given the details of the slaughter and the sprinkling, or dashing, of the blood on the altar round about. In the institution the ram was specified for the reason stated there, with the mediator's estimation by shekels of silver after the shekel of the sanctuary, and the amends made by adding the fifth part given to the priest, none of which things is now represented. The law dwells on what directly, minutely, and sacrificially concerned Jehovah: whether for sin or for trespass, “most holy” is the offering. If Jesus was the Holy One of God, nowhere was it so proved as when forsaken of God on the cross; nowhere was His glorifying God so manifestly and profoundly absolute. And therefore did God glorify Him in Himself, and this straightway. The Burnt offering

testified the perfect acceptance of His death; but where it was slain, were slain also the offerings for sin and trespass. And here again not in the original directions for the Trespass offerings, we have care taken to claim the offering of all the fat thereof, the fat tail, and the fat that covers the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat on them, being expressive not of the life given up, but of the inward energy that perfectly pleased God, and yielding only sweet savor when searched by His full judgment. For the priest, we are here told, was to burn this on the altar, a Fire offering to Jehovah, instead of carrying forth and burning the animal as a whole without the camp as we may see in the great cases or in priestly eating as ordinarily.

Another word is carefully laid down here, “Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: in a holy place shall it be eaten.” Nothing was said on this head in Lev. 5:14-19, or 6:1-7. So little do these added regulations lie open to any fair charge of useless repetition. Aaron's family alone could eat of these offerings for sin or for trespass. But every male was called to eat of them, but this in a holy place only. Here again it is designated “most holy;” yet was it apt to be forgotten as a rite and command of the Lord then, and still more its application spiritually now. For are not “holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,” the antitype of Aaron's sons? Are we not then privileged and responsible to eat not only the Meal offering, and our given portion of the Peace offering, but also of those for sin and trespass?

But just as Eleazar and Ithamar burnt the goat (Lev. 10), instead of eating it in a holy place, so may we fail to make the sins of a brother our own, bearing the sin and shame before God as if we ourselves had been guilty. To condemn him is easy and natural; to identify ourselves with him in confessing and mourning the failure is the clear privilege of the priestly family, at least of “every male” i.e. of every one strong in faith whether of one sex or another, for distinction of this fleshly kind cannot be in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3).

The Offerings of Leviticus: 26. Priest's Portion in General

The Priest's Portion in General. Lev. 7:8-10

Here are given supplementary rules about the priest's perquisite in the Burnt offering, and in the Meal offering. These Jehovah was pleased to add at this point, before entering on the law of the sacrifice of Peace offerings, where the offering priest had his prescribed part, while the high priest and his sons had theirs, and others too with unusual width, as we shall consider in its place.

“And the priest that offereth any man's Burnt offering, the priest shall have to himself the skin of the Burnt offering which he hath offered. And every Meal offering that is baken in the oven, and all that is prepared in the cauldron and in the pan, shall be the priest's that offereth it; to him it shall belong. And every Meal offering, mingled with oil and dry, shall all the sons of Aaron have, one as another” (vers. 8-10).

It is notorious that the commentators are here remarkably silent; or, if they speak, they bring in Jehovah Elohim clothing Adam and Eve with the coats of skins He made for them (Gen. 3:21). Some of them add Jacob personating Esau by the kid-skins Rebekah's craft put upon his hands and neck to deceive his dim-sighted father (Gen. 27). Such applications cannot stand; especially as it is here no question of providing for the offerer's nakedness or need, but of the offering priest, who as usual represents Christ in His official capacity, if we are consistent in reading the type as we surely ought to be.

In what sense then may we, according to the analogy of faith, regard Christ as the Priest receiving for Himself the skin of the Burnt offering which He had offered? It would not become one to speak boldly where the scripture of the N.T. leaves the matter simply to spiritual judgment; but it is suggested that the Priest has for Himself the memorial and the display of that which set forth beyond all other offerings His giving Himself for us to God unreservedly. To the holocaust therefore was this significant token here appended. There could be no eating in this case, as in the Meal offering and in the sacrifice of Peace offerings as well as in the common or lesser offerings for sin or trespass. And the skin of the Burnt offering seems only reserved for the priest on the occasion of “any man's burnt offering” i.e. in ordinary cases. But there is no hint of the priest clothing himself with it: he certainly was not naked. Yet his perquisite it was, the abiding token and remembrance to Him of His offering and sacrifice to God for an odor of sweet smell.

But the Meal offering denoted Christ in His life, not in His blood-shedding or death, yet tested no less by the supreme judgment of God in the fire that consumed and drew out nothing but a savor of rest. Here the offering priest was to have every such oblation that is baken in the oven, and all that is prepared in the cauldron (or, frying pan) and in the pan (or, flat plate). Christ in every way put to the proof here below answers to the type, not merely kept but eaten. There were trials of Christ which He only could enter into and appreciate. Even of the great temptation in the wilderness, none of the details is revealed to us. How well He knows them! And what, to take another example, did the sleeping apostles know of that in the garden of Gethsemane?

Yet we have the closing efforts of Satan, when the forty days were completed, revealed to us carefully in both Matt. 4 and Luke 4. Accordingly we learn in ver. 10 that, “every meal offering mingled with oil, and dry, shall all the sons of Aaron have one as the other.” Christ and His own enjoy thus together the offering of all His life here below as an oblation to Jehovah.

Chapter 196

The Offerings of Leviticus: 27. Law of the Peace Offerings

The Law of Peace Offerings. Lev. 7:11-21

THE institution in Lev. 3 took cognizance of the offerings, whether of the herd or the flock, the kine, the sheep, or the goat. Here we have other particulars of instructive moment, especially as to eating, the sign of communion.

“And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which [one] shall offer to Jehovah. If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, fine flour soaked. Besides the cakes, he shall offer his offering of leavened bread with the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving. And of it he shall offer one out of the whole offering as a heave offering to Jehovah; to the priest that sprinkleth the blood of the peace offerings it shall be. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering: he shall not leave any of it until the morning. And if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or voluntary, it shall be eaten on the day he offereth his sacrifice, and on the morrow the remainder of it shall be eaten; and the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire. And if [any] of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten on the third day, it shall not be accepted, nor shall it be reckoned to him that offered it; it shall be an unclean thing, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity. And the flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire. And as for the flesh, all that are clean shall eat the flesh; but the soul that eateth the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings that are for Jehovah, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples. And if a soul touch anything unclean, the uncleanness of man or unclean beast or any unclean abomination, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings that are for Jehovah, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples” (vers. 11-21).

First of all comes a distinction peculiar to these offerings. Some were simply for thanksgiving; others might be for a vow, marking special devotedness, or they might be voluntary, and so quite as powerfully representing love and delight without any direct occasion to elicit them. They had therefore a deeper character than where the offering was for thanksgiving. But this will come again before us later on.

Next we see that with the sacrifice one had to present also unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, fine flour soaked. It is in substance the Meal offering. Christ is before the heart, not only sacrificed for us (without which fellowship were impossible), but also in all the perfection of what He was here below, as the One absolutely agreeable to His Father, always doing the things which pleased Him. His death had a character and result which nothing else could furnish; but He Himself was the object of continual and perfect satisfaction to the One Who had never found it before in man on earth; and this, where the Holy Spirit had the fullest operation inwardly and outwardly, is just what such an accompaniment here presented to God. But we need to say the less now on the subject, as we

have had the type itself before us fully in Lev. 2.

Here however a very notable difference follows.

“Besides the cakes, he shall offer his offering of leavened bread with the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving” (ver. 13). It is the more striking, because every Israelite began the holy year with the Passover where leaven in every form was altogether prohibited; and this prohibition extended to the Meal offering in pointed terms, as the chapter devoted to it makes plain. But in the Peace offering for thanksgiving, as in the two loaves of the Feast of Weeks, leaven was not only allowed but prescribed. And the reason in each case was the same. Divine wisdom was providing for man and his fellowship. It was man believing and saintly. Still it took account of his nature. There was that in him which was not in Christ. In what represented Him leaven was not nor could be. But in what represented the saints and their fellowship there must be that which intimated the corruption of nature, if the account were to take the stamp of truth. Not that it was leaven at work: in both cases we hear of “leavened bread (or, cakes).” Still there the leaven was and there only. One out of the whole, or of each, offering was to be presented as a heave offering to Jehovah; and this fell to the blood-sprinkling priest as his portion. Christ has and loves to have His part in our thanksgiving, He without Whom we could have none.

Then we learn the superior power of a vow or voluntary offering, representing devotedness of heart in the offerer, over simple return of thanks for blessings received, however good and right. The flesh, in the latter case, must be eaten the same day as the sacrifice. The communion was then only acceptable and sound. But if it had devotedness or spontaneity, there was a power of sustainment that lasted. The flesh was to be eaten on that day, but “on the morrow also its remainder shall be eaten.” After that there must be no eating. “The remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.” Separation from the sacrifice beyond the second day could not be allowed. Fellowship in joy and peace is encouraged, especially where Christ draws and fills the heart in the power of His sacrifice; but the feast must not be too far severed from its source. To guard from such profanity, the remainder after the second day must be burnt with fire; to eat on the third day was intolerable,

Indeed, as the danger was great of abusing holy fellowship, we find in vers. 18-21 warnings of peculiar solemnity. The attempt to prolong the appearance of communion is perilous. Not only should it not be accepted nor reckoned to the offerer, “it shall be an unclean thing, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.” We read in 1 Cor. 11 an analogous dealing of the Lord where His supper was taken without discerning His body and with the lack of judging themselves. His hand lay heavily in chastening such grievous irreverence toward His body and blood. Yet it was not for “damnation” as the superstitious conceived, ignorant of His grace, but for temporal chastisement, in some cases up to death: all its measures were, that they should not be condemned, i.e. damned, with the world.

Holiness then is to temper, guard, and govern the joy of fellowship. “And the flesh that toucheth anything unclean shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire.” Undue familiarity is an offense in the expression of praise and blessing. What is it to sing to God that which we know is neither true nor becoming? How solemnly we are bound that it disappear!

Again, while every Israelite was eligible to be invited and share the feast, there was an inflexible condition: he must be clean. “And as for the flesh, all that are clean may eat the flesh. But the soul that eateth the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings which are for Jehovah, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples. And if a soul touch anything unclean the uncleanness of man or unclean beast or any unclean abomination, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings that are for Jehovah, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples.” If we are free by grace to enjoy the fellowship of Jehovah, and of Christ the Priest, of His priests as a whole and of the very simplest of His people, we are bound to refuse all irreverence and all iniquity. If we associate with that fellowship what is offensive to God's nature and will, we do so at our peril before Him Who will surely vindicate Himself and His word. To be a Christian, ever so truly, does not suffice, indispensable as it is. The apostle in 1 Cor. 11:27 does not speak of unworthy or unconverted communicants, but of eating and drinking the Lord's supper “unworthily.”

Chapter 197

The Offerings of Leviticus: 28. Prohibition of Fat and Blood

Lev. 7:22-27.

A fresh word comes next, specifically dealing with the fat and the blood. The Israelite is forbidden to eat of the blood absolutely, but of the fat in those parts of sacrifices devoted as a Fire offering to Jehovah, as it would seem.

“And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no fat of ox, or sheep, or goat. And the fat of a dead carcass, and the fat of that which is torn, may be used in any other service; but ye shall in no wise eat it. For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast of which men offer a Fire offering to Jehovah, the soul that eateth shall be cut off from his peoples. And ye shall eat no blood of fowl or beast, in any of your dwellings. Whatever soul [it be] that eateth any manner of blood shall be cut off from his peoples” (vers. 22-27).

This is evidently the appropriate place for inserting the prohibition before us. It follows the law of the Peace offerings, where the general rules of eating or not eating had been carefully laid down. In that sacrifice, as in the Sin offering, the utmost stress was laid on the fat, especially of the inwards, which Aaron's sons were to burn on the altar, the food of the Fire offering for a sweet odor to Jehovah. The fat represented the intrinsic excellence and energy of what was offered in sacrifice to Jehovah. It was therefore not for the priests to use, but an odor of rest to Him Who alone could fully estimate it in the Antitype.

On festive occasions, at any rate the Feast of Tabernacles, the people were taught that the day was holy to Jehovah their God, and that they were not to mourn or weep, as they did on hearing the words of the law. Joy has its privileges through His grace, as well as the sorrow that befits our shortcomings and yet deeper failures. The word therefore was, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; neither be ye grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength (or, stronghold). But the fat here allowed was not of course what was exclusively reserved for Him in the sacrificial portions. It was meet that He should have His proper delight in that which glorified Him in Christ; it was wondrous grace that we should have not merely pardon or justification but express fellowship in the same Christ, though we could not have it in the same measure or way. If God shares His joy with us in Christ's sacrifice, all the more those that are His should heed His call to reverence and godly fear.

Nor is this forgotten in the license where no sacrifice was in question. “And the fat of the dead carcass, and the fat of that which is torn, may be used in any other service; but ye shall in no wise eat it.” What died of itself or through another animal's violence, as a whole, had been forbidden already in Ex. 22:31, and was to be thrown to the dogs; much more was its fat unlawful to Israelites: they were holy to Jehovah. In any other way it might be used. “For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast of which men offer a fire offering to Jehovah, the soul that eateth shall be cut off from his peoples.”

But the blood was universally interdicted to the people who knew, as none others did of old, that life belongs to God. It mattered not what the animal might be, fowl or beast, all was forbidden absolutely. “And ye shall eat no blood, of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings: whatever soul [it be] that eateth any manner of blood shall be cut off from his peoples.” It denied the rights of God, the Creator; and if man forfeited his by sin, Jehovah maintained His title over it unimpaired. He instituted government by man in the first place to take cognizance of death by violent intent. Shed blood is its sign, and it belongs to God exclusively; man has no title to appropriate it. So we see that, long after the Holy Spirit was given, and Gentile freedom from circumcision was insisted on, eating of blood was still prohibited, as well as personal purity enjoined. The Christian is the last who should make light of a “faithful Creator.” The principles laid down for Noah are not Jewish statutes, and subsist: so the apostles decided in Acts 15.

Chapter 198

The Offerings of Leviticus: 29. Supplement on Peace Offerings

Supplement on Peace Offerings. Lev. 7:28-36

This is in no way, as has been said, a recapitulation. It conveys from Jehovah a fresh communication of moment for the entire body of the priesthood, and also for the priest ministering on each occasion of this offering. And the truth which we Christians are meant to learn thereby is of special interest.

“And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace offerings to Jehovah shall bring his oblation to Jehovah of the sacrifice of his peace offerings. His own hands shall bring Jehovah's fire offerings: the fat with the breast shall he bring, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before Jehovah. And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar; and the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons. And the right shoulder (or thigh) shall ye give to the priest for a heave offering out of the sacrifice of your peace offerings. He of the sons of Aaron that offereth the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right shoulder for a portion. For the breast of the wave offering and the shoulder of the heave offering have I taken of the children of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons from the children of Israel, as a due portion forever. This is the portion of the anointing of Aaron, and of the anointing of his sons, from Jehovah's fire offerings, in the day he brought them next to serve Jehovah as priests, which Jehovah commanded to be given them by the children of Israel in the day that he anointed them, as a due portion forever throughout their generations” (vers. 28-36).

It is worthy of notice that, while all three offerings of sweet savor fell under one communication from Jehovah in chaps. 1-3, “the law” of the sacrifice of Peace offerings formed the close of the word from Jehovah as to the Sin offering and that of Trespass. We can understand a plain reason for the change of arrangement in “the law;” because there, not in the original institution, the weighty fact appears that, besides unleavened cakes mingled with oil and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, which typified the Lord's holy humanity born of the Spirit and in His power, there were cakes of leavened bread here (chap. 7:13), and here only save also in the new Meal offering at the Feast of Weeks. For there also the two wave-loaves were not only of fine flour but baken with leaven (chap. 23:16-19) and needed an accompanying Sin offering. For man in both cases entered; saintly man no doubt, but having still the old nature, and therefore requiring the blood that atones for sin. In Christ there was none: in us, even in our thanksgiving, it is there, even if it act not; and faith feels and owns the humbling fact that it is only through Christ's death it is annulled. In that “law” is recognized also the “abomination” of separating the eating or the communion of the Peace offering from the sacrifice. The sacrifice of thanksgiving must be eaten the same day; even the vow or voluntary offering of greater energy could not be sustained more than the day after: beyond this, in any case, the rest must be burnt. Thus is our saintly communion closely conjoined with Jehovah's food in the Peace offering: not only Christ sacrificed to Him for us. Here too while the liberty was large, the indispensable need of cleanness is required. To eat when defiled is

peremptorily denounced for every soul (vers. 19-21).

This last truth accounts too for the separate communication that follows in chap. 7:22-27. The Peace offering was that which alone of these offerings admitted of eating on the part of Jehovah's people. Hence the necessity for rigidly forbidding any abuse of the privilege. To all without exception this prohibition reached. To Aaron and his sons the word came in chap. 6:24, 25, stretching down to this point in chap 7 where Moses is told to speak to the children of Israel. No fat of the sacrificial animals was to be eaten, nor of what died of itself, or was torn. And all blood was absolutely forbidden to be eaten: not only the inward energy, but the life too was sacred to Jehovah, Who would brook no meddling with His sole right and title here.

On a similar principle a fresh communication from Jehovah in vers. 28-36 claims out of the Peace offering the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder. The breast was for the whole priestly family, Aaron and his sons; the shoulder for the offering priest: both as the respective and fixed portion forever from the children of Israel. Thus, Jehovah had His part, and the Israelite was free to enjoy, himself, his family, and any Israelite he might invite to share, provided all and only if they were clean. We find only in this last communication, and in language of emphatic solemnity, that Jehovah reserved an especial portion, not to weaken but to deepen the fellowship. Aaron and his sons we have seen to mean Christ and His own. For us communion is altogether short which does not contemplate the Head and the body, even all saints. So if the apostle writes to the church of God which is in Corinth, to sanctified persons in Christ Jesus, saints called, he adds “with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ both theirs and ours.” And for the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who were in Ephesus he prays, that Christ may dwell through faith in their hearts, being rooted and grounded in love in order that they may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they may be filled to all the fullness of God.

The Heave offering was mere absolute than the Wave offering, though the same offering might in cases be called by either name according to the respective aspect. The former was not the whole of what was offered, but part offered to Jehovah. The breast as a whole was waved, the right shoulder heaved, the symbols of the affections as a whole, and of strength which could best sustain the burden. Christ and His own in nearness to God enjoy the one together; He as the Priest that offered has His special joy in that which represented the support of the weak. But the fat or inward energy, as the blood, was Jehovah's portion. Thus while all had their communion in Christ, each had what specially was due on immutable grounds and forever. The communion of saints could not be in Israel as it was enjoyed in the church of God since redemption; but this type was a, beautiful anticipation in its measure.

Chapter 199

The Offerings of Leviticus: 30. Final Summary of the Offerings

Final Summary of the Offerings. Lev. 7:37, 38

The institution, or particularly “the law” of the Offerings, closes in verses 37, 38.

“This [is] the law of the burnt offering, of the meal offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecration offering, and of the sacrifice of peace offerings; which Jehovah commanded Moses in mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to present their offerings to Jehovah, in the wilderness of Sinai” (vers. 37, 38).

Christ, the offering of Christ, is the reality in which all these shadows meet. The varied colors of each and all blend as it were into that perfect light, in which God delighted as the display of His nature in His Son, become man in grace and truth for man, who else had neither, and now by faith receives both; and this in a sacrifice, which not only bore the sins of the first man but transferred to him the acceptance of the Second in a savor of rest before God.

Undoubtedly the rich grace in the work of Christ has a real and permanent, as it should have a deep, effect spiritually on the believer. We love Him because He first loved us; we hate the sins, of us and of all, the judgment of which we behold by faith, unsparingly and beyond creature thought, dealt with by God in the cross. But it is a mistake and a perversion of the word to read in the Burnt offering, the Minchah, or the so-called Peace offering, our own devotedness, whatever impulse the truth in them may give to our souls. Rather are we called in faith to recognize, not only our utter lack but the radical contrariety of our fallen nature to what we have learned Christ to be in life and death, searched as He indeed was by such a test of fire as neither Adam nor any of his sons had ever known. For in every living detail He was as perfect as in the surrender of Himself to death, and this in obedience for God's glory, no less than as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; and as the result He brings us to enjoy communion with God, the Priest, and all the saints, whether they enter into that holy nearness or be vague, as so many of the faithful are.

Thus learned we the Christ, as we heard Him and were taught in Him, even as the truth is in Jesus, Who is the truth. Doubtless the apostle could add not a little more, seeing that He was not only the Firstborn or Chief of all creation, but the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, yea Head of the body the church. He could bring out our having put off according to our former course the old man that corrupts itself according to the lusts of deceit; and our being renewed in the spirit of our mind; and our having put on the new man that according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Such privileges transcend what is implied in the offerings; but what is there, if rightly interpreted in the light of Christ, shines bright to faith.

The offerings for Sin and Trespass were comparatively negative and essentially occupied with the sad variety of sin in general or guilt in responsible relationship to Jehovah. They could not indeed proclaim full remission, for the blood of Jesus His Son was not yet shed to cleanse from all sins. Yet do they tell of Him Who is full of compassion and grace, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But as the

sweet savor offerings proved divine love in Christ by positive and overflowing goodness, so did those for sin and guilt testify it by meeting man in his abject evil, misery, and ruin. Without doubt faith and self-judgment are supposed; but the efficacy is solely in Christ prefigured by the offering. Those who rested on the form and letter got nothing that sanctified beyond cleanness of flesh; but such as looked in heart to the Messiah got spiritual blessing, and walked in all the commandments and ordinances of Jehovah without blame.

The commanding truth that appears everywhere, no matter what may be the difference of shape in the shadow of things to come, is that the body or substance is of Christ. The Holy Spirit works effectually as the Father draws. But to the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. The world may count Him crucified to be folly; but the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. And of Him it is, that as Christ died for our sins, so we are in Christ Jesus, Who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and holiness and redemption, leaving us to boast in none but Jehovah.

This therefore casts the soul, tried by the consciousness of its unworthiness and the failure of all efforts, on Christ and His work. There only does the Spirit direct for peace; Christ made it through the blood of His cross. The believer is thus entitled to enjoy it; he rests on God's value for it, and as this never changes, such should be his peace also. The Spirit bears witness, not only that there is no work comparable, no work therefore to share its place, but that God will never remember more the sins and iniquities of those that believe. The cleansing of their feet defiled in the miry ways of the world is needed, and never fails through Jesus the Advocate with the Father. But the propitiation abides in its constant value; and the washing of water by the word is applied whenever the need arises; not as if the worshipper once purged loses his relationship and nearness to God, but to restore the communion which has been interrupted by a sin. The one offering remains undisturbed in its blessed effect; but Christ's advocacy works by the word and Spirit of God to conciliate the believer's failure with that standard. God is indeed faithful; and we have in Christ a living Savior, not His death only, immense and precious as it is: He is the all (the complete object), and in all.

Chapter 200

The Person of Christ: Part 1

The great question for souls everywhere is not so much, What think ye of Christ's moral teaching? as “What think ye of Christ” Himself? It is not only conceivable but certain that many would accept much of His teaching without accepting His personal dignity and rights. The scribe said, “Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth “; but we have no evidence that he ever believed in his heart that Jesus was the Son of God.

To the ruler of the Jews who came to Jesus by night and said, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God,” the Lord Jesus immediately replied, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God “; and “Ye must be born again.” There is in this a marked difference between Christ and all other teachers. Their personal place is quite subordinate to what they lay down for their disciples. Nay more; it is becoming, and frequently convenient, that the teacher's personality should be hidden and forgotten in his message. But in Christ the wondering eyes are filled with the Lord Jesus Himself, ever the Son of God, and seated now as the glorified Son of man, after atonement, “where our sins no more can rise.”

Miracles, as wrought by Christ's servants, were proofs of their mission. They gave weight to their testimony to the Master, though His servants were careful to take no credit for the miracles to themselves. But miracles, as wrought by Christ Himself, were evidence of His divine personality, and manifested forth His glory and His grace. God Himself, at Christ's baptism and transfiguration, gave testimony to the Person of His Son. The Holy Spirit expressly came down to earth on the day of Pentecost to glorify Christ, working signs by His servants in His name; and He has abode here ever since. It was because of Christ's personal title that the Pharisees took up stones to stone Him; and it was the Savior's own assertion of the truth relating to His person that led to His rejection and death.

It is clear from scripture on the other hand (and this is the living court of appeal), that the Person with the work of Christ is and must be the solemn question for every soul. Only unbelief can dare to treat it as a secondary question. At the same time, those who love Him will surely keep His word: for He is God no less than the Father. Hence it is to Christ Himself, that the weary and heavy laden are invited to come; and him that cometh to Christ He will in no wise cast out. Though conduct flows from the life given in Christ, and a right character is more or less speedily formed; yet the conscience finds peace through faith in Christ's blood. It is God's will; and so the Holy Ghost testifies to His work (Heb. 10). So decidedly clear is this that advanced Christians, of all others, still live on, and finally leave this scene rejoicing in the Lord Himself, and in Him rejoicing always, not in their own character and conduct. They rightly regard all devotedness to His name, vital and real as it is, as the outcome of life in Him, in no way as the cause of it. They faithfully and wisely take their stand on such words as these, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” “Who is he that overcometh, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” With the deepest pity for others, they see no prospect for those who reject Him, but “the blackness

of darkness forever." It was the Person of Christ, even when a Babe, which led the devout Simeon to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Christian practice is tested by our confession of the Person of Christ. Christ taught nothing more plainly than that those who confess Him before men He will confess before all heaven; and that those who deny Him He cannot but there and then deny. On the other hand, "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him (by His Spirit), and he in God." We are bound to test any and every man by the confession of Christ's Person. 1 John 4:2 really means, "Every spirit which confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God." It is the Person of Christ, not the fact of His birth, life or death, which is confessed. The simple fact many unbelievers do not deny. The translators by making it the admission of the mere fact, instead of the confession of Him Who came in flesh, have spoiled the sense. It supposes His divine place. Of no other is there any force in saying that He came in flesh. Every other man must come in flesh, or not come at all. He might have come in divine glory, or in angelic. But He was pleased to come truly man, though in Himself true God.

Again, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" and "Who do ye say that I am?" These are questions that the Lord put concerning Himself. Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Lord replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." We see here the value of this confession in the eyes of Christ; and we learn that none make it, but those who are directly taught of God. On it His church is built.

Persecution is to be expected in connection with the confession of Christ; whereas the propagation of His moral teaching only might be popular with Jews and Gentiles. Before Christ came, and since, persecution for righteousness' sake was and is to be expected; but the advance on Matt. 5:10 in the next verse 11 is noteworthy. Persecution in the former verse is "for righteousness' sake "; but in verse 11 it is expressly for "Christ's sake." Here it concerns His Personal honor. Again, in Matt. 10 the Lord warns His followers that for the sake of His name they shall incur the hatred of all men.

Is there any one thing here below which so much provoked the enmity of man? So we read in the Acts of the Apostles. In sending forth the apostle Paul the Lord said, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my Name's sake." How often has it been felt that, in proportion as the Person of Christ is kept in the background, while divine goodness is proclaimed, or the subjects of creation, or the providential government of God dwelt upon, the opposition to the preacher gives place to human applause. It does not even disturb a guilty conscience. But this is not to preach Christ, though these truths may have their place. "Revile Christ," said the Proconsul to Polycarp, "and I will set thee at liberty." "Eighty and six years have I served Him," answered Polycarp, "and He never did me any wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?" This might be a poor confession; but it did not save Polycarp.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Chapter 201

The Person of Christ: Part 2

In examining the commission and work of the Apostles and Evangelists we find that testimony was meant to center itself in the first place on the person of Christ; and this it actually did. “Ye shall be witnesses of Me,” said Christ before ascending on high. And this holds true to the last Epistle of John, where we read of those who “went forth for the Name.”

So Peter's address on the day of Pentecost is all about the Lord; and the apostles in general ceased not to preach and teach Jesus Christ. A later chosen apostle dealt specially with this object, subject, and aim; but it characterizes the message of all. So Philip the evangelist went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Later on, when sent to the Eunuch, the question was mainly concerning the person. “Of whom,” asked the Eunuch (not “of what”), “speaketh the prophet thus? of himself or some other man?” And Philip “began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.”

We have seen in scripture already referred to that Paul was to bear Christ's name to the Gentiles. In Galatians the apostle makes it specially clear that the person of Christ was the absorbing theme of his preaching. He tells us that God revealed His Son in him, “that he might preach Him among the heathen.” At Corinth the apostle tells them that, when he entered that city of pleasure, he determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. In 2 Cor. 4:4 should be read the “gospel of the glory of Christ,” not the “glorious gospel of Christ.” It is Himself in heavenly glory, where He in fact was seen Him the god of this world is careful to keep from the minds of the lost.

From this scripture reference and quotation, and it might be far more, it is certain that Christ Himself was the theme, ever true and fresh and blessed in the preaching of those He sent forth; and thus their message was something very different from the advocacy of abstract principles of goodness, benevolence, ethics, and philanthropy. Those who live merely to proclaim instincts of morality are on natural or heathen ground. Such as preach Christ know that, whether men accept or reject Him, the service is not lost, because it is done to Him; and His Father honors it. Again, we find that Christ made believing God and love to Himself, not principles of human excellence, the test of discipleship. The majesty of His person is purposely in view, before all earthly relationships: “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

So it is that the language of Christian devotion, and the hymns of Christian praise, like the sayings of Christian martyrs, testify that Christianity is just devotion to the truth and will of the Son of God. Christ's love, Who had spoken to him from heaven in tones tender and true with a power he never forgot, with a soul-winning and conquering voice that made Christ always more and better to him than anything or anyone else, constrained the great apostle of the Gentiles to say, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Our best hymn-writers would agree in this that

“Christ's glory fills eternity-

Eternity which was and is,

And all eternity to be

Shall shine with His undying praise.”

Further, we find that Christ Himself is the center of Christian worship and joy. To those who are gathered to His name He promises His presence, no matter how few there may be. It is in “the Lord” that the apostle instructs us to rejoice; and surely the bulk of proper Christian teaching is to set forth the Lord's divine and varied glories, so that hearts may be drawn out to Him in worship, thanksgiving and praise. But in relation to no subject is this question of the person of the Lord more important, than in its bearing on Christian hope. Both for the Lord and for the Christian the question becomes simply and exceedingly personal. For we read, “I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” The consummation of Christian hope is His coming and our being with the Lord in glory. How could those who “love not our Lord Jesus Christ” find any joy or rest in being “forever with the Lord?” They are anathema. The songs and services of His saints would be insufferable weariness to such.

Enough light on that blessed future is given to know that heaven will be filled with praise of Christ. The elders are seen to have crowns on their heads, they wear white robes, they sit on thrones. In the midst of divine power and glory, they sing, “Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood.” The glory of Christ's person gives eternal efficacy to His atoning work, which is everything to His saints even in heaven; as it makes Him unspeakably precious to them now and forever.

Hsin Hwa, Chinkiang. T. H. (Concluded).

Chapter 202

Priesthood: 1. Introduction

Introduction

Before we enter upon the details of the types in Lev. 8; 10, it seems well to speak of priesthood generally, and also in special reference to Christianity.

The priest offered gifts and sacrifices to God. In patriarchal days this fell to the head of the family, and indeed to its members also as may be seen in the very first recorded instance of Cain and Abel. But when the law came, priesthood was established in a particular family of that tribe which was chosen for divine service and separated from the inheritance of the land given to the other tribes of Israel. The Levites had therefore the tithes of the children of Israel as a heave-offering to Jehovah, but of this the Levites were bound to offer a tenth of the tithes to the priests, who had also their own special perquisites by Jehovah's command.

The Epistle to the Hebrews treats of Levitical priesthood, as well as of the sanctuary and the sacrifices, more formally and fully than any other parts of the N. T., though the principle runs through the Epistles in general and even the Revelation. To the Hebrews the utmost care was taken to lay the foundation of all that follows on the Person of Christ, Son of God in chap. 1, Son of Man in chap. 2, with incontestably superior glory in both respects, whatever His humiliation in grace for our sakes, to every creature, even to angels. Such is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Others, as Moses, Aaron, Joshua, derived dignity from the office to which each was called of God; He had intrinsic glory and excellence which conferred luster on all He undertook, though perfectly subject to God in everything. As sin had ruined all creation, His death was the only door of deliverance for “everything,” and the “many sons” for glory in particular, to annul the devil's power, to succor in temptation and sympathize in suffering, as well as to make propitiation for sins.

The Epistle accordingly contemplates on the one hand the partakers of a heavenly calling passing through the wilderness, and on the other Jesus the Son of God, called as Aaron, but owned of Him as His Son, and saluted as according to the order of Melchizedek. Such He is, and He only, being first by interpretation King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is King of peace. The exercise is after the pattern of Aaron (intercession based on sacrificial blood-shedding), the order after that of Melchizedek, as being not a succession of priests but one ever-living priest. Thus Psa. 110 is cited as divine authority for a priesthood everlasting and intransmissible, which supersedes that of Aaron. “For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily, as the high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, then [for] those of the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appointeth men high priests having infirmity; but the word of the oath-swearing which [was] after the law, a Son perfected forever.”

Hence the doctrine of the Epistle beyond doubt is of a sole High Priest Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, minister of the holy place, and of the true

tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man. The redemption too is everlasting, as is the inheritance. His offering once for all has perfected, not only forever but without interruption, the sanctified. The unity of the priesthood for the saint is as certain and plain as that of the sacrifice for our sins.

Nevertheless the same chap. 10 which sums this up clearly exhorts Christians as a whole, sprinkled and washed as they were, to approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, as having boldness to enter the holies by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and [having] a great priest over the house of God. The inspired writer takes his place with every other saint now, as entitled to draw near, where no son of Aaron could, and even as Aaron could not; for he had no such “boldness” when he entered on the Atonement-day with fear of death. Compare also chap. 13:10, 15, 16. The apostle Peter teaches us the same truth: the believers are “a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ;” and “a royal priesthood... to show forth the virtues of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:5-9). The Book of Revelation teaches the same (chap. 1:6).

Under the Levitical system the way of the holies had not yet been manifested. But by Christ's death the veil was rent; and now the way is open not by grace only but in righteousness. Earthly sacrifices, priesthood, and sanctuary alike disappear; and we who believe are privileged to approach God. Compare also Rom. 5:2, 2 Cor. 3:18, Eph. 2:13-18; 3:12, Col. 1:12, 13. In the N. T. an official priest is either Jewish or heathen, never Christian; a mere and guilty imposture.

Save Christ the High Priest, alone efficacious for us, scripture recognizes no priesthood but that of all Christians. To assert a sacerdotal class for us is to deny that we can offer up our spiritual sacrifices to God; it is in effect to efface the proper and revealed effect of Christ's sacrifice; it is therefore to obliterate the gospel and to restore Judaism. Not only is it a superstitious falsehood, but a contradiction of the faith “once for all” since redemption. Nay more, it essentially and systematically opposes the full and final revelation of God's word which will have the Christian to walk, not in the distance and darkness of the law, but in the light and grace of God perfectly revealed in Christ, His Father and our Father, His God and our God. It is wholly inconsistent with the great mystery as to Christ and as to the church (Eph. 5:32). For we all compose the one body of Christ, His bride, and are members one of another, each one spirit with the Lord. Hence such a relationship is incompatible with a priestly caste nearer to God than the rest, who are able only through it to draw near to Him, It is in short apostasy, not from Christ's Person, but from the truth of Christ's work and from the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence Who constitutes all the saints now God's habitation and Christ's one body.

No doubt these subtle adversaries of the faith allege Ex. 19, 5 to oppose the dogmatic teaching of the N. T. But the argument is absolutely worthless. For the promise to Israel of being a kingdom of priests was strictly conditional on their obedience, as the law is and must be; whereas our priestly standing, like other privileges, hangs on Christ and His finished work to God's glory. The ritualist is what the apostle calls “fallen from grace,” and much lower than the Galatians; he has lost the fundamental truth of Christianity, and is far more guilty than those who have never heard the Lord's name. The root principle, if not an anti-Christ, is anti-Christian.

It was a sad oversight that English Protestants allowed “priest” to represent “presbyter,” and that the Reformed abroad called their ecclesiastical buildings “temples.” An equivocal word is a compromise, of which error always takes advantage when the fresh power of truth fades.

Chapter 203

Priesthood: 2. The Priesthood Consecrated

Lev. 8:1-12

Having had the offerings and sacrifices with their laws fully laid down in the preceding chapters, it was meet that the priesthood should be shown us and duly established. We shall see that in these shadows, as in those, the Lord Jesus was contemplated by the inspiring Spirit of God. There is divine order and nothing desultory, save in that judging according to sight, which in scripture especially is not righteous judgment. Jehovah regulates all things here also; and it is blessed for us if we learn of Him. “And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil, and the bullock of the sin-offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened [bread]; and gather thou all the assembly together at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Moses did as Jehovah had commanded him; and the assembly was gathered at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Moses said to the assembly, This [is] the thing which Jehovah hath commanded to be done. And Moses brought Aaron near, and his sons, and bathed them with water. And he put on him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him, and girded him with the curiously wrought girdle of the ephod, and fastened the ephod on him. And he placed the breast-plate on him; and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim. And he set the miter on his head, and on the miter in front did he set the golden plate, the holy diadem; as Jehovah commanded Moses. And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. “And he sprinkled thereof on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its vessels, and the laver and its base, to sanctify them. “And he poured of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him” (vers. 1-12).

The immense and personal importance of the priesthood was marked by the gathering of all Israel to witness their inauguration. For they effected the intercourse of the Israelite with Jehovah in the sanctuary, as the high priest its most solemn part in the holiest. When Moses was enjoined to take Aaron and his sons with him, the garments, the oil, the victims, and the unleavened bread, all the assembly must gather together at the entrance of the tent of meeting to behold the great sight (1-5). It concerned deeply both Jehovah and His people, every one.

The first thing done was to bathe Aaron and his sons (6). For mortal and sinful man purifying is indispensable, what the apostle calls “the washing of the water by word,” not by a rite however impressive and requisite in its place; but as the Lord said of the eleven, “Already are ye clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you.” They were begotten by the word of truth. It was the gift of life eternal; and thus no type of Aaron or any other could express the truth of Christ, Who was that life eternally. But seeing that His own receive it in receiving Him, even here we see that Aaron and his sons were alike bathed with water; Christ only is the life which we have in having Him. Hence says the Lord in John xiii. 10, “He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet.” There is no repetition of that first and absolute cleansing of the person. If the feet get defiled in walking through a miry world, this defilement must be removed; for it hinders our communion

with Him. And this He sees to, being Advocate with the Father (1 John ii. 1), if one sin. He is the propitiation, as He is the Righteous One. The firm foundation of God stands, and our standing abides; but He deals with us, if we defile our feet, by His word and Spirit, and thus restores the communion that had been interrupted. For if He wash me not when defiled, I have no part with Him: to this need is His advocacy applied now that He is on high.

The garments, whether coat and its girdle, or robe and ephod with its skilfully woven girdle to fasten both firmly, the breast-plate with the Urim and the Thummim, and the turban or miter with the golden plate, were not those of the atonement day-of linen only, but “for glory and beauty.” They express what Christ is and does for us as the great High priest before God. Thus does He represent His own. The ephod was pre-eminently sacerdotal; and on its shoulder-pieces were the two onyx or beryl stones on which were graven the names of the children of Israel, six on each: all borne up before Jehovah for a memorial, as we are told in Exod. 28. The breast-plate of judgment was on his heart for a memorial continually, with the still more precious token of twelve stones of rare value, upon each a name of Israel's sons; and therein Moses put the Urim and the Thummim, the lights and the perfections, for Aaron's approach to Jehovah, that he might bear their judgment on his heart before Jehovah continually.

Very striking is the testimony to Christ in this preliminary scene in the twofold fact, that thus far we have no shedding or sprinkling of blood, as we see where the type of sinfulness comes before us in the leper's cleansing (chap. 14); and in this further, that we have the anointing oil freely used in verses 10-12. When Aaron's sons are brought near, as they are next, the Sin-offering is brought near too, and the hands of all were laid on the bullock's head; and when slaughtered, its blood is brought into a conspicuous use. But the absence of this in the verses before us is the witness to Christ's excellency. The tabernacle and all that was in it are anointed with the unction that bespeaks the Holy One. The altar was sprinkled seven times to anoint it and all its utensils, with the laver and its base; and, what confirms this exceptional aim, the anointing was poured on Aaron's head. It was not the purifying action of the Holy Spirit, but His energy, in witness of Christ's title to have and fill all with the power of God. But again this was not all. If He was the sinless One, and this could not be forgotten, He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and this also must be attested in its place.

Chapter 204

Priesthood: 3. Consecration of the Priests

Consecration of the Priests

Lev. 8:13-21

We read in ver. 6 that Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. The true High Priest was the Holy One of God. The Holy thing born of the Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit knew no sin; for in Him was none. The sinner needs to be born anew, the Savior did not, being thus born holy as was none other. He therefore is as pure in His humanity as of course in His Deity; we require to be purified by grace. Hence to mark the result, however distinct the way of it, all were washed in the type together, He the sanctifier, and they the sanctified. But He was the life, and gave them His life to be theirs.

Now we are to see the sons of Aaron clothed as their father had been, according to Jehovah's command. Not only was man not left in his nakedness, but grace invests, as it pleased Jehovah, for His presence in the sanctuary.

“And Moses brought near Aaron's sons, and clothed them with the coats, and girded them with the girdles, and bound the bonnets (or, high caps) on them; as Jehovah commanded Moses. And he brought near the bullock of the sin-offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bullock for the sin-offering; and one slaughtered [it]; and Moses took the blood and put [it] on the horns of the altar, round about with his finger and cleansed the altar from sin, and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar and sanctified it, making atonement for it. And he took all the fat that was on the inwards, and the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat; and Moses burned [them] on the altar. And the bullock and its skin and its flesh and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp as Jehovah commanded Moses. And he brought near the ram of the burnt-offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, And one slaughtered [it]; and Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar round about. And he cut up the ram into its pieces; and Moses burned the head, and the pieces, and the fat; and the inwards and the legs he washed with water; and Moses burned the whole ram on the altar: it [was] a burnt-offering for a sweet odor, a fire-offering to Jehovah; as Jehovah commanded Moses” (vers. 13-21).

What a blessed privilege to have Christ as life and righteousness and propitiation! But God makes Him much more to us even now, as well as in the glory to come. As the night is far spent and the day is at hand, we are exhorted to cast away the works of darkness, and to put on the armor of light. But in drawing near to God, it is not armor we want, as in conflict with the enemy. Still it is Christ we have to put on; and Christ we put on, as many as were baptized to Him. What have we any more to do, if we have Him, with what we were in the flesh or in the world? Is not Christ incomparably better than all? He is the one thing that we all are in Him. Here it is shown in the priests clothed according as Jehovah commanded Moses. They received their appropriate vests, and their girdles, and their sacerdotal headgear. Without doubt great stress was laid on the dress of the high priest. His were holy garments, for glory and for beauty.

This accordingly is intimated here when Aaron's sons were brought near and clothed with their priestly attire (13). Immediately follows the bullock of the Sin-offering also brought near, on which Aaron and they laid their hands (14). Christ, though He needed nothing of the sort for Himself (Heb. 6:20), was made sin for them, and once for all. For every notion of either continuous or repeated offering Himself up is rigidly excluded by God's word, as indeed it would disparage and annul the revealed efficacy of His death. The blood here however was put, not within the holiest (as on Atonement-day), but on the altar's horns, and the rest poured out at its base, to sanctify that which had to do with sin and reconciliation thereby (15). But all the inward fat was burned on the altar, the unfailing and eloquent witness of the intrinsic excellence of the offering for sin, as Christ alone and fully made evident (16). For Him, Who did not even know sin, God made sin for us; and this was the more manifested here in the burning of the bullock and its skin, &c., outside the camp, as Jehovah commanded Moses (17).

But Christ secures personal acceptance with God, no less than the doing away with sin and its consequences; and so we have in ver. 18 the ram for a Burnt-offering. For in consecrating the priests no alternative was permitted as in ordinary holocausts. The ram for that or other special cases was required, as we have already remarked in its place; and so on its head also Aaron and his sons laid their hands, not for the removal of human evil but for the transfer of Christ's sweet savor. So here the blood of the slain ram was sprinkled all about on the altar (19); and its body was cut into its pieces and burnt, fat and all, with its washed inwards; for every animal thus needed washing to figure His purity (20, 21).

But the priest and his sons were clothed suitably to the sanctuary by no less a command of Jehovah. Essential purity was in Christ; in us who believe all is conferred through His grace. Not only are we in Him, but He was made to us from God all that we want for His holy presence. Of His fullness we all received, and grace for grace.

Yet type as he was, Aaron needed offering for sin and sacrifice no less than his sons: no sinful man could stand on other ground before Jehovah. So in ver. 14 we have Aaron and his sons laying their hands on the head of the bullock for the Sin-offering, which was slaughtered and its blood applied by Moses, who here represents Christ. The priests indeed more than any ordinary Israelite must be atoned for: how else could they approach Jehovah without defiling His sanctuary?

But this righteous necessity only the more brings into relief the anointing disclosed in ver. 12. Not only was the anointing oil applied to the tabernacle and all that was in it, and the altar sprinkled with it seven times, the altar with all its utensils anointed, and the laver and its base, to hallow them, but Moses poured of it on Aaron's head and anointed him, to hallow him. Thus Christ is here unmistakably before us, as far as a type could intimate, in the anointing of Aaron alone, apart from his sons, but with the tabernacle, altar, and laver. Jehovah could not, we may say with reverence, withhold this the highest witness of His satisfaction and delight; for is it not in the energy of the Holy Ghost thus given? It was accomplished literally in our Lord without His blood-shedding, indispensable for every other. For on Him did the Holy Spirit descend in a bodily form as a dove, while the Father's voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son: in Thee I found my delight. This was at the precise moment of His life here below, when men might have been tempted to conceive unhallowed thoughts. For it was when He was baptized as others were, and was praying.

It expressed really perfect moral beauty.

As the tabernacle, altar, and laver too typified offices that He fills as to creation, and had nothing in themselves of moral evil, like Israel or mankind, we see that they were in the type associated with Him in the power of the Holy Ghost. All belonged to Him on every ground, and He was personally entitled to fill all, with the power of divine blessing. When the priests are in question, blood must be shed.

Chapter 205

Priesthood: 4. The Priests Consecrated

The Priests Consecrated. Lev. 8:22-30

The Savior then is of such positive and overflowing excellence in His person and ways that He is entitled to fill creation with the power of the Spirit, as well as to enjoy its fullness Himself. And to this we have seen a striking testimony even in the type, as there was in fact when He walked here below in the days of His flesh.

Yet was it too true that man, its head, was utterly fallen, and that Israel, priesthood and all, were no exception. And this is clearly intimated when the priestly family were distinctly treated, as seen in vers. 13-21. But there is more to follow.

“And he presented the other ram, the ram of consecration; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram; and one slaughtered [it]. And Moses took of its blood, and put [it] on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. And he brought near Aaron's sons, and he put of the blood on the tip of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the great toe of their right foot; and Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar round about. And he took the fat, and the fat tail, and all the fat that [was] on the inwards, and the net of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and the right shoulder [or, thigh]. And out of the basket of unleavened bread that [was] before Jehovah he took one unleavened cake and one cake of oiled bread and one wafer, and put them on the fat and upon the right shoulder; and he gave them all into Aaron's hands and into his sons' hands and waved them as a wave-offering before Jehovah. And Moses took them from off their hands, and burned [them] on the altar over the burnt-offering: they [were] a consecration [or, filling of hand] of sweet odor; it [is] a fire-offering to Jehovah. And Moses took the breast, and waved it as a wave-offering before Jehovah: of the ram of consecration it was Moses' part; as Jehovah commanded Moses. And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood that [was] upon the altar and sprinkled [it] on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him” (vers. 22-30).

We have had Aaron alone anointed with oil in witness of Christ the true Priest and of His personal perfection; now we see the blood of the ram of consecration, on the head of which Aaron and his sons laid their hands, applied first to Aaron's right ear, right thumb, and right great toe, then to the same parts of his sons, as well as sprinkled upon the altar round about. For indeed Christ by His own blood entered once for all into the holies, having found an eternal redemption. Otherwise He had abode alone; now the grain that died bears much fruit, Christ as Son over His own house, Whose house are we, if we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm unto the end. It is not only that He loves us and washed us from our sins in His blood, but He made us kings and priests to His God and Father: to Him the glory and the might unto the ages of ages. Amen. So in this type Aaron's sons were consecrated by the ram's blood which undoubtedly took account of their sins, but went much farther, even to the glorifying God in His own nature, as John 13:31 tells us. So glorified was He in the Son of man's death for sin, that it became righteous for Him to set Christ at

His own right hand in heavenly glory, and to associate us who believe in the same blessedness and eventually in the same glory. “As He is, so are we in this world;” and soon will He come to fetch us that, where He is, there we may be also.

The blood put upon the priestly company means the virtue of Christ's sacrifice consecrating them for all they heard, for all they did, and for all their walk. The whole of their practical being was thenceforth to be in the power of His death to God. It is not that Christ needed aught for Himself, or had the least flaw to purge; but all turned for us in His obeying unto death, yea, death of the cross, for God's glory. His obedience was unreserved and at all cost from first to last. The preparation of the body for Him, as the Sept. puts it and so quoted in Heb. 10, is in the Hebrew of Psa. 40 “Mine ears didst thou dig.” In every other they were heavy and closed through sin. The words too which the Father gave Him He has given to us, that our service and walk should be formed by divine communications, and these of the highest intimacy.

Next came the Wave-offering of all the ram's fat, and one unleavened cake and one cake of oiled bread and one wafer, representing the internal energy of Christ's sacrifice, and his unblemished living excellence in the Spirit's power, which had been put upon the hands of all and waved before Jehovah; then taken off their hands which they “filled” as the essential idea of consecration, they were burnt upon the altar over the Burnt-offering. How blessed the qualification for drawing near to God, and offering the praise sacrifice continually to God, that is, fruit of lips confessing His name! For as they had not only the Sin-offering in its largest form but also the Burnt-offering too in the special way of a ram, so that of consecration gave fullness and precision, as was due to the priestly office and so graciously directed by Jehovah, with its accompanying Meal-offering, that the completeness of Christ's offering and sacrifice might be their inauguration. And all this and more form the Christians' portion, even now a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, which are certainly not less but more acceptable to God through Jesus Christ than any material ones ever were in the past. Nay, answering to Rev. 1:5, we are a royal priesthood... that we may show forth the excellencies of Him that called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, as we read in 1 Peter 2:9,

The breast too as Moses' part (ver. 29) of the consecration ram was no unmeaning sign, as representing Christ's deep interest and satisfaction in their consecration, as well as His own.

No doubt it is a position of the utmost nearness to God by faith, not by appearance like the typical priesthood. But that only enhances the blessing in God's eyes, and to our hearts if we have communion with Him. Anything of a visible nature attaching to a Christian is the least precious of his possessions. Every spiritual blessing with which we are blessed in heavenly places in Christ rises far above what man can see or estimate.

But we must not overlook the remarkable action of the mediator that follows in ver. 30. “Moses took of the anointing oil and of the blood which was upon the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons and on his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.” It is the unction of the Spirit as well as the death of Christ in power. And what a striking answer to it is Rom. 8:2! “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and [as offering] for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteous requirement of the law might be

fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Thus as the life of the Spirit is one of deliverance, so is Christ made sin our release from all the evil; and this to the display of the Spirit's power in our ways, which would seem to be portrayed in the garments.

Chapter 206

Priesthood: 5. The Consecration

The Consecration. Lev. Viii. 31-36

The close of this chapter has its importance like every other part. We have seen the washing of all and the robing of Aaron, and the anointing of the tabernacle and all therein, of the altar and all its vessels, and especially of the high priest's head before the sons had their official clothing (1-13). We had next the bullock for the Sin-offering on which Aaron and his sons laid their hands before it was slain; then the ram for the Burnt-offering; then the other ram of consecration, blood of which was put on the right ear, right thumb, and right toe; the right shoulder, and its accompaniments, with the breast, Moses' part, being waved before Jehovah (14-30). But there remains the eating of the flesh as an essential observance.

“31 And Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons, Boil the flesh [at] the entrance of the tent of meeting; and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of the consecration-offering, as I commanded, saying, Aaron and his sons shall eat it. 32 And that which remaineth of the flesh and of the bread shall ye burn with fire. 33 And ye shall not go out from the entrance of the tent of meeting seven days, until the day when the days of your consecration are at an end: for seven days shall ye be consecrated. 34 As he hath done this day, Jehovah hath commanded to do, to make atonement for you. 35 And ye shall abide at the entrance of the tent of meeting day and night seven days, and keep the charge of Jehovah, that ye die not; for so I am commanded. 36 And Aaron and his sons did all things that Jehovah commanded by the hand of Moses” (31-36).

Communion with Christ Who gave Himself for us is the precious privilege set forth by eating the flesh. It was boiled at the entrance of the tent of meeting; and it was eaten with the bread in the basket of the Consecration-offering. All was to be separate from the common nourishment of man.

Yet was the bread of the offering made by fire to Jehovah no less really for the priests to share, as well as the flesh. It was the expression of fellowship, remote from all the associations of nature, but peaceful and intimate as well as holy. It is appropriately the last thing presented before the eighth day. How foreign to the divine mind to have begun with such a feast!

Jehovah had expressed His sovereign will in separating one family to draw near to Him. They were washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God; for so we may rightly interpret and apply the typical form of the chapter. A new and holy nature is the prime necessity. Christ had this in His person, displayed it perfectly in a world of evil, and gave it to all that believe. But they needed His death also in all its atoning efficacy, and this not only to blot out their sins but to invest with His positive acceptance. This is marked with fullness and precision in the chapter. The Sin-offering and Burnt-offering were duly slain and burnt. God was thus glorified in every way as to sin; beautiful shadows of what was found perfectly and only in the death of the Son of man, God's Son.

But the second ram of consecration distinctly severed to God by its blood the entire priestly family: as has been shown already, their service in the inner man and the outer, was hence forward to be

according to Christ's blood. No less a standard could God allow in those that enjoy access to Him in the sanctuary. Consecration means the hands filled. It is not man's purpose of devotedness, but that which the inward energy of Christ in His offering up to Jehovah, and of His active life in the power of the Spirit, put on the hands of Aaron and his sons (Christ and His own house), and waved before Him.

The flesh of the ram (besides what had been excepted) was also to be eaten where it was boiled, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and along with the bread of consecration also. It is Christ in death as in life, not as our deliverance from judgment or as the means and measure of our acceptance, but as the object for our souls to enjoy and feed on together. It is Christ and His own sharing this joy in common, as indeed God does. For our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And His will is not withheld or dubious. These things He has had written in the inspired word, that our joy might be fulfilled.

Further, the priestly family were not to go out during the seven days of their consecration. It is the circle of man's walk here below; and it applies no less to the priests. Night and day they were to abide at the entrance, and keep the charge of Jehovah that they die not; “for so I am commanded,” as Moses adds, lest any should impute a charge so solemn, all-engrossing, and peremptory to himself. And so was it done.

To appropriate the priestly place to ministers in the word, denying this nearness to the church as a whole, or to every Christian, is an error that makes the gospel void. It is the ruin in particular of those who set up a claim so baseless, arrogant, and anti-scriptural. Ministry is the exercise of a divine gift, in some, for the good of all; priesthood is of all saints to draw near into the holies. There is no other priesthood, save of Christ alone the Great Priest for all His house. Here the Puritan Matthew Henry confounds things that differ essentially, only a little less grossly than the Puseyites, as any one may find in his Commentary on this passage.

Proverbs 1:1-6

BEYOND all others David was the sweet Psalmist of Israel, though not a few worthy companions find a place in the divine collection of holy lyrics. Solomon stands in like pre-eminence for the utterance of the sententious wisdom of which the book of Proverbs is the chief expression, with Ecclesiastes when the sense of his own failure under unique circumstances of creature advantage gave a sad and penitent character to his experience in the power of the inspiring Spirit. It is the more striking when compared with the Song of Songs, which shows us the Jewish spouse restored to the love of the once-despised Messiah, and His adorable excellency and grace, after her long folly, manifold vicissitudes, and sore tribulation.

Every one of these compositions is stamped with the design of inspiration, and instinct with the power of the Holy Spirit in carrying out His design in each. But they are all in view of man on the earth, more especially the chosen people of God, passing through the vista of sin and shame and sorrow in the latter day to the kingdom which the true Son of David, the born Son of God (Psa. 2), will establish as Jehovah's King in His holy hill of Zion, though far larger and higher things also as we know. Hence, these writings have a common governmental character: only that, in the Psalms especially, the rejection and the sufferings of Christ give occasion to glimpses of light above and to hints of brighter associations. But the full and proper manifestation of heavenly things was left for the rejected Christ to announce in the Gospels, and for the Holy Spirit sent down from on high to open out practically in the Acts, and doctrinally in the Epistles, especially of the apostle Paul. Any unfolding of a church character or even of Christian relationship, it would be vain to look for in these constituent books or any others of the O. T.

The express aim of Proverbs, for example, is to furnish, from the one better fitted for the purpose than any man who ever lived, the light of wisdom in moral intelligence for the earthly path of man under Jehovah's eye. Being from “the king of Israel,” it is also for the people he governed; and therefore with a slight exception (only six times it seems easily accounted for) in known relationship with Jehovah, Whose name pervades from first to last. See ii. 5, 17; iii. 4; xxv. 2; xxx. 5, 9. But being divinely inspired, it is a book for him that reads or hears to profit by at anytime, for the Christian in particular as having by grace the mind of Christ. All scripture is for our good and blessing, though most of it is not addressed to us, nor is it about us.

1 Kings 4:29-34 historically testifies to the unrivaled capacity conferred of God on Solomon, and a wisdom He would not let die. “And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from

all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." "Three thousand proverbs" cover far more than the inspired collection; as the songs uttered far exceed those meant for permanency. Inspiration selected designedly.

We have remarked how "Jehovah" characterizes the book. In Ecclesiastes on the contrary the use of "God" or Elohim is constant, and flows solely and appropriately, one might even say necessarily, from its subject-matter. As the book of Proverbs is for the instruction of "men-brethren (Israel)," so there is the constant tenderness of "my son," or more rarely, "sons." But there is not nor could be, as in the N. T., the basis of Christ's redemption, or the liberty of adoption in the Spirit: the groundwork there is in the cross, and the character is consistency with Christ glorified in heaven. Morally too God is revealed, and the Father's love made known in Christ to be enjoyed in the Spirit's power.

"Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction: to discern the words of understanding; to receive instruction in intelligence, righteousness, judgment and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. He that is wise will hear and increase learning, and the intelligent will attain to sound counsels: to understand a proverb and an allegory (or, interpretation), the words of the wise and their enigmas" (vers. 1-6).

Such is the preface. It remains for its right appreciation to explain briefly terms which many readers fail to distinguish.

"Wisdom" here is derived from a word that means "practiced" or skilful, and applied very widely from arts of varied kind to powers of mind and philosophy. The verb is used for being "wise" throughout the Hebrew scriptures; the adjective even more extensively and often; the substantive more frequently still. The "wise men" of Babylon are as a class correspondingly described in the Chaldee or Aramean. But the employment of the term is also general. It seems based on experience.

"Instruction," connected with "wisdom," is expressed by a word signifying also discipline, correction, or warning. The moral object is thus remarkably sustained, in contrast with mere exercise or displays of intellect.

Next comes in its place to "discern the words of understanding." For this is of great value for the soul, understanding founded on adequate consideration so as to distinguish things that differ. The verb and noun occur plentifully in the Bible.

Then we have "to receive instruction in intelligence, righteousness, judgment and equity." Here circumspection has a great place in the learning to behave with becoming propriety and tact, as David did when Saul was on the rack through jealousy.

"Prudence" in ver. 4 may degenerate into cunning or wily ways as in Ex. 21:14, Josh. 9:4; but as in Prov. 8:5, 12, so here and in kindred forms, it has the fair meaning of practical good sense.

"Discretion" at the end of the verse is the opposite of heedlessness, but capable like the last of a bad application. Employed laudably it means sagacity through reflection.

As the proverb is a compressed parable, or an expanded comparison, so it often borders on the riddle or enigma in order to fix attention. The same Hebrew word appears to mean both "proverb"

and “parable,” which may in part if not wholly account for the former only in John's Gospel, the latter in the Synoptists. There too the parable stands in contrast with speaking plainly (John 16:25, 29: compare also Matt. 13:34, 35).

Solomon then introduces himself in his known relation and position as the channel of these divinely given apothegms, not to glorify man like the seven sages of Greece, still less to magnify himself who bears witness to his own humiliation, but to exalt Jehovah in guarding him that heeds these words from folly and snare. For the declared end is the moral profit of man by what God gave to His glory—to know wisdom and instruction, to discern, and receive. However precious for all, the first aim is to give prudence to the simple, so open to deception in this world, and knowledge and discretion to the young man, apt to be heady and rashly opinionated. But there is another result surely anticipated; “he that is wise will hear, and the intelligent will attain to sound counsel: to understand a proverb and an allegory, the words of the wise and their enigmas (or, dark sayings).” Who more in place to teach these things than the man then inspired of God?

Chapter 208

Proverbs 1:7-19

THE book begins with the foundation principle of the fear of God, but this in the special relation established with His people Israel. It is therefore “the fear of Jehovah.” For as He deigned thus to be made known to them; so were they called to prize that name as their special privilege. Jehovah was God in Israel, though alone the true God, and Lord of all the earth. As Jehovah was God, Who spoke through the prophets, and wrought wonders according to His word; so the people at a great crisis with heathenism cried (1 Kings 18), Jehovah, He is God; Jehovah, He is God. The usage of the abstract term, and of the relational name, has nothing in the least to do with imaginary legends or various writers; it is most instructive for the twofold truth that is set out.

“The fear of Jehovah (is) the beginning of knowledge: fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law [or teaching] of thy mother; for they (shall be) a garland of grace for thy head, and chains about thy neck” (vers. 7-9).

In Psa. 106:10 the fear of Jehovah is declared to be the beginning of wisdom, as here of knowledge. Both are equally true, and each important in its place, though wisdom be the higher of the two as built on the experience of the divine word and ways, which “knowledge” does not necessarily presuppose. He who wrote for the reader's instruction was pre-eminent in both, though in his case there was extraordinary divine favor in the communication, and the keenest ardor in improving opportunities without parallel. In this general part of the book we have “wisdom” introduced (chap. 9:10), “the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy [is] understanding.” This gives the moral side its just prominence in both; and so it is in Job 28:28, where that chapter, full of interest throughout, closes with “unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord [Adonai, not Jehovah as such], that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” He is feared as the Sovereign Master, Who cannot look on evil with the least allowance.

But even where external knowledge is pursued, what a safeguard is in the fear of God! Assuredly the Creator would be remembered, not only in the days of youth but in those of age. Who that had the least real knowledge of God could confound the creature with Him Who created it? To him the heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse shows the work of His hands. If he beheld the light when it shone or the moon walking in brightness, it was but to own and adore the God Who is above, unless a deceived heart had turned him aside, that he could not deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? How, with Him before the mind, deny creation for an eternal matter under Fate or Chance? for a desolating Pantheism, where all men and things are god, and none is really God, where is neither sin nor its judgment, nor grace and truth with its blessedness in Christ for faith to life eternal? where all that appears to our senses is Maya [illusion], and the diabolical substitute, but real death of hope, is Nirvana [extinction]? How true it is that the foolish “despise wisdom and instruction!”

What again were his last words to his judges, of whom Westerners boast. “It is now time to depart—for me to die, for you to live; but which of us is going to a better state is unknown to

everyone but God." What a contrast with the apostle! "To me to live is Christ, and to die gain." Certainty on divine warrant, and the deepest enjoyment everywhere and always, the beginning of which is the fear of God in Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

This funadmental deliverance is followed up by the usual appeal of affection, "my son." For here the relationships God has made and sanctions are of as great value where His fear reigns, as they perpetuate sin and misery where it is not so. Parents are to be honored and heard, the instruction of the father and the teaching of the mother. This the son first knows to form and direct obedience, if self-will oppose not; and they are his graceful ornament. How early they act on the heart, and how influential on the conduct and even character, many a son can testify. Alas, that men have forgotten the word of the wisest, and proved their folly, parents and children! And to this sad side we are now introduced.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as Sheol, and whole as those that go down into the pit. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: cast in thy lot among us; we will have all one purse. My son, walk not in the way with them, keep back thy foot from their path. For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. For in vain is the net spread in the eyes of a bird; and they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So (are) the paths of every one that is greedy of gain: it taketh away the life of its owners" (vers. 10-19).

Here we have the soul warned against listening to the voice of enticement. For Satan has instruments not a few zealous to draw others into evil; and companionship is as natural as dangerous. "For also we were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (Titus 3:3). And in this the least scrupulous lead: their mouth full of cursing and bitterness; their feet swift to shed blood. The word is, Walk not in the way with them, keep back thy foot from their path. Covetousness, and robbery to gratify it, are vividly drawn: violence follows lust, and one's own life the forfeit. The day comes for judgment without mercy, the judgment of flesh. Listen, for in vain is the net spread in the eyes of any bird. In reality they wait for their own blood, as surely as God knows how to deliver. How many a one that is plotted against escapes, while those greedy of gain lose their own lives, the end in this world of their wicked schemes!

Proverbs 1:20-23

It is a characteristic of this book, and exactly in keeping with its contents, that we have “wisdom” personified from the first chapter, rising up (as is well known) to the Person of Christ in chap. 8:22-31. Even in this first introduction, though the form is plural, as in chap. ix. 1, and in later occurrences, the cry does not fail as it goes on to assume the solemnity of a divine warning of inevitable judgment, so that it is difficult to sever it from the voice of God Himself, as in ver. 24 if not in 23, and in those that follow. Compare in the N. T. Matt. 23:31 with Luke 11:49.

“Wisdom crieth without, she raiseth her voice in the broadways; she calleth at the head of the noisy (streets), at the entry of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, How long, simple ones, will ye love simpleness, and scorners delight them in scorning, and fools hate wisdom? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour forth my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (vers. 20-23).

Under the law there was nothing that properly, still less that fully, answered to the grace of the gospel in extending to every land and tongue, to be preached, as the apostle says, “in all the creation that is under heaven.” Yet when not only Israel fell as a whole but Judah revolted to the uttermost and was swept away to Babylon, yea, when the rejection of Messiah added incalculably to their older guilt of idolatry, and brought on still worse and wider and longer dispersion, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet to write of the richest mercy which should surely dawn on their ruined estate. After the triple call to “hearken,” followed by the triple summons to “awake” (Isa. 51, 52), we hear the cheering outburst, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth glad tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, saying to Zion, Thy God reigneth.” So in due time will the kingdom be restored to Israel in God's mercy and sovereign grace. But as this is displayed in another and yet profounder way now in the gospel, the apostle does not hesitate to apply these glowing words to those now sent to preach the gospel of God's indiscriminate goodness, alike to Jew and Greek. For now there is no difference, and the same Lord of all is rich unto all that call upon Him. But if Israel be yet deaf to the report of those that believe, the gospel goes out like the voice of those heavenly orbs whose sound cannot be confined to one people or country, but went out unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the habitable earth, as Psa. 19 suggests.

Still here where Jehovah's law ruled, wisdom was not confined to parental discipline, still less was it shut up in philosophic schools but “cries without.” She “raiseth her voice in the broad-ways” instead of seeking only the refined and exalted; she “calleth at the head of the noisy places of concourse, at the entry of the gates.” The moral profit was sought assiduously of those that had most need, if culture despises the vulgar. Not in the calm and quiet of the country is she said to utter her words, but “in the city” where is far more to attract and distract the mass of mankind. “How long, simple ones,” says she, “will ye love simpleness, and scorners delight them in scorning, and fools hate wisdom?” There is thus a climax in these classes of careless ungodly souls. The simple are the many weak ones who, lacking all moral discernment and object, are

exposed to evil on all sides and at each turn, and by this easy indifference they become a prey. The scorners manifest more positive pravity, and reject all appeals to conscience and reference to divine things by unseemly jest and insolent sneer. It is an ever growing moral disease, never so prevalent as in these last days. The fools that hate knowledge may be more godless still, and become openly atheist, as scripture shows. For the apostasy must come, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition who will set himself and be received as God; and this in the temple of God, where the affront is deepest.

But Jehovah gives wisdom's remonstrances, and, if heeded, her gracious encouragement. “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour forth my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” It is an error, which goes beyond the purport of the verse, to conceive that the gift of the Holy Spirit is here promised. There is undoubtedly an inward blessing promised which is ever by the Spirit, and an intelligence of wisdom's words. This is much, and Jehovah made it true from the time the book was written. But it is dangerous either to exaggerate what God always was to His people, or to undervalue those privileges which awaited redemption through our Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit was not poured out as at Pentecost till Christ was glorified. But whatever of blessing there ever was for man is by the Spirit, and this too is in knowing the words of divine wisdom; and here it is amply assured, where the reproof was heeded.

Proverbs 1:24-28

Here it is not the gospel which is thus shown, but the call of God in the government of man on the earth. Hence it does not pass beyond the judgment which will be executed in the day that is coming here below. This is the more important to heed, because Christendom is as unbelieving about the judgment of the quick Christ will surely enforce on the habitable world, as the Jews were about the judgment of the dead in the resurrection state.

Both are revealed in the written word, and both are to be in the hands of Him Who loved to call Himself “the Son of man.” But if He came, the Son of man in grace to the lost, He will assuredly return the Son of man in judgment of all who despise Him, whether alive or dead. Thus there is the judgment of the wicked living at the beginning of His kingdom and through it, no less than the judgment of the wicked dead at the end, before He delivers it up to Him Who is God and Father. Now it is the former which is treated here, though commentators and preachers are apt to see in it only the judgment at the close.

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no one regarded; and ye have rejected all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as sudden destruction, and your calamity cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but shall not find me” (vers. 24-28).

It is sad when Jews do not rise above Gentile moralizing on the life that now is or the death that terminates it; but how much sadder still when Christians are content with similar platitudes! Christ is the only True Light which on coming into the world casts light on every man. He, and He alone, gives us the truth of everything. The divine judgment of man thus acquires proper definiteness and its full solemnity; and the light of the New Testament is thus thrown back on the Old, besides revealing what belongs to itself preeminently if not exclusively.

Take the picture the Lord in Luke 17 draws of the kingdom of God, when it is no longer a hidden matter of faith or of mere profession as now; but the Son of man shall be in His day as the lightning which lightens out of the one part under the heaven and shines unto the other. It will be in truth as in the days of Noah or in those of Lot: unexpected, inevitable, and utter destruction of the ungodly, as they are in the midst of their busy pursuits. When the Son of man thus comes, shall He find faith on the earth? How far is it to be found now?

Take again the view He gives in Luke 21, not only of signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, but of the moral state on the earth when the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. It is not the end of the world, but of the age when the Son of man is seen coming in a cloud, and the kingdom of God will be established manifestly and in power that will put down all opposition.

This “sudden destruction” is here before the inspiring Spirit, Who maintains the edge of His sword unblunted by tradition and callous unbelief. The word of God of old, all His word, is good, wherein He calls man to hear; but He is refused. He stretched out His hand imploringly; but none regarded;

His counsel was rejected, and His reproof no less. What remained possible under the law? Unsparing judgment. How terrible when Jehovah, patient and longsuffering, laughs at the calamity of those that despised Him, mocks the fears, distress, and anguish of those who mocked Him, and has no answer for their call, nor will He be found, though then sought diligently! To fear the judgment, especially when it falls, is not to fear Jehovah.

Chapter 211

Proverbs 1:29-33

THE warning of Jehovah was solemn, but not more solemn than sure. Impossible that He could lie. If faithful to His own in doing all He says to cheer them now, He is no less righteous in dealing with His enemies; He will recompense them.

“Because they hated knowledge and chose not the fear of Jehovah; they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning back of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely and be at rest from fear of evil” (vers. 29-33).

Divine compassion is unfailing for the ignorant where it is not willful. No less severe is the abhorrence of such as hate knowledge in the things of God, which of course is alone considered here. And what can be more sadly plain than to “choose not the fear of Jehovah?” It proves the enmity of the heart. Is He indifferent to man? It was only the vilest of the heathen who laid it down formally; but what was the general state of the Jews of old? What is that of professing Christendom in our own land and every other to-day?

Christ has shed better and perfect light; and the final revelation of God is fullness of grace and truth through Him. But what is the issue of slighting it and Him? It is more conspicuously true now than in Solomon's time that “they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof.” When God came into the world in Christ's Person, they turned Him out of it. They hated Him without a cause. His grace only made Him more despicable in their eyes. His counsel irritated, His reproof was a laughing stock. What will the end be?

Jehovah is not mocked with impunity. “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their way and be filled with their own devices.” Sowing to the flesh must be reaping destruction. He does not execute judgment as yet; but it will come assuredly and soon: tribulation and anguish for man; indignation and wrath on His part Who judges. It is easy to turn away from grace and truth, from righteousness at any time; but the backsliding of the simple will slay them, and the prosperity of the foolish shall lure them to perdition.

“Hear, and thy soul shall live.” So said the prophet Isaiah; and it is blessedly true under the gospel. “He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death into life.” So declared He Who is the Truth, as He is the Way and the Life. Or, as it is written here, “Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be at rest from fear of evil.” Is it not a goodly shelter in a world of evil and danger? Christ is it now to every one that believes on Him, not only rest from evil but from the fear of it by grace.

Proverbs 2:1-9

Here the Holy Spirit turns from the sad end of impious indifference and contempt, to enter on a new part of His design. He shows how the moral wisdom and right understanding is to be obtained, which consists in the fear of Jehovah and the knowledge of God, at least by the submissive and docile heart.

“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and lay up my commandments with thee; so that thou wilt incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding; yea if thou cry after discernment, [and] lift up thy voice for understanding; if thou seek her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou apprehend the fear of Jehovah, and find the knowledge of God. For Jehovah giveth wisdom; out of his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright, a shield to those that walk in integrity; guarding the paths of just judgment and keeping the way of his saints. Then thou shalt understand righteousness and judgment and equity-every good path” (vers. 1-9).

As we are begotten of God's will by the word of truth, so to receive His words, and lay up His commandments with one, is the constant condition of blessing. We see in Luke 10 our Lord deciding for Mary the good part which should not be taken from her. In this Martha complained of her sister's indifference. For she herself was wrong in judging Mary's sitting at His feet and hearing His word. It is really to incline the ear to wisdom, and to apply the heart to understanding. Yet this is not all; for at the beginning of Luke 11 our Lord shows the need and the value of earnest prayer also. So here to cry after discernment, to lift up the voice for understanding follows according to God the reception of His words. We are called to dependence and to confidence in thus importunately looking up; for every good gift and every perfect giving is from the Father of lights, as Solomon could attest, who thus sought and found wisdom.

Our age can testify the zeal with which men seek silver and gold and other hidden treasures; as Solomon's day of magnificence and noble designs of an earthly sort was famous for its success, for that enterprise was conducted by his skill beyond any other monarch. Now it is the mere vulgar thirst for lucre to spend on vanity and self-indulgence to a degree without parallel in the breadth of its diffusion. But now, as then, the toils are immense, the dangers continual, the sufferings extreme, the experience full of bitter trial and frequent disappointment, the moral atmosphere shameless. But the quest demands in any case constancy and endurance and undaunted resolution; and thence does the Holy Spirit draw the lesson where no disappointment can be. “If thou seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou apprehend the fear of Jehovah and find the knowledge of God.” Jehovah is full of goodness and mercy. So here He “giveth wisdom,” when the heart is thus in earnest. It is the reversal of man's dream of education. Man is proud of his own acquisitions. “Jehovah giveth wisdom; out of his mouth [not of man's mind or heart] come knowledge and understanding.” Where are we to find what “His mouth” gives out but in His word?

Solomon failed to maintain the brightness of his beginning; and old age found him foolish about his wives and faithless about the glory of Him Who had given him all that made him what he was at first. Still less could Solomon guarantee wisdom for the son that succeeded to his throne; none acted less wisely than Rehoboam, and his humiliation was not small. But “Jehovah giveth wisdom,” He only and surely, to such as wait on Him with purpose of heart, and diligent search into and value for the treasures of that word which He has magnified above all His name.

It is plain throughout that not intellectual activity is in question, but what is spiritual and for moral ends practically. Hence in verse 7 it is said, “He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright; a buckler [he is] to those that walk in integrity.” There is assured a supply of what is valued most, and guardian care for those whose eye and heart are toward His revealed will in their ways. But it is wholesome to notice that He guards the path of just judgment, that is, His own chosen way; and He also preserves the way of His saints or godly ones. He knows the way which pleases Him, and He shows it to His own, who desire nothing more than to see and follow it. Christ it is Who brought this out habitually and in manifold forms. See John 1:44; 8:12; 12:26; 14:6. It is as real to-day as when He presented it in following Himself. Indeed the disciples far better knew its blessedness when He went on high and the Spirit came to be in them, Who abides for us to know it now. “Then thou shalt know righteousness and judgment and equity—every good path.” We ought to know it even better and in higher ways than a godly Israelite could.

Proverbs 2:10-22

The preservative power of wisdom is next shown in guarding from moral perils, whether of iniquity or of corruption.

“For wisdom shall enter into thy heart and knowledge be pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall watch over thee, understanding shall keep thee:—to deliver thee from the way of evil, from the man that speaketh froward things; [from those] who forsake the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice to do evil-delight in the frowardness of evil; who in their paths are crooked, and pervert in their course—to deliver thee from the strange woman, from the stranger who flattereth with her words; who forsaketh the friend of her youth and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead; none that go unto her return again, nor attain unto the paths of life;-that thou mayest walk in the way of the good and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the land, and the treacherous shall be plucked out of it” (vers. 10-22).

How admirable is the wisdom Jehovah gives the heart! and not less on the negative or dark side than on the positive; especially where the knowledge that accompanies it is pleasant to the soul. Discretion and discernment follow with vigilance against an evil world. Violence and greed are not the only dangers, but the way of evil through deceitful speech. Silence is not always golden; but “the tongue of the just is choice silver” (Prov. 10:20); or as the N. T. exhorts, “let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” How powerful is the soft and pure answer, not only to turn away wrath, but to check heat and pride and will! It is dangerous to hear froward things; it is wicked to speak them. How soon after this the paths of uprightness are forsaken to walk in the ways of darkness! Evil words allowed lead to a walk which God's light never illumines. How sad the descent in rejoicing to do evil! Delighting in the frowardness, or deceits of evil! It is to glory in the worst shame. How crooked in their paths and perverse in their course! Truly their judgment is just.

But the discretion that flows from wisdom is no less efficacious to guard from “the strange woman” (16), and her flattering words, where lust reigns, not love, and selfish passion, not true affection and tender regard. Debauchery is all that could be expected from her that forsakes the guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.

We do not hear the glad tidings of grace in this book. There is no gospel call throughout. It addresses those who are under the law and the covenant, whoever else may profit by it. If it is very excellent for any man that has ears, and those who know most of grace and heavenly privilege will most prize it, its voice direct is to the ancient people of God, to Israel. For them all flows simply and easily. There is no strain of a single sentence or word, no need of accommodation, no lending it a sense which it does not truly contain or convey. In it therefore “Jehovah” appears regularly, and “Elohim” rarely used has its exceptional force.

By the way, remark how the notion of various writers here or any where indicated by such designations is the shallowest of dreams. It may afford pleasant pastime to men who, not knowing God (or, at least, beguiled and blinded by such), find in its cultivation a field for imagination and ingenuity without truth, conscience, or love, a mere linguistic or intellectual tour de force whetted by the keen will to damage and deface every landmark of divine authority.

It is evident that corruption, especially when it takes the form of the violation of a holy relationship is as hateful to God as it is destructive to man. See how Babylon and its counterpart is spoken of and dealt with in the Revelation. So here it is said that “her house inclineth unto death, and her path unto the dead.” This Israel as a people had to prove, before Christendom existed to follow the fatal wake. It is no less true of individuals. “None that go unto her (the corrupting woman) return again, nor attain unto the paths of life.”

Wisdom then from Jehovah it is that ensures discretion to walk in the way of the good and to keep the paths of the righteous. So were led the faithful of old; but how much brighter is the light of life in following Him Whose ways and words here below we know from God as of none else! Yet was Jehovah's word, before He shone in this world of darkness, a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. And the day hastens when it will be made manifest to every eye that “the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.” What was plainly attested in the days of David and Solomon is but a witness to the full display of this truth in the coming kingdom, when “the wicked shall be cut off from the land, and the treacherous shall be plucked out of it.”

Proverbs 3:1-4

The opening chapters set out moral wisdom in the fear of Jehovah as the true and sure preservative in a world of self will and its evils of violence and corruption. Redemption is not introduced any more than a new nature, but the duty primarily for the Israelite of subjection to divine instruction, with the consequent establishment in the land when the wicked perish out of it.

Here follows still more ample exhortation as well as admonition, that the discipline might issue in the happiest and most fruitful results.

“My son, forget not my teaching, but let thy heart keep my commandments: for length of days and years of life and peace shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the tablet of thy heart; and thou shalt find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (vers. 1-4).

We thus learn how far the O. T. was from casting the people of God on the sentiments, emotions, or reasonings of their own hearts. It was but an imperfect or at least partial revelation. “For the law made nothing perfect.” The first man was under process of trial; the Second had not yet appeared. There were dealings of God and testings of man; revelations from God, but not yet God revealed. For the Son of God had not come nor given us an understanding that we might know Him that is True.

Yet even in the days when faith waited for its Object and His work, and the best blessing then lay in promise, the heart was formed by the positive teaching afforded, and trained in the observance of commandments which came from God. They might come through a parent; and such no doubt was the due order in Israel, as it had been marked from their father Abraham, as Jehovah deigned to express His pleasure in his commanding his children and his household, that they might keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment. But what gave divine value was that it was His teaching, and that the commandments enjoined were His. This alone sanctifies-obeying God, obeying His word, the effect and proof of love, when any are in relationship with God. Nor do we forget but remember what we love and value.

So the Lord puts it in His matchless way to the disciples. “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself unto him” (John 14:21). What a contrast with dark superstition, forbidden to have His commandments through fear of making an ill use of them, and shut up to a sinful director, and to its tradition nobody knows whence, both human and precarious at best! What a contrast with the yet darker sin, which denies the authority of God to every scripture, and thereby would deprive His words of spirit and life! Even a Jew was not so bereft of blessing. He was called not to forget what he had been taught, and his heart to observe commandments which were Jehovah's, only through Moses or any other that communicated them. What a blessed picture Luke 2 sets before us of the Lord, thus obedient in the days of His early sojourn, subject to Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, yet conscious of a higher relationship and so occupied with His

Father's things! And blessed were the fruits. Even then truly, as He said afterward, He kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love. So here it is written for the obedient Israelites, “length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.” But this is far from all. As we know that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” the Israelite was exhorted to cherish confidence in mercy, or loving kindness, and truth. Let them “not forsake thee,” is the word. He was entitled to believe and count on them habitually and evermore. “Bind them about thy neck, write them upon the tablet of thy heart.” What ornament can compare with them? What inward lesson so cheering and invigorating! “And thou shalt find favor and good understanding [if this last be the shade of sense here meant] in the sight of God and man.” So we see in our perfect pattern. Our Lord assuredly found in His unequaled path of subjection “favor” with God and man, as we are told. Whether the word often rendered “good understanding” is not modified here as sometimes elsewhere may be questioned. But as it stands, it was a good and welcome stamp of divine approval through devotedness to God's will, without either self-seeking or men-pleasing. Happy, when as here, it comes as the answer without as well as on high, to grace and truth written on the heart! Now too one word, Christ, expresses all; and the Spirit of the living God is given to us who believe, that He may be written truly and deeply on those tablets of flesh, our hearts. How rich the grace wherein we stand! For we all, contemplating with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Lord the Spirit.

Proverbs 3:5-8

Confidence in God, and in the relationship He forms for us with Him, is the fruit of faith. It is the next call here; and it found ever the sure answer of His grace. It ought to be still more easy for the Christian, seeing that how many soever be the promises of God, in Christ is the Yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen unto the glory of God through us. This is just as it should be for the saints passing through a wilderness world. If all were fulfilled in us, the changed state of glorification would be incompatible with the needed trial. But that they are fulfilled in Him, that in Him is the Yea, is the ground of peace and joy and comfort; and victory for us is exactly what the God of all grace meant that we should have in the fullest measure by the Holy Ghost given to us. For we have in Christ's redemption the remission of our sins, and only await His coming for adoption, the redemption of our bodies, having already the Spirit of the Son sent into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. What a power of deliverance from leaning upon our own understanding!

“Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own discernment; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall make straight thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear Jehovah, and depart from evil; it shall be health for thy navel, and moisture for thy bones” (vers. 5-8).

Worthily does the chapter open with the call to trust in Jehovah. As He, He only, is God, so was He the God of the fathers, the God of Israel. How blessed for the Israelite that he had Him to trust in! that He even demanded his trust! He was in no way exhorted to trust himself. He was but a creature whose breath is in his nostrils: what is he to be accounted of? It was wise to have done with man to lean on, wiser still to trust in Jehovah. Yes, He was and is the eternal God, merciful, gracious, slow to wrath, great in goodness and truth, keeping His goodness to thousands of generations, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet holding no guilty one as innocent, but visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the sons and on the sons of sons, on the third and on the fourth generation. Not that this is His language to the Christian or the church, but just His declaration of Himself to Moses the mediator for Israel, that they should know His governing character and principles.

Yes, it was good and right to trust in Jehovah with all the heart, and to “lean not on one's own discernment,” as the tempter always advises to ruin, sorrow, and shame. This is the divine counsel for the heart. But the Israelite needed also to “acknowledge Him in all his ways.” And the heart if loyal would prompt to honor Him thus. For practical inconsistency is a burden to the upright; and it is due to Jehovah to own Him where He is apt to be ignored, or forgotten in each detail of walk, and in them all. Nor was it even without present fruit, for He could not be unmindful Who never slumbers or sleeps. “And He shall make straight thy paths.” He is Lord of all, no less than He is the Eternal, and concerns Himself with every obstacle and difficulty for such as would walk unswervingly according to His will.

The great danger for all, though for some of thought and experience more than others, is to seek counsel from within. Yet experience should have taught the reflecting a less flattering tale. All

scripture re-echoes what is here written, “Be not wise in thine own eyes.” The bait of Satan was to become so; and man has ever coveted it. How blessed when we learn our folly and find an incomparably better wisdom open to us! Certainly to the Christian, to them that are called both Jews and Greeks, the crucified Christ preached to us is God's power and God's wisdom. What they counted foolishness is wiser than men; and what looked the extremity of weakness is stronger than men. Of God are we in Christ Jesus, Who from God was made to us wisdom and all things. Well may we glory in Him.

But there is a word for conscience as well as heart; and none the less now, but more when, having been purged once for all, we have no more conscience of sins. “Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil.” Was there ever true fear of Him without pardon? Certainly Psa. 130:4 makes clear, that there is pardon with Him that He may be feared. Without it, what can the fear be but servile and tainted? This nerves the soul to “depart from evil.” We hate it, because He hates it; and such doubtless it is in itself, intrinsically evil. We turn away from what the serpent commands, trembling at His word. A son honors his father, a servant his master. His honor, His fear, are no longer light things to us. And the effect is wholesome and blessed. “It shall be health for thy navel, and moisture for thy bones.” The boast of altruism might perhaps in a way suit an angel, not a sinner nor a saint. We need to be blessed that we may be a blessing to others; we need and have God in Christ the Lord and Savior. We love Him because He first loved us. Is it a wonder that all then goes on well? How sad when it is not so!

Read Job 1:1-8; 2:3; and think what pleasure God takes in him that fears Himself and abstains from evil. He knew all the while the weak point and danger for Job; but Satan failed to reach it by his hostile measures, Jehovah did through Job's friends, though they were beyond comparison more faulty than Job, and indebted to his intercession to shield them from His dealing according to their folly, wise as they had thought themselves.

Proverbs 3:9-12

Prosperity, and chastening, are treated, each in the next pair of verses respectively. Let us hear the wise king, inspired now with the best wisdom for man on the earth; and first in view of earthly blessing on the due recognition of the living God.

“Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine” (vers. 9, 10).

Jehovah is precisely that designation of God which He gave to Israel that they might learn His ways and bear witness to Him in His earthly government. Things are sadly changed now; for His people played Him false, went after strange gods, and rejected His Anointed. But He abides the same, and will arise and have mercy on Zion; and when He does, the nations shall fear His name, and all the kings of the earth His glory. But when things looked fair, and Judah and Israel were many, and the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as sycamores for abundance, this was the word, “Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of thine increase.” It is always morally true, though then when the reality of direct divine government was being shown, the result was unfailing: “so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine.” The rejection of Christ brought in the revelation of heavenly hopes for believers, and sufferings, persecutions, etc., with better spiritual blessings even while they are here. The text speaks of normal results for the earth and Israel on it.

But, man being as he is, there is another side, which brings out divine goodness yet more strikingly. “His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men.” Still more closely bearing on us, we read that “the eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous, and his ears are toward their cry. The face of Jehovah is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth"; as on the other hand “Jehovah is nigh to those that are of a broken heart and saveth those that be of a contrite spirit.” Hence the need and the blessing of His ways with our ways.

“My son, despise not the instruction of Jehovah, neither be weary of his chastisement; for whom Jehovah loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (vers. 11, 12).

There is, as always, another and more intimate kind of divine government, and this wholly independent of the public state of things. It was true when Solomon reigned and wrote; it is only more fully disclosed and deeply known under the gospel. There is ever a government of souls, and here it is stated with all simplicity. How affectionate the call! “My son, despise not the instruction of Jehovah, neither be weary of his chastisement.” For these are the snares of the enemy: either to make light of His training on the one hand; or on the other to sink under His reproof, as if He dealt hardly with us.

The Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 12:5,6) appropriates this ancient order, and applies it to the Christian now, pointing out the love which acts unfailingly when we fail as we too often do, Nor is the blessed object less which the Father of spirits has toward us; for it yields peaceable fruit in those thus exercised, though for the present it seems not joyous but grievous. There is therefore

no ground in it for despondency, but the best reason for the lame that they be not turned out of the way but rather be healed.

The first Epistle of Peter (1 Peter 1:15-17) is no less plain. “As he who called you is holy, be ye also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to the work of each, pass the time of your sojourn in fear.” It is now that the Father judges His children in the love that will make us hate our every inconsistency; for His grace has through Christ and His work exempted us from that future judgment which is appointed for all that believe not, and walk in evil and darkness (John 5:23-28).

Even more explicit is the word in 1 Cor. 11:29-32. The apostle explains that in the sickness and death that fell on not a few saints at Corinth the Lord was judging those who did not discern or discriminate themselves, but walked carelessly, even as to the Lord's Supper. But when thus judged now, “we are chastened (or, disciplined) of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” It is a present moral dealing which might go as far as cutting off; but even so, it was His chastisement in love, that saints should not share the world's condemnation, as all unbelievers must.

The reason given in our text and cited in the N.T. bears out fully the love from which present chastening flows. “For whom Jehovah loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” It is not always however because of evil done; His chastening may be to guard us from evil. It may be preventive, as well as corrective. Shall we not, as children confiding in Him, accept it with thanksgiving? We have the distinct proof of His love. Let us never doubt, but believe and bow.

Proverbs 3:13-20

But chastening or discipline is far from all, proof though it be of Jehovah's love. There is positive blessing to reap and of a high order. “Blessed [is] the man [that] findeth wisdom, and the man [that] getteth understanding. For the gain thereof [is] better than the gain of silver, and her revenue than fine gold. She [is] more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not equal to her. Length of days [is] in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways [are] ways of pleasantness, and all her paths [are] peace. She [is] a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and blessed [is] he that retaineth her. Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew” (vers. 13-20).

It is God, we are told in a later revelation, that giveth liberally to all, and without reproach. Yet He will be asked for it: not that any one adds to Him, or that He is beholden to man's hand. But He cannot deny Himself; and this it would be, if one found wisdom or got understanding elsewhere. The blessing comes through dependence on Him. Who of mankind knew this better than Solomon himself? Did not God say to him, “Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy word.” Nor is there another means; and “blessed” indeed is he that proves afresh that God is true and faithful as He ever is. Even the beloved Son, when He in grace deigned to become man, even Jesus so walked here below from tender years, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. He received all as man from His Father.

If it was so with the Jew before Jehovah, is the blessedness less now that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding to know Him that is true? Is He less accessible, or less gracious now that He is revealed as Christ's Father and our Father, His God and our God? Has He not abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, and this of the highest character and largest hope, in accordance with our calling and inheritance? And if for the greatest things, does this kind of blessing fail for the least things day by day? How true that the gain thereof is better than the gain of silver, and the revenue than fine gold? Surely we can say that the wisdom that comes down from above is more precious than rubies, and that all the things one can desire are not equal to the rich boon of divine favor.

Willingly do we bow to Jehovah's promise of wisdom to the Israelite, of “length of days” to be in her right hand, and of “riches and honor” in her left hand. He that died and rose again has brought us deeper grace and shown us a yet more excellent way; so that what things were gain one has in one's measure counted loss for Christ, and it may be, as it surely ought to be, to count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, to count them dung that one may win Him and be found in Him in that heavenly glory where He is, renouncing all righteousness save what is through the faith of Him, the righteousness which is of God by faith. This is indeed Christian privilege; that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of

His sufferings, being made comformable to His death, if by any means, no matter how trying the way, one might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, as Paul knew pre-eminently.

Not only is such experimental wisdom as the apostle expresses in Philippians alien to all that flesh and blood values, but it rises unspeakably higher than all that was or could be revealed of old, as for instance in the Proverbs or even the Psalms. It awaited the presence of the Son of God, the work of redemption, and the sending down of the Holy Spirit from the glorified Head. The wisdom and the understanding, of which this book treats, remain ever for man on the earth; and Jehovah will doubtless thus bless His people looking to Him for these good gifts in the day of power and glory; for the word He has spoken cannot fail but shall stand everlastingly. But man's evil, and the Jew's in particular, has given occasion for God to bring “some better thing” in every way. Of this we see the basis and substance and exemplar in Christ crucified, risen, and set in the highest glory, quite above all O.T. expectations. And we know that “the wisdom of God in a mystery” is not confined to His heavenly and universal exaltation, but in God's sovereign purpose embraces us too who have believed in Him since the cross. It is the hidden wisdom, as the apostle adds (1 Cor. 2:7), which God ordained before the world unto our glory: but a glory which now calls for, not length of days on earth, or riches or honor, but fellowship with Christ's sufferings “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” It is just Christianity in contrast with all before and its hope for the heavens in the day when the earth also shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

Still, whether the wisdom be of the general kind for the earth, or of that higher and heavenly kind which we now know in Christ, we can truly say that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” When our Lord tasted rejection, and sufferings, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief beyond all, none the less was it His to say “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage!” It is ours thus to follow Him, living on account of Him as He on account of the Father; but it can only be by making Him our constant food (John 6:57). So here wisdom is said to be “a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and blessed is he that retaineth her.” How much more can we boast of what He is to our souls by faith! The oracle before us can add, “Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens; by His knowledge the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew:” blessed witness of His multifarious wisdom and unlimited understanding, as His knowledge directed the devastation of the deluge and orders the kindly refreshings of a peaceful night. The one word, Christ, recalls to us heights and depths more wondrous far.

Proverbs 3:21-35

If Jehovah manifested wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in creation and in its least things as well as the greatest, how vain in all to forego the quest, or the means open to them from on high!

“My son, let them not depart from thine eyes; keep true counsel and discretion: so shall they be life to thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid, but thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, nor of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh; for Jehovah shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken” (vers. 21-26).

Change is a snare to the young especially; hence Jehovah's wise ways were no more to depart from their eyes than they were to be wise in their own eyes: life inwardly, honor outwardly, would follow; the walk be secure, the foot stumble not. Nor would the night bring fear but sweet sleep. Nor would alarm surprise when the storm falls on the wicked, for Jehovah is the confidence against all snares and terrors.

“Withhold not good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbor, Go and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou past it by thee. Devise not evil against thy neighbor, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm. Envy not the man of violence, and choose none of his ways. For the perverse [is] an abomination to Jehovah; but his secret [is] with the upright. The curse of Jehovah [is] in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the righteous. He indeed scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace to the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools (vers. 27-35).

The heart is deceitful as well as suspicious in a world of evil. Hence the importance of the simple-hearted integrity which confiding in Him gives. He that gives (exhorted the apostle), in simplicity, which is liberality. The lack of looking to Jehovah brings crookedness in dealing with man; the bowels of compassion are closed. The same lack may be even mischievous, and quarrelsome, instead of, if possible, as far as depends on us, living peaceably with all. And why envy the violent man, or choose any of his short cuts? All these ways are turned aside from God's will, which alone is good, acceptable, perfect, and which alone makes happy him who learns it in Christ. The perverse is an abomination to Jehovah, as His secret is with the upright. “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” So His curse is not only on the person but on the house of the wicked, as He blesseth the habitation of the righteous. Neither wealth can avert the one nor poverty prevent the other.

Yet there is an evil even lower, and never did it abound so much as in the end of the closing days as now, scorn or mocking, where self reigns unblushingly in contempt of all that is good and noble and generous, as well as holy and true. But “He indeed scorneth the scorners,” as surely as “He giveth grace to the lowly.” The wise shall understand, as Daniel assures; but, further, “the wise shall inherit glory,” whereas “shame shall be the promotion of the foolish,” whatever the deception

of present appearances or of such as trust them. “Judge not according to sight (said the Lord), but judge righteous judgment.”

Chapter 219

Proverbs 4:1-19

Much depends on the way in which instruction is given. We see its perfection in the great Teacher as depicted opening His mission in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22). There He had been brought up, and there He read a prophecy which beyond doubt applied to Him alone, as soon appeared; and all bore Him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth. Alas! they clashed with the will of man, and roused implacable anger, which showed itself even then murderously. But wisdom is justified of her children, whatever self-will may do or say. Let us then pursue the scripture before us.

“Hear, ye sons, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: forsake ye not my law. For I was a son to my father, tender and an only one in the sight of my mother. And he taught me and said to me—Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget not neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall keep thee; love her, and she shall preserve thee. The beginning of wisdom [is], Get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thy head a garland of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee” (vers. 1-9).

The form chosen is that of a father, not of a legislator. It is not therefore even a catechism of the “ten words,” but parental instruction; and attention is called in order to intelligence or discernment. The same Spirit Who took His part in creation, Who gave skill for the glory of Jehovah, Who wrought in all that was good and great and holy, would here engage the young heart to hear. For He assuredly has good doctrine to give, and would guard against forsaking His law or teaching. The instrument employed can speak of the loving care bestowed on his own early days, when he was “a son to his-father, tender and only beloved in the sight of his mother.” The affections are thus recalled to awaken the new duties. It was not only that the teacher had himself been taught, but that he who did so appealed touchingly. “Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live.”

It is not language or letters or science, but that education of which the fear of Jehovah is the foundation. It supposes neither a state of innocence, such as once was, nor a prohibitory test when fallen man thought himself quite able to do all that Jehovah spoke against the evil he was prone to. Mercy, divine mercy, deigned to supply what neither the individual nor the race possessed. It is true that man has a conscience; he knows good and evil, but only as a sinful creature, the good that he would not doing, but doing the evil that he would not: a truly miserable state, from which redemption alone furnishes an adequate deliverance in the power of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

This deliverance, we all recognize, is not the subject handled here, but the instruction that is addressed to subject hearts, like the rest of the O. T., within the ancient people of God. But now it is for the Christian to profit by it to the uttermost; for “all things are ours.” The book does not give the exalted Head nor the heavenly glory we are to share with Him as members of His body, nor the

duties which flow from that relationship; but it does reveal divine wisdom for a saint here below, first in general moral principles (1-9), then in the greatest affluence of details to chapter 29, with a fitting close in chapters 30, 31.

Thus the exhortation is, “Get wisdom, get understanding; forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth.” Obedience, heart-obedience, is sought. Could Jehovah be content with anything short of it? Could one of His people desire otherwise? Undoubtedly self-will is the great and constant hindrance; and the enemy would excite it, and shut out God by the objects without and the passions within. All the deeper is the need of instruction, and in the varied way just indicated, which divine goodness here supplies. Here we have a father's authority urged, and the responsibility of sons claimed. This was always true for man here below, as the law long after recognized; and it holds good now that we are no longer under the child-guide.

They were not to forsake wisdom, which has preservative power to “love her, and she shall keep thee.” The beginning of wisdom, as we are forcibly told, is to “get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.” Those who are of God pass through a world of evil and need wisdom from above to keep them; for it is a wilderness where is no way, save that which grace provides for faith. Suffering there will be for Christ's sake as well as for righteousness; but “exalt her [not self], and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her, she shall give to thy head a garland of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.” How sure will all this be in due time! David in his earlier days was a fine example. He went at his father's bidding in no pride or naughtiness of heart, and as he exalted wisdom in the fear of Jehovah, so was he promoted, and, embracing her, was brought to honor. He behaved himself wisely, so that his enemy was compelled to own him blessed-that he should both do great things and still prevail. Yet was he tried beyond most.

Proverbs 4:10-19

The way of wisdom is next contrasted with that of the wicked; and here the exhortation is individualized.

“Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be multiplied. I will teach thee in the way of wisdom; I will lead thee in the paths of uprightness. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil [men]; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause [some] to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is as the shining light going on and brightening to the perfect day. The way of the wicked [is] as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” (vers. 10-19).

It is not by the sight of the eyes nor by the activity of the mind, nor even by the cultivation of the affections, that the wisdom here commended comes. “Hear, and thy soul shall live,” said Isaiah; and so the apostle, “Faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” No doubt the coming of the Son of God brought this truth and every other into an evidence before unknown. But the principle ever applied. Whoever obtained a good report obtained it by faith, and faith rests on God's word, as Christ is the main object of it all, however much be corrective or disciplinary. Hence the word here is, “Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be multiplied.” Nor is there uncertainty when Jehovah furnishes the means “I will teach thee in the way of wisdom, I will lead thee in the paths of uprightness.” The happy result is assured to such as believe that it is from Him, and doubt not His interest in His people and their blessing. “When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble” Nevertheless earnestness of purpose is called for, and fidelity of heart. “Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life.”

Only we have to add that now the door of mercy is opened to those who have weighed money for that which is not bread, and earnings for that which satisfieth not,-yea, have been children of folly and have wallowed in sin. Grace can meet the deepest need, and Christ brings to God the most dark and distant. See wisdom in Luke 7 justified of all her children, eminently in one who might have been deemed hopelessly corrupt. But is anything too hard for the Lord? He assuredly and openly vindicated the persistent soul who hid herself behind His love that owned hers coming by faith. Indeed it was faith which produced that love, and saved her; as He bade her go in peace, which His blood would make unfailing and unbreakable: all in due time.

But we have the opposite way not less clearly for warning; the way where one turns off from God and wanders anywhere else. “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil [men]; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” How urgent and importunate the voice of divine goodness and love! And it is none too loud, but most requisite; for the calls, and ties, and snares are many and manifold. But the word is unmistakably plain and pointed. And what a picture

follows of the zeal on the side of evil “For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause [some] to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.” It is their life, nourishment, and joy if joy it can be called, to mislead, injure, and destroy. But on the other hand, “the path of the righteous is as the shining light going on and brightening to the perfect day.” How we can bless God that Christ is this way; and there is but one in, but not of, this world, for He is the true light. “But the way of the wicked is as darkness,” and this so profound, and they so blind, that “they know not at what they stumble.” Grace alone calls and keeps by faith.

Proverbs 4:20-27

The chapter concludes with a renewed call to heed a father's words clothed with the authority of Jehovah.

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thy heart. For they are life to those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart more than all thou guardest; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee perverseness of mouth, and corruption of lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and be all thy ways well-ordered. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil” (vers. 20-27).

As parental affection in the fear of Him Who deigns to teach young no less than old would bring lessons of wisdom before the child, the listening ear, the attentive mind, cannot be dispensed with. Personal respect, however due, is not enough: the ears, the eyes, and above all the heart, have their part to do. Such training is to be kept “in the midst” of the heart. What else is to be compared with what has Christ for its source, character, object, and aim? “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” No wonder then that it can be added, “for they are life to those that find them and health to all their flesh “; or, as the apostle says to his genuine son Timothy, “godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation.” No doubt too Christianity has given immense accession to the truth by the coming of the Son of God. For “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He Who was manifested in flesh, was justified in spirit, was seen of angels, was preached among Gentiles, was believed on in the world, was received up in glory.” Yes, the secret of piety is in Him thus known as He is; and all else is but a fair show in the flesh, which flickers for a moment before it is extinguished forever.

Hence the call to “keep thy heart more than all thou guardest.” The utmost vigilance is needed and due; “for out of it are the issues of life.”

Scripture ever and truly views the heart as the moral center on which all outward conduct and walk depend. Hence the Lord in Luke 8 speaks of those who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience; as in John xv. He said, If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you. This indeed is piety: to abide in Him Who is life and salvation and peace, to have His words, yea not only obeyed but constantly cherished, with prayers going up and answers coming down accordingly. No wonder then that His Father is glorified, much fruit borne, and the Lord Jesus not ashamed to own such as His disciples.

But there is meanwhile evil still allowed to go on around; and what is so trying, it is in our nature, the old man. That it was crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be annulled, so that we might no longer be slaves to sin, is our blessed knowledge by faith. This is no real reason that we should deny the existence of that evil thing in us, but the best and most powerful ground why

sin should not “reign” in our mortal body. For we are not under law but under grace. Hence though this knowledge could not then be possessed, yet then as now the word is “Put away from thee perverseness of mouth, and corruption of lips put far from thee.” The Epistle of James is the plain proof of the importance attached to this, and yet more pressed, if possible, than of old; but how deplorable the unbelief that stood in doubt of its inspired authority and exceeding value in its own sphere! Nor did the Lord Himself slight the same need and danger when He taught; nor the great apostle of the uncircumcision any more than those of the circumcision.

There is another call quite as urgent. “Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Christ ever was the object of faith, and He is now revealed as the way, no less than the truth and the life. But, morally speaking, the eye is of great moment, the state of our spiritual vision. As Christ gives us eyes who were born blind, so only He makes and keeps our vision clear. “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (Luke 11:34, 35). Let us not forget the searching word. Christ guides safely but by the single eye.

Nor are we left without direction in detail. “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be well-ordered.” Negligence is no more of faith than haste; and we slip in both ways through lack of dependence and attention to the word of God.

The path of Christ is narrow, but direct through this world to Himself in glory. The saints were ever called to walk with God before their eyes; and His will is now declared thus to honor the Son. Hence “Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.” For evil lies on both sides.

Proverbs 5:1-14

Here the call of the son is to attend to “my wisdom,” before “a strange woman” is depicted vividly. Corruption demands and receives a yet deeper guard than violence.

“My son, attend to my wisdom, incline thine ear to mine understanding, that thou mayest keep reflection, and thy lips may preserve knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop honey, and her mouth [is] smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on Sheol. Lest she should ponder the path of life, her ways are unstable, she knoweth [it] not. And now, children, hearken to me, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house; lest thou give thine honor to others, and thy years to the cruel; lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors [go] to the house of an alien; and thou mourn in thine end, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and thou say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to those that instructed me! I was well nigh in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly” (vers. 1-14).

Evil men were bad, a strange woman worse still. A higher wisdom is used, and an exercised understanding, that there may be discretion and knowledge so to apply the principle on the largest scale. The beast is lawless and shall perish utterly; but Babylon is even more loathsome, as to the Lord, so to all who seek His mind There is nothing in nature so lovely as affection; but how ruinous and defiling, where the fear of God does not guide it! He it is that puts and keeps us in our relationships which are the ground of our duties. But a strange woman is such because she ignores and forsakes them, and seeks to entice others. Fair words of flattery may be the beginning, sweet to the flesh; but her end is bitterness extreme, and frequently deep wounds. Nor is it loss of present happiness only, but the end of those things is death, and after death comes the judgment. Satan employs her to hinder all reflection and to shut out all light from above. The strange woman abuses the quick perception of her sex to baffle moral discernment by such changes as none else can know. Thus will works without check, and conscience is more and more numbed by self-indulgence.

And what is the counsel here given? Prompt and thorough steering clear. “And now, children, hearken to me, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.” So must every one act who would preserve moral purity. The path of life is far from her and her house. Christ alone gives life eternal and guides it; His word is for one in such a world as this, Follow Me. Is the warning not heeded? More follows to lay bare the paths of death. For there is a righteous government, whatever the complication in this life. Selfishness reaps its sad recompence. None can yield to it with impunity. Beware then of self-indulgence, “lest thou give thine honor to others, and thy years to the cruel; lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors go to the house of an alien; and thou mourn in thine end, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and thou say, How have I hated instruction, and my

heart despised reproof; and I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to those that instructed me! I was well nigh in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." Bitter self-reproach is the end of the honey and oil which captivated at the beginning; and no wonder, after a career of sin and shame. It is a retrospect of guilty self-pleasing, the headiness that valued no authority, yielding neither respect nor obedience. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Nor is it the least painful reflection that all the evil committed was "in the midst of the congregation and assembly." This was no doubt that of Israel wherein all then revealed was by Jehovah. There was hypocrisy therefore covering the sins. How much more is the similar wickedness, when and where the fullest light of God is enjoyed!

Proverbs 5:15-23

In contrast with the fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and even here have no result but shame, Jehovah set up the holy relations of marriage in the sinless Paradise of Eden. What a safeguard for man when an outcast through his own sin! What folly and ungodliness the dream of a Plato, which would dispense with the reality of one's own wife, one's own husband, one's own children in his ideal republic! Certainly there was no wisdom, nor understanding, in such a scheme. It is vagrancy of the most debasing kind. How gracious of Him to warn and guard weak passionate man from his own ruinous will!

“Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Should thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of water in the broadways? Let them be only thine own, and not for strangers with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed; rejoice in the wife of thy youth. A lovely hind and a, graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; with her love be ravished continually. And why shouldest thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before Jehovah's eyes, and he pondereth all his paths. His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of discipline; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray” (vers. 15-23).

Two things become man that fears God. There is the outgoing of heart that loves his neighbor, or, as we Christians add, that loves our enemies in the spirit of the gospel. There is also the centering of the affections within the family. This last the father here would impress on his son. Here therefore the due place of the wife comes before us. It is the human relationship that survives from the beginning when sin was not; it is quite as essential now that the offense abounds. Wandering affections are selfish, carry their own shame, and have a permanent sting. As Jehovah instituted the sacred enclosure of the family round the parents, so He sanctions and enjoins warm affections in the head towards his counterpart. It is the most intimate bond of society at large as of the home circle.

Heathenism, as we know, conceived its deities jealous of human happiness: it is easily understood; for as the apostle tells us, they were but demons, fallen spiritual creatures that sought to drag the human race into their sin and misery, and to keep their victims from the love that delights in reconciling and saving them. There is but one that is good, even God; and He has now fully shown His best good, His grace, in His Only-begotten Son for eternity as well as the life that now is. But even before divine love thus shone out, the unmistakable goodness of Jehovah appears in these home precepts. “Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well;” and all that follows is in keeping. If ver. 16 be rendered rightly in the Vat. Septuagint, it means “Let not waters out of thy fountain be spilled by thee, but let thy waters go into the broadways.” The Alexandrian text goes with the Vulgate and the Authorized English Bible in omitting the negatives, yielding the sense that the children will reflect the parents according to the atmosphere they all breathed. The R.V. prefers the form of query, rather confirming the concentration of the verse preceding, and not adding the dispersion abroad intimated in the

ordinary versions. It may not be easy to decide; but the R.V. has the effect of greater homogeneity, and more naturally falls in with ver. 17, “Let them be only thine own, and not for strangers with thee.” Then the passage becomes more narrowed to the partners of life. And very impressive it is that he who erred publicly in adding so many wives and concubines should be the one inspired to commend a single object of wedded love. “Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice in the wife of thy youth.” The words supplied by translators to introduce ver. 19 are not only uncalled for, but enfeebling to the sense. To be cheerful abroad and morose at home, is to be thankless and unholy. “Let marriage,” exhorts the apostle, “be honorable in all things.” As the A.V. stands, the words read as a stamp of warrant. It is really a call to hold the tie in honor, and this in every respect; and the warning follows there in accordance with ver. 20 here. Nor are the verses that succeed (21-23) to be disconnected. It is wholesome to remember that Jehovah not only honors His own institution for man, but watches over every transgression against it. Very grave is the admonition on His part in ver. 21; too surely descriptive is the sketch in 22, 23 of the sinful folly that goes astray in this. It has been pointed out that the word “shall go astray” is the same word translated “ravished” in a good sense in ver. 19 and in a bad sense in ver. 20. This last prepares for what ver. 23 requires; especially when we compare with it chap. 26:11, “a fool repeateth his folly.” It is a departure, ever going on from bad to worse.

Proverbs 6:1-11

From these grave moral dangers we are next directed to matters of a very different complexion. But if on the surface they seem much less serious, their consequences are often ruinous. How gracious of Jehovah to take notice of things which might seem beneath Him! Is it not due to His deep interest in His people?

“My son, if thou art become surety for thy neighbor (or, friend), —hast stricken thy hand for a stranger, thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, since thou art come into the hand of thy neighbor; go, humble thyself, and importune thy neighbor. Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids; deliver thyself from the [hunter's] hand, and as a bird from the fowler's hand.”

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no chief, overseer, or ruler, provideth her bread in the summer, [and] gathereth her food in the harvest. How long, sluggard, wilt thou lie down? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down! So shall thy poverty come as a rover, and thy want as an armed man” (vers. 1-11).

It was the more notable that Jehovah should counsel His own, who might feel embarrassed by His command to love the neighbor as one's self. Instead of leaving it to human judgment or its conflict with amiable sentiment, He warns of the dangerous consequence in yielding to impulse. If the unwise step has been taken, it is right to acknowledge it, and wrong to break the words which have passed though to hurt. What then is becoming? “Go, humble thyself, and importune thy neighbor.” This is painful, but wholesome. Jehovah will not fail to bless subjection to His word, and make a way of escape for both, though each may have to suffer for his own measure of fault in the transaction.

Does this word then absolutely prohibit such an act of kindness? It assuredly admonishes against the inconsiderate rashness which enters into such an engagement too often. If you are prepared before God to lose all that is at stake, and believe it His will, you are free. But apart even from the claims of nearer relationship, are you not a steward? Are you sure that the undertaking will bear the light? Is it for speculation? But supposing that your words have been spoken, and you wake up to see your folly, do not yield to pride or obstinacy, “deliver thyself “; and this, not by scolding your neighbor, but by confessing the simple truth of your own heedlessness. “Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids” till this is done: He Who thus directs can give efficacy to His word, which is as wise as ours may be foolish.

In full contrast with the earnestness enjoined here is the indolent folly which is next portrayed vividly. The sluggard is sunk so low, that Jehovah bids him learn of the tiny “ant” as his sufficient monitor; so the lilies of the field are made in the N.T. to rebuke anxiety for raiment. Not a word is said of hoarding store for winter, as in fact like many animals they are then torpid for the most part. But their unceasing industry and good order and even care for others in the summer and harvest,

while activity is open to them, may well put to shame the self-indulgent slumberer. If moral weakness in its easy-going has exposed its prey to the hunter and the fowler, so on the listless and lazy, poverty comes like a tramp or an armed man that will not be denied. What goodness on Jehovah's part to guard His people from both snares along their earthly pathway! How salutary for such as are called to higher things!

The Septuagint adds without warrant a lesson from the bee in ver. 8, and gives a quite different turn to ver. 11, making it a promise rather than a threat. One need not say that however such words got into this Greek version, they are without warrant in the Hebrew. The Latin Vulgate follows the latter, not the former.

Proverbs 6:12-19

Unworthy as slothfulness is, bad and unwise for one to be idle, it is far worse to be active in evil; for this works mischief to others without end. The Holy Spirit first draws a portrait of the dangerous man in verses 12-15, and then presents the evils impersonally, save at the close, which are emphatically hateful to Jehovah in vers. 16-19.

“A man of Belial, a wicked person, walketh with a perverse mouth. He winketh with his eyes; he speaketh with his feet; he teacheth with his fingers. Deceits [are] in his heart; he deviseth mischief at all times; he sendeth out discords. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; in a moment shall he be broken, and without remedy. Six [things] Jehovah hateth, yea, seven [are] an abomination of his soul: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness breathing out lies, and he that sendeth out discords among brethren” (vers. 12-19).

The first term reveals the evil source, the second characterizes him humanly and in general, whatever his position. The tongue, given to praise God and to help our fellows, too surely indicates what he is: he walks with a froward and perverse mouth. It is not merely that he feels no affection, but he has only things awry to say. He likes to differ and to insinuate what is painful. Nor is there candor even in his perverse expression. “he winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.” He plies his pertinacious and evil activity with the utmost skill. Not only practicing ill, but having pleasure in those that do it, he in an underhand way loves to make others his instruments: a wink of his eyes suffices for one; a shuffle with his feet influences another; and even his restless fingers give a signal to the third. The evil has a root deeper than his perverse mouth “deceits are in his heart.” Other bad men may seek money, pleasure, ambition. His heart has in it frowardness; and to gratify this perverse spirit is his business and life: “he deviseth mischief at all times.” His pleasure is to set people by the ears: “he sendeth out, or soweth, discords.” He that bows to the written word cannot doubt what will be the issue of a course so ungodly and malicious; but even now how often a blow falls on evil in this world! “Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; in a moment shall he be broken, and without remedy.” The day of the Lord will display this judicial dealing publicly, and far and wide; but from time to time there may be a witness that God is not mocked.

To impress the abhorrence with which Jehovah regards malignant iniquity we have specially evil qualities. They are set forth in a more abstract style, which might not be in the same person, that in the mouth of these two divine testimonies every word should be the more established. “These six Jehovah hateth, yea, seven [are] an abomination to him.” Haughty eyes are first, or a proud look; what a contrast with Him Who made heaven and earth, and all that in them is, when He deigned to become man here below! The dependent and obedient man, meek and lowly in heart, Who ever looked up and did only what pleased His Father, full of compassion toward suffering man, ready to forgive the sinful. “A lying tongue” comes next, Jesus was not true only but the truth; He alone. Far from Him “hands that shed innocent blood,” Himself the holy sufferer to the utmost. But in man

there may be worse still, “a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,” in hateful and unmistakable resemblance to the evil one. What can be more opposed to Jehovah and His Anointed? “The counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

Do we read of men's “feet swift and running to mischief” The Son tells us of the Father running to meet the prodigal. But man under Satan's power, if he cannot kill or injure physically, may inflict a worse wrong as “a false witness breathing out lies.” The goodness of God Who discovers to us the truth about ourselves leads to repentance; and He is the God of peace, in the fullest contrast with him “that sendeth out discords among brethren.” “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” How hateful to Jehovah is he that soweth discords among brethren!

Proverbs 6:20-26

This section turns to another snare of more than usual danger, especially though by no means exclusively for the young. Hence the tenderness of the appeal to influence; hence memories, which did not fail to warn of so insidious a snare in the lusts of the flesh.

“My son, observe thy father's commandment, and forsake not thy mother's law. Bind them continually on thy heart, tie them about thy neck: when thou walkest, it shall lead thee; when thou steepest, it shall keep thee; and [when] thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment [is] a lamb, and the law a light, and reproofs of instruction the way of life: to keep thee from the evil woman, from the smoothness of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, nor let her take thee with her eye-lids; for by means of a whorish woman [one cometh] to a piece of bread, and another's wife doth hunt for the precious soul” (vers. 20-26).

When men bearing the Lord's name are characteristically self-lovers, and disobedient to parents, it is the more urgent for the young and inexperienced to beware of the spirit of the age, and to recognize the place Jehovah gave to a father's command and a mother's teaching. For those who fail in natural affection soon become implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce; instead of love for good, they are traitors, headstrong, and puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. If they hold a form of piety, they deny its power, and are to be promptly turned from.

Here the son is exhorted to lay to heart those precepts to purity from early years, from the mother no less than the father. Indeed it falls to the mother most of all to form the bent of the young. Bind these words therefore “continually on thy heart, tie them about thy neck.” They are both shield and ornament in a world as evil as is the fallen nature. When one walks, do we not need direction? When one sleeps, do we not need to be guarded? And when one awakes alone, is it not good and pleasant to have such a word shining and talking with us?

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law (or teaching) a light.” “A lamp” is excellent in a squalid place, as we are told of the prophetic word; which came when things went wrong, tells of even worse at hand, but assures of divine judgment when least expected. There we are also told of a still better light in the truth fully revealed and crowned by the blessed hope of Christ's coming for scenes more glorious. Here, if it rise not high, the teaching appears to exceed the commandment in breadth, positiveness, and intimacy too: how well then called a “light!” And we are reminded of “reproofs of instruction” as the way of life. How much do we not owe to that which, humbling as it is to our too good opinion of ourselves, takes pains with us in love, and turns even our faults to profitable account!

At length comes the main point here-” to keep thee from the evil woman, from the smoothness of the tongue of a strange woman.” How many a one trusting himself has been decoyed! A little license rapidly betrays into shameful sin. “Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, nor let her take thee with her eye-lids.” If the Jews were God's people, much closer is our relationship as His children, and bought with a price, which they in their blindness despised. We are not our own, and

are called to beware of a whorish woman, and yet more of another's wife, an adulteress; for here the evil is still more heinous, ruin both of soul and body, object too of God's especial judgment.

Proverbs 6:27-35

Still more emphatic is the warning here given, which deals with a more aggravated and destructive evil. It is not now only the evil woman, or a strange woman, or a whorish woman. It is the wife of another as in the last clause; and the language rises in severity, for marriage is a divine tie, and God hates its breach and judges those who break it.

“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his garments not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife: whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. They do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; and [if] he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. Whoso committeth adultery with a woman is void of understanding; he [that] doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and contempt shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy [is] the rage of a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance; he will not regard any ransom, neither will he rest content though thou multipliest gifts” (vers. 27-35).

There is a baseness peculiar to itself, even among the dissolute, for a man to tamper with the wife of another. But lust is insidious on either side; and little beginnings, where that relationship subsists, are apt to go on to great evils. For Satan acts on the flesh, and leads souls which forget God's presence to venture in the vain hope of escape. But can a man take fire to his bosom, and his garments not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched? That corruption will not escape the fire of human vengeance: how much less of divine judgment? Any approach, however small or passing, is dangerous and evil.

The inspired writer contrasts it with stealing even, though men are extremely sensitive of any loss in their property. If dire need were evident, men extenuate a thief when he steals a little rather than perish of starvation. But what is so senseless, no less than abominably sinful, as adulterous iniquity? Pity mingles with blame in the one case; but nothing can excuse the other. It is the foulest dishonor of the husband; it is the life-long ruin of the entrapped wife; it is the shame of the house, and of its connections; it is the abhorrence of God Who judges it. And what must be his resentment who is chiefly wronged? No wonder that the evil-doer is said to lack understanding or heart, and to destroy his own soul. The law laid down fines fourfold, fivefold, and sevenfold, for rising guilt in stealing; but death Moses commanded in Jehovah's name for adultery. If Christendom, pretending to judge the world, betrays its wicked levity, by a lenient sentence, it tells its own tale of corruption, which will draw down the strong hand of the Lord God in judgment.

Even in this world a wound and dishonor will the adulterer get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away, spite of the heathenism which dared to consecrate this enormity and every other; spite of Christendom which did once adopt heathen ways and seems now returning to them even where Protestant zeal once chased them out in a large measure, though never up to the true Christian standard. Here it regards man's feelings. “For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.” The overture of any ransom is vain; to give many gifts contents not him who cannot rest without wrong's condign punishment.

Proverbs 7:1-5

THE chapter opens with a fresh paternal appeal to his “son” individually (vers. 1-5). Then is drawn the graphic picture of a young man void of understanding drawn into the worst corruption by an adulterous woman (vers. 6-23). The close is a call to the “sons” generally, a terse, earnest, and solemn warning (vers. 24-27) of similar character, but deeper still.

“My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments and live; and my teaching as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers; write them upon the tables of thy heart. Say to wisdom, thou [art] my sister, and call intelligence kinswoman; that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger that flattereth with her words” (vers. 1-5).

In this individual appeal the value of the word is urged as the great preservative means. “My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.” There is not only the need of dependence on God when the trial comes, but the positive value of the truth and the divine will infusing one beforehand. Thus is the soul inwardly strengthened within against the snares without, which find the father's precepts in possession of the field. The words are therefore to be kept, and the commandments laid up.

Therein is the path of life; for it is not by bread alone that man lives, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Hence here we read “keep my commandments and live.” Yet the teaching that comes from God, though alone nourishing, is easily injured by self-will, and needs to be vigilantly guarded from a world of evil where defilements abound. Therefore must the teaching be kept as the apple of one's eye. What more jealously prized as invaluable and irreparable? What more exposed to sudden damage?

Other figures are employed to impress the all-importance of heeding the words which express Jehovah's will. “Bind them upon thy fingers; write them upon the tables of thy heart.” Old and New Testaments indicate that rings were worn for weighty use and high authority, not mere show or ornament. Besides, the precepts here were to be written on the heart.

Nor does this suffice the care with which grace forearms those exposed to temptations suited to a fallen nature. In O.T. times little was known of a new life from God. Still it was there, and implied if not clearly taught. Hence the new call: “Say to wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call intelligence kinswoman.” For the reception of God's word made this true. In contrast with one born of the flesh, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” We are begotten by the word of truth, and thus become a sort of first-fruits of His creatures. Our new relationship is with wisdom and understanding, as near of kin, suited, beloved, and necessary.

Thus does God work in His goodness to keep one “from the strange woman, from the stranger that flattereth with her words.” That she was a “stranger” who sought familiarity is enough for any soul with the fear of God. So is man constituted that it should ever be a signal of danger. When formed originally, there was no strangership; but out of the man was she built who was meant to be his

wife, his counterpart. How much greater the peril when, in a fallen condition, “the strange woman” abandons the propriety of her sex, and appeals with flattering words to the vanity, the pride, or the lusts of man!

In the closeness of the Christian relationship, where all are brought by the grace of Christ into the endearing tie of God's children, the danger is enormously increased. For the “neighborhood” of Israelites mutually was a comparatively distant connection and a man's “brethren” meant less in every way than “brethren” in a Christian's life, a term that included sisters as well as brothers. Undoubtedly there are the deepest moral principles in the gospel, and the church: where the law was partial, obscure, and feeble, truth is brought clearly and graciously to view in Christ Himself for those whose it is to walk in the light as God is in the light. But if we are not in the flesh through the deliverance Christ has wrought and given us, the flesh is still in us, and is ever ready by Satan's wiles and the world's influence to ensnare us into self-gratification. Only each walking in faith as having died and as crucified with Him, in continual self-judgment and lively sense of His loving me and Himself given for me, are we kept by God's power. Where this has been forgotten, what dismal falls have been even to the strong! What sad gaps every now and then, where few know the dark histories which lie at their back!

Proverbs 7:6-23

Next is given a graphic sketch of the evil against which the son is warned earnestly. It is a picture divinely drawn from the life.

“For at the window of my house I looked forth from my lattice; and I beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the sons, a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening of the day, in the blackness of night and the darkness. And, behold, there met him a woman [in] the attire of a harlot, and subtle of heart. She [is] clamorous and ungovernable; her feet abide not in her house; now [she is] in the streets, now in the broadways, and lieth in wait at every corner. And she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him, I have peace-offerings; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face; and I have found thee. My bed I have decked with tapestry coverings, with variegated cloths of yarn from Egypt. I have perfumed my couch with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us revel in love until the morning; let us delight ourselves with loves. For the husband [is] not at home and he is gone a long journey; he hath taken the money-bag with him; he will come home at the day of full moon. With her much fair speech she beguiled him; with the flattery of her lips she constrained him. He goeth after suddenly, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, and as in fetters to his correction the fool; till an arrow strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that [it is] for its life” (vers. 6-23).

On the one side is a young man, idle and thoughtless rather than of evil or profligate habits; on the other is a woman given up to shameless immorality; and when a woman abandons all pretension to modesty, who can be so recklessly corrupt or seductive? But the warning impressed is all the more telling because in the youth there is no purpose of lust, any more than of passion in particular, no thought or room for sapping the moral principles generally, no old undermining of the barriers which warded off improper advances. A weak character, hitherto harmless as men say, vain and self-pleasing, is seen in the way of temptation, and gradually verging near the point of danger, as the twilight grows and the darkness favors shameful deeds. For his youth and inexperience make him the more attractive prey to the woman who is sunk to the lowest depths, as regardless of human order as of God the Judge of all.

The “strange woman” has even the attire of a harlot, with a heart more subtle still, yet clamorous and ungovernable. Her house is no home; her unsatisfied will drives her feet into the streets and the broadways; and at every corner she lies in wait. The heedless youth fixes her choice; and giving him the fullest credit for a vacant heart, for a void of understanding, she scruples not at once to storm one so unarmed and unestablished. She caught and kissed him, and strengthening her face to the utmost effrontery, she tells him of her peace-offerings, her vows paid that day. He was the delight of her eyes and soul. Him she came to meet (whom she probably never saw before): his face was diligently sought; and now she had found him. Providence smiled on them, and the feast upon a sacrifice was a happy omen. None could deny that she was a religious woman; she

must pay her vows duly when she ventured on a delicate affair of the heart. Yet she, the wanton, did not blush to speak of the utmost lengths without disguise. “I have decked my bed with tapestry coverings, with variegated cloths of yarn from Egypt; I have perfumed my couch with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us revel in love until the morning; let us delight ourselves with loves.” How terrible and how true is this picture of ritualism and luxury in league, prostituting the name of love to illicit amours and debauchery more guilty than the most brutal!

Nor does she fail to quiet the fears which might cow even the most thoughtless and audacious. For she declares that the man, the husband, was away from home, gone on a long journey, provided with ample funds, and not to return before full moon. It was not a Joseph that listened, but a match for Potiphar's wife that enticed. Who can wonder that the foolish youth, spite of conscience, surrendered! But oh, what pathos in the language which describes him giving himself to ruin of soul and body! “He goeth after her suddenly.” He does not dare to think of Jehovah, or of his own relation to Him, nor yet of father and mother, of brothers or sisters; of the irreparable wrong to the absent husband; of his own sin and crime, to say nothing of yielding to so vile a paramour, or of the affront to society degraded and godless as it is. It is truly “as an ox goeth to the slaughter, and as in fetters to his correction the fool; till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare and knoweth not that it is for its life.”

Proverbs 7:24-27

The close of the chapter is a short, touching, and solemn appeal.

“And now, sons, hearken to me, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thy heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths: for she hath cast down many wounded; and all slain by her are strong. Her house [is] the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death” (vers. 24-27).

Youth is prone to impulse and self-confidence, as we have seen the danger, not for the depraved only but for the idle, because of the corruption in the world through lust. Hence the earnestly affectionate summing up of what has gone before with a fresh warning of uncommon grace. “And now, sons, hearken to me, and attend to the words of my mouth.” A father's call to heed his words in the face of inward propensity and outward seduction is entitled to the gravest attention. There is but one such friend in the nearest degree who has passed through like snares. His wise love no son can slight with impunity.

What then are the words of his mouth on that head? “Let not thy heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her path.” Joseph had no father near to counsel him when the temptation arose, and persistently, through his master's wife. But he refused utterly her shameless blandishments, as one seeing the Unseen. The ten words were not yet spoken; but he feared God, and he was jealous for his master's honor. “How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Good reason had a father to counsel sons to steer clear. If the whole world lies in wickedness, or in the wicked one, one needs dependence to pass through the streets safely, and obedience with the worthy object in view. Emptiness exposes the soul for evil to enter and take possession. “Abide in me, and I in you.” “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall come to pass to you “: so spoke the Holy, the True. Nor is there any other way of fruit agreeable to the Father. In this is He glorified that we bear much fruit, and not merely that we be kept from sin and shame and ruin. Evil begins, not with the steps but the heart declining to such ways; to follow them is to stray.

And who has lived a while here below without the saddest memories and the most humbling sights in confirmation? “For she hath cast down many wounded, and all slain by her are strong.” Such seems the force of the latter clause, which is illegitimately rendered in the A. V., for “all” in such a sentence at least cannot be reduced to “many,” as in the former clause. But it is difficult to understand that “all” her slain should be strong. The R. V. suggests that “all her slain are a mighty host.” This, whether or not accepted, is assuredly true, and an advance on the words which preceded, according to the Hebrew style. No wonder, that the words recall not only Samson, but even David, who if not slain himself brought the sword on his house, and caused the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme.

And how energetic the words that follow! “Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.” They are words of truth and sobriety; so they exaggerate in nothing.

Chapter 231

Providence and Faith

The same principles which accompany the moral deadness of the unbeliever, may be found in the believer, weakening and hindering his simplicity in following Christ. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It is true, the believer is not in the flesh (Rom. viii. 8), and through grace he can please God; yet the flesh is in him, and, so far as it is unjudged, it will prove a sure and sad obstacle in the path of faith. Hence there is not an evil in the unregenerate heart of man which the regenerate can afford to despise. The tendency, nay, the root of all, is in his own heart, although, as a believer baptized unto Christ's death, he is entitled to say that he is crucified with Christ-the flesh crucified with its affections and lusts. This is his weapon. He has died, and he that thus died has been freed (or justified) from sin. And if dead, how shall we live any longer therein? But then, although in God's estimate this is a fact, for He has identified the believer with the death and resurrection of Christ, yet it is a fact which faith alone realizes.

The experience of the believer is the constant, painful witness that the flesh is within, ever seeking to display its enmity to God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Practically he finds that the flesh is alive and actively energetic toward evil, and that struggling with it is not the way to gain the victory, because it is not God's remedy for it, and therefore not the resource of faith. Such is not the way in which the Spirit, by the apostle, instructs us to deal with sin. For, after having said, “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus [our Lord],” he also adds, “let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

The faith that would reckon us dead to sin in Christ's death, wherein the sentence of God was executed upon it, is the weapon which gives us practically the victory over its efforts in each day's experience. But if the believer, ignorant of this sword of Goliath which the divine armory supplies him, attempts to face the enemy with some puny instrument of his own, is it wonderful that he fails in the encounter? If, after being justified by faith, he puts himself under law as regards the daily train of Christian conversation, is it strange that the offense again abounds, that the perverseness of the flesh is afresh stirred into activity, that the law is once more proved to be a ministry of condemnation? No! it is the sense of grace, it is the sense of what God's grace has done in uniting us to One who is raised from the dead, far above the claims of law and the effects of sin, into His own holy and blessed acceptance in the presence of God; it is this, kept bright and fresh before and in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which enables us to bring forth fruit unto God. “For sin,” says the apostle, “shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace.”

The unconverted, if he thinks at all about God and his soul, naturally and necessarily puts himself under law, and proves it to be a ministry of death. The tendency of the converted man is to do the same as regards his walk, if not as regards his salvation; and so far as he slips aside into legalism, he is powerless for God, and certain to be immersed in worldliness. Let us then, dear brethren, hold fast grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire. Granted that the flesh would say, Let us continue in sin that grace may

abound; still, the cure is not to throw away that which is the alone spring of holiness as well as of salvation. The grace of God not only brings us salvation, but teaches us that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

But it is far more ensnaring to the believer when there is a partial recognition of God in His actings, which Satan turns to account by making him indifferent to the question of God's will. A familiar instance of this, and one that is corrected by the word of God, appears in the too prevalent habit, which some Christians would even justify, of looking to providences; in other words, walking by sight rather than by faith. But the believer is called to walk as seeing Him who is invisible. “We serve the Lord Christ.” It is a comparatively easy thing to act as circumstances seem to prompt, and if these circumstances become a supposed divine rule of action to me, this is precisely to abandon the march of faith for providences. Alas! into how many ditches will this blind guide lead the unwary, or the unfaithful Christian? Even the wretched unbelieving world likes to talk of “Providence” in the abstract. It demands no faith; nay, it is a shutting outside of a present acting God, Who condescends to lead His children with His eye; of a God Whom we have known in Jesus-Who has brought Himself nigh to us, and us nigh to Himself. They prefer to have an abstraction of their minds to discuss, rather than to be brought so close to the living God. “Providence” is a familiar and palatable word, where “God manifest in the flesh” would sound strange and unwelcome. So, practically, it needs little spirituality to see the hand of God in circumstances; but it requires much power of the Spirit to understand their bearing, and to discern the path of Christ in their midst. What is unseen, not what is seen, ought alone to guide the faithful.

Hence the necessity of an undivided heart, of a single eye. Only thus is the body full of light. If the circumstances fill my eye, instead of Christ, I am sure to go astray. It is not that one would deny the providential dealings of God, or that a Christian can overlook them without loss. What is affirmed is, that no circumstances can rightly be the guide for Christian action, and that all circumstances ought to be judged in the light of the perfect word of God. Nay, I believe that while God, on the one hand, frequently overrules circumstances in default of our faith, on the other, He often orders circumstances so as to be a test of fidelity or of its absence. In other words, a Christian may find himself in a position not of his own seeking, but of God's superintendence, which nevertheless faith has to relinquish, and not to abide in, though divine providence may have placed one there. Of this the scriptural history of Moses furnishes a striking example. I do not speak now of the faith which marked the parents of Moses, for faith it was, and not parental affection merely, which led them for three months to hide their child; “they were not afraid of the king's commandment” (Heb. 11:23).

Nor do I allude to the overruling hand of God, Who met their faith, and so arranged events as to accomplish His future purposes respecting Moses and His people. It is the conduct of Moses himself, which is so full of instruction to the man of God who would learn the tree place of faith in relation to providential circumstances.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

Now, here we learn that as surely as providence carried him into the house of Pharaoh, faith led him out. Never was a providential dealing more strongly imprinted with the finger of God than the one before us. In spite of the royal ordinance Pharaoh's daughter took up the outcast Moses and nourished him for her own son. The providence of God had placed him in an illustrious position, unsought, unexpected. Educated too as became it, he was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.” Why not use his ability and his wisdom—why not use the influence which his exalted rank gave him, and his nearness to the most princely personages in the realm-why not wisely and thankfully turn such evident gifts of providence to the service of God's people? What a blessing it would be to see Pharaoh the tyrant transformed into Pharaoh the patron of Israel! And what enterprise more worthy of one who, without a wish or effort of his own, had been so strangely brought into the circle of the throne of this world? What return would he make to that august person who had lavished such kindness upon him? And for what end had God wrought so wonderfully, if not that Moses should employ Egypt's scepter for the emancipation and advancement of God's people? But, no! faith at once disposes of all such reasonings founded on providences. “By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.” The simple question to him was, Will it please God? Where are God's affections? Are they not with His people?

The people may be suffering, wretched, and discreditable. They may little understand and ill requite the love and faith that could renounce all. They might greatly prefer the patronage of the son of Pharaoh's daughter to a self-sacrificing Moses, who refused such a place, choosing rather to suffer with them; but it was enough for Moses that the poor captives were God's people. It was not enough that his heart was with them and himself far away in the splendid court of Egypt. His single eye judged all that Pharaoh's daughter could offer to be the pleasures of sin. He deliberately resigned the glittering honors and the worldly influence which providence had strewn around him, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. With whom was God identified? With Pharaoh's palace, or with Israel in the iron furnace? Had he followed providences, he would have sought to succor and relieve, and perhaps ultimately to deliver Israel, through the advantages which his position furnished; but it was faith which led him to estrange himself from the world and identify himself with the people of God. The world hates God's people, and may be permitted to enslave them; but can the world bless God's people? Surely not. Moses would have shrunk, as a man of faith, from the thought of yielding to the world such a place. It would be to assert that the world is greater; for, beyond all question, the less is blessed of the greater. Therefore it was that Moses gives all up, and rests only upon God. His desire was not to save himself loss, suffering, reproach: he chose it rather, because God was there; and Moses desired to be where God was, and with those whom God loved. How the actings of his faith only reflected the feelings of God for His people may be gathered by reading Ex. 3:7, 8, 9.

Thus, we see that providence may place in a position which God would have us not use but leave. It may seem the most fair occasion possible in outward things; but faith judges the contrary, because faith looks not to our honor but to God's; not to our ease, but to His deliverance. Faith rests on the promises of God to His people, and has respect to the recompence of the reward.

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Chapter 233

The Red Sea and Jordan

The Red Sea figures the death and resurrection of Jesus as deliverance by redemption. The Jordan adds our death with Christ, and as to our state subjectively, our resurrection with Him-analogous to the forty days He passed on earth. To this the teaching in Colossians answers: hence heaven is in hope. Rom. 3:20- chap. 7 gives Christ's death for sins, and resurrection for our justification; thence to the end of chap. 8 death to sin. Sin in the flesh is not forgiven but condemned (Rom. 8:3); but we as having died with Christ are not in the flesh but alive to God in Jesus Christ. This takes us no farther than the wilderness, though passing through it as alive to God in Christ. Hence we see that in Romans we are not risen with Christ: this involves as a consequence our being identified with Him where He is; and so union by the Holy Ghost whenever we are sealed. In Colossians we are risen with Him, but not seen in heavenly places. Colossians treats of life, with a hope laid up for us in heaven, not at all of the Holy Ghost.

In Eph. we are risen with Him and seated in heavenly places in Him: and then begins the conflict with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, and testimony according to what is heavenly. So far this is Jordan, and Canaan; and here the gift and dealing of the Holy Ghost is fully spoken of; and our relationship with the Father as sons, and with Christ as body and bride. Only Eph. begins with our being dead in sins, so that it is a new creation, not death to sin. The blood-shedding however has a more glorious character in one respect: God is glorified in it, though by crossing Jordan we are experimentally placed higher. That too is the fruit of the blood-shedding, in which there is not only the bearing of sins but a glorifying of God, so as to bring us withal into God's glory with Him, which is beyond all questions of responsibility. It is sovereign grace.

Chapter 234

Review: G. E. Tarner's Future Roman Empire

This little book is the more curious as proceeding from a friend rather than an enemy of God's work and word. Yet his faith must be small as he is so anxious to clear his speculations of Chiliastic reproach. He is careful to say in his introductory chapter that, while regarding with due respect the conscientious students of Apocalyptic prophecy, he “identifies himself with neither school, and attaches no Chiliastic reference” to his remarks. But is it not a serious reflection that he, a professing Christian, openly advocates the revival of the defunct Roman empire? Whereas prophecy in its latest voice declares it to rise up “out of the abyss,” ordained (we may say) not of God but of the old serpent, the dragon, and to bring or itself and its votaries the condign judgment of God, when the Lord Jesus appears in power and glory, and His world-kingdom follows. Is it not a solemn proof that speculation is dangerous when God has revealed this coming catastrophe? Mr. T. argues out the desirableness of that empire, which, as it played its representative part in crucifying the Lord of glory, will be judged as no empire ever was for its apostate and God-defying rebellion when He comes again to establish the kingdom prepared from the world's foundation. Is then Mr. T. writing with God or against Him?

Chapter 235

Righteousness

Rev. 19:8

In this chapter we find the church, as well as the O.T. saints, complete in the glory; the bride, and the invited or guests, at the marriage of the Lamb on high.

Then we read (ver. 8), “And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.” It is not here, we are assured, faith imputed for righteousness, but practical ways consistent with their new relationship as saints, or good fruits (that is, “righteousnesses” in the plural) that become and characterize the heavenly redeemed. This is now admitted to be the force of the word, where men have no wrong object.

It is said, however, that the word “justifications,” used in the Vulgate and found in the English Roman Catholic Version, has been supposed by some to express the same thought. Nevertheless we feel it incumbent to warn against the use of, or quotation from, a version which, although correct in some of its renderings, is also full of subtleties, and, in places, of the grossest errors and perversions of the truth. The truth needs no such support.

What should simple souls expect other than error from that which is issued as the authentic word of God (not the inspired original but Jerome's translation) by “Great Babylon?”

Our clear duty here surely is, that where we have a word which, although it may be a possible rendering of the original, is yet capable of so different an application as to contradict the truth, to shun without hesitation such a rendering.

“Justification” is not appropriated to right deeds or good fruits, but rather to our standing before God judicially, being accounted just by faith in Christ through His work or faith in the gospel.

Now the good deeds of the saints can never accomplish their justification as here before God. Christ Jesus our Lord alone is made unto us righteousness to this end.

Hence “justifications” should be rejected as ambiguous and tending to mislead; and “righteousnesses” accepted as the sense meant. Never was there greater need than now for the saints of God to be on the watch against the subtleties of the enemy. W. M. S.

Chapter 236

Sanctification or Setting Apart to God—1

1 Peter 1

There is something very sweet in the certainty with which the apostle Peter presents to us the truths contained in this Epistle. There is neither hesitation nor uncertainty. The word speaks of things received, of a certainty for those to whom it is addressed. Their faith was tried, but the thing was certain. The apostle speaks here of an inexhaustible fund of truths which belonged to him; and it is not as one groping in the dark that he speaks of it. These things are too important to be left in doubt; they deserve all our attention: our hearts need it. It is not the unregenerate heart that loves the Lord Jesus. One may be brave and all that, and think that if one's conduct is good, the result in heaven will be accordingly; but therein is no love for the Lord Jesus. And this is the badge of the Christian.

The apostle says in the eighth verse, “Whom (Christ) not having seen, ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Now, there is no such thing as that without regeneration, which is a new life that has interests, and affections-quite a new world; and without this there is no Christian, because there is not Christ.

We will now see the two principles laid down in this chapter, and in the work here attributed to the Holy Spirit.

God finds the soul in a certain position, in certain relations, and removes it to place it in quite a new state; and this separation is according to the power of the resurrection of Christ.

The apostle speaks to the Jews of the dispersion (that is, to those of whom it is spoken in John vii. 35, those dispersed among the Greeks) in these words. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” &c. He addressed himself to the dispersion, to Jews now converted to Christianity, to those who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace and peace, &c. He says this because he is speaking of another election than that of the Jewish people. The Jewish nation was elected after another manner. Here he writes, as we said, to Jews who had believed on the Lord Jesus; so that sanctification in them was not sanctification of a nation by outward means, but by the Holy Spirit, Who separated the souls from among the Jews to belong to God, and to form a part of the present dispensation of grace. It was not with them as with the ancient Jews, who were separated from the Egyptians by the Red Sea. They were separated by the sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit. Observe particularly this word “sanctification “: the first idea is separation for God, not only from evil, but a setting apart for God Who sanctifies.

This is what God does in those whom He calls, finding souls lying in evil. John says on this subject, in his First Epistle, (chap. v. 1.9), “We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness;” and it is very precious to have things clearly stated. “We are of God": it is not merely that we should conduct ourselves aright; doubtless, that is well. But the great difference is, that we

are of God, and that “the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Does this mean that we are always as we should be? No: but we are of God. One is not all one would desire to be: that will come to pass only in heaven, for only there will God make us conformed to the image of His beloved Son.

But this is what God has done: He has separated us to Himself, as a man who hews stones out of a quarry. The stone is hewn out of the quarry and set apart, destined to be cut and fashioned, in order to be placed in the appointed building. And God detaches a soul from the quarry of this world to separate it for Himself. I say not but there is much to do; for a rough stone cut out of a quarry requires often considerable labor before it is placed in the building for which it is destined. Even so God separates, prepares, and fashions this soul to introduce it into His spiritual building. There are many useless matters to take off; but God acts every day in His grace. Howsoever, this soul is sanctified, set apart for God, from the moment it is taken out of the quarry of this world.

The apostle speaks here of sanctification before he mentions obedience and the blood of Jesus Christ. We are sanctified to these two things (ver. 2): “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” He takes us out of the quarry of this world to place us under the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The stone is entirely His and adapted to His purpose. Although He has yet to work upon it, the question is not of what He does each day, but generally of the appropriation to the end God has proposed to Himself. It is the Holy Spirit Who acts in the soul and appropriates it to Himself. It may previously have been very honorable, or very wicked in its conduct; this makes no difference: only it will be more grateful, if it feels itself more evil. But as to the former condition, that matters little: one belongs now to God.

To what does God destine this soul? To obedience. Up to this period what has it done but its own will? It has followed its own way, no matter what appearances may have been, more or less good, more or less bad; it is all one. The character may have been weak, or more or less fiery, until, as with Paul, the Lord arrested him on his road. Now behold this soul, hitherto filled with its own will, set apart for obedience.

Paul had been very learned in what concerned the religion of his fathers; he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He honestly believed that he had done the will of God, but there was nothing of the kind. He followed his own will, according to the direction impressed by the tradition of the fathers. Never, till the moment that Jesus stopped him on the way to Damascus, had he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Thus, whatever may have been the conduct of a soul before this setting apart, nothing of all before has made it do the will of God. But the aim of the life of a soul sanctified, set apart, is to do the will of God. It may fail.; but that is its aim. Jesus said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” He had no need of sanctification, in one sense, because He was holy; but the aim of His whole life was obedience. Here am I “to do thy will, O God.” He took the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men, and He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He existed only for God; the principle of His life was obedience. He was come to do nothing but His Father's will.

As soon as a soul is sanctified, it is sanctified unto obedience; and this is manifested by the spirit of dependence which has done with its own will. It says, “What must I do?” It may fail through weakness in many respects; but that is its aim.

As to the second thing, we are sanctified to enjoy the sprinkling of blood. The soul, thus placed under the influence of the blood of Christ, is thereby completely cleansed. The blood of the Son of God cleanses us from all sin; it is by the efficacy of His blood that we are separated from this world.

The question here is not of bulls and goats which could not sanctify the conscience of him who did the service, but of the blood of Christ, Who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. It is the blood which purifies the conscience. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 237

Sanctification or Setting Apart to God—2

1 Peter 1

Let us see a little what the apostle says on this subject. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Whereabouts are we then, when the process of sanctification is carried on? It is that although we have not seen Jesus, we love Him; and although now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of (our) souls.

It is there that the heart finds itself; and while saying that His love is boundless, passing all knowledge, we can say also that we have the intelligence of it.

The magnet always turns towards the pole; yet the needle may tremble a little when the storm and tempest roar; but its direction changes not. The needle of the Christian heart points truly towards Christ. A heart which understands, which loves Jesus, which knows where Jesus has passed before it, looks at Him to sustain it through its difficulties; and however rugged and difficult the way, it is precious to us, because. we find there the trace of the steps of Jesus (He has passed there), and specially because this road conducts us, through difficulties, to the glory in which He is. Seeing, says the apostle, that it need be, in order that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

It is not only that we have been regenerated, but that we should receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of (our) souls. The end of my faith is to see Christ and the glory that He has gained for me. He says here, the salvation of souls; because the question is not of a temporal deliverance, as in the case of the ancient Jews. I see now this glory through a veil, but I long to see myself there. And being now in the trial, I look to Him Who is in the glory, and Who secures it to me. The gold will be completely purified; but the gold is proved: as to me, as to my eternal life, it is the same thing as if I was in the glory. Salvation and glory are not the less certain, though I am in the trial, than if I were already in the rest. And that gives practical sanctification; habits, affections, and a walk formed after the life and calling one has received from God.

If I engage a servant, I require him to be clean, if I am so myself. God says “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” And as it is with the servant I desire to introduce into my house, so it is with us. God requires that we should be suited to the state of His house; He will have a practical sanctification in His servants. Moreover, the aim of the apostle is, that our faith be firm and constant. He gives us in the twenty-first verse, full security, in saying to us, “that your faith and hope may be in God,” not merely in that which justifies us before a just judging God. It is a God Who is for us, Who willed to help us, and Who introduced us into His family, setting us apart for obedience, and to share in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. He has loved us with an eternal love. He has accomplished all

that concerns us. He keeps us by His power through faith, in order to introduce us into glory.

He places us in trial; He makes us pass through the furnace, because He will wholly purify us. It is Himself Who has justified us: who shall condemn us? It is Christ Who is dead, or rather Who is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, and Who also maketh intercession for us: who shall separate us from His love (Rom. 8:33). Our faith and our love being in God, what have we to fear?

We have in Zechariah a very encouraging example (chap. iii). Jehovah caused Zechariah to see Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And Jehovah said to Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan! Jehovah, who hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. Is not this a brand that I have plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments (the sin, and corruption of man), and he stood before the angel. And the angel said, Take away the filthy garments from him. And he said to him, Behold, I have made thine iniquity to pass from thee, and have clothed thee with new garments (the righteousness of God applied). Satan accuses the children of God; but when God justifies, who can condemn? Would you then that God were not content with His work, which He hath wrought for Himself? Is it not in order that we be holy and unblameable in love before Him?

Can you say, “He has sanctified me,” in the sense that He has given you Jesus for the object of your faith? If it be thus, He has placed you under the sprinkling of His precious blood in order that you may be a Christian, and happy in obedience. You may say now, He is the object of my desires, of my hope: You may not yet have understood all that Christ is for you, and you may have much to do in practice; but the important thing is to understand that it is God who has done all, and has placed you under the efficacy of that resurrection life, in order that you may be happy and joyful in His love.

It is remarkable to what point God makes all things new in us; and this because He must destroy our thoughts, in order that we may have peace. There is nothing morally in common between the first and the Second man. The first sinned and drew the whole human race in his fall; the last Adam is the source of life and power. This applies to every truth of Christianity, and to all that is in this world. There are but these two men.

Nicodemus is struck with the wisdom of Jesus, and with the power manifested in His miracles; but the Lord stops him, and cuts the matter short with him by saying, “Ye must be born again.” He was not in a condition to be instructed. He did not understand the things of God, for to do so a man must be born again; in short, he had not life. I do not say that he could not arrive at it; because, further on, we see him paying honor to Jesus in bringing the necessary spices to embalm Him.

I have been led to this thought because the end of this chapter recalled to me the fortieth chapter of Isa. 1 do not speak of the accomplishment of the prophecy which takes place at a later day for the Jews, but of a grand principle. This chapter begins with these words, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough

places plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Before God begins, He must cause it to be understood that all flesh is grass, &c.

If God will comfort his people, what saith Jehovah? "All flesh is grass," &c. It must begin there. "The grass is withered, because the spirit of Jehovah hath blown upon it. But the word of God endureth," &c. Therein lies the foundation of hope. Had it been possible for anyone to have obtained anything, it would have been the Jews, who had all; but they were nothing more than the grass of the fields, than the grass that withereth. When God will comfort man who has failed in the responsibility which attaches to him, it is thus He begins. "All flesh is grass," &c.; and it is for this reason that there is such a confusion in the heart of the newly converted man, and even of the Christian. Let him then pay attention to it: namely, that the word comes to tell him, "The grass is withered," the flesh is incapable of producing any good; and that he does not yet rest on this, that the word of Jehovah endureth forever, and that the blessing consequently cannot fail to His own. Till we cease in our efforts to get good from the flesh, and till we are assured that the word of Jehovah endureth forever, we shall always be troubled and weak before the assaults of the enemy.

The people had trampled on the ordinances, broken the law, crucified the Messiah, done all possible evil. Has the word of God changed? In no wise. God alters nothing in His election, nor in His promises. Paul asks, Has God rejected His people? God forbid. Peter addresses himself to the people; there is no more of them apparently. The grass is withered, but the word of God remains; and He can say to them, You are now a people, you have obtained mercy. Thus we are going to see that this word becomes the instrument of blessing and of practical sanctification. God never sanctifies what withers like grass. He introduces, on the contrary, what is most enduring and most excellent of man into heaven.

Chapter 238

Sanctification or Setting Apart to God—3

1 Peter 1

The word withers man, the breath of Jehovah has passed over. Introduce man's glory into heaven, it is dreadful! This work is painful, because of the often prolonged wrestlings of the pride and the self-will of the flesh; and God does not begin His work by modifying what already exists. Neither can He, because He will destroy it. He can neither require nor produce fruits before the tree be planted. But He begins by communicating a new life, and detaches the creature from the things to which its flesh is attached; and the Holy Spirit communicates to it the things of the world to come, and the instrument He employs is the word-that word whereof it is said, “it abideth forever.” The word, which was of promise for the nation, becomes an instrument of life for our souls. We are begotten by the word of truth, which judges also as a two-edged sword all that is not of the new life.

Let us now examine the difference between our justification and our sanctification. Justification is something not in ourselves, but a position in which God has placed us before Himself; and those who possess His righteousness, those to whom it is applied by God, being the children of the Second man, possess all that He has and all that He loves. He who becomes the righteousness of God is born of God, and possesses all that belongs to his Father, Who assimilates the rights of His children to those of His Son, Who is heir of all things. So soon as I am a child of the Second man, I am in the blessing and righteousness in which Christ Himself is found; and thus as I have inherited from the first Adam all the consequences and results of his fall, even so, being born of the Last Adam, I inherit all that He has acquired, just as I had inherited from the former.

If it be thus, it is evident that I have part in the glory of Christ; but if life be not there, it is naught. God presents His love to us. He reveals it to us, and His word abides eternally. And here is the way God begins with the soul. He presents the truth to us, ever fresh before Himself. It is not a result produced in us that He makes us see; on the contrary, it is, that man, such as he is, has no part in this righteousness, because of the flesh, which, being as grass, cannot be in relation with God. He reveals and imparts to us a justification He has accomplished.

God cannot give precepts of sanctification to such as have no justification. The effects of the life of Christ are to convince of sin, and also to cause fruit-bearing. When the gospel was presented at the beginning, it was to Gentiles who, till then, had had no part in the promises of God. There was no need to speak to them of sanctification. But now that all the world calls itself Christian, I must see whether I be really a Christian; but this idea is not found at all originally in the Bible. The state of sin was spoken of, and the gospel declared. Now, men say “Am I really a Christian,” which thing was not so then. A man takes his practical life to see whereabouts he is, believing that the question is of sanctification, when it is only of justification. This question was not necessary at the commencement; now people look at the fruits to see if they have life, and confound with sanctification that which is only a conviction of sin previous to justification by faith and peace with God. Until a soul has consented to say, “Jesus is all and I have nothing” —till then, I say, there is

nothing in this which relates to Christian sanctification. These things must be set right before the soul can have peace.

At one preaching of Peter three thousand persons were made happy; they were not in doubt. From the moment a man embraced the gospel, he was a Christian, his soul was saved.

The progress of practical sanctification must not be confounded with justification, because practical sanctification is wrought in a saved soul that has eternal life. It is an entirely new thing, of which there is no trace before I have found Christ. Do we comprehend this passage, “Without holiness” (sanctification) “no man shall see Jehovah” (there is nothing troubles a soul as that often does)? It is clear that if I do not possess Christ, I cannot see Jehovah; that is very simple. If I have not in myself the life of the Last Adam, as I had before the life of the first, never shall I see His face. The tastes natural to the one will develop themselves therein, as they developed themselves in the other.

The first inquiry to be made in such a case is, “Have you peace with God, the pardon of your sins?” If not, the question is of the justification of a sinner. “Having then purified your souls in obeying the truth by the Holy Spirit,” that is the power “by the Spirit.” The essential thing is the obedience of the truth; people seek purification and desire to bear fruit. But this is not what God first asks of us; it is obedience, and obedience to the truth.

Whereof then does the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, speak? He has much to say to us, but first of all, “All flesh is grass.” He says that no good thing exists in man; the Spirit convinces the world of sin. The whole world lies in wickedness; that world would none of Christ; and the Holy Spirit cannot present Himself without saying, “You have rejected the Christ.” The Holy Spirit comes into this world and proves to it its pride and its rebellion. Behold, the Son is no longer there; and why? The world has rejected Him. The Spirit comes to say, “The grass is withered,” &c.; then, when that is acknowledged, He communicates the peace that He has preached. He says truly, “You are sinners,” but He does not speak to sinners of sanctification; He will produce it by the truth, and He tells them the truth. Can man produce it? Nay. It is Christ, He Who is the way, the truth, and the life. The Holy Spirit speaks to the sinner of God's grace, of the righteousness of God-of peace, not to make, but made; this is the truth. He convinces the world of what it is, and He speaks to it of that will of God by which the believer is sanctified, that thus we may be obedient to the truth, in submitting to the grace of God; and when the soul is subject to the truth, life is there.

He communicates life, “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” The word abides eternally. It is thus that God first produces the principle of sanctification, which is the life of Christ in us; if the practical means be inquired, it is the word of truth.

Does the Holy Spirit tell pagans to make progress in sanctification? Does He say this to men unconverted? No. When a sinner has understood the truth, such as God presents it, then the Holy Spirit puts him in relation with God the Father, and the sinner rejoices in all that which Christ has acquired for him. Thus having purified your souls in obeying the truth by the Holy Spirit, &c., ye have been born again of an incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. Dear friends, you will find that it is ever thus. (To be concluded, D.V.)

Chapter 239

Sanctification, or Setting Apart to God—4

1 Peter 1

In 2 Thess. 2:10 it is written, as to the unbelieving contrasted with the Christians, that they have not received (or rather accepted) the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who have not believed the truth, &c. But, my brethren, beloved of the Lord, we are bound to give thanks to God for you, because God hath chosen you from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

It is then the belief of the truth; it is not the belief of its fruits. The Holy Spirit cannot present to me the works He has produced in me, as the object of my faith. He speaks to me of my faults, of my short-comings, but never of the good works that may be in me. He produces them in me, but He hides them from me; for if we think of them, it is but a more subtle self-righteousness. It is like the manna which, being kept, produced worms. All is spoiled-it is no more faith in action. The Holy Spirit must always present to me Christ, that I may have peace.

The same principle is in John 17:16, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.” The world was not Christ's aim.

During His whole life, though He was not gone out of the world, He was no more of the world than if He had been in heaven. When practice is in question, He says, “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by thy truth.” Truth is not of the world; the world is a vast lie, which is demonstrated in the history we possess in the Bible. There we find the manifestation of sin in the natural man, and the manifestation of the life of God in the regenerate man by His word. “Sanctify them by thy truth.” “For their sakes I sanctify myself.” What does the Lord Jesus here for us? He sets Himself apart, He sanctifies Himself. It is not that He may be more holy, but He makes Himself the model-man. It is not a law requirement; but it is Christ Himself Who is life and power, whereof He presents the perfect result. It is Christ Who presents the fulfillment and the perfection; He is the vital spring of all; and in considering these things, the reflection of them is in me by faith, which reproduces them in the inner man and in the life.

We find something interesting on this subject in the first chapter of John's Gospel. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The law was not this. It was not a light that condemned; but the Life was this light, and we have seen it, full of grace and truth-not of truth only but of grace; and of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. When we have received Christ, there is not a single grace which is not for me, and in me. There is no Christian who has not every grace that is in Jesus. Suppose even a state of failure; it is the strongest case: but this hinders not that we possess all in Him. Failure is a sad thing, but it changes not the position; for the Christian has not received a part only of Christ, but the whole of Christ.

On the one hand, it is encouragement: when I say to myself, “I must seek after such a grace,” the answer is, “Thou possessest it;” and on the other hand, “it humbles me,” for if I possess it, why is it not manifested? This always supposes that we have received the truth that God has made peace. We must always return to this, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” Is it by looking into myself that I shall find this sanctification? No: but in looking to Jesus, in Whom it is, Christ having been made unto us of God “righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

I see perfect humility in Christ, and take pleasure in it. When I look to Him by faith, my soul is in peace. His Spirit is always in me, and I am sanctified by faith in Him, according to that grace which makes me one with Him. Christ gives me all that; and His truth reveals to me that the redemption is made, and I enjoy it, having obeyed the truth.

If anyone seeks after sanctification without being assured of his justification, and is consequently troubled about it, doubting whether he be a Christian, then I ask him: “What have you to do with sanctification?” You have not to think about this for the present. Assure yourself, first of all, that you are saved. Pagans, unbelievers, do not sanctify themselves. If you have faith, you are saved; then sanctify yourself in peace. The only question is to consider your sinful state. First, have you obeyed the truth? have you submitted to it? What does God speak to you about? He speaks of peace made. He says to you, that He has given His Son; He says to you, that He so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the truth to which you have to submit, and to receive above all; specially before you busy yourself about sanctification, which depends upon Him Who has given you eternal life.

Begin then by obeying the truth of God. This truth tells you of the righteousness of God, which is satisfied in Jesus, and which is yours; yea rather that you are in Christ. Then you will enjoy peace, and you will be sanctified in practice: for practical sanctification flows from the contemplation of Jesus. Here is what the apostle Paul says to us on this subject in 2 Cor. 3:18: “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from-glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.”

You see that it is in beholding Jesus that we are transformed from glory to glory. Life, the principle of life, is there, and not in your anxieties; the development of the life of Jesus is progressively realized by looking to Him. It is faith which sanctifies, as also it justifies; it looks unto Jesus.

When Moses came down from the mountain from before God, he did not know that he also shone with glory; but those who saw him knew it. Moses had looked toward God; others saw the effect. Blessed be God that it is thus in a practical sense! As to practice then, the question is the sanctification of Christians, because they are saved, because they are sanctified to God as respects their persons (not those who are not yet so). It is not to exact (on God's part), but to communicate life. Now, this communication proceeds from Jesus, Who is its source. He communicates life, which is holiness in effect.

Oh! that God might always show us the grace to make us ever more and more feel that all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass; but the word of Jehovah endureth forever! “And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” It is of this incorruptible seed we are born. What ought not our confidence to be in His word! J.N.D.

Chapter 240

Scripture Queries and Answers: Seven Beads and Seven Kings; Acts 20:7-11

Q. 1. -Rev. 17:9-11. How are we to understand “the seven beads” and “seven kings?” Is it legitimate to take “the seven heads” as 1, Egypt; 2, Assyria; 3, Babylon; 4, Medo-Persia; 5, Greece; 6, Rome; 7, Israel in its apostate state? And is it correct that “the seven kings” can be, 1, Pharaoh; 2, Sennacherib; 3, Belshazzar; 4, Antiochus Epiphanes; 5, Herod; 6, Nero; 7, Napoleon; 8, anti-Christ? F. R. G. S.

A.-One of the most important helps everywhere for right interpretation is a firm adhesion to the context. In the present case the object before us is the Beast or Roman Empire, which the Holy Seer beholds in its last form before it goes into perdition. The seven heads are doubly interpreted. They are seven mountains (or hills), whereon the woman sits (compare ver. 18). Rome is the seat geographically, not Jerusalem, nor the plain of Shinar. But they are seven kings, or differing forms of ruling power. The Beast is thus distinguished. There had been, 1, kings; 2, consuls; 3, dictators; 4, decemvers; 5, military tribunes; who held successively and constitutionally the imperium. And these five were fallen. The sixth was actually then in power-emperors. The seventh had not yet come; and it was to be transient. “And the Beast that was and is not, himself also is an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition.” Thus the context fixes the heads, not only in connection with a Roman seat, but to the peculiar and complete changes of its ruling powers, explaining that the last is an eighth, and yet one of the seven. It is the imperial form, which had been wounded to death (13:3), revived by the dragon as the resurrection-head of the empire rising up at the close against the risen Lord of glory. The introduction of other kingdoms or empires, south, north, and east, long before the Roman empire began, is out of the way imaginative; still more so the strangely unconnected episode, as that of the queried list of kings. Even in the heads, as here mistakenly separated from the kings, to make apostate Israel the seventh head of the Roman empire is a singularly wide if not wild conjecture. Hengstenberg followed by the late Dean Vaughan so took six of the heads, but the seventh to be the ten horns in a cluster! a not much happier guess than Israel, though somewhat more homogeneous. The context suffices to correct all such thoughts. The proposal was to explain the seven heads, which we have in vers. 9-11; then the ten horns, which follow in vers. 12-14.

Q.-Acts 20:7-11. Does not this scripture indicate that the remembrance of Christ in His Supper should be kept prominent, and that speaking save in praise, &c., should rather follow? E. P.

A.-Certainly the Holy Spirit records apostolic ruling and practice for our guidance, lest we should yield to the habits of Christendom. It was not “preaching” as in the A.V., but a discourse to the saints, prolonged unusually, because the apostle was about to depart on the morrow. Yet here as elsewhere no rigid law is laid down, and an exception might be due to urgent need of a special kind. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” But undoubtedly it is well to learn from those given by the grace of Christ to teach us His ways in every assembly. Common sense, excellent for the world, is out of court for the church. We are called to walk by faith, not by sight, and are

sanctified to obedience.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-What will be the position of the Continents of America, Australia, &c., with their populations in the coming crisis? Will they be under the Roman Beast?

A.-I am not aware of any distinct reference to the continent of America in the scriptures. But in a general way it appears to me that “the waters,” on which the great Harlot Babylon sits (as in Rev. 17), include its population on all sides of the world. It was, we do not doubt, peopled not only by migratory hordes of Chinese, &c. across Behring's Straits, but by Icelanders, Norwegians, &c., who are believed on sufficient grounds to have made their way there little after A.D. 1000, and therefore many centuries before its discovery by Christopher Columbus, who opened it to the enterprise of Europe.

But it seems plain that the American or the Australasian lands and races cannot find themselves under the Roman Beast. For it, as I understand, is exclusively western, and does not comprehend even Greece or Macedonia, still less the properly MedoPersian or Bahylonish empires. Hence in Dan. 2 the gold, the silver, and the brass, are seen at the end when judgment falls, no less than the iron and clay, the symbol of the Roman empire. Compare also Dan. 7:12. It is an error to make the range of the Beast, and of his Jewish ally, the Anti-Christ, universal. We must leave room for a great adversary in the king of the north or the Assyrian, and for Gog, the chief of the Russian races, behind that king, and after him.

It may however be well to add that the late Mr. E. B. Elliott (in the Hore Apoc. ii. 73, fifth edition) imagined that there is a more direct allusion to the discovery of America, if not of Australasia, in Rev. 10:2 (latter clause). He naturally says little, and is somewhat indefinite, but as usual confident. It is the end of footnote, 3 though the reference in the General Index might lead one to expect more. “Dr. S. R. Maitland thinks it strange that no notice should have been taken in the Apocalypse of the discovery of America, supposing it a prophecy of the history of Christendom. (Remarks on Christian Guardian, p. 120). If I am correct in my understanding of the vision before us, the supposed omission does not exist.” This is all the notice I can find in his four large volumes.

Q.-John 14:2. Does the Lord by the “many mansions” mean equality of reward for His laborers? M. L.

A.-It is rather His unjealous love in giving all His own the place of intimate nearness to the Father which He alone was entitled to enjoy as the risen Son of God. On the contrary each will receive his own reward according to his own labor (1 Cor. 3:8). In the kingdom, as we are taught in the parable (Luke 19), one is to have authority over ten cities, another over five. But the Father's house rises wholly above such differences, and His children alike share it with Christ. It is the answer, not to their services, but to His redemption, His infinite love and His glory, Who would have told us if it were not so. There was indeed room for all His own. He was far from holding out too sanguine a hope. He would at His coming have them with Himself where He was going.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-Heb. 9:12. Is it legitimate to infer that this verse speaks of our Lord, entering the holies as a separate spirit before He rose and ascended? Mαθ.

A.-Not only is there not a tittle of scriptural evidence pointing in that direction; but other scriptures speak of His entrance, not in that transitional condition, but when become forever high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Compare especially Heb. 6:20. Nor is this all. For the verse itself precludes all but one entrance to this end, though all admit our Lord's presence in the disembodied state in Paradise. But the word here is that “by His own blood He entered once for all into the holies, having found an everlasting redemption.” This is simple, plain, and decisive.

Q.-Rom. 16:17. What sort of offenders is meant by “those causing the divisions and the stumbling blocks,” whom the apostle called the saints to avoid? Y. T.

A.-They were as yet different from the separatists of Titus 3:10, 11. “Heretic” as in the Auth. V. gives a misleading sense; for in modern usage it means “heterodox.” This is not intended, but one forming a party or sect outside, to which schism ever drifts. Therefore in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, the apostle says, “I hear there exist schisms among you, and I in some part believe it. For there must even be sects [heresies] among you, that the approved may become manifest among you.” It is not that schisms must lead to heterodoxy, but that, if not judged, parties within (or schisms) naturally land in an outside party or sect. When this happens, disciplinary action is foreclosed. They have gone without. Such are perverted, and sin, being self-condemned to all who know what is due to the Lord, and what the assembly of God is.

But the case in Rom. 16 is an earlier stage. It supposes self-confident and restless zeal inside, inconsistent with the teaching already learned by the saints, and reckless of the pain, shame, evil, and danger treated by striving after innovations without scriptural warrant. In accordance with the word is the amplest scope for every kind and measure of true gift; and gift ordinarily is apt to be overestimated, as we see it was in Corinth and is today. But the self-seeking and self-important are never satisfied with the place of subjection which scripture claims from us in deference to our Lord. Hence the desire for popularity and excitement. “From among your own selves,” warned the apostle, “shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.” For such men chafe under the protests and reproofs, urged by spiritual experience and insight into scripture, to save them from a course as dishonoring to the Lord as ruinous to themselves and any swayed by them.

Those in our day gathered to the Lord's name have labored in and according to His word for near seventy years; about the same time it was from Pentecost till the canon of scripture closed and the apostle John died. Gifts various and great abounded then; as by grace in their measure they were not lacking in our day. Yet no man ever rose up so presumptuous as to organize what is called an “all-day-ministry.” We have known offenders, some of them men of light and leading, who fell away now and then; but no one so much as proposed what on the face of it is outside the teaching of the apostles and their fellowship. This was enough for ordinarily faithful men. Even the bold did not dare to canvass, still less to carry out, a device unauthorized by God's word. Our profession was to have left human associations and plans, no matter how many pious persons might sustain them. We took, and are resolved in divine mercy to keep, the only hallowed ground of obedience.

We eschew therefore all definitive authority but the written word. “What is the harm?” is the excuse of unbelief and disobedience. An apostle might choose a personal companion in ordinary ministry: so may a wise brother now; but no apostle ever arranged anything even resembling an “all-day ministry.” This settles the matter to faith; and one can but grieve over the want of faith which thought of action so unscriptural, borrowed by rash inexperience from the bustling spirit of the age. Where Christians do not own the Spirit's presence any more than subjection to scripture alone, such methods are natural. But how sad that any who professed to turn their back on such unfaithfulness should do their utmost to foist in among us an unquestionable departure from the word! For it has not the paltry merit of an invention, but is a plain imitation of a novel fashion even in fallen decrepit Christendom. “The time shall be,” said the sorrowing apostle in his last Epistle, “when they will not endure sound teaching, but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers according to their own lusts, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables” (2 Tim. 4).

May grace preserve from such an issue! If we are to be kept, it is and must be as sanctified by the truth. And sanctification of the Spirit from the starting-point is “unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” What then does the apostle prescribe, when there are those that cause divisions and stumbling-blocks contrary to the teaching we learned? He commands us in the Lord's name to “mark” and “avoid them.” It is no question of “division” in the sense of people gone out, but that such innovating work habitually gathers a group of unsuspecting supporters, in opposition to what the mass of saints have ever believed and practiced. Were there a scrap of modesty or active grace, the remonstrance of those whom scripture calls “chief men among the brethren” would have peacefully hindered the project; whereas to the self-willed that is only another incentive to go on at all cost. In such a state one's own way is dearer than anything else; and people are not wanting to back it. As the apostle adds, “They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the guileless.”

Tender conscience shows itself in readiness to obey the word of the Lord. Our bounden duty is, not to put such misleaders away, but to keep clear of sanctioning them in any way, till they abandon their wrong course and are content themselves to obey. There is holiness, not hardship, in that. “If any one think to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the assemblies of God.” As long as the agitation continues, the willful who persist ought distinctly to forfeit the confidence of the godly. More is at stake than the disorder of women's independence about a veil, though the apostle ruled this to be intolerable, even if they were prophetesses. Those that serve in the word are surely bound to submit to it themselves. It is no question of liberty to minister, which all own to be of God, but of a new-fangled license to organize the work of others; which is not only unscriptural but trenches on the Lordship of Christ and the ways of the Holy Spirit as revealed by the word.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-How are we to regard such scriptures as Jer. 51:39, 57, Rev. 14:10, 11? J. L. H.

A.-The “perpetual sleep” is through man's day with which the O. T. was conversant. The Chaldean Babylon should never wake. And so it has been. Rev. 14:10, 11 pierces more deeply as divine judgment on individual worshippers of God's enemy, and “forever” has the unlimited force of the N.

T. Christ has brought to light, not only life and incorruption, but the second death and everlasting judgment. “Seventy years” in no way measure Babylon's doom, but the chastening of the land and people of Judæa; and the rejection of the Messiah has again sealed their desolations till the day of Jehovah brings them deliverance.

Q.-1 Cor. 15:52. What is the connection, if any, between the last trumpet here, and the last of the seven in Rev. 11? M. A.

A.-The figure of the trumpet sounding, and of the final one, is common to both; but the connection of each is wholly different. In Rev. 11 it is the culmination of God's loud warnings of judgment, after both Judaism and Christendom had run their sad, sinful, and apostate course. The day of Jehovah follows. In 1 Cor. 15 it is the close of the Christian testimony in the triumph announced by that figure when the risen Lord not only raises the dead saints but changes the living at His coming. “The last trump” seems to be drawn from what all in that day knew so familiarly, the final signal when, after preparatory tokens to guide, the last sound was given for a Roman legion to quit their old encampment and march.

Q.-What is the difference between ■νευ and χωρ■ς, as both mean “without”? D.

A.-The first expresses privation or non-existence; the second only separation, or apartness. Thus on the one hand Matt. 10:29 denies the exclusion or non-existence of their Father's care in the least thing; 1 Peter 3:1 shows how unbelieving husbands may be won absolutely without the word by the pious conduct of saintly wives; and 4:9 would have hospitality quite without a murmur. On the other hand Matt. 13:34 and Mark 4:34 only assert that apart from parable He spoke nothing then. So Matt. 14:21 and 15:38 may not deny the presence of women and children, as ■νευ would, but do not count them. In John 1:3; 15:5, χωρ■ς alone suits: apart from Him did not anything come into being; apart from Him the disciples can produce no fruit. So Rom. 3:21 does not negative the existence or importance of law, but shows that God's righteousness is now manifested apart from law. In Rom. 4:6 ■νευ (privation) of works would never do, but χωρ■ς apart from them.

Q. What is the Lord's way of bringing the dead saints in company with the living ones into the kingdom at His coming? A. W.

A.-The answer is given expressly in 1 Thess. 4:13-17. It was raised by the death of some believers at Thessalonica to the astonishment of their brethren. So full of immediate expectation were they as to be stumbled by the event. They had exceeded the error of those in Jerusalem who wrongly inferred that John was not to die, but to be found alive when the Lord came. The Thessalonians still more extravagantly assumed that no Christian could die before it. But neither the Lord in the Gospels nor the Holy Spirit when come gave any warrant for it. Again, the martyrdom of Stephen and James (son of Zebedee) was so publicly known, to speak of nothing else, as to prove its fallacy by the simple facts. Nor can we doubt that many had already fallen asleep both in Judζa and among the nations.

The apostle here therefore explains how the Lord will act at His coming. So far from unavailing sorrow and unintelligent disappointment, they should rejoice that God will bring with Jesus those put to sleep by Him, This will be for introducing the kingdom; but how? Are not the living to precede those that sleep? Certainly not. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with an

assembling shout, with archangel's voice, and with the trump of God; and instead of being anticipated, still less of losing their place in the kingdom, “the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we the living that survive 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.” He comes for the saints, dead and living, to be thenceforward forever with Him; so that, when the moment arrives to come in His kingdom and in the execution of the judgment that precedes its establishment in peace, they all follow Him out of heaven, and are manifested with Him in glory. Compare 1 Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 2:1; Jude 1, 14; Rev. 17:14; 19:14.

Q.-What do you gather from Jude 9? J. D. P.

A.-We know from Dan. 12 that to Michael the archangel is confided by God the chief place of guardianship over Israel. He it is who “at the time of the end,” when the final collision of the powers rages in and around Jerusalem, shall stand up for the children of Daniel's people. It was no new interest of his. Jude was inspired to recall the thrilling fact of the unseen world, that even so early as at Moses' death there was a contention between him and the devil about the dead body. Doubtless the adversary's aim as ever was to deceive and destroy thereby; and it may be by setting up for adoration that relic of him whom when living he stirred them up to disobey, oppose, and revile. Even Michael railed not against Satan but said, Jehovah rebuke thee. Compare Zech. 3. It is for the vilest to revile those whom God honors in any way. Jude helps to fill in the sketch drawn in Deut. 34:6.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-Eph. 4:8. What means “He led captivity captive”? Did the Lord go anywhere but to Paradise after dying? Does Luke 16:23 mean, after death, a risen state?

A. Christ in ascending led captive the evil powers which held man captive previously. It had nothing to do with the O.T. saints or any others. The Lord after death went to Paradise where His Father received His Spirit. It was in Hades, not yet Gehenna, that the rich man lifted up his eyes, being in torments. The express object of the parable is to show the great and immediate change in the unseen state for the believer, no matter how wretched now, and for the unbeliever, no matter how at ease here. Resurrection or final judgment is not in question. The converted robber on dying joined the Lord in Paradise. Abraham's bosom, the blessed expression before, was not suitable for Him and His now, though both speak of bliss in heaven; and Paradise still remains for the risen and glorified by-and-by (Rev. 2:7).

Q.-Heb. 2:17; 8:4; 9:12. How are these texts to be applied and held consistently with Lev. 16 to which allusion is made? S. B.

A.-The first text refers to the exceptional action of Aaron as representing first his own house, next the people, on Atonement-day. The second presents the normal place of Christ's priesthood on high. The third speaks of Christ's entrance there once for all, not by His personal perfection which would have been for Himself alone, but by His own blood in infinite efficacy, having found an eternal redemption. Lev. 16 figures this and more even to the restoration of Israel by-and-by as a shadow, not the very image which the N.T. alone gives. Nor indeed does the Epistle disclose the union of the body with the Head; but it fully reveals that entrance of the Lord into heaven once for all, due alike to His person and His work.

Q.-Heb. 10:29. (1) Those persons guilty of renouncing Christ's sacrifice, and objects of divine judgment to the last degree, in what way can it be said that such were sanctified by the blood of the covenant? Also (2) 1 Peter 4:17, what is meant by the time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God, and the end of those that obey not the gospel of God? R.M.

A.-(1) None can be compared for guilt with apostates; and apostates from the gospel are immeasurably worse than from the law. These are the persons in view here. If they now abandoned the infinite sacrifice of the Savior which they hitherto had confessed, there was no other that could avail for their sins. None had real and everlasting efficacy but that one; and those who gave it up, after owning it, were absolutely resourceless. Only divine judgment awaited them which must be their perdition. Their guilt was despite of grace, and of the Holy Spirit its witness and power. Of course in their case it had been mere profession, and the sanctification but outward in separating them from their Jewish fellows who made the law (that is, their own righteousness under it) their sole dependence before God. They never possessed living faith in Christ; “they only received the knowledge of the truth,” of which flesh is quite capable. And what flesh takes up it can as easily give up under trials, which only by grace lead the believer to purge himself practically as well as into a holy deepening acquaintance with God. “For the just shall live by faith,” besides receiving remission of sins by Christ's blood.

So (2) the apostle Peter refers to the broad general principle of God, and particularly to Ezek. 9:6. His house is the special sphere of His moral government; and if departure and disorder be allowed there, there His judgment must begin though it will extend to all mankind and the whole earth. If His people dishonor, Him, they must bear the righteous consequences, while grace knows how to save those who are His. Compare 1 Cor. 11:32. Yet the difficulty of the salvation here spoken of is great, considering their own utter weakness, the many trials in a world of sin, and the exceeding danger from a subtle and sleepless foe. Only God's power and faithfulness could bring His own through the wilderness. Now if this be so with the righteous one who calls on Him as Father and has Him guarding by His power (1 Peter 1:5), if he is saved with a difficulty insuperable save to God; how will it fare with the impious and sinful man? The warning is solemn, the argument plain and forcible, the condition inevitable. We may assuredly apply, as a general maxim, what our Lord said to His amazed disciples of the particular peril for a rich man and his salvation: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” It is by grace only that any sinful souls are saved, through faith; and this not of themselves, but the gift of God; not of works, lest any one should boast.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-Psa. 111:9. What is the strict meaning of the word here translated “reverend?” Does it bear on the official title taken by so-called Christian ministers? J. S., M. D.

A.-As the word in question simply means “fearful,” “dreadful,” “terrible,” and is so translated elsewhere in the O. T., it will be obvious that it applies to God as manifesting His ways of old, not at all to its modern usage. There is no real ground therefore for charging the clerical class or its supporters with profane appropriation of Jehovah's title, as is sometimes done. For they give or take the title in the quite different sense of respect paid to a consecrated class. As a matter of fact “reverend” seems a prefix of courtesy in use rather late, not legal or canonical. Its assumption was thus open to the officials of all denominations, without definite right or sanction. Hence as some

pious dissenting chiefs despised what the more vulgar seized with eagerness, so the established clergy began sixty years ago to fall back on the more legal style of “clerk,” or their distinct ecclesiastical status of vicar, rector, &c., as the case might be. The question was raised in the Courts of Law, and decided in favor of a dissenting tombstone inscription, in which a widow claimed it for her deceased husband. It was proved, it seems, that ancient usage gave “reverend” as a title to lawyers! before it was also accorded to men of ghostly pretensions; so that any exclusive application was invalid. But all such contention was clearly of the world. Therein titles of earthly and present honor have their place. But Christians are not of this world, as Christ is not. God set in the church as He chose; but apostles, prophets, teachers, &c., were not recognizable in the world. And the Lord had solemnly warned His disciples on this head. See Matt. 23:8-12, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:24-27, When the cross lost its power both in truth and in practice, flesh asserted itself unblushingly, and the offices of His servants in the church were turned into badges of rank in the world: a chaos which reigns everywhere really, but more or less conspicuously, to this day. Hence the haughtiest offender, even when flaunting his peacock feathers, proclaims himself “servus servorum Dei.” Who can wonder that, when carnal vanity and worldly pride (arrogating the right to beat or anathematize fellow-servants) took the place of love and lowliness, hypocrisy and hatred came in like a flood over Christendom! Nor is there real escape from the evil save in unfeigned self-judgment by Christ's word, and cleaving with full purpose of heart to Christ's name, not as Savior and Lord only, but as center and Head.

Q.-Phil. 3:11. What is its bearing? M. A.

A.—The verse is not intended to raise the least doubt or uncertainty in the believer's mind, but to convey the deep blessedness of that glorious goal, the “out-resurrection” from the as the apostle puts it here only. So incomparable was it in his eyes that, in the view grace gave him of it, he welcomed the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being conformed to His death (as indeed he was to be literally), if in any way to arrive at that wondrous result of Christ's resurrection. He minded no labors nor pains nor shame meanwhile to win and know Christ thus. He would not have his own righteousness if he could, which is of law-nothing but what is by faith of Christ, the righteousness that is of God conditioned by faith: all of His grace, and in His righteousness, and according to Christ both along the way and at the end in glory.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-2 Sam. 24:13 and 1 Chron. 21:12. Dr. Temple lately said on a public occasion that he had no doubt there were inaccuracies in the O. T., though the writers told the truth as far as they knew it! Still more recently he owned the statement, and referred to the verses above as an instance. Is it mistranslation, or what? W. C.

A.-The superficial looseness and irreverent unbelief of the rationalists is too plain; but there is really a choice of explanations in meeting objections of this kind. 1. Numbers are apt to be mistaken in transcription; but this is the inaccuracy of copyists, not of scripture. In this case the Sept. (far the most ancient of versions) gives three years in 2 Samuel as in 2 Chron. 2 Difference of design explains many an apparent discrepancy, the one statement being as true as the other but not the same. Thus in the earlier book Jehovah is said to have moved David, whereas in the later Satan is the mover: very different aspects, but equally certain, and neither open to just exception. So we see difference in the sum given by Joab to David; in the first 800,000 of Israel

and 500,000 of Judah; in the second 1,100,000 and 470,000 respectively. But the lesser number of Israel we find qualified as “valiant men,” as those of Judah were given in a round number. Again, in 2 Samuel David bought “the threshing-floor and the oxen” for 50 shekels of silver; yet in 1 Chronicles he gave to Ornan for “the place” 600 shekels of gold. It was not the mere floor for the altar site, but the whole of mount Moriah for the house of Jehovah Elohim as well as for that altar.-It may be noticed too that details of interest, are added in each of the accounts, but omitted in the other; and the language, not more notable for similar shades than for dissimilar, is equally striking. Nevertheless who doubts the later writer was familiar with the earlier writing? The one was no less inspired than the other. Had it been a human arrangement, the irresistible impulse would have been to make the two identical. But knowing them both to be inspired of God, neither priest, nor people, nor prophets, nor scribes, dared to lay a sacrilegious hand on either. Assured that Jehovah was the author through the instruments He chose, they left it to faith to receive if they could not explain all the difficulties, and to rationalists to call them “inaccuracies.”

Q.-1 Cor. 7:23, Gal. 1:10. What is organization in divine things such as ministry?

A.-It is arranging the ministry of the word in ways of men without God's will. As the Lord from on high gave the gifts, He controls livingly by His word. His servants are not left to their own discretion, but subject to His direction in scriptures open to all saints. Not only is there doctrine as to its source, character, and nature, but inspired history, that those who walk by faith might have an adequate unvarying standard from God. Well may we cherish the full liberty of the Spirit there laid down; and we cannot depart from the word for the fancied improvements of the age without presumption and error. How far are we from making it good as we ought, even in these islands small as they are, and with so crowded a population, according to that holy precedent! Innovation is fatal; for, however pleasing to the superficial, it can only precipitate declension. One can understand perfervid and erratic ways in those filled with zeal over perishing souls. But those who undertake to instruct the many and needy professors of Christ in Christendom ought assuredly to be patterns of obedience. With what face can they urge the word on others, if they do without it themselves? Do we believe in the sufficiency as well as in the authority of scripture? Is it rich enough in profit, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted unto every good work? Can we add anything of value in God's eyes?

At the meetings called Conferences, prayer and praise, open assemblies, and testimony have scripture warrant and just proportion. For the Christian public a discourse or two at most would convey ample material for profit. But where quantity, not quality of speech to professing Christians has its monopoly, how sad the principle! and what may not be the issue?

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-1 Cor. 9:27: is it “a castaway,” or only set aside as a servant? B.A.

A.-The apostle means, that if a man failed to buffet his body and lead it captive (i.e., gave it license to sin without conscience), no matter how he preached to others, he should himself be rejected or reprobate. God is not mocked. This was not his own case, though he puts it hypothetically of himself in order to give it the greater emphasis, as he was in the habit of doing. Without holiness no one shall see the Lord.

Q.-Lev. 23:26-32. Is there any good ground why the day of atonement should be interpreted of the judgment seat of Christ? J. S.

A.-None whatever. Such an application is wholly incongruous with the Feasts of Jehovah; nor does the order of time favor it save superficially.

For as the earlier series was fulfilled in Christ sacrificed, our Passover, with its accompanying feast of unleavened bread, and in the wave-sheaf, with the wave-loaves, there is ver. 22 following up all this, and hinting not only at that harvest which will clear the wheat for the heavenly garner, but at the righteous remnant left here below in the end of the age.

Then is given the later series beginning with the trumpets as a divine summons to awake God's ancient people, the atonement-day as the application of Christ's work in a way (as we know) even more applicable to them than to us by the scapegoat, and last the tabernacles, though there be the eighth day to connect the earthly with the heavenly at the end.

Here all flows on with the simplicity of truth, and in twofold order manifestly required and appropriate; whereas the interpolation of Christ's judgment-seat confuses, dislocates, and destroys what is most distinctive. Atonement-Day is in no way met by our being manifested to God and receiving accordingly. Nor will there be a day of affliction for the glorified in heaven, any more than a call to do no manner of work on pain of destruction. Both statutes are quite in harmony with Israel when they realize the Messiah's death for their sins.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-Is it true that Heb. 4:14; 9:11, 12 speak of Christ's entrance into heaven when He died, not on His ascension? R. T.

A.-It is pure assumption, in order to scrape an appearance of evidence for the strange and unsound doctrine of propitiation made by Christ, not through the blood of His cross, but by His subsequent action as a separate spirit in heaven, by an unintelligent misuse of the types. Hence the pretense that Heb. 4:14 and 9:11, 12 refer to His entrance on death as priest! whereas other passages in the Epistle speak of His entrance on ascension as Man! Whosoever is bold enough to draw such a line is on every principle of truth bound to prove his assertion. Those who deny it, as almost if not all believers hitherto, stand on the common character thus far of Heb. 1:3; 6:20; 8:1; 9:24; 10:12; 12:2 with the two texts in question. No one denies the Lord's presence in Paradise immediately after death; no sober Christian has ever confounded this with His entrance after ascension on priestly function. Indeed one of the two texts even maintains beyond cavil Christ's entrance once for all into the sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption. This is the sole entrance which the Epistle contemplates or allows: if any one disputes this, let him try to give an adequate proof. Dean Alford's argument for simultaneity here is at issue with the doctrine of the Epistle. Indeed, ingenious as he was, he is unreliable often for orthodoxy. And as to Greek, think of a scholar comparing ■πoκριθε■ς ε■πε and similar cases with ε■σ■λθεν ■φ■παξ..., α■. λ. ε■ρ■μενος! The rendering of the A. and R. Vv., Green, Davidson, &c., is alone tenable: so the Vulgate, &c.

Q.-Is it according to the scriptures for the bread at the Lord's Table to be broken before giving thanks? or the wine to be poured out after giving thanks? An Enquirer.

A.-The Lord blessed, or gave thanks, before breaking the bread or any distribution of either this or the wine took place. Unity is thus better expressed than after breaking in pieces or pouring into two or more cups. It is not that the memorial is really impaired; but there is wisdom here as every where in subjection to scripture. Some talk of thanking for empty plates or cups; but the loaf is there, and so is the cup (as the vessel is called that contains the wine). Emptiness does not apply, whatever the order. The subsequent division is a mere matter of convenience, and unnecessary save where numbers call for it.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-Is the Sabbath part of the law to which the Christian (Rom. 7:4-6, Gal. 2:19) died with Christ? or does Gen. 2:3 make it still binding, as being before the law and even sin? R. C.

A.-Undoubtedly the Christian is declared to have died to the law as well as to sin; and to both without qualification. Grace and new creation take us out of Adam's or Israel's relationship. We are in Christ risen and ascended, and are told expressly in Col. 2 that none should judge us in eating or in drinking, or in respect of a feast-day or a new moon or sabbaths. Having died with Christ, we are not, as men living in the world, to subject ourselves to ordinances. This does not hinder but help our enjoying the privilege of assembling on the first day of the week, “the Lord's day” of resurrection, not as in bondage but in liberty, not only for the remembrance of Christ in worship, but for edification also as well as in the outgoing of heart with the gospel to the lost and burdened. Hence we see how the Lord pointedly wrought His works of mercy on the sabbath, breaking through the formality of the self-righteous Pharisee; while the devotedness, to which the resurrection of Christ gave so mighty an impulse deeply offended the rationalism of the easy-going Sadducee. We may notice too how the N.T., while showing our precious place as associated with and expressed by “the first” day, wholly distinct from the sabbath, carefully avoids any reference for it to the law, or even to a fresh commandment. For we are not under law but under grace. Such is Christianity as a whole and essentially.

Q.-1 John 2:2. Was Christ a propitiation “for the sins of the whole world?” Does John 1:29 teach this? Does 1 Peter 2:24 apply alike to all, believers and unbelievers? W. R. W.

A.-It cannot be urged too plainly or often that “the sins of” is an interpolation, not only uncalled for, but an addition which goes beyond the truth and is therefore false, as all exaggerations must be. “For our sins” is in pointed distinction. “For the whole world” is ample ground of encouragement for preaching the gospel to those who are still in unbelief, without warranting the dangerous delusion that the sins of the whole world are gone. This would naturally lead to telling every body that he is forgiven, in open opposition to the general warning of scripture to all the unconverted. Hence it is not just to confound this last member of the sentence with 1 Peter 2:24, which rather coalesces with Christ's being a propitiation for our sins. He was our substitute; when men believe the gospel, we and they can say this of them. But He is a ransom for all, as He is a propitiation for the whole world. John 1:29 goes on to the complete taking away (not “bearing our sins”) of the sin of the world, as will be manifested in the new heavens and new earth, like Heb. 9:26. The sacrifice is already offered and accepted; but all its results are not yet come and enjoyed. It will be applied to the millennial age, and completely in the eternal day. To say that judging “according to works” does not mean “sins” is mere quibbling. The “works” of the unbelievers, of the wicked, are nothing but “sins"; for which, when raised, they will have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone, the

second death.

Q.-1 Thess. 5:23: how do you explain sanctification here? M.

A.-It is sanctification in practice, which all Christians admit and urge. The apostle prays that “the God of peace might sanctify them wholly “; and, not content with this general desire, “that their spirit and soul and body might be preserved entire, blamelessly, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The whole man is comprehended, in virtue of the reconciling work on the cross; which awaits redemption in the full sense (Rom. 8:23) at Christ's coming. It is the believing man inwardly and outwardly, the mind of flesh or old man already condemned, and all the rest, inner and outer, animated and directed by the indwelling Spirit of God. The higher faculty of man, his spirit, is named first, and the external instrument, his body, last; the soul, if we distinguish the words, is the seat of individuality, the “I” which uses both. It is a heathen notion, though favored by many moderns, to place the “I” in the spirit; but scripture is distinctly adverse, and the error involves many serious consequences. As to this, Dr. Delitzsch's book is unreliable, though learned and lively.

Q.-1 Peter 1:2: what is meant by sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience?

A.-It is sanctification in principle, a truth of deep importance, ignored everywhere in Christendom, by Protestants as well as Romanists, by Calvinists no less than by Arminians. For by it is meant true living separation to God from the starting-point of faith, when one is “born of water and Spirit,” in a new nature. This cries, as Saul of Tarsus did when converted, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? It is therefore as we see here, “unto obedience"; not only so but to Christ's obedience, not as a Jew under law, but as a child obeying its Father under grace, even though the sprinkling of the blood or justification had yet to be learned, however soon it may follow. Hence we read in 1 Cor. 6:11 “washed, sanctified, justified “: the order of which is inexplicable to such as overlook the absolute setting apart, or personal sanctification, of believers from their first breath of new life as “born of God.” The Washing looks at our previous uncleanness, the sanctification at our separation to God, the justification at our resting on Christ's work of redemption, as the other two precede and go together.

If any one wishes to see the havoc done to scripture by a pious and learned man, through confounding these two senses of sanctification, both equally true and essential to Christian intelligence, let him consider Th. de Bèze's version of 1 Peter 1 and the notes in any of his five folio editions of the Greek Testament; in which he makes κατ■-ex! ■ν-ad! and ε■ς-per! It is a total and inexcusable falsification through prejudice. Verses 15 and 16 of the same chapter do exhort to actual day-by-day holiness or sanctification in practice. Popery and Puseyism confound justification with practical sanctification to the loss of the truth as to both. The great value of the truth, so generally found wanting, can hardly be exaggerated, Romish theology being utter confusion and that of the Puritan partial and one-sided. Scripture alone is the truth which co-ordinates, and is worthy of all trust.

Again, the Authorized and the Revised Versions are fairly correct: elect “according to.” But “by” is better than “through “; and “in” is equivalent to “by,” as it here can only mean “by virtue, or in the power, of.” And both agree in rendering “unto” obedience, which is alone right or possible on any sound principle. We are called to obey, as Christ obeyed, filially, and not in the bondage of the law

like Israel; whilst instead of having the blood of victims as its sanction threatening death on failure, we have the sprinkling of His blood cleansing us from all sin.

Chapter 242

Scripture Queries and Answers: The Little Horn

Q.-Can the little Horn of Dan. 7 be the last Roman Emperor? Is he not rather the Jewish Anti-Christ? On the one hand the ten Horns are not the beast, nor is the little Horn which comes up among them, and destroys three of the first Horns. And as the Beast was destroyed because of the great words the Horn spoke, their distinction is clear on the other. Taking the little Horn as the Willful King, or the Anti-Christ, he is the Beast's minion, and corresponds more with the Second Beast of Rev. 13. He has all cunning (eyes like those of man), pleases the Beast, and represents him, though a distinct personage.

(condensed from) D. P.

A.-It is quite true that John's Anti-Christ (or willful king of Dan. 11:36 et seqq.), being the subordinate of the Beast as to earthly power, is the Second Beast or false prophet, the highest pretender to spiritual eminence and energy, answering to the man of sin in 2 Thess. 2. They are, one no less than the other, worshipped, and they perish together in the lake of fire (Rev. 19). But the Roman empire, or first Beast of Rev. 13, has a chief; and this clearly the little Horn, which came up after the ten, dispossessed three, and became the dominant power, to which the rest gave their kingdoms as vassals. Dan. 7 alone gives the historic details. It is the once little Horn become great, whose pride and blasphemies brought judgment on the imperial Beast as a whole.

In the Revelation, which gives character rather than history, it is the Beast that said and did what its last ruler said and did. Compare Dan. 7:20, 21, 24, 25, 8-11, with Rev. 13:4-7. This solves the difficulty. The Revelation therefore does not distinguish this last Horn as such like Daniel, but attributes to the Beast in its last form what Daniel predicates historically of the little Horn. So true is this, that Rev. 17:11 identifies the Beast or Roman empire with the eighth resurrection head, which answers to Daniel's little Horn; and in ver. 12 takes no notice of the then fallen Horns. John speaks of the characteristic ten Horns. There is the clearest guard against confounding him with the second Beast, the lawless king in Judea (Anti-Christ).

There is no doubt that the Roman imperial Horn is said to have “eyes like the eyes of a man “; but this only symbolizes his extraordinary intelligence and insight humanly. The second Beast pretends to give breath and speech to the inanimate, as well as to call fire from heaven in the sight of men—the crucial proof of Jehovah as God against Baal in Elijah's day. Again, it is certain that the Roman prince in Dan. 9 causes sacrifice and oblation to cease in the temple; so that his thinking to change times and laws was quite consistent with Dan. 7, instead of bringing the Anti-Christ into what belongs to the Roman power. But as they are confederates, it is easy to identify them mistakenly.

We must also beware of the still more prevalent confusion of the little Horn of Dan. 8 with either the Emperor in Rome or the Anti-Christ in Jerusalem. He is the enemy of both, being “the Assyrian” of the prophets in general, and the “king of the north,” whose last doings and end we read of in Dan. 11:40-45. He is destroyed no less signally than the Beast and the False Prophet

soon after their awful catastrophe.

Scripture Query and Answers: 1 Timothy 4:14

Q.-1 Tim. 4:14. How do you explain this? D. S. T.

A.-That the apostle was God's channel in conferring a special gift of grace on Timothy for his work, as we know was done generally on saints not before landed on Christian ground (Acts 19:1-7), is plain and sure. There were prophecies preceding about Timothy, as a prophet or prophets designated Barnabas and Saul at Antioch. Only in the latter case no gift was conveyed. The laying on of hands by their fellow-laborers was no more than the sign of their commendation to God's grace for the work given them to do (Acts 13:2-4; 14:26), and was repeated, as we learn from chap. xv. 40). Thus to Timothy a spiritual gift was imparted by the imposition of Paul's hands (2 Tim. 1:6), with the accompaniment of the elders (1 Tim. 4:14) who were incapable of conferring the Spirit in any way, but joined by the apostle in that act by way of fellowship. There is no question of “a gift” in Acts 13. Those called in this case had a higher place and a greater gift (see Acts 14:4) than the prophets and teachers, whom the Spirit directed to set them apart for His special mission.

Scripture Queries and Answers: Genesis 4:23-24

Q.-Gen. 4:23, 24: what do we learn from these verses? M.

A.-As Cain appears to be no obscure type of the unbelieving Jews who rose up against and slew Him Who deigned to be born of that people, and have since been left wandering over the face of the earth; so Lamech appears, in this song to his two wives, to represent the Jew in the latter day confessing his blood-guiltiness, yet looking to be avenged most amply at the end. Thus we know from the prophets it will be with Israel, when a land is brought forth in one day, and a nation is born at once. For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her sons. Then shall the people, once so guilty yet kept, and henceforth truly penitent at the feet of Messiah, sing, O Jehovah, Thy mercy is forever.

Scripture Queries and Answers: Hebrews 4:14; 9:11-12

Q.- Heb. 4:14, 9:11, 12?

A.-It ought to be added to the remarks in page 256, that those who do not distinguish between Christ as Man and as priest, but on the contrary lay the utmost stress on His priestly entrance as a separate spirit, to effect propitiation, quite fail to give the scriptural evidence such a theory demands. The statements of the Epistle to the Hebrews ignore any entrance in that character, save “once for all “; and this beyond fair question was when He ascended on high. They are accordingly not entitled to the distinction supposed in that answer to the query; for their theory supposes His priestly character in the separate state as well as when He ascended, and a (if not, the) most important exercise of the office before the ascension.

Chapter 246

Scripture Queries and Answers: John 1:5

Q.-Does John 1:5 refer to the Word when incarnate as in vers. 9, 14? or to His action as light in the ages before? W. S. L. B.

A.-I am not disposed to limit verse 5 to the Lord when He became flesh. As He was ever the object of faith for fallen man, so He appeared and spoke in testimony from the earliest days; and this was the action of divine light to faith, while the darkness apprehended it not, but liked better the deceits of the enemy and the spurious devices and imaginations of man far from God. The True Light, in coming into the world, sets every man in the light as never before; so that there was a vast increase of privilege, and hence of responsibility. It could not be otherwise, when such a One became Man and tabernacled here below, full of grace and truth,

Chapter 247

Scripture Queries and Answers: Man Child Caught up

Q.-Rev. 12 Is the man-child caught up to God and His throne yet future? If so, how do we account for no mention of death and resurrection? — C. R.

A.-From ch. 11:19 is a fresh start in the book, as the seventh trumpet in a general way brings us down to the end. This closes the first volume of the Revelation. The second, beginning with that verse which should introduce ch. 12, tells us, not of a door opened in heaven," but of "the temple of God that is in heaven opened." God's ark was seen now, the ark of His covenant, though there followed, not only lightnings and voices and thunders, but an earthquake and great hail also. Then were seen signs in heaven: the mother, not the bride, (with supreme government, reflected authority subordinate, and full power in man) yet in travail; and the dragon, wielding the power of the Roman empire, and seeking to devour her child destined to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But the vision omits that work which is the basis of redemption and divine right, and at once shows us Him caught up on high, whilst the woman flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days. It is a mystical presentation of Christ with Whom the church is hidden, as in O.T. figures, caught up to heaven, without date, save that the woman's flight into the wilderness is measured out, during which she is protected but has in no way the glory and power on the earth that is to be her portion. But heaven meanwhile is cleared of the great enemy and his angels; which is plainly future, and cannot be till after the rapture of the saints on high. The accuser of the brethren is not yet expelled. For the N.T. recognizes that our wrestling is against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. But Satan and his emissaries shall surely be cast down, never more to regain access there as now; and the contest for the earth is decided in due time, when He Whose right it is shall unite heaven and earth and all things under His sway. Thus the ascension of Christ is mystically identified with that of the heavenly saints; just as what is said of Messiah in Isa. 1 is applied to Christians in the later verses of Rom. 8 Still more easily is this understood in the symbols of a prophetic book like the Revelation. The signs being seen in heaven does not mean that the object in view is heavenly for the woman any more than for the countless crowd of Gentiles in chap. vii. The mother is as clearly the earthly people, as the heavenly bride is the church.

Chapter 248

Scripture Queries and Answers: Serving the Lord

Q.-Is it true that a servant of the Lord, acting out of his own zeal without God's word, must be left free' even Of remonstrance beyond private? C. H. R.

A.-Nothing can be more opposed to both letter and spirit of scripture. Of all who call on the Lord's name, Christ's true minister is bound to be the most submissive to His word. For with what face could he enjoin the saints to submit to the word, if he himself claimed exemption, instead of being an example in faith, obedience, and humility? All alike are sanctified. by the truth, all chosen in sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, on the pattern of our Master, in its perfection. “If any one think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things, that I write to you are the commandment of the Lord. But if any one is ignorant, let him be ignorant” (1 Cor. 14:37, 38). Condemnation, more cutting cannot be of those who pleaded their little gifts for setting up personal independency or some new thing.

No doubt, we are bound not to be hirelings of denominations, and should not seek to please men, as is done by adopting human methods. If the church is one, it does not admit of men's ways (1 Cor. 4:16, 17; vii. 17; xi. 1, 2). We have to persevere in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, remembering that ministry means not mastery but service, the service of Christ, and of every one for His sake. But, even the greatest gift and highest office, if it went wrong, was liable not only to private remonstrance but to public rebuke. So we find Peter solemnly blamed before all for what many, and very probably the great majority, must have thought the venial change of teasing to, eat with the Gentiles. To Paul it was dissembling, and an offense against the truth of the gospel.

Who of us ever heard so egregious and unfounded an assumption since the days of 1845? Then a like piece of ministerial irresponsibility was sought to be based on the metaphor of a shepherd. His place was to judge the sheep, not they him

Chapter 249

Scripture Query and Answer: 1 Corinthians 14:29

Q.-1 Cor. xiv. 29. Does the restriction to “two or three” apply at present and always? Does it bear on what is commonly called an “open meeting”? H.G.L.

A.-It is precisely then that this apostolic direction does apply, that is, when saints come together in assembly character (■ν ■κκλησ■■) This is supposed throughout the entire chap. 14. See vers. 4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 26, 30, 34. It does not of course relate to a preaching, or a discourse to the disciples such as Paul gave day by day in the school of Tyrannus. It is the divine regulation of the assembly as such, where the Lord acts by the Spirit working in His sovereign grace. If any one speak there, it is as God's mouthpiece, or oracles. It is not enough that it be true, but, as Peter means by that phrase (1 Peter iv. 11), what God would have spoken then and there, the truth intended by Him for the occasion. This would be impossible but by His Spirit. Yet inasmuch as His Spirit is now given, as for every other holy purpose, so for this specifically in the assembly, we are entitled to act on it, to look for it, and to repudiate any speaking otherwise. “Prophesying” in 1 Cor. xiv. is just the word which answers to that phrase in 1 Peter iv. 11. If we believe God as to meeting “in assembly,” we have the important word from the Lord that even prophesying is not to be overdone. “Two or three” is the limit. There might be not one, or only one, to speak so; “two or three” are allowed, but no more. For others to speak after “two or three” is such human license as the apostle was correcting in the Corinthian church. Too much is injurious, and neither edifying nor orderly. We cannot speak rightly save in obedience. What the apostle wrote, he wrote for all saints as well as those addressed; and it is for us to recognize it as the Lord's commandment. Let all things be done in comeliness and order. Eagerness to speak, when the Lord gives no warrant but rather prohibition, is disobedience instead of pleasing Him. But man's spirit is as ready to invent rules arbitrarily as to neglect the rules laid down in the word.

Chapter 250

Scripture Query and Answer: Captivity Led Captive

Q.-Eph. 4:8. What is meant by “captivity led captive?” Can it imply (as some besides Romanists, Lutherans, &c. think) the O. T. saints taken then on high? Does Luke 16 bear on it?

H. G. L.

A.- The expression first occurs in Judg. 5:12, where it means that Barak was called to lead captive those who had haughtily oppressed Israel. So also in Psa. 68:18 the risen and ascended Lord is celebrated in terms drawn from warfare as victorious over the mightiest powers of evil. There is no sound reason to doubt that in the Epistle the sense is the same, applied yet more loftily but within His mind Who ever looked on to Christ. Some have gone so far as to suppose an active force in the word αχμαλωσια. But there is no need to go beyond the ordinary usage, and the Hebraistic emphasis. That they had been captors before being thus emphatically led captive is no doubt true; but it is not expressed in the phrase itself, which simply but intensely expresses the completeness with which they were vanquished. Col. 2:15 describes the same victory over him that had the power of death and his angels in a manner suited to that great Epistle. Their might is annulled in the cross, which seemed Christ's defeat but is the ground of His triumph. This was indeed a captivity led captive. And He who received gifts in man (or in that capacity) gave gifts to men.

It would be altogether harsh to imagine any reference to the saints before Christ. There ought to be proof from other scriptures that they are alluded to as at that time within the cortege of the Savior's triumph. Certainly neither 1 Peter 3:19 nor 1 Peter 4:6 has the smallest bearing on it.

Nor does Eph. 4:9 give countenance to any descent of the Lord to carry on high the departed saints. Granted, that the verse does not express His descent as the Son from heaven to become man; but it goes no farther than His descent when a man on earth to the grave. He tasted death, truly died, and was buried. Jehovah would not leave His soul in Sheol or Hades, nor suffer His pious One to see corruption. He that descended so low ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. But Eph. 6:12 does present the solemn truth of spiritual powers of evil in the heavenlies, with whom, instead of being yet expelled, we have now to contend in energy of the Holy Spirit. Through these world-rulers of this darkness the Lord did pass victorious in His ascent through the heavens to the throne of God. Possibly the marginal alternative of “a multitude of captives” captivates persons of an imaginative turn of mind, who are under the delusion that such alternatives are more faithful than the text. Here it appears that it is not mere “multitude” which is the point, but the completeness of His victory over the enemy. Yet in any case there was a multitude.

Is it a plausible interpretation that the Holy Spirit would apply a figure from vanquished foes to the O. T. saints of God? And this, not referring to their evil condition when living in sins, but when turned to God from idols, or from iniquities of any and every kind, and even after they had departed from this life? Would it not be a strangely violent and ungenial account to describe them at the Savior's ascension as “captives"? On the other hand, it is not only intelligible, but unforced

and accurate, to speak of the spiritual hosts of wickedness as a “captivity” which Christ then “led captive.” Him alone it became, and He alone was capable of it.

Luke 16:9 shows us everlasting habitations awaiting those who sacrifice the present in view of the heavenly future; as the story of the rich man and Lazarus (19, &c.) assures of the blessedness that follows on the death of the righteous, and the terrible lot after decease of the selfish man. It is not here after resurrection, but after death.

Chapter 251

Scripture Query and Answer: Conversions in the Millennial Age

Q.-Where in the Psalms or Prophets is justified the belief that there will be conversions in the Millennial age? J. C. J. (U. S. A.).

A.-Almost every where that we find the work of divine goodness contemplated. Take Psa. 2:12: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry... Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” All conversions past, present, or future, are in this way and no other. They alone are the righteous who fear God then as now. The gospel, which actually goes out in indiscriminate grace, the apostle vindicates to the Jewish objector in Rom. 9; 10 by testimonies from the Law, Psalms, and Prophets which anticipate that day. It will be the harvest. We are but a sort of first-fruits, though called to “some better thing,” as Heb. 11:40 speaks, as compared even with “the elders.” But the ingathering great as to extent awaits that day. All must bow to the Lord, “King over all the earth,” as well as “Head over all things;” but all are not converted even then, as Isa. 65 shows, and on a large scale Rev. 20:7-10. They will previously have rendered but a feigned obedience. Compare Psa. 18:44.

Chapter 252

Scripture Query and Answer: Zion and Heaven

Q.-It is acknowledged that the Lord will reign in Zion (Psa. 2; 99; Isa. 12; 24 &c.; Zech. 2; 8 &c.). Yet it is drawn from the N. T. that His or our especial scene of glory will be in heaven. How can this be? R.

A.-Few truths are more important, whether one thinks of Christ or of the church. It is a question of the purpose of God, hidden in the ages and dispensations, but now brought to light formally and fully by the apostle Paul. Take Eph. 1:9-11 as a grand unfolding of it, where we learn that for the administration of the fullness of the times (or seasons) God will gather together (or head up) in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him in Whom also we obtained (or were given) inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

This rises incomparably beyond the kingdom in Zion, or the yet larger dominion of the Son of man, both of which will assuredly be accomplished “in that day.” It is even beyond all the promises to which the O.T. saints have just claim, and wherein no disappointment shall ever be. But grace gave to the apostle to reveal the divine counsel of setting Christ at the Head of all creation, the Heir as the Creator of all, now His (as the Epistle to the Colossians shows) on the ground of reconciliation. He is thus constituted the glorified Head over all, as we now know by faith. And “that day,” which proclaims Messiah's reign over the land of promise with Israel renewed as His people, and all nations and tribes circling round Israel and subject to the Son of man, will make known the still more wondrous glory of our Lord over all things heavenly, angels, principalities, &c., with the church in the same glory His bride as now His body.

When this characteristic truth of the N. T. dawns on the soul, a crowd of scriptures confirm it. Thus in Matt. 6 our Lord taught His disciples to pray for “Thy” (i.e. the Father's) kingdom to come, as well as His will to be done on earth. The Father's kingdom is as distinctly heavenly as the Son of man's is earthly: so Matt. 13:41-43 clearly proves. The risen saints shine as the sun, which is not earthly, in their Father's kingdom; whereas the Son of man by His angels executes judgment on all offenses and unrighteous persons in His kingdom as manifestly on earth. But it will be the day for His exaltation manifested on high as well as here below, being the Son of the Father and set by God over all things heavenly and earthly.

Then John 14 is unmistakable that our special hope of blessedness is not merely reigning with Christ, as all suffering saints shall, but that He is coming to receive us to Himself in the Father's house where He now is. And the great N. T. prophecy shows us (Rev. 21:9 to the end) the bride the Lamb's wife the center of heavenly and universal glory; as the O. T. is equally clear that Zion will be for all the peoples of the earth, then owning Israel to be the seed which Jehovah has blessed and set at the head of all nations under the Great King, Himself Jehovah-Messiah.

So Rom. 8:16, 17, designates the Christians as God's children. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” This goes far beyond the earth; as Rom. 5:17 cannot be limited to

the millennial reign.

Again, 1 Cor. 6:2, 3, teaches that we shall judge the world—nay more, judge angels. And chapter xv. 48, 49, distinctly calls us even now “heavenly” in title, after the pattern of the Heavenly One, and points on to our bearing that heavenly image, as we have now borne the image of the earthly (Adam's).

But instead of gathering up other intimations, look at the glorious type of that day furnished by Gen. 14 where Melchizedek meets Abram victorious over the foe in the hour of their short triumph, and pronounces him blessed of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; as he blesses the most High God Who had delivered his enemies into his hand. Christ is even now, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches, priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; but He will exercise its privileges in the blessings of. that day of blessing. One might add many a glimpse in the types of Joseph, and of Moses, as well as in that of the sanctuary. But enough is said to show the blank left by looking no higher than the earth for the Lord in that day. If nature abhors a vacuum, the Christian in hope awaits glory in the heavens for Christ and the church, while fully assured that the glory of Jehovah and the knowledge of it shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Chapter 253

The Second Tables of the Law

While the people are distinctly put under law, the principle of the second tables (Ex. 34) was law after present forgiveness and mercy. This is exactly the ground Christians want to be upon now—to bring in law, after present forgiveness and mercy. But this it is that the apostle calls a ministry of death and condemnation. For, the first time he went up, his face did not shine; and it is to this shining of his face on the second time that the apostle refers in 2 Cor. 3. If the people were still under law, the more gracious God was, the more guilty they were.

Chapter 254

Separate State and the Resurrection (Duplicate)

When we have learned a truth, even in power from God, such is the narrowness of the human mind, that we are in serious danger of making it a shut-door against other truths, and thus of stopping short of the largeness of God's thoughts. Indeed, the more important a truth, the greater is the peril of its becoming all-absorbing. “But the Advocate, who is the Holy Spirit (blessed, divine remedy!) whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.”

Thus, when Jesus, after speaking of the many mansions in His Father's house, and of going there to prepare a place for His own, said: “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,” it is clear that He did not mean death, nor the end of the world, nor the destruction of Jerusalem. He who was going away promised to come again: if it was a real, personal departure of Jesus, it was to be as real and personal a return, not to reign over them in their place, but to take them to His place, that He and they might be there together. Right, therefore, it is, that our hearts should feel that our going to Him is a thing very distinct from His coming to receive us unto Himself in such sort as this.

Again, our souls may have drank somewhat into the triumphant strain of the apostle, when he cries, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Hades is not our joy, but He Who has won the victory—He that liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore, and hath its keys! It is true that the Christian can say that all is his, life or death; still, death is not, and ought not to be, the object of his affections. Christ is the Bridegroom; not Christ known after the flesh, for henceforth know we no man thus: we know Him the risen man, the Lord from heaven. And by the energy of the Holy Spirit, knowing Him risen, we long for that which will but speak His worth, His power, His glory—above all, His love. We long for His coming and for the resurrection—the resurrection of them that are Christ's, at His coming. Happiness, no doubt, it is to be rid of the clog and burden, this body of sin and death; happiness far deeper is the assurance that we depart to be with Christ; but, led of the Spirit, we long for His triumph, for His joy. Our death and consequent separate state, however to us “far better,” through His grace, far from being His triumph, is rather the last effect of the power of His adversary. No! it is “when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Nevertheless, let none depreciate the blessed portion of those who, absent from the body, are present with the Lord. When the word of truth in its fullness and simplicity is respected, this may not be touched. To the dying thief, who prayed the Lord to remember him when He should come in His kingdom, Jesus said, “Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;” that is, He proffers something beyond and better than he asked, something which, to the renewed mind, is more prized than any outward governmental display, however glorious—the joy of being with Christ Himself, and that very day too, without waiting for His coming in His kingdom. I do not

mean, nor believe, that, in the kingdom, the element of the presence and companionship of Christ will be wanting, nor can it be supposed that we shall be less able to appreciate this blessed association, when that which is perfect is come. Surely not. Yet, strictly, it is not what constitutes the character of the kingdom, for it existed, as we have seen, before the kingdom, and it will continue after the kingdom shall have been delivered up. But when one has felt even a little of the affections of Christ, it needs few words to show that no conferred honor, no recompense, however bright, (and God forbid that we should disparage the recompense of such a Lord!) can approach the joy of being near Him, and with Him, and, blessed be God, forever!

The saints, then, which sleep in Jesus (or rather, who were put to sleep by Jesus, το■ς κοιμηθ■ντας δι■ το■ ■ησο■— 1 Thess. 4:14), death shall not be able to separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So Stephen stoned calls and says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and Paul could say “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” There was not, and could not be, a doubt, whether to choose death or resurrection. The hesitation was about “living in the flesh,” not about resurrection, which is incomparably more blessed than either to live or to die: “if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead.” To abide in the flesh might be more needful for others; but as far as the servant of Christ individually is concerned, to depart and to be with Christ is far better (Phil. 1:21-23).

Nevertheless, the third chapter of this same Epistle declares that we have another and better hope. We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior from heaven; Who, instead of giving to our spirits only the joy of being with Him, 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. And the apostle, in 2 Cor. 5, speaking of Christian position and judgment as to these things, utters our confidence and willingness to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord, though, even here, he shows that there is another thing closer to the heart. “We groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven..... For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed (i.e. death and the separate state), but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life: “the result and complement of the resurrection life of Christ. “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” “Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:11-23).

Chapter 255

The Shepherd of the Sheep

John 10:1-6

The similitudes of the Fourth Gospel differ from the parables of the other three, and have another name. They are sayings by the way or proverbial allegories, and like all the doings and sayings of John's Gospel, they set out the Lord personally, the grace and truth which came by Him. Here is the first of the cluster.

“Verily, verily I say to you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up elsewhere, he is a thief and a robber; but be that entereth by the door is shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. And a stranger they will in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. This proverb (or, allegory) spoke Jesus to them; but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them” (vers. 1-6).

With the solemn formula that occurs so often in this Gospel, the Lord introduces His description, not of the shepherd of the sheep, but of a thief and a robber. He does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up elsewhere. God distinguished the door by plain marks that the sheep might discern the Shepherd, Who came from and was sent by Himself. For they were precious to Him no less than to the Son. And the Son was zealous for the Father's house and would enter by the appointed way and none other. He, the mighty God, deigned to be the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, and so to become the Seed of Abraham, the son of David, and born of the Virgin. Through Micah (v. 2) Jehovah named Bethlehem as the place of His birth. Out of it should He come forth unto Him that was to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Nor was the time left vague. Through Daniel He fixed it by weeks (of years) to elapse, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus), after which Messiah should be (not born nor manifested nor reigning, but) “cut off and have nothing.” So also He does not fail to announce in this chapter as in chapter 3:14 too.

Others sought their own things by craft or violence; He came in a love unmistakably of God, in an obedience that left nothing to desire, always doing in an evil world the things that pleased the Father. Prophecy pointed Him out no more plainly than the grace and truth which came by Him, or the signs of beneficent power which studded the path of light that could not be hid. He entered by the door, and “to him the porter openeth.” The Spirit of God deigned to work in this as in all others to glorify the Lord. Notably we perceive this by the testimony of Simeon, and of Anna a prophetess in early days, but above all by John the Baptist the divinely appointed herald of the Messiah, when the time drew near for His public ministry.

It was for him who was but “a voice of one crying in the wilderness” to say, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Nor was it in vain for those given to see according to God. For “the sheep hear his voice;” and as He said in ch. 5:25, “they that hear

shall live.” There was faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and with faith life. For life was in Him from everlasting to everlasting. It belonged to His eternal person as the Word and the Son (i. 3, 1 John 5:11); and when He took the place of man, as the Sent One, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, yet not for Himself simply, but that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal, and this in hearing His voice (vers. 24, 25). It might not yet be life in resurrection—, but it was life eternal; for it was in the Son, and the Son has none other for the believer. Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth on Me hath life eternal (John 6:47). There is no exception. A robber just converted, and an apostle behind none, have just the same life. Christ lived in both; and He is the true God and the eternal life.

But what tender care in the Shepherd! “He calleth his own sheep by name.” His love is in the fullest way personal. His interest is in each personally, and He would have all to know it. What could evince it more than His calling His own sheep by name? So the apostle wrote, for those who believe as well as himself, He loved me, and gave Himself for me.

A change is next announced of great moment, especially for Jews. He “leadeth them out.” God had given His ancient people much advantage every way. But they had received not His Son, the Shepherd of Israel, hating Him to the utmost, and about to cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him. And He, knowing the end from the beginning, leadeth His sheep out of the fold, more and more the den of thieves and robbers, already the seat of His enemies. It might be done through the violence of others, as when the blind now seeing was cast out by the reviling Jews. But in effect He leadeth them out, as would be true for all His own in due time.

But there is more; and it is of transcendent importance. “When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice.” Later in the chapter He explains how this was to be. He would give Himself for them. It would be by nothing less than His death and resurrection: such was His love, and such their need. Thus only could they be secured, or fitted for the new place of blessing. For even Caiaphas soon after prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:51, 52)—a yet larger view than ver. 4 presents, and needing ver. 16 to supplement it. And what a safeguard for their difficulties and dangers grace provides the sheep! “They know his voice.” This enables them to “follow him,” as it preserves them from misleaders.

“And a stranger they will in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers.” So the Lord lays down the truth for His own. He does not here state the possible wandering of any sheep, but presents the only way of life. Others might occupy themselves with errors and evils, a pursuit not without danger of defilement. The wisdom of the Christian is to be content with His voice which gave him life from the first, and to delight increasingly in Christ to the last, fleeing from a stranger and knowing not the voice of such.

It was a deep allegory, and looked on to that which was not yet accomplished. We need not, then, wonder that as yet the Savior's words were not understood.

Chapter 256

Signs and Waiting for the Son From Heaven

In the calculations of men, events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But, while this has its truth, to faith it is God Who, in His supremacy, holds a seal in His hand, to stamp each day with its character or sign. This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others, but all are in progress; and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era. Like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night, some moments in such progresses may be more strongly marked than others. But all are in advance. Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary, while others were full of incident. And so, all the present ago is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others. These “signs of the times,” or sealings of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern. Because they are always according to the premonitions of scripture. Indeed, current events are only “signs,” as they are according to, or in fulfillment of, such previous notices. The words of the prophets made the doings of Jesus, in the days of His flesh, the signs of those days (Matt. 12:22, 23). And have we not words in the New Testament which, in like manner, make all around us at this moment, or in every century of the dispensation, significant? Have not words, which we find there, abundantly forecast the characters of such dispensation, and given beforehand the forms of those corruptions that were to work in Christendom? They have told us what now our eyes have seen. They told us of the field of wheat and tares—of the mustard seed which became a lodging place for the fowl of the air—of “the unmerciful servant” or of the Gentile not “continuing in God's goodness” –of the great house, with its vessels unto honor and dishonor, and of other like things. They told us of “the latter times,” and of “the last days,” and they still tell the deadly character which that hour is to bear that is to usher forth the man of sin, and ripen iniquity for the brightness and the power of the day of the Lord.

All this is so. And let me ask, if every hour be, after this manner, bearing its character, or wearing its sign, what mark are we, individually, helping to put upon this our day? Is the purpose and way of the Lord ripening into blessedness, at all reflected in us? or, are we, in any measure, aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment? If the times were to be known and described according to our way, what character would they bear? what sign would distinguish them?

These are inquiries for the conscience of each of us. We cannot be neuter in this matter. We cannot be idle in this market place. It may be but in comparative feebleness, but still, each of us, within the range of the action of Christendom, is either helping to disclose God's way, or to ripen the vine of the earth for the wine-press of wrath.

The Lord tells us that the sign on which our faith must rest is that of a humbled Christ, such a sign as that of Jonah the prophet. Our faith deals with such a sign, because our need as sinners casts us on a Savior, or a humbled Christ. But hope may feed on a thousand signs. Our expectations

are nourished by a sight of the operations of the divine hand displaying every hour the ripening of the divine counsels and promises; in spite of the world, and in the very face of increasing human energies.

These signs may be watched, but watched by the saint already in the place and attitude assigned him by the Spirit. They are not to determine what is his place, but they may exercise him in it. His place and attitude is beforehand and independently determined for him — waiting for the Son of God from heaven.

This posture the Thessalonian saints assumed on their believing the gospel (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). The apostle seems afterward to strengthen them in that posture, by telling them that from it they were to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). And again afterward, he seems to guard them against being disturbed in that attitude, against being tempted to give it up, by further telling them, that that place of expectation should be exchanged for the place of meeting, ere the day of the Lord fell in its terrors on the world and the wicked (2 Thess. 2:1). And, still further, this very posture of waiting for the Son from heaven had induced a certain evil. The Thessalonian saints were neglecting present handiworks. The apostle does not in any wise seek to change their posture, but admonishes them to hold it in company with diligence and watchfulness, that, while their eye was gazing, their hand might be working (2 Thessalonians 3.)

Other New Testament scriptures seem also to assume the fact, that faith had given all the saints this same attitude of soul; or, that the things taught them were fitted to do so. (See 1 Cor. 1:7; 15:23, Phil. 3:23, Titus 2:13, Heb. 9:28).

Admonitions and encouragements of the like tendency, that is, to strengthen us in this place and posture of heart, the Lord Himself seems to me to give, just at the bright and blessed close of the volume.

“I come quickly” is announced by Him three times in the twenty-second of Revelation—words directly suited to keep the heart, that listens to them believingly, in the attitude of which I am speaking. But different words of warning and encouragement accompany this voice.

“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (verse 7). This warns us, that while we are waiting for Him, we must do so with watchful, obedient, observant minds, heedful of His words.

“Behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every one according as his work shall be” (verse 12). This encourages to diligence, telling us that, by the occupation of our talents now during His absence, on the promised and expected return He will have honors to impart to us.

“Surely I come quickly,” is again the word (verse 20). This is a simple promise. It is neither a warning nor an encouragement. Nothing accompanies the announcement, as in the other cases. It is, as it were, simply a promise to bring Himself with Him on His coming again. But it is the highest thing, the dearest thing. The heart may be silent before a warning and before an encouragement. Such words may get their audience in secret from the conscience. But this promise of the simple personal return of Christ gets its answer from the saints. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Thus the Lord, after this various and beautiful manner, does the business of the Spirit in the apostles. His own voice, in these different and striking announcements, encourages the saints to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him.

Great things are doing. The church, the Jew, and the Gentile, are all in characteristic activity, each full of preparation and expectancy. But faith waits for that which comes not with such things. The rapture of the saints is part of a mystery, a part of “the hidden wisdom.” The coming of the Son of God from heaven is a fact, as I judge, apart altogether from the history or the condition of the world around. J. G. B.

Chapter 257

So Shall the Sea Be Calm Unto You

Jonah 1:12

A strange fact, the outcome of a necessity, for one to be thrown into the then raging sea, in order to bring a calm, and thereby deliverance to the otherwise shipwrecked mariners, who finally would have perished. But so had a faithful unfailing God ordered, not only for a disobedient servant and the imperiled sufferers, but above all, to shadow forth the Antitype: the perfect contrast, as shown in the marvelous ways of Him, Who ever had His Son before Him.

Jonah had knowingly departed from doing the will of Jehovah, and was thus the moral cause of the storm; moreover he was fast asleep when roused to face the reality of the position. It was when the helpless captain and crew felt the danger they were in, and called upon the only gods they knew, which were no gods, yea nullities, that Jonah disclosed the facts of the case—how God had sent the storm on his account, and declared the only remedy. “Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you.”

It is often remarked, that a calm precedes a storm. This will truly be the case in a coming hour: when men are saying, Peace and safety, then comes upon them sudden destruction. In this case, the storm precedes the calm, in character both with type and Antitype, where the raging waters must be gone into, to bring the calm of peaceful deliverance. Such are the ways of wisdom, love, and holiness, combined with grace in righteousness, as set forth in Jonah, made good fully and perfectly in the Lord Jesus, and (blessed be God) now made known to and enjoyed by faith in Him by Whom alone the answer can be found and the lesson seen and learned. Jonah's case solemnly illustrates, that the poor perishing mariners could not be saved except by throwing the disobedient servant into the sea, that thereby the innocent should not suffer for the guilty. This the runaway prophet insisted upon, accepting Jehovah's dealing, and his ultimate purposes of blessing assured to him.

How far otherwise was it with Jesus, the Anti-type, Who as the Eternal Son came from the holy calm of the divine glory into a world of sin and woe; becoming a bondman to do the will of God by obedience unto death, even death of the cross. In living obedience through every circumstance, He found it His meat and drink; yet only consummated it at the cross, which He knew must be, not only because of the hatred and wickedness of man, whom He came to save, but there to meet God alone, and settle the question of sin, exhausting the judgment due to it, and thereby bringing about peace with God for all that believe, an eternal calm for guilty ruined man.

Jonah the disobedient servant said, “Take me up and cast me into the sea;” Jesus said “I have a baptism to be baptized with” “The Son of man must be lifted up,” crowned with the mysterious solemn words, uttered in holy communion with His Father, “Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.”

All this eternity will never fully unfold, and much more of the depths of all the suffering, when the innocent stood for the guilty, the Holy for the sinful.

The wrath and waves of a sin-hating God passed over Him, when He Who knew no sin was for us made sin, uttering the unfathomable cry,

“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me”?

Disciples, even chosen witnesses, could sleep in the hour of His anticipated sorrow, where wrath and judgment were pending, but devotion to God's glory, and His people's need led Him onward to the cross, until He could say,

“It is finished.”

Then He went down into the sea of death, not only paying the full wages of sin, but by dying to sin He closed its state forever, and no less made everlasting peace by the blood of His cross.

As always, so here, the Antitype more than covers the type. The storm greater than every other in its every element is now past forever. The abiding proof is, that the once suffering Jesus has exchanged the cross, with all its agony, divine judgment, and death, for a perpetual seat at the right hand of God. Not this only; He is the exalted Head of the church over all things, Chief of the new creation, where all is of God.

Accordingly the Holy Spirit has been sent to testify to Him, that everlasting peace is made, that eternal redemption is secured. By Him the gospel is preached, whoever may proclaim it—the calm which succeeds that storm in perfect peace with God through Him Who died and rose again; as every simple believer is privileged to have henceforth unruffled at all times. Fault may disturb communion, but never undo the soul's peace with God.

The grace of Jehovah used the appointed means of Jonah's sin and remedy to bear witness of the true God to the sailors ready to perish. How vast the company of perishing sinners, who have been brought to God, and saved from the wrath to come by believing in Jesus, whom He raised from the dead, Jonah's Antitype!—Jesus Who suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust!

What will not God do for the Holy One, Who alone glorified Him in being made sin? Surely the believer as to his sins and failures, whether in Jonah's form or otherwise, can say that all his blessing is based on Christ's wondrous death, where sin in all extent was judged as it could be nowhere else. As this is the truth, what must their portion be who are content to live and die, without the true confession of their sins, without faith in the One Whose death alone met God's judgment there? May the person and death of Christ be growingly real and precious, begetting devotion of heart, in holy consistency and obedience to His word, till He come. G.G.

Chapter 258

Suffer the Word of Exhortation

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ—The day of the apostasy is hastening on with rapid strides, and also the moment in which the Lord shall come to snatch His own away. The present hour is of so solemn a character that I feel constrained to address you this word of exhortation. Godly men everywhere, who watch the signs of the times, see the moment approaching which shall terminate the present actings of grace.

The time has evidently arrived when one must speak plainly and decisively, and ask you where you are, and what you are about. You have by grace, which has shone brighter and brighter as it has approached its termination, been gathered out of the seething mass of idolatry and wickedness which now threatens Christendom and the world with an overthrow more awful than that of Sodom and Gomorrah of old. The question is whether you are adequately impressed with the responsibility, as well as the blessedness, of the ground you are on, and walking like men and women whose eyes have been opened.

Believe me, there has never been in the world's history such a time as the present, and Satan is occupied with none as he is with you; and his occupation with you is the more to be feared because of the subtlety of his operations. His object is to withdraw your attention from Christ, while you suppose you are on safe ground and have nothing to fear. He would destroy you with the very truth itself. For mark the subtlety: you are on safe ground and have nothing to fear. He would destroy you with the very truth itself. For mark the subtlety: you are on safe ground, but only while Christ is your all as He is in all.

Here is where Satan is drawing some away. Interpose anything between your soul and Christ, and your Philadelphia becomes Laodicea. Your “right ground” is as unsafe as the rest of Christendom; your strength is gone from you, and you are become weak like any ordinary mortal.

Some of you are young, recently converted or brought to the right ways of the Lord, and you do not know the depths of Satan. But you are hereby solemnly warned of your peril; and if mischief overtake you, you cannot plead ignorance.

Again I say, Satan has his eye especially upon you, for the purpose of interposing the world in some form between your soul and Christ. He cares not how little, or in what form. If you but knew how little will answer his purpose, you would be alarmed. It is not by that which is gross or shameful; such is the development, not the beginning of evil. It is not by anything glaring that he seeks to ruin you, but in small and seemingly harmless trifles—trifles that would not shock nor offend any one as things go. Yet these constitute the deadly and insidious poison, destined to ruin your testimony and withdraw you from Christ.

Do you ask what are these alarming symptoms? and where are they seen?

The question does but show what is the character of the opiate at work. Brethren and sisters, you are being infected with the spirit of the world. Your dress, your manner, your talk, and your lack of

spirituality betray it in every gathering. Does not a sense of weight or of restraint, a want of power, often reveal itself in the meetings, sometimes as if your heart were visibly displayed and its thoughts publicly read? A form of godliness without power is beginning to be seen among you by degrees, as in Christendom generally. As surely as you tamper with the world, insensibly will you drift away to its level.

This is the nature of things. It must be so. If you tamper with the world, the privileged place you occupy, instead of shielding you, will only expose you to greater condemnation. It must be Christ or the world. It cannot be—ought not to be—Christ and the world. God's grace in drawing you out of the world in your ignorance is one thing; but God will never permit you to prostitute His grace, to play fast and loose, when you have been separated from the world. Remember you take the place, and claim the privilege, of one whose eyes have been opened. If on the one hand this is unspeakably blessed (and it is), on the other hand it is the most dreadful position in which a human being can be found. What is it to be at the wedding feast without the wedding garment? It is to say, “Lord, Lord,” while you do not the things that He bids. It is to say “I go, sir,” as he said who went not.

Beloved, I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak; and I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will bless Him for these few faithful words. Nothing can be more excellent than the position you are called to occupy in these closing days of danger and many antichrists.

Saints have stood in the breach, have watched through weary days and nights these eighteen hundred years; and you only wait for the trumpet of victory, to go in and take possession of the glorious inheritance. Other men labored, and you are entered into their labors; and yet, forsooth, you are lowering your dignity to the level of the poor potsherds of the earth, who only wait for the rod of the Victor (and yours too) to be dashed into pieces. Oh, awake then from your lethargy Slumber no longer; put away your idols and false gods; wash your garments, and get you to Bethel, where you will find God to be better than ever you knew Him, even in your best days.

Lay aside your last bit of worldly dress; see to your speech, that it be of Christ and His affairs, and not, as you know it too often is, of anything but Him. Let your prayers mingle with those of other saints at the prayer meetings: they never were more needed. Neglect no opportunity of gathering up instruction from that word which alone can keep us from the paths of the destroyer; and let your life be the evidence of the treasures you gather up at the lecture, at the reading meeting, or in secret with the Lord. If you want occupation with a glorious reward from a beloved Master, ask that Master to set you to work for Him; you will never regret it, either in this age or in that which is to come.

Beloved, bear with me: I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. You belong to Christ, and Christ, to you. Break not this holy union. Let not the betrothed one be unfaithful to her Bridegroom! Why should you be robbed and spoiled? And for what?, Empty husks and bitter fruits, while you waste this little span of blessing?! All the distinctions acquired here in the energy of the Spirit will but serve to enhance your beauty, and render you more lovely in the eyes of Him Who has espoused you to Himself.

Can you refuse Him His delights in you? Can you refuse Him the fruit of the travail of His soul Who once hung a dying man between two robbers on Calvary, a spectacle to men and angels, and for

you? Can you have forgotten (for you cannot have despised) this devotedness for you? He could have taken the world without the cross, and left you out; but He would not. And now will you, having been enriched by those agonies and that blood, take the world into your tolerance and leave Him out? Impossible! Your pure minds did but need to be stirred up by way of remembrance.

Let us therefore take courage from this very moment. We have lately been offering up prayers, confessing the lack of piety and devotedness. May we not take His word, as the answer of our ever-gracious faithful Lord, to arouse us? And then if He re-awaken our drooping energies, the more quickly He comes the better. We shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming. Q.

Chapter 259

Early Testimonies (Fragment)

IN Adam and Eve (under the judgment where man is still) was shown figuratively sovereign grace, which clothed them with a garment that testified to death, before they were driven out; then, in Abel the sacrifice by which the fallen can approach God; next, life eternal in Enoch taken up to heaven, after bearing witness of the Lord's coming with myriads of His saints to execute judgment; lastly, in Noah the end of the age was announced, and the judgment gone through, before emerging for a new earth. Compare Heb. 11:1-7.

Chapter 260

To the Editor of the Chinese Recorder: Part 1

DEAR SIR,

It is evident that the ecclesiastical position in China is exercising the minds of not a few, and that some are dissatisfied with what surrounds them, not as to practice only but as to foundation principles. Mr. Hawks Pott says, “There is one thing about the church of apostolic times in sad contrast with the church in China to-day. Then the church was one; now it is divided and rent asunder.” I suppose he meant to say “There is one thing about the church in China [indeed everywhere] to-day in sad contrast with the church of apostolic times.” Undoubtedly the united church of apostolic times was as right, as the divided church of to-day is wrong. Do we gain anything by closing our eyes to so sure and sad a fact?

Mr. Hudson Taylor is reported to have said at the Kuling Conference, “Had he the power to make all flowers green, he would not care to use that power; or were he able to pierce the eye and make an ear of it, he did not think he could improve the present arrangement by so doing. Unity involves diversity, as shown by the diverse members of one body, though all animated by one spirit.” Is this serious? Is it not a self-excusing play of words? The application of such language as this to the present situation is an easy way of getting rid of positive departure from God's word and will.

Some cannot look at things thus lightly: God's truth and glory are too deeply concerned. Variety in the colors of flowers is from God. The different functions of the eye and the ear are from the first established by the Creator. So it is organically in the church, which man dislikes and dislocates. “In [the power of] one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” The scriptural principle of unity with diversity does apply to the body of Christ. “We being many are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” Scripture recognizes but one communion. How then does this sanction distinct denominations, and separate communions? Is it not a bold misuse of the aim and argument of inspiration? God is not the author of confusion. We are not entitled to impute to Him the scattered condition of Christ's members to-day, to the ruin of expressing His one body. Does it not become us to confess and grieve over the existence of a manifest evil? It is always a spiritual loss when we close our eyes to facts as they are. Let us be assured that the safe ground to take is to read, not the word of God in the dark of our circumstances, but our circumstances in the light of the word. God is not mocked.

Is it further said that “the church at Jerusalem was the mother church, with whom all other churches were in communion?” Because of this fact and others, with principles still deeper, some of us cannot recognize a passing intercommunion of Christians from the various denominations, as adequately meeting God's will, or the due privilege of His children. It is a compromise, not a scriptural expression, of the one body of Christ. Denominationalism according to God's word is utterly bad; but pan-denominationalism is even worse, for it allows and maintains the guilty division, while the new device shows that division is not really approved. It teaches Christians to be habitually separated from other Christians; yet it occasionally proclaims that we ought not to be separated from them. Is it an open question left for us to answer as we please? Is it not most

inconsistent, as the rule to tolerate separate communions, and yet to commune now and then with those from whom we are outwardly separated? What can one think of page 63? “I said an exact imitation of the apostolic church would be unwise; my reason for so saying is because the apostolic church was a time of germination; Christianity had not then, nor has it yet, reached its full and complete development. The more we study those early “days, the more we are led to see that nothing was as yet crystallized; doctrine, church government, and worship all were in the formative state.”

Such language as this is worthy of the author of “Apologia pro vita sua.” We may be quite sure that any “doctrine,” any “church government,” any “worship” not found in the apostolic writings is wrong now. May I suggest that this continuous development of “doctrine,” “church government,” and “worship,” which “has not reached its full development yet,” is the main cause of three-fourths of the division in the church to-day which all Christians should deplore? It is refreshing to turn to 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, and read, “Every scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

If the sound doctrine, the God-given system of church government, and the true character of Christian worship are not in the apostolic scriptures, where are they to be found? The same writer says, “The word apostle is used in a two-fold sense in the New Testament..... sometimes it refers to missionaries..... but it has also a narrower and more restricted use, that is, it is the name applied to the twelve and their successors.”

He believes then in apostolic succession! But he does not tell us who these successors were, or who they are, whether there were twelve lines, or only one. But we know that Peter did not expect one; for he tells us in his second and last Epistle, chap. 1:15, “I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance.” Not a word is here about a personal successor, but everything to show that the apostle of the circumcision meant his writings to take that place. The apostle Paul too makes it quite clear, in Acts 20:29, what kind of persons were to be expected after him. “I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things.” Does this look like either apostolic succession, or desirable development of doctrine? The apostle adds, “And now I commend you to God (not to man), and to the word of His grace (not to developed doctrine), which (word of His grace) is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.” Happily it is within easy reach of all in these days to know what rubbish the (so-called) early fathers taught.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 261

To the Editor of the Chinese Recorder: Part 2

As we are told, “the origin of the Episcopate seems lost in obscurity” (just, because it is not found in scripture); whilst it is added, that shortly after the time of the apostles it became the unifying principle of the Christian church. Yet, says he, “the unifying factor is just what is absent now.” If scripture is to be heard, and if we may reverently use the words, it is the Holy Spirit Who thus acts: and, thanks be to God, He is not “absent now,” but abides with and in us forever. This word “By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body” shows Him to be the true unifying power; and I am glad to see that all do not agree with the assumption that the “charismata” (or gifts) have all disappeared.

Another writer, it may be observed, directs our attention to 1 Cor. 14, as a “practical model for the present time.” If the saints of God followed the teaching of that Epistle, many of the present difficulties would disappear. That miracles may cease is Another matter; but Alas for us, if these gifts have all gone! “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.” How could we possibly get on without these? The word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are vital parts of the “charismata “; but it is to be observed that these are distributed “by the Spirit.” What necessary connection have they with a divinity degree, or a mind powerful and cultivated? “If any man speak, [let him speak] as oracles of God.”

Scripture is plain, not obscure. We read in Eph. 4:8, “when He ascended up on high... He gave gifts to men “: next we are told, the gifts are, “some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” But we read in verse 13 that these gifts were given, “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.” As we have not all reached this happy consummation yet, we may be sure that the δ■ματα (that is, the persons gifted), and the χαρ■σματα (that is, the gifts received), like the Holy Spirit Himself, Who is the Giver, are still present in the church of God. But one can understand that to those who do not accept this as a present truth, on the authority of God's word, they may seem to have disappeared. As to the “apostles and prophets,” they laid the foundation so well, that it abides in their inspired writings. It does not need to be laid again. Are not evangelists, and pastors and teachers still given by the church's Head?

By the words, “the Spirit will lead you into all truth,” we are told that Christ Himself “thus foretold the progressive development of His religion!” Now is this the Lord's meaning? Is it a sound interpretation of His words? Is it not an untruth to glorify man? We must remember that these words were spoken primarily to the apostles, before the Holy Spirit was given; that they were fulfilled after Pentecost within their lifetime; and that “all truth” was committed unto them, that we might believe through their word. The faith was “once for all” delivered to the saints.

He says on page 74, “I believe God's Holy Spirit led the apostles to a clearer understanding of the teaching of Christ; but yet I cannot think that all that was apostolic (teaching, I presume) was in complete harmony with the mind of the Master.” Now, we must be allowed to claim that their

teachings are the truth, they are “words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” “they are the commandment of the Lord.” In doubting their “complete harmony with the mind of the Master,” he thus sets himself up to judge the apostles, and denies the divine authority of scripture.

Kindly bear with strong dissent from the tract in Chinese by Pastor P. Krauz, for I must testify the truth. On page 12 of its English translation I read these words, “Before Jesus there were in Judea the prophets; China had Confucius, who corresponded to the prophets of that time who prophesied of the doctrine of the world's salvation” etc. Does not this remind one of the shameless Oxford Essays and Reviews? It is indeed very true to say that the Jewish prophets prophesied of the Savior. But Confucius never prophesied of “the doctrine of the world's salvation.” The Jewish prophets burst forth into rapturous song in view of Messiah's coming glories, of righteousness and salvation too. The Spirit of Christ in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. Instead of this, Confucius sorrows as those who have no hope. Were we to tell the Chinese that Confucius corresponds to the Jewish prophets who prophesied of a Savior to the ends of the earth, they would reply, and would be justified in replying, “Then the Jewish prophets must have been all wrong; for Confucius, whom you own as prophet, says nothing about such a Savior.”

Nay, this effort to humor China by installing Confucius among the Jewish prophets, is directly opposed to the divine teaching of the New Testament about the Jews and Gentiles. The Chinese are not Jews. The apostle is very clear in the early chapters of Romans as to the place God gave to the Jew. “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way, because that unto thou were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1). Further on, it is shown that, as to the Jews, “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

Now are the Confucian analects, etc. “the oracles, of God”? If so, the Jew has no advantage over the Chinese. Has that pastor considered where his principle of “correspondence” lands him? Besides, the tract contradicts itself; for the writer gives us no end of “mistakes” and “insufficiencies” on the part of Confucius. Surely he did not thus mean like the neo-critics to insinuate like “mistakes and insufficiencies” of Jewish prophets, did he? Logically from his tract the Chinese might look for such failures in the prophets of the O. T. Now it is taught authoritatively in Rom. 2:1, that every man who has a moral judgment of right, and acts wrongly, is without excuse. “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.” Being able to discern right from wrong, and yet doing the wrong, is to condemn ourselves. “For as many as sinned without the law shall perish also without law, and as many as sinned in law shall be judged by law.” Will it not be righteous?

Confucius might perhaps be compared to Socrates. But who can imagine Paul, or rather the Holy Spirit, saying that Socrates or Confucius corresponded with the Jewish prophets? If you compare Confucius with his nearest contemporary Jewish prophet, he was laying the foundation for the worship of the dead, while Daniel was being cast to the lions for refusing to worship idols. A few words from 1 Cor. 1:10, &c., dispose completely of Gentile philosophy, whether Greek or Chinese. “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this age? Did not God make foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” In a

British Court of Law a witness is responsible before God “to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Much more responsible is every Christian preacher and teacher in China.

When the proper inspiration of the scriptures is undermined, and man's development of the church is made to take the place of God's word, when heathen philosophy is put on a level with Jewish prophecy, to the baseless and mischievous elevation of the one, and to the virtual degradation of the other, is it not time to raise a note of alarm?

I remain, Yours in the Master's Service,

THOS. HUTTON.

Hsin Hwa,

Chinkiang. 25th Feb., 1899.

Chapter 262

Two Receptions in the Gospel of John

There are two important facts intimately associated with the coming into the world of the Son of God, viz., how He found it when He came, and its state when He left it. John 1 declares, that He Who was in the beginning with God, and emphatically was God, was in the world that He made (nothing having been made without Him), yet the world knew Him not. In Him too was life, a life shedding its pure and holy light not only on His people Israel, but on man generally. Still the darkness did not comprehend it, any more than the world by wisdom knew the One Who made it. Moreover He came specially to His own things, and His own people received Him not. Therefore the state was one of moral darkness and death, with no desire for the Light of Life. The same Gospel, that so fully declares the love and grace of God made known by the Son, definitely proves that the world was no better but worse for His presence. Light, love, holiness, and truth, all so perfectly expressed by Him, only brought forth hatred and opposition, thereby showing that the world was incomparably worse at the end than at the beginning. The Light that shines in darkness in chapter i. is about to leave the world in chapter xii. He Who was God's only-begotten Son, His gift to the world, touchingly said, “Yet a little while the light is with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.” Clearly, God's best and final gift failed to win man back to God; yea every sign given connected with the pure light of life shining around, crowned with displayed power at the grave of Lazarus, drew forth the fullest hatred in plotting to kill Him, which finally was carried out. Thus no alternative remained but for the Son of God to declare in view of it, “Now is the judgment of this world.”

Light and Love coming into the world in the Person of the Son, Who brought God to man, having been entirely despised and cast out, of necessity left the world in moral darkness and death. It is therefore proved, that the world was in darkness when He came; and much more so when He left, consequent upon its willful ignorance, hatred, and rejection of Him.

Man's sin and God's purpose significantly have their place in the Gospel of John, where sovereign grace so distinctly shines. He came to His own and was rejected: hence condemnation closed their final responsibility. Nevertheless grace in purpose would have a new set of people termed “His own” taken out of the world; not limited to the chosen earthly nation, but all who receive the Son, or in other words “believe on His name.” Here it is that reception blessedly comes in, making known an entirely new family that has a birth and relationship distinctly of God: a privilege reserved for the time of the Son's rejection, fully brought out after His death, resurrection, and exaltation; no less made good by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven by the Father and the Son, and given in connection with not only divine birth but heavenly relationship to a child of God. It is the Father known by the Son in the indwelling power of God the Holy Spirit. Wide, significant and emphatic, are the words faith welcomes in contrast to those that received not God's Son, Who came in grace; as it is written, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (title) to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Therefore to receive or believe on the Son of God gives new life and relationship, completely outside man and the world, his sphere.

Yea, it is eternal life in and by the Son, and by the Father known in Him.

If all is of God Who reconciles to Himself by the death of His Son, truly so is the life given to as many as receive the Son, in character with the grand gospel verse of chapter v. 24. To hear the Son's word, and believe the Father Who sent Him, is to have everlasting life and not to come into judgment, having already as before God passed out of the state to which it applies. The life and relationship being heavenly and not of the world, which is fully declared in the heart-breathings and desires of the Son to the Father in chapter xvii., the hope and prospect of the heaven-born family must be in character with it.

The opening of John 14 makes known both the return of the departing Son of God and the place by His presence in the Father's house He has gone to prepare. Those who received Him according to chapter 1 He designates as His own (in chap. 13) when about to give them a sample of His needed service on high, to wash their feet in the hour of His absence. They are also told for their hearts' comfort that He is coming from heaven to take them to His Father's house, assuring them it was love's intention to have them where He Himself was. This is the blessed hope and prospect handed down to the 19th century, as fresh as when uttered from His heart Who desires to live in the heart of every believer; not only to be in the consciousness of present heavenly birth and relationship, but in daily anticipation of going home to the Father.

This will be consummated in its blessedness by the reception the Son of God will give to all His loved ones when He meets them in the air fashioned into His own likeness, and takes them into the Father's house to spend an eternity of unmarred happiness to the good pleasure of the Father and the Son. “I am coming again and will receive you to myself, that where I am, ye may be also.”

May the heavenly hope and prospect have its sanctifying effect in fuller separation from the world, and devotedness of heart to the Son of God for Whom we wait, watching with girded loins and clear burning lamps, and serving during watching time for His sake. G. G.

Chapter 263

Universal Redemption?

Q.-Mark 9:50. Has “salt” any meaning typically beyond preservative purity? M.

A.-Gen. 19:26 is clearly not the consecrating principle but judicial infliction. For Lot's wife disobeying at such a time became an abiding monument of divine judgment. So too, if Israel rebelled and fell under the curse, Jehovah declared that their whole ground should be brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom (Deut. 29:23). The N. T. adds the awful figure of salt losing its savor, and hence, as proper neither for land nor for dung, but to be cast out. Grace does effect not only love but separateness to God in the believer. Easy-going unbelief destroys all savor in those that bear the Lord's name without self-judgment. What must the end of this be? Not only unrighteousness but apostasy.

Q.-1 Tim. 4:10. Does this apostolic sentence countenance universal redemption? L. C. H.

A.-In no way. The reference is, not to Christ's work, but to God's faithful care of His creatures, His children especially, in providence day by day. Where is the propriety of reading the salvation of men's souls in the terms of the verse? where, the consistency with other scriptures, which declare that only those who believe shall be saved, and that the mass, being impenitent and unbelieving, must perish? “For unto this we labor and suffer reproach [or, strive], because we have our hope set on a living God, who is preserver of all men, specially of faithful ones.” It is God as appealed to in Job 7:20, and even more widely in Psa. 36:6. Compare Judg. 3:9, Neh. 9:7, Obad. 1:1, 20. There is no mention or thought of Christ's death even in the way of purchase, still less of redemption. It is a living God as Savior in present labors and trials; and this goodness of His is real toward every child of man, especially toward believers. Apply it to the salvation of the soul, and the comfort evaporates; for all are thus thrown into confusion and uncertainty. If those who are Christ's he only in degree more saved than such as reject Him and perish, theirs would be indeed a little and sorry salvation to the denial of life eternal and everlasting redemption. Any application of the kind would dishonor Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as it contradicts the Scriptures. Indeed it would be nonsense to speak of saving the souls of all men, especially of the faithful. The fact is, the apostle treats of a wholly different subject: the sure ground of confiding in a living God for the path here below. As in wisdom He made all, so does He care for all compassionately, even in a sinful and ruined world, especially for such as look up to Him in the faith which strengthens them to labor and suffer with joyfulness.

Chapter 264

Walking Worthily

There are three measures given in this form of the Christian's walk: worthily of God Who calls us to His own kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12); worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing (Col. 1:10); and worthily of the calling wherewith we were called (that is, the Holy Spirit dwelling in the church, Eph. 2, developed as it is after the end of chap. 3).

Chapter 265

We Know

1 John 5:20

Nothing is more characteristic of the inspired writers than the calm assurance with which they speak. It is not theirs to surmise, or suppose, or infer, but simply to state. The former processes no doubt have their place in the affairs of this life, and not least in the domain of science, where thoughtful men increasingly recognize that it is risky to generalize too rapidly. For from time to time fresh facts come to light that conflict with some previous generalization, and demand reconsideration from the ardent builders of the oft-repaired edifice. The discovery that geology and physics do not agree as to the antiquity of the earth is one illustration of this; another is the shock recently given to the dream of Darwinism by an eminent scientist, who affirms that acquired habits are not transmitted. Now the doctrine that such are transmitted, and not instincts only, is an assumed buttress, perhaps keystone, of the evolutionary hypothesis. But if the German professor be correct, what becomes of its vaunts? How many advocates fondly hoped it had passed the probationary period, and was as secure as the law of gravitation itself; and many others, though reluctantly, have thought it necessary to make terms.

Now there is nothing strange in this, if, as is probable, it be true; nor does it in the least invalidate the discoveries of science, nor the advantages that result. It merely shows that all man has to discover for himself must be of a progressive nature, and that science itself, in certain branches, must be in a state of flux. It is foreign to the object of this paper to discuss evolution. The point pressed is simply the hypothetical character of much of human science; it may often seem a dazzling guess, but much is still a guess. On the other hand no intelligent person need ever seek to belittle its efforts.

But can man by searching find out God? Surely the same answer must be returned now as when the question was first propounded. Yet without the knowledge of God there can be no true happiness. For, as Augustine said of old, “Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.” But science has nothing to do with that which is highest in man, the spirit, and can give no peace or joy. For none probably would designate by such comfortable words the austere pleasure man's science is able to afford. It is indeed “dry light.”

And so, were there no revelation, the lament of the poet, “Behold, we know not anything,” must be but too well-founded. What should we have beyond the progressive investigation of the extent of our ignorance? This, while benefiting man marvelously in a material way, has only enabled us to work our iron and not our souls (as one of our poetesses has expressed it). Hence it were pitiful indeed, had we nothing better. No wonder that when revelation is ignored, men are sad: a fact painfully disclosed in much of the literature of the day, in which is seen how no culture (that is the word) can avail to make hard negations seem like the “children's bread.” Wherein lies a weighty difference between ancient and modern, or rather what is known as up-to-date literature. If the ancient poet was not true to the light he had, at least he knew no turning away, from the “great light” (Matt. 4:16); for he had not seen it. How infinitely more serious for those who go back to

Pagan reveries, and to worse than the twilight of the Jewish world! It is a well-known fact also that those who make a point of cultivating the beautiful apart from the true fail in the former almost as much as in the latter. No, "'tis first the true, and then the beautiful," as a Christian poet sings.

But what if God in His grace give a revelation? Does not He know what is good for His poor fallen creature, man? And, knowing, is He not able to impart such knowledge? No doubt mere curiosity is never gratified. But all that concerns man's spiritual welfare is abundantly revealed, and this with divine plainness and simplicity. Besides, how much there is momentous about man and the world before the deluge and since, where the classical oracles are dumb! But as to things eternal even now "we know," as John says again and again. Nor is the disciple, whom Jesus loved, alone if conspicuous in directness of statement with its concomitant profundity of truth. It characterizes, as was said at the outset, all the N. T. writers, as well as the O. T. ones not less truly.

When we ask what it is that we know, we hear the blessed words, "We know that the Son of God is come." Clearly such knowledge must dwarf all others into absolute insignificance. Other things may be true for and on this little stage. He indeed is the truth. For it is evident that if I know that a Divine Person has come, and truly man in this world, and that by faith in Him I have life eternal, with the blessed issue of being with Him forever after this short life is over, then nothing down here can be of consequence—save to do God's will. What, when weighed in those balances, are science, art, or literature? Surely in themselves but of ephemeral interest, save where they possibly minister to divine purposes. We know that the Son of God is come, the True Light; and all else passes into the shadow out of which it came. Hence it is that the question propounded by our Lord ("What think ye of the Christ"?) becomes the all-important thing. For, if I think rightly as to Him, if I am taught by the Holy Spirit to believe on Him, this will clearly set me right on every other important question, and enable me to see each thing in true perspective, when God's Son occupies the central place in the heart and mind. And this is the firm ground of the apostle, who had already at the start testified to Christ's atoning blood, which cleanses from all sin. He simply in language of the truest sublimity presents the Son of God come, and tells of the understanding given us that we may know Him. Oh, how much hangs, and what holiness of life should follow, on such priceless knowledge!

This then is divinely given knowledge, in a world where all is out of course, and where there is no light but what streams from Him Who came by water and blood. No other key unlocks the enigma of this groaning creation, the "burden of this otherwise unintelligible world." What else claims to be light, when it is not spurious, or mere will-of-the-wisp, is but a reflection of the rays of Christianity. It is forgotten often by those who point to the sometimes upright lives of doubters, that they have been nurtured in the Christian tradition. Truly no high standard of morality in society at large could survive the dethronement of the Bible. The reflected radiance seen in philanthropy, crusade of peace, &c., &c., would soon vanish in the eclipse of doctrinal faith.

What the knowledge is, and in Whom known, has been briefly stated; it remains only to add how it may be obtained. This, all are assured, is by simple faith. And the simpler we are, the better, both for ourselves, and in order to help others. Does not our Lord commend above all things the simple faith of a little child? Hear the Gentile apostle, "Let no one deceive himself: if any one thinketh he is wise among you in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise" (1 Cor. 3:18). R. B.

Chapter 266

The Wish of Paul in Chains: Part 1

Acts 26

It is much, dear friends, to say with Paul to Agrippa, “I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” (ver. 29).

There is what the apostle could say from the bottom of his heart to those who surrounded him, that they might be such as he was without his bonds. He might have answered to Agrippa (who had said to him, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” ver. 28), “Would to God that thou wert.” The answer would have been good and according to charity; but it would not have presented us with a state such as that expressed by the words of the apostle, whose heart, full of joy, overflows with his wish of love. A happy heart does so naturally.

The apostle was pressed to say what he knew, that is, to express what was passing in a heart which enjoyed its position in God. His soul was so happy, that he could desire for others the same thing of which he had the consciousness for himself. Joy is always full of good-will; divine joy of love. But more, this wish describes to us the state of the apostle's soul, notwithstanding his circumstances. In the face of his confinement, which had already lasted more than two years, his heart was completely happy; and it was a happiness of which he could render himself a reason; and all that he could desire was that those who heard him, even the king, were such as he was except those bonds.

Such is the effect of the strange happiness that is produced in a soul wherein Christianity is fully received. It possesses a happiness which in principle leaves nothing to be desired, and which is always accompanied by that energy of love which is expressed by the wish that others were such as itself. We see moreover here, that it is a happiness that outward circumstances cannot touch; it is a fountain of joy springing up within the soul. The whole outward position of the apostle was but ill calculated to produce joy. It was long since he was prepared to expect bonds and tribulations; but none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received to testify the gospel of the grace of God (see Acts 20).

Paul had been taken and led to the castle because of the violence of the people. He had been dragged from tribunal to tribunal. He had languished two years in prison, obliged to appeal to Cesar. And, to sum up his history, be was a man that might have been supposed to be worn, harassed as he was, pressed on all sides by all that can break the heart and daunt the courage. But there is nothing of this. He speaks before the tribunal of what he came to do at Jerusalem, and not of his sufferings. He was in the midst of all these things, as he says himself, exercising himself to keep always a conscience void of offense before God and man. All the difficult circumstances through which he passed were idle to him, and did not reach his heart. He was happy in his soul; he desired nothing but this happiness for himself or others; and the happiness which fills with

perfect satisfaction is surely a remarkable happiness. True, he was bound with chains, but the iron of his chains reached not his heart: the Lord's freedman cannot be bound with chains. And he desired nothing else, either for others or for himself, save this complete enfranchisement by the Lord. All he could wish was that all might be altogether such as he was without his bonds.

We are going to examine what gives this happiness, this tranquility, which leaves nothing to be desired. We may have joy to a certain point, but not peace, when there is something yet incomplete. In Paul was to be seen a perfect happiness. A free and ardent love was found in it. Doubtless, he had not already attained to perfection, as he said himself, “I count not myself to have apprehended;” but there was happiness and love. He possessed a perfect happiness; and, being “before kings and governors,” surrounded by all their pomp, he wished for them that they might be such as he was: and his testimony was so powerful, that Agrippa could say to Paul, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

Persons may be found here, all whose circumstances are painful, who have anguish of heart. Well, Paul was in a position to be “of all men most miserable:” not only did he suffer, but his work was stopped; he could not attend to what concerned the dear flock of the Lord. Every spring of happiness that he might have sought in these cases as a resource failed him; and although, according to man, he might have had good reason to complain, he is there a model of happiness. That which he enjoyed was independent of all outward circumstances, for they were not what rendered him happy.

There are persons who imagine that, if such and such circumstances met together, they might be happy. But that could not have procured Paul the happiness which he possessed: God alone was the source from whence he could have drawn it. We may have sorrows, but the happiness which we have just spoken of will not be troubled by them; and we have need, dear friends, of the firmness of this happiness. For if we knew the circumstances of this life, whether among the rich or among the poor, we should see that sorrows never fail. But to return to relations with God, we are going to see the source whence Paul drew his happiness.

Before his conversion, he possessed not this happiness. His privileges as a Jew could not give it him. He had a good conscience as a man, but ill enlightened; he did things which he thought he ought to do against Jesus (vers. 9, 10). Conscience is so often falsified by education (and this was his case), that he followed its directions and obeyed its dictates; and, through that very thing he opposed Christ with all his might. He did conscientiously what was the greatest possible iniquity. As for the rest, he was well instructed in the religion of his fathers, a “Pharisee after the straightest sect.” very active, and distinguished for his zeal. He had been taught at the feet of Gamaliel, he was directed by the high priest (ver. 12), and in open war with the Lord Jesus (vers. 14, 16). With all our conscience, our religion, our learning, and the approbation of the doctors of this world, we may be at open war with the Lord.

The enjoyment of all these advantages does not hinder us from being bankrupt before God. Now it is a terrible and painful thing to be bankrupt before God; and so much the more, as the things we have so much esteemed not only do not support us, but are found to have been the instruments of the blinding of our souls. Although the apostle had a good conscience, was pious and directed by wise men, all these advantages had served in the issue only to place him in open war against God. One may boast and glory, “nobody can say anything against us” (and it is the saying of many

people), yet finally one discovers that all has led us to make war against the Lord.

The flesh has its religion, as its lusts; it does everything to hinder the conscience from meeting God. When Paul acted in the flesh, he was satisfied with himself, and, with the help of the good he did, that settled his affair. The religion that the flesh uses is put into the balance to make weight. If conscience says, “Thou hast not been quite what thou shouldst have been,” this religion, which adds certain forms, certain ceremonies that the flesh can accomplish, puts the whole in the balance, tranquillizes itself, and rests there.

This is not faith, for faith draws nigh to God. One has no religion before God; one has a conscience convicted of sin, and one is too much occupied about the judgment of God upon it to think of one's religion; rather, it is all gone; and there is not a person here who, if he were in God's presence, could think of his religion. Worldly piety only serves when we need it not. When we do need it, whether before the justice of God or on account of a broken heart, it is naught. It has only served as a means to turn us away from the consciousness of our need as sinners. But this consciousness, through the grace which produces it, would have led us to the true remedy, to that which would have done us real service in the hour when it would have been necessary for us.

What made Paul happy? It was indeed the truth, but not immediately; for he found he had made war against God, when God met him on the way to Damascus. Hitherto he had been content, but he is so no more (see chap. 9). The Lord Jesus manifests Himself to him in glory, and convinces him of sin. He is three days without eating or drinking, upset as he was by meeting the Lord; he was not then in a position to say, “I would that not only thou, but all that hear were such as I am.”

The Lord sends him to Damascus to hear the word of truth, and after three days' sufferings (produced by the conviction that the Jesus against Whom he wrestled with so much fury was the Lord) this same Lord sends Ananias to him and then we see how complete was his conversion. From an enemy be becomes the friend of Jesus, and the apostle of grace. That is what God does: of a persecuting “Saul” he makes a “Paul,” a powerful witness of the love of Jesus.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Chapter 267

The Wish of Paul in Chains: Part 2

Acts 26

Paul had been conscientious and very zealous for the religion of his fathers; but, with all his conscience and his religion, an enemy of God. He was the most wicked, and, as he says himself, the “chief” of sinners. And nevertheless, there he is; he becomes in three days the most remarkable apostle of grace. And how did that happen? It is a very simple thing. He had become acquainted with Jesus. He could not at once manifest what he would be; for he had been terrified at seeing the state of death wherein he was, but he had heard in his heart the voice of Jesus. Jew or Gentile, it is all the same, while the soul is unstripped, the conscience unconvinced of sin, and the man has not understood, that all his religion is but enmity against God. This conviction of sin does not come to all in the same way; there are different circumstances; but it must always be that the soul be naked, and that Christ reveal to the soul His relations with His own. There are poor Christians, dishonored by those who are in consideration, designated by injurious terms. Well, to these persons, despised and pointed at because of their faith, the Lord reveals His relations with them in a manner most positive and clear. The revelation that Jesus made to Paul is, that they are entirely identified with Himself. He says, I am all those men whom thou persecutest. Paul sees the glory, and he is arrested; no doubt that it is the Lord. But this Lord is Jesus,

Who shows him that he persecutes Him in persecuting the Christians. “It is Myself,” says Jesus, “whom thou persecutest.”

There were in those days differences in faith, patience, and piety, amongst the Christians; but Jesus bears them all on His heart. He says, “It is Myself.” And there is a complete revolution in Paul, learned, religious, and a persecutor. The more there is of religion of the flesh, the greater enemies we are to Jesus. The finer the outside, the more honest and brave I give myself out for, exactly so much the more I am God's enemy, and so much the more opposed to the grace of Jesus. He who wallows in sin will not pretend to be the friend of God, to be reconciled with Him.

But as for those who have believed, Christ identifies Himself with them. In this room there are those who believe, and others who do not believe. Amongst those who believe there are (without doubt) many degrees of spirituality; but I can say of all these believing ones, “They are one with the Lord Jesus.” It is evident that this simple truth changes all in the state of the soul—the being one with Him Who is in glory.

Paul had been later caught up to the third heaven, and had precious revelations. When he was arrested on the road to Damascus, he had yet much progress to make, for he was shocked at himself, till Ananias had explained and made him understand what Jesus wanted of him (see Acts 22:14). Then Ananias said to Paul, “The God of thy fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.” But from the moment that he truly knew the Lord Jesus, he was one with Him, and he knew it.

Whatever then might be the circumstances of Paul, whether at Jerusalem, at Caesarea, before Festus, or before Caesar, he could say, “I would that you were such as I am, except these bonds;” for he knew what he possessed in Christ. It was a question of this truth—the being one with Christ. Of course, Paul had yet a great deal to learn of the Lord, but in spite of that, he was one with Him. He had understood, that in persecuting the Christians, the beloved of Jesus, he was persecuting Jesus. “Why persecutest thou me?” The nearer we are to the Lord Jesus, the better we understand that he who touches His brethren “toucheth the apple of His eye.”

I will add a few words more on what we are in Christ. All in us has been enmity against God, our religion, our works, our whole conduct, so that in this state it is impossible to please Him. It is sad, but, after all, it is true. Paul admits it; he no longer esteems what he thought was “gain “; on the contrary he looks upon it “as dung.” But he understands that by faith all are one in Christ. Faith makes him take his place with them. He does not ask if he has faith, he does not begin a metaphysical discussion to know what faith is; but he becomes a Christian, because he believes that Jesus is the Lord of glory and that Christians are one with Him. And this is the life and joy of our souls, to comprehend that Christ has not asked us if we have faith, but that He has said, I am One with thee. We are one spirit with the Lord.

All was sin in this world. There was no longer any means of entering into relation with God. It was necessary, in order that these relationships should be re-established, that Jesus should come into the world to accomplish the will of God, and to manifest to sinful men the deep interest that God took in them. But in this case I have nothing to do but to weigh what Christ is for me, and that is faith's business. I find in Him that which takes away all my mistrust, because He knows me altogether. He knows my sin better than I know it myself; in going to Him, my heart is free, because He knows all, and that He is come expressly for that. I find all goodness, all grace, and all liberty, in Him.

Moreover, knowing that He is God, I know Him as the Savior God. And what a revolution takes place in the soul which knows that it has to do with the God Who never denies Himself, and Who is love I Not only is He come to relieve me, but more—to save me. And what is exceedingly precious is, that when I have met Jesus Christ a man, I have met God; I am one with Him, not upon the cross (there He had taken my place), but in His risen privileges. He has taken up the cause for me as a sinner, and has given Himself as propitiatory victim for sin. God cannot sue again for my salvation, because I am one with Him there in heaven; and if I torment myself, it is only with myself, for I cannot have the least uneasiness before God.

Satan has done all he could, but it is only to show that his power is destroyed forever. There is nothing remaining which can disquiet me before God: He has everything to be the source of life and joy. I find all in Jesus, in Whom “dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” I find in Him all grace for my need, my righteousness, and my strength.

Another righteousness has succeeded that of man; it is the righteousness of God. Christ is become head of all things; and all the glory is manifested at the right hand of God, as a consequence of the expiation which has been made for my sin. Thus all the fullness is manifested, and Jesus has said, being glorified, that He is One with us, and that He has sent His Holy Spirit to make us understand it. Christ has said of us, “It is I.” Thus I have only to examine what Christ is, and to rejoice too in seeking to manifest what He is, since He has said of His own, “It is I.”

The Holy Spirit is given to be in the heart of these poor worthless, ones, the “seal,” and the “earnest of the inheritance.” When one has the Holy Spirit, is one to despair, if one should sin? Quite the contrary, for then we are one with Christ, Who considers us as “His flesh,” and Who looks after us. Sometimes, perhaps, He must wound it a little, but He does so because He cannot neglect it, since it is “His flesh.” The Holy Spirit makes us sensitive to all that with which Jesus is not satisfied in us as being one with Him, His body; and the nearer we are to Him, the more alive we are to these things. Besides the fact of being one with Christ, in order fully to enjoy this privilege, and that the heart might overflow with joy in the consciousness of possessing it, the Holy Spirit must not be grieved. If the heart of Paul had not been set at liberty, although the truth of his oneness with Christ remained, he could not have said, I would that all ye should be such as I am. His understanding would have recognized the truth of it, apart from sin; his heart could only have said it by the Holy Spirit: for the Holy Spirit is repressed neither by prison nor by every kind of tribulation. Nothing hinders Paul from enjoying the grace of Jesus. He was able to call himself happy in every circumstance, and to say to those who heard him, “I would that all were such as I am,” &c.

When Agrippa says to Paul, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,” if that had been addressed to us, what had been our answer? Perhaps we should have said, “Would to God that thou wert!” but could we have said: “I would that thou wert such as I am,” &c. That shows the inward happiness he possessed. Oh! happy is the man that can say so, and all can say it in Christ, for Christ has said of all, “It is I!” But, if we are not close to Christ, in Paul's state, we are not at liberty.

Alas! there may be many things in the life of the poor Christian which oblige Christ to chastise him; and there is a diversity in the manifestation of His love; but that changes not this truth—He is one with me. The Christian sees in God all goodness towards him, and, as a sinner, nothing but grace. There is in Christ the righteousness of God, the life of God, the glory of God, and that in Christ which declares him one with Him, and which says of him, “It is I.” He has the Holy Spirit, that he may understand Him, and enjoy Him, and that he may know by this “earnest,” that the fellowship and happiness of God are his forever, and according to the sweetness of the peace which assures him of it. Is it then astonishing that, filled with love, he cries out, “Would to God that those who hear me were such as I?”

Being in the presence of God destroys whatever we have put to hinder the conscience from being alive. With all your religion, would you be naked before God, before whom every veil is rent? All that we put before us to hinder us from seeing God, all the cares, all the pleasures, our very religion as it was, all disgust us, when the conscience is awakened.

Are you content that your conscience should be naked before God? If it be so, Christ can say to you, “You are one with Me, and God is occupied about you, because you are one with Me,” like those of whom He said, “It is I Whom thou persecutest.”

May God give us grace, dear friends, to comprehend this truth so powerful, and so blessed to our souls. J. N. D.

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