MAJOR WORKS OF CHARLES STANLEY

by Charles Stanley

A collection of Railway Tracts and other writings by Charles Stanley, a nineteenth-century Plymouth Brethren author known for his simple gospel tracts distributed through the railway system to reach everyday travelers with the message of salvation.

112 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 003. Vol 1 - Railway Tracts
2. 004. The Son of God: His Word or Man's Word?
3. 005. The Handcuffs: or the Deserter
4. 006. "Smashed to pieces"
5. 007. The Lost Ticket: or is your Life insured?
6. 008. "Just in Time"
7. 009. "Conversation;" or "The Commercial's Way to be Saved"
8. 010. "What a Contrast"
9. 011. "Progress"
10. 012. "An Interesting Question"
11. 013. "The Explosion"
12. 014. "I have my Ticket"
13. 015. "Over-Luggage"
14. 016. "How does a Man become a Soldier?"
15. 017. That Sad, Sad Face
16. 018. "Must I not strive?" or the Poor Man's Dinner
17. 019. The Lunatic and his Keeper
18. 020. Vol 01 - Plain Words
19. 021. The Little Garden or, "Fruits of Repentance."
20. 022. A Lesson from an old Schoolmaster
21. 023. "Conversion"
22. 024. The Telescope; or, "How may I know that I have the right faith?"
23. 025. Redemption
24. 026. "Life"
25. 027. "The Justifier"
26. 028. Worship; or "One in Ten"
27. 029. The Burial of the Ethiopian
28. 030. "The Risen Christ"
29. 031. "The Live Bird let Loose"
30. 032. The Great Supper, or a Promise of One
31. 033. How did the Jew know his Sin was Forgiven?
32. 034. Naaman, the Leper, dipped seven Times in Jordan
33. 035. "As it was in the Days of Noah"
34. 036. "As it was in the Days of Lot"
35. 037. Vol 01 - Bread cast upon the waters
36. 038. "Your dying Hour"
37. 039. "Be Thou Clean"
38. 040. "Have I repented enough?"
39. 041. "Thy Sins be forgiven Thee"

40. 042. "Two Things which God hath joined together"
41. 043. "Why are ye troubled?"
42. 044. How are you to be saved?
43. 045. Who is to blame?
44. 046. If thou knewest the Gift of God
45. 047. "Repentance unto Life" - A Double Change of Mind.
46. 048. What is Good New to a Man who feel Himself Lost?
47. 049. What is Grace?
48. 050. "Hath" and "Are"
49. 051. "The Righteousness of God"
50. 052. "How can a Sinner be Justified?"
51. 053. "How does the Believer know that he is justified"
52. 054. Vol 02 - Tracks for young Christians
53. 055. Victory!
54. 056. Joseph, Type of the Risen Christ.
55. 057. Lessons of the Wilderness: Shur, Sin, Rephidim
56. 058. The Two Husbands of Rom_7:1-25.
57. 059. What was the Sabbath?
58. 060. Doors shut and Lamps put out.
59. 061. Awake, Awake! Behold the Bridegroom cometh.
60. 062. What God hath said on the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the Presen...
61. 063. The Millennial Reign of Christ.
62. 064. Vol 03 - Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects:
63. 065. What is the Gospel of God?
64. 066. Do you believe God?
65. 067. The Oaks Explosion
66. 068. Ritualism: and what will be the end of it?
67. 069. Solomon■s Temple; or the Altar Equal to the Holiest.
68. 070. Jonathan; or one thing lacking.
69. 071. Nehemiah; or the building of the wall.
70. 072. The Church of God as Found in the Scriptures.
71. 073. Vol 04 - Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome
72. 074. Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.
73. 075. Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.
74. 076. Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.
75. 077. Rahab, or, the Siege of Jericho.
76. 078. Christ the Centre: or Why do we meet in His Name alone?
77. 079. The Revelation of Jesus Christ.
78. 080. Vol 05
79. 081. The Young Believer's Difficulties;
80. 082. Hezekiah; or Brief Lessons on Church Truths.
81. 083. Samuel

82. 084. Election
83. 085. From Egypt to Shiloh
84. 086. Cleansed by Blood, and washed by Water.
85. 087. Vol 06
86. 088. You will never make your peace with God
87. 089. "You will never make your peace with God."
88. 090. A Great Supper,
89. 091. "God so loved."
90. 092. The First Resurrection.
91. 093. The Young Convert's Enquiry as to where He should go.
92. 094. The Great Tribulation;
93. 095. The Riband of Blue and the Lace of Blue.
94. 096. The Confessional.
95. 097. What God does say to the Swearer?
96. 098. The Doctrines of the Salvation Army compared with Scripture.
97. 099. Vol 07
98. 100. On the Epistle to the Romans
99. 101. The First Years of Christianity and What is the Church?
100. 102. The Way the Lord hath Led Me;
101. 103. The Righteousness of God
102. 104. Decision for Christ.
103. 105. An Allegory:
104. 106. The Preparation Day.
105. 107. A Sermon of Five Words which all may preach.
106. 108. Justification.
107. 109. I have compassion on the multitude
108. 110. The Wanderers Restored
109. 111. The Swallows are Gone
110. 112. The Atoning Death of the Son of God.
111. 113. God's Centre in Shiloh
112. 114. Recollections of the Last Days of Charles Stanley.

003. Vol 1 - Railway Tracts

Volume 01

Railway Tracts

004. The Son of God: His Word or Man's Word?

The Son of God: His Word or Man’s Word?

I had taken my seat one afternoon in a train Liverpool for Southport, when a Romish priest entered the carriage, and sat down on the seat opposite to me. Having long had a desire to speak to a priest, I felt that this was my opportunity. I said, "Sir, I have long had an impression on my mind, and I should take it as a favour if you would allow me to ask you a question." He very politely said, "I shall be most happy to answer you to the best of my ability." I said, "Well, sir, if I am rightly informed, there is a very serious question at issue, between you and the Son of God." "Indeed," he replied, and all eyes were turned towards us, and all ears were opened to know what this could be. "The question is this, sir; the Son of God says (John 5:24), ’Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life;’ — now, sir, I have been told that all you priests say, ’Verily, verily, we say unto you, he that heareth our words, and believeth on Him that sent us, can never know that he hath everlasting life, — shall never in the present life know whether he shall come into condemnation or not, nor whether he is passed from death unto life or not.’ Now, sir, I wish to know from you, whether there is so flat a contradiction in your teaching, to the words of the Son of God." I shall never forget the man’s look. He said, "May I ask who you are?" "Oh," said I, "through the mercy of God, I am one who had heard and received the words of Christ, and I have found them words of life. I do believe that God send Him to die the sacrifice for my sins. I do believe that God raised Him from the dead. I have redemption through His precious blood — even the forgiveness of sins; yes, and His blood cleanseth me from all sins. Oh, yes! I do believe these precious words, and I have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. I have passed, from death unto life, — hearing His words I have all this; — What should I have if I believed your words?" "Ah," says the priest, "you must be mistaken in supposing it possible in this life to know that you are saved, or what could St. Paul mean, when he said, ’No man knows whether he is worthy of favour or hatred?’" I reached the Bible which I had in my hand, towards him, and said, "Will you kindly shew me where St. Paul says any such thing." "Oh," says he, "I think you know more about it than I do, you can find it sooner than I can." I replied, "Indeed I cannot find what is not in his writings — but I will gladly read what he does say. In the Acts 13:38-39, after speaking of the death and resurrection of Christ, he says ’Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things,’ &c. In Romans 5:1, he says, ’Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (Colossians 1:14) ’In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.’ Why, my dear sir, there is nothing makes a man so happy as to know that his sins are forgiven." "But do you mean to say there is no such passage in the Bible as the one I named?" asked the priest. "On the subject of salvation there is not such a text," I replied. "Solomon, when speaking of the vanity of this life, did say, ’No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.’ (Ecclesiastes 9:1.) He did not mean to deny the Gospel by this passage but urged the usual mistake." "I think," said he,

"that man must be very presumptuous, who thinks himself so holy and so good as to be quite sure he is saved. He may have many of the fruits of the Spirit in him, but yet it becomes him humbly to doubt." "Yes, indeed," said I, "and if that were the ground of salvation, it would become him for ever to doubt — but, sir, you make a fatal mistake in supposing that a Christian's hope is based on his goodness or holiness, or even on the work of the Spirit in him. There are thousands who are seeking peace with God this way, I know, but there never was one that found it thus. No, sir, it is not my work, or the work of the Spirit in me but the work of the Son of God for me, on which I must rely. He loved me, and gave Himself for me. Now, I ask, is it presumption to believe on Him whom God raised from the dead? He is the rock that shall never be moved. Have you never read, sir, in chapter 10 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the offering of the body of Jesus Christ for ever perfects, and that the Holy Ghost is to bear witness of this? (Hebrews 10:14-15.) 'For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.' Yes, and however men may reject his witness, still it is true that we 'have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.' This peace can never be interrupted. Now, sir, would you not be very happy if you were quite sure that God had for Christ's sake, forgiven your sins — as He certainly had forgiven the Ephesian believers, and every believer mentioned in the New Testament?" "Ah," he said, "if you will come up to my house at Birkenhead, I will teach you." He said this as he left the train. My last words to him were these: — "That would be poor teaching where all is uncertainty and darkness." Just as the priest had left the carriage, a young man who had listened with the deepest attention, said, "Will you speak to me a little further, of the difference between resting on the finished work of Christ for me, and the work of the Spirit in me?" He said, that "he had for many years been an anxious seeker of salvation, but had looked for a sufficient depth of the Spirit's work in him, to be sure he had the witness of the Spirit and was saved." A friend who was with me, from Manchester, showed him from the Word, that the Spirit did not bear witness how good we are, but how exceedingly bad, utterly ruined we are by sin; but that God Himself has sent His Son to be offered up for our sins — and that the moment we cease from our own foolish efforts to be saved by our works, and come to Christ with all our sin and misery, just as we are, then we have peace, according to His own words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In short, that the Spirit bears witness to the glory and worth of Christ. Light burst into the young man's soul, and at once he found peace through the precious blood of Christ. And now, dear reader, with eternity before you, may I ask, Are you saved? If not, when and how do you expect to be saved? If not saved, you belong to that world which has rejected and put to death the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God. The Romish priest has no salvation for you. He does not even know that that he is saved himself. If you know a priest, ask him if he knows himself to be saved, and you will find on this most important question all is uncertainty with him.

Come to Christ: all is certain. "My peace I give unto you." Oh, don't delay; to-morrow may be too late. Do you ask, What shall I do? Oh, hear the words of Christ — let no man hinder you from searching the Scriptures. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Behold Him now, His work of redemption finished, He, has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. As sure as you are reading this paper — so sure is it, that He who died for sin is in the glory alive from the dead, raised for our justification; — even so sure is it, that he that believes on Him who raised Christ from the dead (Romans 4:24), is justified, is saved. Let go doubt, lot go works, lot go self, let go all; receive Christ, trust Christ — oh, is it so? is Christ your

all? If so, you have life — risen life, the life of the risen victorious Christ, the Son of God, — for he that hath the Son hath life. If you be risen in Christ, seek to give body, soul, and spirit to Him, not that you may be saved, but because He so loved you as to save you by His own death. Oh, the love of Christ! the love of God! We love Him because He first loved us.

C.S.

Chapter 3

005. The Handcuffs: or the Deserter

The Handcuffs: or the Deserter

I was walking along the Birmingham platform for a few minutes before the train started for Bristol, when my attention was drawn to a deserter, handcuffed, and seated between a private and a sergeant. His features betrayed distress of mind. The thought suddenly occurred to me, if my Master were here, He would take His seat by the side of this man. Yes, blessed Jesus, Thy heart was too full of compassion, ever to pass by a distressed sufferer. These thoughts led me to take my seat opposite the poor man. I sat some time in silence, thinking of the mercy of God, in delivering me from Sergeant Satan, and the handcuffs of sin. Reader, if you are delivered, thank God — if not, then sit down with me a little, and listen attentively. The poor deserter appeared to be about forty years of age. He had been a deserter many years, but had become so exceedingly miserable, that he had given himself up to the authorities. Having been thus severed from those most dear to him on earth, and that probably for ever, I found his heart was too full of sorrow to bear much conversation; but the following, as nearly as I can remember, took place with the sergeant.

"You seem to have brought your captive some distance?"

"Oh yes, sir, from beyond Glasgow!"

"Indeed! It must be very painful to have had the hands in that bound position so far."

"Oh yes, sir." The man’s heart seemed nearly as hard as the bayonet by his side.

"Well, sergeant," said I, "have you got your handcuffs off yet? or are you still led captive by the devil? He knows that sin will handcuff a man, and draw him along to judgment and to hell. — It’s sore work, sergeant, to be dragged like that, Eh?"

"Well, sir, I’ll tell you, I think a soldier will have less to answer for than anybody. He is not tempted to rob and cheat, like the commercial man; and, indeed, he’s a good-hearted follow, only he gets a little sup too much grog sometimes."

"Ah, there you may be mistaken. I think I can show you a greater sin than taking the drink. I will suppose this prisoner, first to have been led to enlist through the influence of drink. Granted, then, that drink has made him what he is. He may cast a look far behind him and say, My sin in drinking has broken the heart of my poor wife, has dragged me from my crying children;" — (here the tears began to run down the face of the poor deserter) — well now, sergeant, if an officer from the Horse-guards were to meet you on your way, say at Cheltenham, with the good news for our friend here, that a great ransom had been paid — that the Queen had sent down his discharge — now, sergeant, which would be the greater sin? the drunkenness that has brought all this misery on himself and his poor family, or the hard-hearted cruel sin of refusing to trust to the ransom purchased at so great a price? O let me tell you, sin has brought us into bondage, misery, and death. Satan has thus handcuffed man to himself. This man might sleep, and dream there was no

sergeant here, and no handcuffs; but when he wakes up he finds it is only a dream. You are still there. And men may dream there is no devil, to whom they are bound by sin, and dragged by lust; but, when they truly awake, they find this bondage a terrible reality. But ah! if you knew the love of God, to us poor handcuffed sinners! Even whilst we were yet sinners, God gave a great price for our ransom. Yes; "whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The ransom price is paid — God has accepted it, even the precious blood of Christ; for God hath raised Him from the dead, and sends a free discharge to every sinner that believeth. And now, sergeant, how long would it take you to unfasten the handcuffs of this poor man? (Here the sergeant took out a little key, and shewed me how soon it could be done.) That little key is like faith. Yes, even so soon; the soul that believes God's testimony, that on the cross, the ransom has been paid — that through Jesus is preached the forgiveness of sins — that by Him all that believe are justified — yes, even so soon, that soul is free. The chains of sin and condemnation are broken for ever. Now, sergeant, which is the worst sin? — that which brought the guilt and condemnation, and which is hurrying man to judgment and to everlasting destruction; or, that cruel sin of rejecting and despising the wondrous love of God in giving His only-begotten Son? Yes, rejecting the only ransom, even the blood of the Son of God?" The sergeant seemed never before to have heard these "words of life." And oh, how comforting it was to my heart, to see the face of that poor deserter brighten up with joy! The Lord opened his ear at least, to hear the gospel of the grace of God. Reader, are you still a bond-slave of Satan, hurrying on to hell? Let me ask you, Who can deliver you but Christ? The handcuffed prisoner could not deliver himself. I asked him what he could do. Ah, he could scarcely get his hand to his eyes to wipe off the tears. I asked the sergeant what he would think of a would-be officer who should deny the sufficiency of that ransom which had been accepted by the Queen, and should begin to speak thus — "Ah, true, it was a great price; but do not believe the Queen will discharge you, without you do something, to increase the value of that ransom, and when you have done all that you can you may merely hope for liberty. Do not be so presumptuous as to believe that message of the Queen." The sergeant could not endure even the thought of such cruel lies.

Ah, this reminds one of Paul, who said, Let such perverters of the gospel be accursed. It was with this loyal zeal for God he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. And is not this the great lie of the day? You are virtually told not to believe the all-sufficiency of the finished work of Christ, though God Himself has accepted the ransom, and proved this by raising Him who offered it from the dead. These wolves in sheep's clothing tell you that God will not pardon your sins for Christ's sake only; that He will not give you a free discharge from the power of sin and Satan, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone. Oh flee! flee from such dreaming liars! "Do the best you can"! — best, eh! — when there is no best in a handcuffed sinner. "Keep the law!" — when God Himself says, If that were possible, Christ has died in vain. Away with such lies! Turn to the word of God. Read Romans 3:1-31; 1 John 4:1-21; Hebrews 10:1-39. Believe the testimony of God to the value of the blood of Christ. He is sincere. It is true that he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. But you ask, Are there to be no good works? Oh yes! But are the handcuffs on or off? — that is the question. The soul that has really been delivered from the power of Satan, will never forget its liberation. "We love him, because he first loved us." "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Believe, then; believe and live.

C.S.

Chapter 4

006. "Smashed to pieces"

"Smashed to pieces"

I had left Birmingham for Derby, in company with a friend, and after we had travelled some distance, he gave away a few tracts. I observed an old man reading the one given to him with very marked attention. Though a working man, his wrinkled forehead and careworn face bore marks of mental anguish, of no ordinary character. I felt a strong desire to speak to the old man, but could not make a beginning. I mentally offered a short prayer; it was this, — "Lord, if it be Thy will that I should speak to this man, cause him to speak to me first." I sat still a few minutes, when he put up his finger for me. I went and sat by him. He said, "I want to speak to you." (If the reader does not know what prayer is, he will perhaps wonder at this.) I looked at his anxious face, as he said, "When I was a young man, I read Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and many such; and their writing suited me well then, for I liked to have my full fling in sin; and I had it, both here and far away, across the seas. I travelled both on the continent, and also in South America; and what scenes have I been in! But now" (pointing to his grey hair), "oh, this remorse! it smashes me to pieces." I shall never forget the look with which these words were spoken. Oh, my soul! thought I, how much like hell is the anguish of remorse. Almost before I could speak, he went on to say, "I think the deceitful ways of professors make more infidels than all the writings that infidels themselves have written." "Well," I said, "if it were not for an old book I have in my pocket, which tells all about that, I should be staggered myself." "Indeed," said he; "what book is that?" "Oh," said I, "it is the Bible; and there is not an evil in the professing church which was not plainly foretold. But you have looked long enough at man; there is nothing in him to heal your broken, smashed heart; I want you to look at another object and that object is God. You will find no deceit in Him; indeed all is sincere love. I don’t ask you to do this or that to get to God, but I want, to tell you, smashed under sin and guilt as you are, what God has done to get to you. I want to tell you what He is, and what He has done, as displayed through the cross of Christ. The love that is seen there is all sincere, and it is all the work of God. Man put Christ to death, but God so loved. Yes, it is the cross of Christ alone that heals the broken heart. It has been truly said, that to heal the broken heart, Christ’s own heart must be broken first. It was broken. He died for us, ’the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.'" I pointed out the difference between our having to seek and to serve God, in order to be saved, and God’s having sent His Son to seek and to save that which was lost. I told him the following anecdote to illustrate this most important difference: — A man I knew, in Derbyshire, was walking in a dangerous mine, with a candle in his hand, when a drop of water from the roof fell upon his candle, and put out the light. The mine was a very dangerous place, and he, alone and without light, could not find his way out. He remained a long time in this dreary condition, until he became greatly alarmed; indeed, such was the effect on his mind, that he was in danger of losing his reason. Whilst in this state, he thought he saw the glimmering of a light.

It was a light; he fixed his eyes on that light; it came nearer and nearer, until at last he saw the face of his own brother, who had come to seek him. His friends having become alarmed on account of his long absence, his brother had descended into this pit of darkness to seek and to save him that

was lost. "Mind you," said I, "he did not stand at the pit's mouth calling out, that if his lost brother would but come out of that pit of darkness, he would then save him, as many falsely represent Christ as doing. No; he came to the very place where that brother was, and who needed his help." I said to the old man, "You are in the dark pit of sin and death; your candle of youth has been put out; you are beginning to feel something of the fearful solitude; alone without God. Do you catch a glimmering of the light in the face of Jesus Christ? Fix your eye there. The light will come nearer and nearer, till it shews you, in that blessed One, the face of a Saviour, who does not tell you to come out of the pit first to save yourself, and that then, when you do not need saying, He will save you. Oh, no, He knew we were too far lost for that. He descended into the very pit of sin and death; He bore sin's curse and condemnation, that there might be none for us; and He alone can, and does, deliver from sin's power. He comes to you in the pit; give Him your hand, He will lead you to eternal day."

There was power in the name of Jesus; a change passed over the old man's countenance; the raging storm was calming down; the goodness of God was leading him to repentance. He had never thus seen God manifest in the flesh, as the God of love. He had long been trying to get out of the pit, like many others, but had never before seen Jesus coming into it to save him. Our conversation was suddenly stopped — we parted at Derby. I trust we shall meet again at the great and glorious terminus — the coming of the Lord.

Well, reader, what say you to these things? Have you been "smashed to pieces?" Have you felt the bitter sting of remorse? Judas felt that. But I will ask another question, Have you ever felt the power of the love of Christ? Judas felt the one — Peter felt both. You may be saying, "I am too bad to be saved; I have tried so often; and oh, my sins! If I could but undo what I have done!" Were you not saying this to yourself the other day? You can never return to innocence. You can never have peace, but through the blood of Christ. If you could be ever so good to the end of life, still those past sins come as fresh as ever before you; and, as the old man said, "The older we get, the heavier they become." Ah, this will be true in hell for ever. Oh, let me tell you, there is no relief but by locking at the blood of Christ; this only gives me relief; my sins were laid on Him; they have broken His heart. But you say you have tried so often. How have you tried? Have you tried to prove yourself better than God's word says you are? Or, have you tried to get out of the pit, and cannot? God well knows you cannot. If you could have been saved in your way, Christ need not have died. You have tried and failed. Christ did not fail. He finished the work of redemption. This is most certain, for God raised Him from the dead. Forgiveness of sins is preached in His name, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things. (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 5:1.) My friend, this is a great salvation, it is worthy of all acceptation, yes, of your acceptation, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Now, you trust Him, and see if it cannot be done; nay, if you trust Him, it is done. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Reader, dost thou believe on the Son of God? Having no confidence in thyself, praise Him for all that is past, trust Him for all that is to come. He says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." There may be falterings and faintings, but faith, that has done with self, and takes hold only on Christ, shall overcome to the very end.

C.S.

Chapter 5

007. The Lost Ticket: or is your Life insured?

The Lost Ticket: or is your Life insured? The London train was just about to leave the Exeter platform, when a lady exclaimed, "I have lost my ticket." Her concern became so great, that guards and passengers searched the train, but the ticket could not be found. After the confusion had subsided, I said to my fellow passengers, "Is it not very strange that there should be such anxiety about this ticket, which is but the passport of a day, and may soon be forgotten, while so many have no concern whatever about the journey of life, or whether they have a ticket that will pass them into heaven at last? You may see a man get his insurance ticket, post it to his friends, and look as if he had done a very prudent act." "Is it not," I said again, "strange that man should be so prudent and thoughtful for present things, and yet not care to have eternal life insured? Oh, that there were the same desire to have the passport of salvation, and to know it." A man in the next compartment stood up, and said, "Will you have the kindness to tell me how a person is to have eternal life insured, and how he is to know it with certainty; in other words, what is his ticket for heaven, and how is he to know when he has got it?" It was evident from the man's manner, that he felt the question to be of the utmost importance. I said, "We will take the case of a life insurance for illustration: — A man insures his life in a certain office; he believes the large figures, stating the amount of capital paid up, to be real; the policy is deposited in the safe keeping of his banker, lest he should lose it himself. Now, I ask, how does he know for certain that his life is, as it is called, 'insured?'" "Oh," said the man, "he cannot doubt it, if he have confidence in the company, and in his bankers." "Very well, to carry out the figure — when I look to God for salvation, I am assured that the capital has all been paid up. Neither gold nor silver, words nor figures, can express the priceless value of the precious blood of Christ: — and, mind you, the Cross was no instalment, leaving future calls to be met by sinful man. Oh, no! — all was paid. The price of redemption was paid to the full, and paid for ever." "But what is the life policy, and how am I to know that I have it?" "Christ risen from the dead is the life policy. God has shown His full and eternal satisfaction and joy by raising that Blessed One from the dead, and exalting Him to the highest glory. Now, as Christ thus died for our iniquities, His being raised again, declared that His death had put away our sins.

Yes, His resurrection was as really for our justification, as His death was for our sins. Unless the question of sin is seen to be for over settled by Christ for us, we never can have full assurance of faith, as to final salvation. Christ having finished the great work of atonement, and having ascended up on high, the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, with the glad tidings of salvation, through the blood of Christ, and of eternal life, in Him who is alive from the dead. All who have, through grace, believed this testimony, have been saved. The illustration then holds good; just as when the capital of an insurance company is real, and a life policy deposited in safe keeping, where it can neither be lost nor stolen, even so the believer knows by faith in God's word, that the atonement for sin has been made; and that Christ is his life policy; for 'He is our life;' — 'he that hath the Son hath life.' He is at God's right hand for us, where we can neither lose Him, nor can aught possibly take Him away. Faith says, 'because He lives, we shall live also.' Christ alive from

the dead — raised to glory — is the believer's life policy, — his passport to heaven. If my salvation were in my own keeping, I should be sure to lose it. 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Yes, this simple heart confidence in God removes every doubt. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and the Spirit bears witness that I am a child of God." "This seems very clear," said the man; "but will you allow me to state a difficulty I have had for many years?" "Oh, certainly." "Well, sir, it is this: — I read in the Epistle to the Romans, that 'justification is entirely through Christ, by faith, without the works of the law,' and this hath given me comfort, but then, I read in James, 'Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.' Now, sir, this has perplexed me for many years." "At first sight," said I, "there seems a contradiction, but it is only in appearance. In Romans the great question of justification before God is discussed; and before Him nothing short of absolute perfection can stand; and hence, Christ alone being perfect, we can only be justified by and in Him. But in James it is, justification before men: 'Ye see brethren;' and men can only judge by works. Abraham was justified before God by faith, at the birth of Isaac; but he was justified by works before men thirty years after, when he offered him up.

True faith is sure to work by love, and is sure to produce fruits. If you believe the kindness of a person to you in your need, you are sure to be affected by it. We love God because He first loved us. But where so many make a fatal mistake is, in the vain attempt to produce work before justification. When you see your neighbour's chimney smoke in a morning, what do you think? Why, that the fire has been kindled. There is sure to be smoke if the fire is applied — but you don't make smoke first. One person might speak of the kindling of the fire within; another might speak of the smoke seen without. There would be a great difference — but no contradiction. The Spirit of God, by Paul, speaks of the kindling of eternal life within; by James, He speaks of its manifestation without; surely both are true. You put the seed in the earth, and with God's blessing you expect the plant, and then the fruit. If salvation were by works, then could none be saved." The man left the train with an expression of real thankfulness; his last words were, "I hope to tell to others the gospel I have heard this day — Salvation first, and works after." Reader! is your life insured in heaven? Can you look by faith at Christ Jesus, in the presence of God, and say, He is my righteousness, my passport. He has taken possession of heaven for me? Does Christ dwell in your heart the hope of glory? Or, are you gliding along the rails of life without a ticket? You may be a professor; you may be trying by self-righteousness to buy a ticket, and hope some day to get one — that is, to be saved. It won't do. If God deals with you on that ground, you are lost. However you may deny the death of Christ, God never can. No, no, He will not sell you the ticket. It must be a free gift. The gift of God is eternal life, even Christ, — God's greatest gift of love."God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John 5:11-13.) The New Testament is full of this assurance of salvation. It is no use saying, you are doing the best you can. What I do you mean you are doing the best you can whilst seeking to be saved in some other way than by God's free gift to lost sinners? — eternal salvation, in, through, and by Christ? Oh, but you say, "my frames and feelings." Ah, you will never be saved by looking at frames and feelings. Look away from your feelings — simply to Christ. A person does not say, "I feel nice and happy — so it's all right — I dare say I have my ticket." No; he first finds his ticket, and then feels happy. So, my reader, may you never rest till you have found Christ to be the all-sufficient passport to the haven of eternal rest.

C.S.

008. "Just in Time"

"Just in Time"

Sometimes God is pleased to use a few words in the awakening of a soul. Such was the case some years ago, in the following remarkable manner. The porters at the Sheffield station had cried, "Take your seats for Derby and the South," when I observed a man making the utmost exertion to reach the train before it started. It was a struggle. "All right!" shouted the guard. The driver answered with a whistle. The train moved. The man was just in time. He took his seat by my side; smack went the door. I said, "And the door shall be shut." I do not remember that another word passed between us. Two years afterwards, when I had quite forgotten the circumstance, a friend of mine met with the same man, who told him that those words, "And the door shall be shut," produced such a solemn impression on his mind, that he could not, by any means, forget them. When he awoke in the morning, and all day long, they sounded in his ears. The madness and danger of delaying his salvation to the last moment became so evident, that he believed that circumstance had been used of God in bringing him to Christ.

Reader, those are, indeed, solemn words, in that prophetic parable of the ten virgins, "And the door was shut." The gospel train is fast filling; the last person will soon be in it; and then, can you tell what you would feel, not to be just in time, but just too late? Would you like to be one who shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us?" when the only answer will be, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I know you not."

Hark you, the gospel porters cry "Take your seats." But you say, "I have not paid my fare; and worse still, I cannot pay it." Do you really own this to be true? Have you tried to pay your fare to heaven by good works, and do you own that you are still a vile and worthless sinner? Whether you say so or not, God says so: "The scripture hath concluded all under sin." Yes, you stand at the station, and though the price required is immense to pass you from the kingdom and power of Satan to God, yet, strange as it may seem, those only can take their seats, who have nothing of their own to pay. The full price has been paid, even the precious blood of Christ. That which many a poor soul wants to be done, has been done. "It is finished!" Yes, the full fare has been paid. Ask God Himself, if the death of Christ for your sins is not enough to justify you in taking your seat, and enough to justify Him in receiving you to glory? The resurrection of Christ is God’s answer to both these questions. If God gave Jesus to die for our sins, and thus to pay the fare in the giving up of His own life, God also raised Him from the dead for our very justification. Take your seat, then, and who shall condemn you? "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us." Take your seat, rest in the finished work of Christ. Who dare, or can, take us out of God’s train of grace? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" But you say, "This is very strange; a porter told me that I had to do much by prayer and amendment of life, and by deep repentance, before ever I could take my seat in God’s train. I have been trying for years, but I do not know how much would satisfy God for my fare.

I never before heard that it was all done, and that my ticket must be a free gift, because my fare has been paid, even the blood of God's Son." The porter that told you this story of works for salvation belongs to another company, and you will not find a passenger in his train who knows his fare is paid for heaven. I was once on that line myself, but I never was happy. I found it all tunnel, and we had no light in our carriage, and then it was down-hill, and so fast, and all uncertainty as to where we were going, that I do thank God for stopping the train, and making known to me His free grace. But you say, "There must be repentance." Yes, and what repentance is like that change of mind when a person believes the testimony of God — to the death and resurrection of Christ — that is, that all who believe are justified from all things? And you say, "There must be a forsaking of sin and the world." True, but I never saw a person get faster away from the place, than by taking his seat in a train. Would you really give up sin and the world? Then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, without money and without price, take your seat in a finished salvation. Do you want to be fifty miles from a given place in two hours? The power of steam can take you; you quietly trust this power; the train takes you. It is not you who take the train. Ah! men can trust anything but God! you want to be far away from sin, then take your seat, believing the death of Christ has paid your fare, and the mighty power of God shall bear you onward far away. The devil has many lines, all of which lead to hell. There is only one to heaven. Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You may say, "Do not bother me. I will not travel on any line." In that you are greatly mistaken. Travel you must. Every day is a day nearer heaven or hell. Look at the crowd about you; and let me ask, where is the crowd that thronged this world a hundred years ago? But hark again! there is one speaks from heaven: "Behold, I come quickly!" His words are fast fulfilling. The professing church is as He said it would be: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Some are saying, "We will not believe He is coming." Others, "We will not have Him to reign over us." Few, very few, are waiting for the Son of God from heaven. But the word of God assures us, He will suddenly come, and take the world with as great a surprise as the flood in the days of Noah, or the destroying fire of God, that fell when the sun had arisen on Sodom.

Men may laugh now, as men laughed then; and scorners may say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But, after years of prayerful searching of the scriptures, I take God at His word; and tell you plainly that "they that are ready shall go in, and the door shall be shut." And how soon no one knows. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What an event!

Ah, reader! are you ready? Can you say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?" You tremble at the thought. Your sins! Ah! you could not bear to meet the Lord with them unpardoned. Oh! bring them at once to the cross. None over sought forgiveness and were denied. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There are thousands of professors whose lamps are gone out, or going out, and who have no oil in their vessels. Think of the midnight cry! awake from that fatal slumber! Fellow believer, go to Christ for oil. Trim your lamp; gird up your loins; be like one that waits for your Lord. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And then, farewell, poor world of sorrow, sin, and death: welcome, bright eternal joy! for ever with the Lord!

C.S.

Chapter 7

009. "Conversation;" or "The Commercial's Way to be Saved"

"Conversation;" or "The Commercial’s Way to be Saved"

There are few opportunities so favourable for candid conversation as railway travelling; and though a commercial traveller myself, I think I may be allowed to say, there are few persons better qualified than commercial travellers for sustaining intelligent conversation. A short time ago I was travelling with two, who for intellectual ability might not be surpassed by any on the road. I felt an anxious desire to know what were their thoughts on that most important of all subjects, the salvation of the soul. In course of conversation, I inquired of one of them, "How do you really think a man is to be saved?" He replied, "No doubt the man who keeps the ten commandments is a happy man, and I believe that is the way to be saved." His fellow-traveller remarked, "I did think so, but I heard Dr. Some-one, of Leeds, preach a sermon which convinced me that it was only necessary to keep the last six." This was said in all seriousness. I replied, "I will not say ten, nor six; but now, if one had to be kept for salvation, tell me who could be saved? If Adam, happy in innocence, did not keep one, but fell, would it not be a fearful thing for us, fallen in sin, and surrounded by innumerable temptations, as we are, to have our eternal salvation to depend on our perfect obedience even to one command? No! my friends, redemption through the blood of Christ is a very different thing from our trying to keep the commandments. We must have redemption first through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins; and obedience will come after. Not the obedience of law-keeping for salvation. That is impossible when you have got it first. It would be utterly impossible to be in this carriage, and at the same time have something to do to get in. Just as impossible is it to receive Christ as my salvation, and yet have to keep the law to get saved." "I never saw it in that light," said my friend opposite.

Well now, reader, of course I do not know your religious sentiments, but, ten to one, you are on the same ground as the commercial. If I were to ask ten persons in any carriage the same question, very probably nine of them would have some indistinct thought, that it is something we have to do for God which will save us, and that if we do it worthily we shall be saved. And if one out of the ten were to say, "Oh! no, it is what Christ has done for me that has saved me," I should be glad to hear even one out of ten give the glory to Christ. Well, now, is it not a miserable thing to be tormented with uncertainty year after year? and not only uncertainty, but often the person who tries most to keep the commands, feels more keenly the gnawing of conscience, and the burthen of sin. Yes, no words can describe the anguish of heart that some feel who are thus trying to get saved by keeping the law. Oh, the weight of guilt! The law can give you no relief. It can only curse you. For "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians 3:10) And you know well that you cannot continue in them. Again and again you have tried, but all in vain. You cannot even be what you wish to be, much more what the holy law of God requires. But you hope to be better yet. You hoped that long ago; but still you are rather worse than better. Some try to get saved this way, until, tired out, they give all up in despair, plunge headlong into sin, and perish in infidelity. There are few infidels but who were made so by false religion. Just as

salvation by works is preached, infidelity increases, until, as in popish countries, you can hardly tell which is which. Is it not a solemn thing, that so few, even in England, know the difference between the saving gospel and the cursing law? Well, you say, "If man cannot keep the law, why was it given?" It was given because of transgression, that sin might be manifested, that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world proved guilty before God. (See Romans 3:1-31; Galatians 3:1-29.) But the gospel sets Christ before us sent down from heaven. God having concluded all under sin, He now brings Christ, and sets Him forth, the righteousness of God. This holy Jesus became the substitute for sinners; and now it is not they who must do something to live; but He must die that they may live: and He has died for our sins according to the scriptures, God declaring His acceptance of that sacrifice for our sins by raising Him from the dead. Mark, this is not a question of men's opinions, but the very righteousness of God is at stake: the word of God puts it so. (Romans 3:21-28.) "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," &c. Yes, the death of Christ is God's own remedy for my sins; to deny it or doubt it is to make God a liar. Dare you say God is not just, and the justifier of him that believeth? How is it, with the record of God in our hands, as given by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the apostles and in all the epistles, that believers are saved entirely by grace through Christ Jesus, and not by works of their own: I say, is it not marvellous that men will not believe God Himself?

Reader, was this not an instance of the truth of that statement of the word of God, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Just think of two commercial travellers, bright, intelligent men, but as ignorant of God's way of saving sinners as any Jew or Mahomedan on the face of the earth. The commercial's way to be saved, by keeping the law for salvation, is the thought of every unconverted person, however ignorant, or however learned. It is the professed doctrine of the millions of the Greek and Romish churches. In principle it is the same with every shade of heathenism, something that man can do to satisfy the god or gods of his own choice. Some wonder that so many are going over to Romanism. The wonder is that all who are on the ground of works for salvation do not go over to it. No doubt this will be the case, or worse. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:11.) But though hell and earth have so long, and in every variety of way, tried to extinguish the light of the gospel, it is still the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.

Reader, if you do not care for your poor soul's salvation, then throw my paper away; say plainly you will have sin and hell. Are you really concerned? Have you long desired to be saved? What has hindered you? Two things. First, you have not believed God's testimony about yourself, and secondly, you have not believed God's testimony about Christ. As to yourself, you do not really believe that you are utterly ruined by sin. If you did, you would see at once the folly of trying, as you try, to mend yourself. That which is partly ruined may be mended. If your hat fell into the water and was injured, it might be restored; but, if ruined, it is past mending. Sin has not merely injured man, but ruined him. But now as to the second — God's testimony of Christ. God Himself has accepted the mighty ransom — God Himself has raised Him from the dead. God Himself declares that all who believe on Him are justified from all things. Ponder these words: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Every attempt to keep the law for righteousness is an attempt to prove that Christ died in vain — that you are not so ruined, and do not need such a gift as Christ. Certain it is, without righteousness you cannot enter heaven; you have none of your own. If you do not receive God's righteousness as a free gift, even Christ, what on earth or in

heaven can save you? Oh, fellow-believer, what wondrous love was that "made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

C.S.

Chapter 8

010. "What a Contrast"

"What a Contrast"

We had been delayed a considerable time one morning at a station a little north of Derby, when several of the passengers on the platform became exceedingly impatient. I made a remark to the following effect. It was much better quietly to bear what we could not alter. And some could even thankfully do so, believing what the scripture said, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." Surely it would be better to wait on the platform than be killed on the line: every passenger might not be quite ready to quit this life. An old countryman came up to me, and told me the following circumstance. He said, "A few days ago I was walking across a field with an old friend of mine, our village blacksmith; and though a blacksmith, he felt so much of the love of Christ, that he would frequently be found visiting the sick and dying, and pointing them to Christ: and not only them, but he would often call to see Christians, and was very useful to those who were of a doubting sort. He would show them it was not their feelings or their doings that would save them, but that Christ was all. Well, we two were walking over the fields. Now he was of a tender turn of mind, which grieved much over the state of the world and the church. As we were walking he became sorely depressed at the thought of so much division and carnal strife amongst Christians. Suddenly he stopped, looked up with such a gaze at heaven, his face beaming with joy, and said, 'Oh, what a contrast! there Christ is all.' His face became brighter, his eyes fixed, as though looking at Christ in heaven; his body gently lowered on the grass, the pale shadow of death passed over his face, the spirit departed to be with Christ."

I need not say I was thankful for the delay. I felt that it had worked together for my soul's good. The departure of this honoured pastor had given a reality to eternal things, which produced such a thrill in my soul that I can never forget. Yes, I call him the honoured pastor, for He who called the fisherman of Galilee, called also the blacksmith of Derbyshire, to feed His sheep. The Holy Ghost alone can teach and convince of the sublime truth contained in those few words, "It is not your feelings or your doings that can save you. Christ is all." Are you mourning over sin, and longing for assured forgiveness? Christ is all! "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins." Do you want peace with God? Christ is all! "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you want righteousness? Christ is all! "For he hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Do you want to be sanctified? Christ is all! "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." Do you want to be kept from sin and Satan? Christ is all! "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Do you want to be certain, unworthy as you are, that you are an accepted person with a holy God? Christ is all! "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Now what can you want more? "Oh," says the trembling believer, "I want to be quite sure that I shall be with him at last." Christ is all! "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) If you look at your feelings and your doings for salvation, it is

like a person trying to climb a steep mountain of sand — every effort slides him lower. Our poor feelings and our doings are as unstable and shifting as the sand: there is nothing in either for faith to lay hold of. But when faith, looking away from our feelings and doings, takes fast hold of Christ, we are at once on the Rock of Ages. This is the difference between saving faith and all mere spurious faith, which really is only unbelief. If you have obtained the precious faith of God, you look at Christ. If false faith, you axe looking at yourself, your feelings and your doings. The departure of this servant of Christ reminds one of the death of Stephen. A glorified Christ in heaven was the object of faith to each of them. Neither of them had a single hope below. Christ, rejected on earth, glorified in heaven! What a contrast! Yes, the rejection or acceptance of Christ makes this immense difference. It is quite true that all the wretchedness and misery of this world came by sin, but it is the rejection of Christ that is the cause of its continuance. You see the wretched drunkard, reeling from the alehouse, led by a thin, pale-faced, half-starved child, its mother having sunk in the grave, slowly murdered by him who called himself a father and a husband. Ah, poor drunkard, drunk or sober, the cause of all thy misery is this — thou art a rejecter of Christ. Christ in thy family would have turned a hell into heaven. Look where you will on earth, it is a Christ-rejecting world. For eighteen hundred years has Christ been rejected by the succeeding generations of men. [Written in the XIXth century.] The few who through grace have received Him have all been hated by the world, and many of them persecuted to death. You may have as much of the world’s false religion as you please, and the world will praise you. But if Christ is your all, the world will hate you, even as it hated Him. When Jesus looked upon the city of the Pharisees, he wept. The sectary may fight and wrangle, and stamp and storm; but, like the blacksmith, the true Christian, when he looks at the masses of rejecters around him, will not fight, but weeping, seek to save. And what grieved him most was, that much which calls itself the church dishonours Christ quite as much as the world. What deceit, what covetousness, what selfishness, hatred, malice, cruelty, and oppression. But enough! Look up. Oh, what a contrast in heaven! Jesus is all and in all. No rejecters there! No deceivers there! No sting of sin is felt there! No drunkard walks the golden streets! No liar there! No slave-driver there! No sorrow, no pain, not a sigh, a groan, nor a tear there! God is there, and in His presence there is fulness of joy; at His right hand pleasures for evermore. There is a moment fast approaching when all who are Christ’s shall be taken, not from the body, as was the dying blacksmith, but when "we who are alive and remain shall be caught up." Yes, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Our vile body shall be changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ. Reader, this is my blessed hope. What is yours? It is not that I am better than you, and therefore worthy of such a place. Oh, no! I am a sinner — the very chief of sinners; but Christ is my all. Do you ask, "What can fit me for that happy, holy place?" My answer — nay, God’s answer — is, Christ alone. Yes, it is the unquestionable privilege of all believers to "give thanks unto the Father, who hath made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," &c. (Colossians 1:12-14), "and ye are complete in Christ." Believer, this is all true, whether you enjoy it or not. The more you walk with God in the light, the more you will enjoy it. Remember, it is not your feelings or your works. Christ is all!

C.S.

011. "Progress"

"Progress"

I was travelling on the Birmingham and Derby line some time ago, when a gentleman was speaking, with evident satisfaction, on the wonderful improvement and rapid progress of society. I quietly listened as he boasted of the development of man. At last I said, "You seem to have overlooked one thing." "And what is that, sir?" he said. I replied, "Why, sir, it is this: you forget that this world has yet to answer for the murder and rejection of the Son of God. That is the end of this world's progress." The man appeared struck with surprise, and I thought alarm. I showed him that however man may dream of this world's gradual improvement, God's word speaks out without mistake. Christ distinctly foretold that He would be rejected. (Luke 22:25-30.) For eighteen hundred years this world has treated the mercy of God, in giving Christ, with contempt. I asked him if he thought God would bear this for ever? But my question was quite outside his philosophy. Finite reason knows nothing of the infinite God, but what He Himself reveals. What a revolution took place in that man's thoughts in a moment! He said, "I never thought in that way about the death of Christ." This reminds me of a question a young man once asked me; it was this: "If God knew for certain that men would reject Christ, where was the use in sending the gospel?" "Well," I said, "I will answer by an illustration. Suppose some nation — say America — were to murder the British ambassador; of course that would at once cut off all relations with England.

Well, there would be one of two things for it — immediate judgment, or forbearing mercy. England would be just in demanding instant satisfaction. But now, instead of that, though England might well know that such was the inveterate hatred of that nation which had deliberately murdered her ambassador, that the offer of pardon would be rejected with disdain; — yet would there be no meaning, no use, if, instead of demanding immediate satisfaction, she sent the most conciliatory message of reconciliation? Yes, England's character would be manifest to the whole world; and when she ever did proceed to extremities, still her clemency would be acknowledged by all." "Oh," said the young man, "I see the point; the character of God is manifested." "Just so," said I. "And, oh, think of the person of Christ, the Son of God, heaven's ambassador! and is it not even so that men by wicked hands have murdered Him? And God did know that such was man's hatred, that he would reject Him. Yes, and having murdered and rejected Him, talks of progress. God knew it all, and most certainly all relations with God are cut off by the murder of Jesus. It is impossible for God to talk to men about keeping His law that are murderers of His Son. No, no, the whole world stands guilty before God. Surely man cannot be more guilty than the murder and rejection of Christ proves him to be. But, oh! the wonder of all wonders, God did not proceed at once to righteous judgment, but infinite love and grace burst through the very wounds of Christ, and God speaks peace and pardon to black vile man through the very blood of His murdered Son. Yes, He knows man will reject oven this mercy; yes, all men. But out of these very rejecters God is, by the power of the Holy Ghost through the gospel, gathering His church. And is He not glorified in that very world that still rejects Him? Yes! yes! Oh, the longsuffering forbearance, the grace that still beseeches men to be reconciled to God." "Ah!" said the young man, "I never saw how God would

be thus glorified in all His ways."

Now, reader, what think you? Just look for a moment at the world, filled with wickedness and violence. Oh! what a scene! and if you look at what bears the name of Christian — nay, it will not bear looking at — I say, do you think God will bear this for ever? He bore long in the days of Noah. But did not the judgment come at last? He bore long with Sodom and Gomorrah, and men made progress; but at last God rained fire and brimstone. Has not Jesus said, "Even thus shall it be when the Son of man cometh?" Why did He say that that day should come as a thief in the night? Why does the scripture say that this solemn event shall come at a time when men are saying, "Peace and safety?" Ah! He well knew that men would believe a lie — yes, that lie of Satan, when he persuades men to say, "The Lord delayeth his coming;" and therefore the word of God, is full of warnings, lest that day should take any of us unawares. The only progress that the scripture reveals is that of increasing iniquity. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:1-17, &c.) But you ask, "Do not you believe the world will be converted by the preaching of the gospel?" Oh, no, reader, I do not indeed. I just believe what the word of God says, that the world will become so wicked, and the professing church so corrupt, that Christ will come again in judgment. Having first taken up the real church, that is, all the true members of Christ, wherever found, living or sleeping, then that great day of the wrath and vengeance of Almighty God will come. I do believe all that scripture says, too, about the happy state of this earth during the millennium, after Christ has come in judgment. A preacher, who had long preached the conversion of the world by the gospel, said to me the other day, that nothing had surprised him so much as to find there was not a single passage in the whole Bible to prove that doctrine. But come, it is time for me to ask you a plain question or two. Are you ready to meet Christ? Your heart may be set on something. What will that something be worth when Christ appears? The Jews preferred a robber to Christ. Is there some secret sin, pleasure, money, or the world that you prefer to Christ? Oh! my reader, is it possible, are you a wicked rejecter of Christ? If so, the coming of Christ is a terrible day to you. And come it will. Oh! let me tell you, vile as man was in crucifying Jesus, God so loved the world that He gave Him — Jesus so loved that He thus died for our sins. Oh, blessed Jesus! Thou art precious! Can you say so? Have you tasted the sweetness of pardoning love? Do you say, that is what my soul longs to know? My friend, if so, God put that desire into your heart, and Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Since Jesus has died for your sins, can anything give God so much joy as pardoning them for His sake? When Jesus, alive from the dead, came into the upper room, His heart was so full of joy, that His first words were, "Peace be unto you." What joy Christ has in speaking; may you have joy in hearing those words of life, "Peace be unto you; and he showed them his hands and his side." This is enough for God, and you need no more. By grace ye are saved. My fellow-believer, what a day awaits us — what a change — to be with Jesus, to see Him as He is, and to be like Him! Even so, come Lord Jesus!

C.S.

Chapter 10

012. "An Interesting Question"

"An Interesting Question"

"What do you think you have to do to get your sins forgiven?" I have very often put this question to my fellow-passengers, and I nearly always get in substance the same answer. I was travelling the other day with a farm servant, on my way to London, when the following short conversation took place. "Well," I said, "I suppose you have some desire at times to be saved?" "Yes, sir, I have at times." "Then you would not like the thought of being lost for ever — would you?" "I should not," was the reply. "No; however light a man may make of it in health, it is a sad sight to see a man die with the terror of hell upon him. Well, now, what do you think you have to do to get your sins forgiven?" The young man replied, "To give them up." "That is a very common answer," said I, "and at first sight seems a very true one: but then you have tried to give them up, and you have found you could not; and you have tried again, and again you could not give up sin." "When did I try?" "Oh, often: when you were ploughing or driving your horses, have you not wished you could give up all sin, and be a saved man?" "Yes, it’s true."

Reader, is it not true that you too have wished and tried, and wished and tried in vain? How is it, think you? It is the most serious question that can occupy your thoughts — Are you quite sure that this trying to give up sin, this making resolutions and breaking them, until you almost despair of ever getting saved — are you quite sure that this is God’s way of saving a sinner? You may have given up some sin or sins; but still the fountain, your very heart, is corrupt, and out of it still flows the most hateful sin; for if one channel has been stopped, it finds another; and you are hasting on to eternity, and still not saved. I ask, Are your sins pardoned? Your conscience answers, No! Are you justified? No! Are you prepared to meet God? No! Are you certain to be with God in heaven? No! You may have every earthly comfort, but to-morrow you die — without hope! Fearful, fearful state! What will it profit you to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? But I think I hear you saying, "What can you mean? Is not this the gospel of God, ’If the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby?'" No, my friend, that is not the gospel at all. It is the law, by the which if a man can be saved, Christ died in vain. Do you say, "What then must I do? Can I go to heaven in my sins?" No, my friend, that you certainly cannot. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

How awful the fact that every one of us is described in this verse. Yes, born in this very condition, and held fast prisoners by the devil, the god of this world — so fast that, however you, my reader, may desire to deliver yourself from the power of sin, you cannot. Every effort is utterly vain. I believe that such is the awful dominion that sin has over man, that if all the men in the world, and all the angels in heaven, were to unite to deliver one soul from the power of sin and Satan, they could not do it. I think I hear you saying, "If that’s the case, I must have been dreaming. I thought a

man could repent at any time, and give up his sins, and then God would forgive him; and so I have not been particularly troubled about it. I have thought there is time enough yet." My reader, if this is your thought, you could not well be under a greater mistake. How awful if you should go on in this fatal delusion until the door is shut, and you are lost! Now, come, try your plan. Try to repent — try to give up all your sins — try to love God with all your heart — try to keep His holy law. The effort, sincerely made, will soon convince you of your hopelessly sinful state; but even if you could succeed in such all effort, there would still be the fearful weight of past sins. No amount of bitter remorse could uncle, or wipe away, one past sin. Judas is a solemn beacon as to this; he tried this way; but he found it the way to hell. Sorrow for sin is but a very small part of true repentance. Your mind must be entirely turned from sin to God. There is but one only way by which this can be done. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." To repent before you believe would be as if the bitten Israelite had to be healed before he looked at the brazen serpent. No, no. Faith in the love of God, as seen in the death of Jesus, alone can produce true repentance. The moment I believe in Jesus, my mind must be changed toward God. If you have been brought to look at Jesus lifted up on the cross, dying for your sins, and now lifted up to the highest glory — if He is your entire trust — you are, and shall be, certainly saved. "For through him is preached the forgiveness of sins; and all that believe are justified from all things." But if you have not looked, and do not thus look, on Jesus lifted up — if you are trusting in anything else — you are as certain, should you die in this state, to perish, as though you were just now in hell. Do not deceive yourself any longer. If your sins are not pardoned, why should you put on a smiling face, as if you were happy? You are not — you cannot be. Nothing in this world has yet made, nor ever can make, you happy. God so loved the world as to give His beloved Son to die the death of the cross, and what for? To make His very enemies happy for ever. And the world is trying its utmost to be happy without Christ. Is this your case, my follow-passenger? May God in mercy stop you, just now as you read. How little idea you have of the terrible wickedness of your life, if you are thus despising and trampling underfoot the Son of God. Do you ask, "What must I do to get my sins pardoned?" Just what the insurgent troops in India would have to do if a general pardon were proclaimed — believe it.* "The blood of Jesus, Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Through him is preached the forgiveness of sins." Believe it — believe it.

* [Written in the XIXth century]

Dear reader, one word, in conclusion, as to the question, "What must I do to get my sins pardoned?" Until you give up those words, "What must I do?" they prove that you have not yet felt the real necessity for the death of Christ. It is not, "What must I do?" but "What has Jesus done?" And what does God say? The believer hears God speak to him in His word: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

All! all! has been done! done by the Son of God! "It is finished." Look at the cross. Behold the dying Lamb of God. See what was done by Him, and to Him. All this was done that every poor sinner who believes in Him might have his sins forgiven. Blush, then, to ask, "What must I do?" Instead of vainly trying to do, may you, my reader, by the power of the Holy Ghost, be led to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

C.S.

013. "The Explosion"

"The Explosion"

I was travelling on the South Yorkshire line, on my return from Lund Hill, soon after the fearful explosion there, when a gentleman put the following difficulty. He said, "How is it that a person may try his utmost to escape from sin, and still sin has the mastery, and he, of course, has no peace?" The following illustration may help to explain the difficulty. On my first visit to Lund Hill Colliery, I called at several houses, and found in each widows and orphans, whose fathers and husbands were shut up in that burning pit; One, woman said, "My husband and two sons are in the pit." In another house I found four women — three had lost their husbands, and the fourth her brother. But when the widows and orphans assembled to hear the gospel, never did I see such a sight of sorrow. Amid such sorrow, there is a power in the name of Jesus that can be found in none other. The last of seventeen persons, who were got out alive before closing the pit, was there. I said to him, "Well, how did you feel as you lay at the bottom of the shaft?" He replied, "Oh, sir, I cannot describe my feelings, as I lay, half dead, suffocating and unable to stand." "Suppose you had heard some one at the top of the shaft shout down, and say, 'I have brought you good news: you must do the best you can to get out;' would that have made you happy?" "Oh no, sir; it would have been of no use at all. Get out? Why I had not strength to stand." "Then, after you had waited three hours and a half in that fearful place of death, how did you feel when those three valiant men descended to the very bottom where you lay, to seek the lost, the dead, the dying?" "Nobody can tell what I felt when the cage was going up for the last time, and I knew that if I was I a not put in it I could never get out; but they did lift me up, and put me in the cage, and I was drawn out at the top."

Here we have an illustration of the two gospels of our day. Man's gospel is, that he must do the best he can to get out of the pit of sin. He thinks his condition is not so bad, but that he can still do something to save himself. The gospel of God is the very contrary of this. The word of God plainly shows man's condition so utterly bad that he cannot help himself. Just as the gas at the bottom of the pit had stupefied the men, and taken away their strength, even so has sin stupefied all men, and taken away their strength. In proof of this, in Romans 5:1-21, God's love is commended, in that whilst men were "without strength," "whilst we were sinners," "ungodly," "when we were enemies," God did not send word, we were to do the best we could to get out of this condition. Oh, no! But just as the three men descended to save those poor, lost, dying men in the pit, so did God send His own most glorious Son to save lost sinners. "Yes, when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." What a striking illustration this is! If you had seen that sight, when more than 200 poor men and boys were all deep down in that pit of fire-damp and death! Every effort was made to save them. It was enough to melt a heart of stone to hear the sobs and cries of the women and children. What an expression of the love of man for his fellow man, when those three men descended, at the risk of their own lives! And have you never read that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" And this was not at the risk of his own life, but with the certainty that

nothing but the offering up of that precious life could atone for sin and save the soul. Now it is most certain that if those poor men were not got out they must perish. It was awful when the last man was out, to see the last ray of hope destroyed by the closing the mouth of the burning pit. God is sovereign — seventeen were taken out, and nearly 200 left in. Oh, if this solemn fact were but more thought of — God is sovereign. The whole world lies in darkness, sin, and death. Few are saved; many perish. Reader, are you one of the few, or one of the many? Do not be deceived. Do not think that you need not be alarmed; that when you begin to feel the pit too hot, you will then get out. Do not dream about getting out by ordinances, or by your own self-righteous works. You are too deep down. If you knew your condition, you would cry out this moment, "Lord, save, or I perish." This is a solemn thing, that unless Christ saves you, you must perish.

There was one poor man dreadfully burnt, and when they brought him to the cage, he mistook them for his enemies, and rushed back again to the dark works of the pit. They pursued him again, and caught him, and brought him again to the cage; and now you would have thought him safe; but again he rushed up the dark old works, and perished in the pit. What a lesson for a backslider! It is a sore grief to see a person, that one thought saved, go back again to the dark works of sin and death. Reader, if that is your case, what a fearful looking forward for judgment you have! I need not ask, Are you happy? Sin and happiness are eternal strangers. But do not despair; if by reading this little paper God shews you your utterly dreadful, lost condition, let me tell you that for eighteen hundred years not a person has ever known his need of Christ, and trusted in Him, but that person has been saved. And if you really know your need, that you are an ungodly sinner, without strength to be better, you are just the one for Christ. The last thing I would notice, and not the least, is, those who were saved from the pit were saved clean out at the top. They were not drawn half-way up, and then told to do their part; that it all depended on themselves whether they were finally saved. Some are told to work out their salvation, as though that meant that Christ had finished about one half of their salvation, and they had to do the other half. It is a great mistake. God’s salvation is clean out at the top. No! no! not drawn half-way out of the pit; but the Christian gives "thanks unto the Father who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Read that over again, will you? The man I talked with was out of the pit. He know he was. He did not hope to get out. If he had done so, that would have been a flat denial of the kindness of those who had got him out. They were drawn out together, the deliverer and the delivered. It is so with the believer and Christ. "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Christ took my place in death for my sins; but God hath raised us up together; so that the believer is as clean out of sin and death as Christ is. My fellow-believer, there is just as much condemnation to Christ now at God’s right hand, as there is to you in Him. Read the first and second chapters of the Ephesians, and the fifth and sixth of the Romans, and you will there see that the believer is as clear of sin and condemnation as Christ Himself is clear. O for more faith in the out-and-out salvation of God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

C.S.

014. "I have my Ticket"

"I have my Ticket"

I was passing Worcester station the other day, when a young man entered my carriage. As he sat down I took out my ticket, and showed it to him, saying, "Young man, I have my ticket." "Yes, sir," he replied, "I see you have it." I said further, "I do not hope to have it sometime. I have not now to ask for one, or wish I had a ticket; I have it — that is a certainty. Just so, also, I have salvation. I do not hope I may be saved; I have not to ask now to be saved — I have salvation. Through God's unspeakable mercy I am saved." The young man looked with astonishment, and said, "Well, this is very strange: I could have got to Birmingham for about half the fare by the other line; but somehow I could not book that way. Something said I must come by this train, and I felt I must get into this carriage. Now I'll tell you: there is a man works in the same shop with me, and he says the same thing you say. He says he has eternal life; and mind you, he not only says so, but everything he does shows he has. Bless you! he has no fear of death at all; and when he has any trouble, this having eternal life makes him so quiet and happy, that I cannot help feeling that he has got something that I have not, do you see? And no matter how we chaff him at the shop, we cannot touch him, for he has eternal life. He tells us he has found eternal life by reading and believing the Bible. For myself, must tell you, I used to read Tom Paine and Voltaire; but somehow, when I got reading at night, I said, 'Tom Paine, thou canst not give me eternal life;' and I felt so miserable, I banged the book on the floor." As he said these words, he suited the words by action, with great earnestness, and then, putting his hand in his side pocket, he brought out a beautiful edition of a pocket Bible, and said, "I have now got the book that makes known eternal life, but I cannot say that I have eternal life. I want to feel that I have it!" I said to him, "When the clerk laid your ticket on the window-board this morning, did you say I must first feel that I have it before I take it; or did you first take it, and then feel that you had it?" "Oh," he said, "I see now how simple it is. I must first receive salvation, and then I shall feel that I have it."

I dare say many a reader of this paper has the very same difficulty that this person had. Instead of believing the word of God, in His glad tidings of pardon and life through Jesus Christ, you look, and look within, wishful to find some unknown amount of feelings in which you may rest, or at least on which you may base a hope of being saved. Thus you stand at the window, waiting for feeling, and all the while refusing the grace of God. Now what do you want to feel? "Why," perhaps you say, "I must feel very sorry for my sins, and I must feel that I have forsaken them, and I must feel that now I love God. I have often tried to feel all this; but I have always failed. And yet I must feel all this before I can be saved — must I not?" No, my friend, if these feelings were God's conditions of salvation, not one soul would be saved. Now let us look in the New Testament, and see. I cannot find one place where it says, If you feel sorry for your sins you shall be saved. The answer to the jailor's question, "What must I do to be saved?" was not "Be or feel sorry for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved." Nothing of the kind. They pointed him to a very different object than himself or his feelings — even to Jesus. They said,"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And that same hour "He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." On another

occasion (Acts 8:1-40), as Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, and set forth the great sacrifice for sins, the eunuch, said, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Did he reply, If thou feelest sufficiently sorry for thy sins? Was this the condition? Were his feelings needed to add to the atoning value of the blood of Jesus? Oh, no. Nothing but faith was needed to connect him with Jesus, or to warrant his showing forth that union in death and resurrection, by baptism. "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest; and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." He was at once baptized, "and he went on his way rejoicing." The apostle Paul does not say, "The gospel which I preached unto you, 'by which also ye are saved,' was that you should feel this or that." No, he says, "How that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures."

Now, my reader, if there were no barriers then to exclude the sinner from Christ, why should you put your feelings now as a perpetual hindrance to your receiving Christ as your entire Saviour? Then Jesus and the resurrection was preached — never human feeling — never amendment, resolutions, or sorrow for sin, as conditions of God's free gift — eternal life. The gospel finds man blind as to God's character of love, and morally dead in sin. It reveals God in the blessed Jesus, God is love. The cross — ah! there the sinner sees the goodness of God. The infinite love of God — what a sight! This, and this alone, leads to repentance, or, as the word in the Greek always means, a change of mind. When Jesus, saving from the curse of sin by the death of the cross, is revealed to the soul, there is then that change of mind toward God — that knowing God which is eternal life. This is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ — this is repentance toward God. It is only as I gaze on the cross of Jesus that I can either learn or feel what sin is. Blessed Jesus! Thy precious blood cleanseth me from the guilt, and delivers me from the power, of sin! If I look back at my feelings or my doings, all is failure and sin; and hence, if these have aught to do with my salvation, all is darkness and uncertainty. But looking at the cross of Jesus my Lord, I find no failure. "It is finished." With all my coldness, and unworthiness, and sin, I do believe; and hence I can say I am saved. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." My reader, if you have been brought to give up all dependence on self, your feelings, your sorrows, or your tears, then hear the words of Jesus. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Again, He Says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

Think of those words — "eternal life," "hath everlasting life," "shall never perish neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Is this your present and eternal portion? Then can you say, "Worthy is the Lamb?" and "I have eternal life?" Do not rest satisfied with a mere hope of being saved. It will not do to tell the collector you hope you have a ticket. The believer has redemption through the blood of Christ, and his hope is the coming of the Lord.

C.S.

015. "Over-Luggage"

"Over-Luggage" A short time ago, I was waiting at the Stoke station, when I overheard a violent dispute about a gentleman’s over-luggage. The owner of the luggage evidently wished to defraud the company; and an officer was very properly refusing to allow him to proceed until the amount was paid. I felt pleased with the manly conduct of the officer, a tall Irishman; and after the noise had subsided, I entered into the following conversation with him. I said, "Then I suppose the passenger cannot go on unless the over-luggage is paid to the full. How much is it?" "Seven and sixpence," was the reply; "and it would not be right for me to take less than the full amount." "Very true," I replied; "but if a friend were to pay the full amount, would you hinder him then?" "Oh dear no, sir! should I not be very glad to see him go along?" "And the porters all along the line, do you think they would stop him?" "Oh, not at all, sir; he would be as welcome to travel on as though he had paid every farthing himself." "Well, now," I said, "suppose you and I were about to take a journey to-day, say from this world to the next, what about the over-luggage — I mean our sins; if put on the scale of divine justice, do you really think you would pass?" "Well, now, sir," he said, "that is what often troubles me when I come to think of dying. I goes to church, you know, sir, on Sundays, but still I fear my sins would be too heavy for me to pass on to heaven." "Then what have you towards paying the over-luggage?" "Oh, sir, I have nothing at all, for I am a sinner." "Let me, then," I said, "tell you what another has done. When God weighed our sins on the scale of divine justice, such was the weight, that the lever went higher and higher, until the price demanded was the Son of God. And blessed it is that I can tell you that God spared not His own Son; ’for God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Now, just as it would not be right for you to let the passenger pass on until his over-luggage is paid to the full, neither would it be righteous if God were to allow the sinner to pass on to heaven until his sins were met to the full. But, then, also, just as it is perfectly right for you to allow the passenger to pass on when his over-luggage has been paid for by another, how much more is God perfectly righteous in receiving the sinner, the awful weight of whose sins has been met by the death of Jesus Christ, His own beloved Son! The amount claimed by divine justice has been paid to the full. ’Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ Yes, and then if called upon to take your journey to-day, you may look at the cross, and pass on to glory." My train moved on, the man thanked me for the conversation, and God only knows whether I shall meet him amongst the redeemed above.

Well, reader, what about your over-luggage? Sinner you are, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If God were to let you feel the real weight of only one of your sins, it would sink you in everlasting despair. Yet, strange as it may appear, I find many of my fellow-travellers who seem to think that God is far more indifferent about our sins than the railway officer was about the over-luggage. They know they are sinners, yet with some of them sin is a very light matter, and yet they expect to get into heaven somehow. They think if they begin to reform some day, and do the best they can, all will be right at last. Reader, if this is your state of mind you are not far from the lake of fire. Sometimes I meet with persons in the very opposite state of mind from this. I will

tell you of one case. I was coming to Tetbury station in the omnibus. My fellow-traveller was a young person who appeared distressed in mind. After some conversation, I inquired the state of her soul. I shall never forget her reply. "It is no use. I have tried so often to give up my sins and the world, and serve God, and I have failed every time. I only keep adding to the weight of my sins. I have given up the attempt." As she said these words, tears rolled down her face. I said, "I am glad to hear you say so." She appeared greatly surprised, and wished for an explanation. I read to her Mark 2:1-5. I told her the one sick of the palsy had to be let down in his entire helplessness to the very floor at the feet of Jesus. It was then, but not till then, he heard those precious words of Jesus, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." She had made this mistake; she had tried to climb a little higher by her best endeavours. There must be this letting down; and God had by every failure let her down a little lower; and now is she was helpless at the feet of Jesus, I was glad to be able to set forth a full and eternal salvation through Him. She said she had never seen it in that way. Her mother, on seeing us enter the omnibus, had retired to pray that God would use that opportunity for the conversion of her child. How little did I think that in a few days she was to return to her mother’s house to die. I passed through the same town seven months afterwards. I found her pale on her dying bed. She had now found peace through the precious blood of Christ. The visits of a Christian had been blessed to her soul. She is now with the Lord. The cross of Christ meets both these states of mind. Are you careless about sin? Look at the cross; in it God says it is impossible for Him to be indifferent about sin. Is your soul burthened with sin? Do you feel like the person with his over-luggage, that with your sins you must pass on to the presence of God? Oh, how overwhelming is the weight and guilt of sin — still pressing the soul down, down, down! Yet, how ever much we may fool its weight, it is only at the cross of Jesus that we can really learn what sin is. The cross of Christ was the scale of divine justice on which sin was weighed to the utmost. God there laid its utmost weight on Jesus. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The thought of it made Him, even the Son of man, sweat as it were great drops of blood. Oh, dwell on the solemn hour of the cross, when His soul was made an offering for sin! Blessed Jesus! in that hour of darkness, thou didst endure the full weight, the utmost curse of sin! Pass on, my soul, pass on; the ransom is fully paid: it is finished. The price of thy fearful over-luggage is paid; fully, divinely paid — paid to the utmost. Jesus is risen. Thou art justified. God, who laid thy sins on Jesus, has justified thee. Pass on. That same Jesus is coming again shortly to receive thee to Himself.

Reader, nothing can discharge thy over-burthened soul but the cross of Christ. Thy best works can help thee no more in this matter than thy greatest sins.

Believer, why doubt? Pass on with holy confidence. God is divinely and eternally righteous in justifying thee from all sin, and receiving thee to glory. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

C.S.

Chapter 14

016. "How does a Man become a Soldier?"

"How does a Man become a Soldier?"

I was leaving the Birmingham station for Manchester the other day, when I noticed three soldiers walking on the platform. I felt an inward conviction that my Master had something for me to say to these men. Taking my seat in the carriage beside their three knapsacks, I looked up in prayer, that the right man might come and sit next to me. They took their seats. I remained silent for some time. At last I saw tears begin to roll down the face of the man next to me. It is often better to pray than talk; one gets to see more of God that way. After a while I said to him, "When I saw you three walking on the platform, I felt assured that the Lord had a message for one of you; and I asked Him to bring the right man next to me; and now, will you tell me what is giving you so much grief this morning?" He looked very much surprised, and said, "Oh, sir, it is eighteen years since I ran away from home; my father was a man of prayer; I never saw him again; he has been dead many years now, but I can never forget his prayers for me. I have been abroad most of my time since I enlisted — have never seen my dear mother from that day to this — she does not know whether I am dead or alive; but I am going, to-day to see her; I have got her address in Manchester; and this brings to my mind those happy days when my father had a prayer-meeting in our house." He also showed me a worn-out letter, written by his sister, on leaving his native shores. No, words can tell the value he set upon this tender treasure; he had worn it near his heart in every part of the world he had seen. He also opened his knapsack, and shewed me a well-worn Bible: his two companions, I found, also had each his Bible. They were, in fact, three praying soldiers. I read their testimonials, and three more noble, upright men I seldom met. The thrilling interest of that conversation I shall not easily forget. One point, however, I must name. Though these three soldiers were, like Lydia of old, men of prayer, and I trust the Lord had opened the heart of the one next me, yet they were totally ignorant of God’s plan of salvation. In order to meet this ignorance, I put the following question: — "How does a man become a soldier? Doe he go to some old rag-shop, and buy old cast-off regimentals, and try to imitate the soldier, until he gets to be one?" "Well, well," said one of them, a pretty soldier "that would be, wouldn’t he, now?" "But," said I, "then tell me, how does a man become a soldier?" "How, why simply by receiving the shilling,* to be sure." "Just so," said I, "does a sinner become a Christian. It is not by going to some religious rag-shop, and buying the rags of self-righteousness; and trying to imitate the Christian, until he gets to be one. No, it is simply as a lost sinner receiving Christ, as the man receives the shilling." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "

What!" said one of the soldiers, "do you mean to say then that a man does not ought to do his duty to God, to read His word, and pray?" "Oh, yes! the Christian earnestly desires to do all this; but you have to do your duty, you have to keep your regimentals bright, and to obey your orders; but tell me, have you to do your duty to get to be a soldier, or because (since you received the shilling) you are one? Just so the Christian. He loves to keep his regimentals bright, to walk with garments undefiled, and to obey, as a son delights to obey, the will of his Father. But this is not to get to be a

Christian, but because he is one."

* [Written in the XIXth century]

"I never saw it in that light before," said he. "I know you never did; and after all your sincere desires to live to God, and thus get to be a Christian, when you come to look back at your past life, have you not often done the things you most hate? Don't you often feel you are as far from being what you wish to be as ever — sin has such terrible power? Now, has it not?" "That's all true, sir. But what is a poor fellow to do? You have no idea, sir, of the temptations of a poor soldier! Why, now, we three, because we are steady men, are sent to be recruiting sergeants. It makes my very heart sick to think of the dens we shall have to go into to get our men." "Oh," said I, "what a world of sin and wretchedness! and how much there is in every fallen man that answers to the iniquity around. If God had not known it all, and sent His own dear Son to die, the sacrifice for sin, on the cross, so that salvation might be as free, yet as binding, as the soldier's shilling, who could be saved? Who, with such a fallen nature, in such a world, could imitate the Christian, until he got to be one?" At Crewe, two old pensioners got into the same carriage one, of whom appeared to have tried hard and long to make himself a Christian. This man, I believe, found blessing to his soul through the conversation. As an old soldier, he remembered well the shilling; and he remembered he had not to buy his regimentals; and he remembered well that he had to do his duty, not to get to be a soldier, but because he was one. But he had never known that it is just the same with every sinner that is brought to God. When a man is enlisted, he is stripped of everything — not a rag is left. He then stands in royal uniform — but that royal suit is a gift — he has not to pay a penny for it. He only receives it. No matter how dirty his old rags were. Every man in the regiment stands in the same cloth. It will be so with thee, poor, lost sinner, no matter how filthy thy life has been; no, if even thou hast been like the thief on the cross, or a very Mary Magdalene. If the Holy Spirit shall open thy heart to receive Christ as thy entire salvation, thy royal clothing shall be the very righteousness of God. Yes, every soldier of Christ wears the same spotless robe. "For he hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21.) "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Perhaps one of the dealers in old rags of self-righteousness will say, "Won't you come to my shop, and try my sacraments and ordinances? I will teach you how to imitate the Christian best, and then you may hope to get to be one. I assure you my shop is the oldest in the line?" No, thank you; no religious rags for me. I have put on the Lord Jesus — He is my only trust — I need no more; for God says of all that are in Him, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." And, "Ye are complete in him." What God says is complete, let not man try to mend. No, no! fellow-soldier of Christ, don't be tempted into the rag-shops of the day; thou hast not to put on old regimentals to get to be a soldier of Christ. Watch and pray, that thou mayest walk worthy of thy royal uniform. As says the word of God, "I will that thou affirm constantly that they which have believed in God (those that are saved) might be careful to maintain good works." (Titus 3:4-8.)

It is impossible to describe that poor soldier, as he came within sight of Manchester. I spoke of the return of the prodigal son. Whatever might be the joy of that poor mother's heart, in receiving her long-lost son, still infinitely greater is the joy of God, in receiving the long-lost prodigal. Oh! careless sinner, what a God of love dost thou despise! Thou art starving in wretchedness, and

there is bread enough and to spare. See, see, He comes to meet thee with outstretched arms of love; fall into them, crying, "I have sinned." The first words the prodigal heard were these, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hands, and shoes on his feet."

C.S.

017. That Sad, Sad Face

That Sad, Sad Face

I was travelling on the Midland some time ago. Amongst my fellow-passengers were a commercial, an aged general, a major, an aged lady, a sister of mercy, or nun, and a young girl, who, from her agitation, I feared, was being tempted from her home to take the veil. A more sad face than that of the unhappy-looking nun was seldom seen. As I looked at her, I thought if she had but peace with God, oh, how her misery would be turned into joy! I sat longing for an opportunity to tell her of the finished work of Christ. By-and-by she felt for her ticket — she could not find it. I helped her to seek it. At last she found it, after much excitement, in her cloak sleeve. I then said, "It would be a fearful thing at the end of the journey of life to find that we were without the passport to heaven." "Indeed it would," she replied. I said, "Can you tell me what the passport is to the holy presence of God?" "A good conscience," she replied. I said again, "God says in His word that 'there is none righteous, no, not one,' that 'there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' Will you then tell me how a sinner can have a good conscience?" The nun was quite at a loss to know how to answer this question. "I should think you ought to know," said the aged lady at my left, and, pointing to the Word of God in my hand, she said, "That book will tell you." "You are quite right," I said. "This book tells me that 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth me from all sin,' that every believer has 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' It tells me my sins are forgiven for His name's sake, that believers have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:1-7), that God is infinitely righteous in thus justifying a poor sinner, and that without works." (Romans 3:19-23.)

"What!" said the major, "you do not mean to say that a man may know in this world that his sins are forgiven. I cannot think that a man can be quite sure of that." "Certainly, Major; and now let me give you an illustration in your own line. Suppose your regiment in rebellion, and you give yourself up to make reconciliation for your men, telling them that if you do not succeed you shall never return, but that if you do return, they may be quite sure of their pardon the moment they see you — that the reconciliation will then have been made. Now suppose you do thus make a complete and satisfactory reconciliation — you do return — and you call your regiment on parade, and announce a free pardon to every soldier; and now a man steps up, and says, 'I suppose,' your honour, I must not be quite sure that what you say is true?' Now, Major, would you not consider that an insult?"

"That is right," says the old general.

"And now, if it is an insult to doubt the word of a fallible man, what is it to doubt the testimony of the infallible God? Has not the blessed Jesus given Himself the propitiation for sin, 'to make reconciliation for the sins of the people?' 'He died for our sins according to the scriptures, and he was buried, and he rose again the third day.' (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Corinthians 15:5.) He never could have returned from the cold chambers of the dead if the reconciliation had not been perfectly made. But believers can say with triumph, 'He was raised from the dead for our justification,

therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace, with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Do you not see, Major, your return to your regiment would be a proof that reconciliation was made? And the resurrection of Christ is God’s proof that the atoning work of Christ is perfectly finished. And if your own word should be enough for your men to believe, what can I want more than the word of God? God hath raised up that very Jesus who groaned and bled on the cross beneath the weight of my sins and guilt. And that is not all. That very Jesus is gone up on high, and sits at the right hand of the majesty on high. This is what gives me the answer of a good conscience, as Peter says, ’And be ready always to give an answer to every mall that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, having a good conscience.’ But how? By good works? No, these will do before men, ’but the answer of a good conscience toward God is only by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven,’ &c. (1 Peter 3:15; 1 Peter 3:22.) The sacrifices of the law could never make the conscience perfect, much less can the bloodless sacrifices that men pretend now to offer. But the offering of Jesus on the cross — His one offering of Himself — perfects the conscience for ever, so perfects it that there needs ’no more sacrifice for sins.'" (Hebrews 10:1-23.)

"Major, would you not be happy now if you knew your sins were forgiven?" "Oh yes, indeed, nothing on this earth could make me so happy." And then, addressing the nun, I said, "And would not you be happy if you also know, like the believing Ephesians, that God had for Christ’s sake forgiven your sins?" She said, "I do not know how to answer you." The commercial man now spoke: "I have no doubt that a man is justified, as you have said, by faith; but will you tell me when a man may conclude with certainty and safety that he is saved?" "That is a very important inquiry," said I. "Many make a fatal mistake by concluding, because they have passed through a religious excitement, that they may hope they are saved. There is no safety in such a conclusion. Neither can a person be sure he is saved by fasting, and prayers, and works of kindness. No, there is sin mixed up with it all. Neither dare the person conclude that he is saved by keeping the holy law of God; for the more sincerely he strives to keep it, the more miserable and desponding he is, for he finds an evil heart that is still breaking it. But when a person sees himself so great a sinner that there is no remedy for him but death, and that God has met his need as a sinner in the death of Christ, and that being risen from the death the sinner deserved, He is now his justification and life — in plain words, when stripped of all dependence on himself, he is brought by the Spirit of God to trust alone in Christ, he may then conclude with certainty and safety that he is saved."

Yes, my reader, nothing can be so sure as the word of the living God: "Be it known unto you that through this risen man, Christ Jesus, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Are justified" — not may be after death. No, the believer is now beyond death, Jesus having died for him. If you are brought to give up all self-righteousness, and as a lost sinner to receive Christ as your entire salvation, you may be most certain you are saved. A person may be deceived in doing and enduring anything to save himself, but no man will trust alone in Christ, but, by the Holy Ghost. If this is your faith, you may be certain it is of God. You may be certain, therefore, you are saved. If you are trusting partly in Christ, and partly in something else, you never on that ground can be saved. It must be all Christ, or no Christ at all.

C.S.

Chapter 16

018. "Must I not strive?" or the Poor Man's Dinner

"Must I not strive?" or the Poor Man’s Dinner

I had a long conversation the other day with a butcher, on the rail to Derby, on the reason why men smoke and drink. This led us to the subject of the bitter misery that sin produces, even in this life; and the various attempts that men make to smother conscience, and drown sorrow. The butcher had just lost his wife, was left with two little children, had passed through some trouble of conscience; but, what was worse, he often took too much drink. In short, we were both agreed that one great reason why men drink is the misery and burthen of sin. He owned it was a wretched thing thus to go on from sin to sin; and that solemn word of God sounded heavy in his ears, "The drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God." I found him much interested in the things of religion, and wishful to converse upon them. I found he purposed, at some future time, to make a firm resolution to cast off his sins, and become religious. Alas! how many are now in hell who once had the same intention as this butcher! He evidently thought a little striving of his own, at any time, would do all that is required.

"Well, now," said I, "man is certainly in a wretched condition through sin; but how do you think he is to get saved from this guilt and misery?" "Well, you know," said the butcher, "it will not do for a man to go on in his sins until he dies, will it? He must strive hard to give up all his bad ways, and live to God." I replied, "He will never save himself by his striving in that way." "What!" said he, "do you mean to say a man must not strive?" "As long as he does strive in that way," said I, "he is a rejecter of Christ." I saw the poor man was evidently trusting in his future strivings. "Explain yourself," said he: "whatever do you mean? — A man striving is a man rejecting the gospel of Christ! What can you mean?"

I replied, "I will illustrate what I mean. Suppose you have gone on in sin and drunkenness, until you have brought your family to starvation; you have not a farthing to buy them food, and you are too ill to make the least effort; when a friend comes to your house, spreads your table with plenty, and begs you to eat. If, then, you say, ’No, I must strive to got food myself,’ would not you be rejecting the kindness of your friend? And would not this rejection of his love continue as long as ever you continue your striving? And is it not so with the lost sinner? Man is so bad, that he really does go on sinning until he dies. Is he not as helpless as the starving man? God has come to his rescue — God has given His own Son to meet his deepest need as a lost sinner, by the death of the cross. He died to deliver us, because we could not possibly save ourselves. God, the Friend above all friends, has come in Christ to our house of wretchedness and sin; and He, in pure love and pity, has spread the table of salvation — all things are ready. Oh! it is God that beseeches poor dying sinners to eat the bread of life spread before them. ’Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.’ The kindness of God to perishing sinners has now been shown by the death of Jesus. Now pardon and deliverance are preached through Him. Surely, then, the longer I strive to save myself, the longer I reject the kindness of the God of all love." The man’s countenance fell; his last prop,

he felt, was being taken from under him; his heart rose in rebellion against the free grace of God. If he could but have had the honour of a little striving, as a merit, to bring to God, he would have been well pleased. But to bow to God meeting him through the finished work of Christ, in pure, undeserved pity and love, this he would not do. He now tried to ridicule me, "Perhaps," said he, "you are not so good as you pretend, to be." "You very much mistake me," said I, "if you suppose I pretend to be good. No, I put myself along with you; I say we are both sinners; only I feel I am a greater sinner than you, because I know more about my own sins than I do about yours. But this is the difference between us — I have been brought, like the famished man, to receive Christ, the salvation of God. I can assure you it is through His blood alone I am pardoned and washed. I have nothing else before God. It is His life from the dead, that is my life. It is not in myself I boast, but in Christ. Jesus the Lord." "I have had enough," said he; "I will hear no more." A young man to my right, who had been deeply interested in the conversation, put forth his head, and said, "Will you tell me that illustration again?" I repeated to him again the parable of a friend going to the famishing household, as an illustration of the work of Christ for perishing sinners. I showed him it was not that we had to do one thing for God — it was not even that we had to present the sacrifice of Christ to God, and believe, until God would save us, as though there were any virtue or merit in our so presenting it. No, salvation was entirely from God; like the poor man's dinner, which was entirely from the friend. That it was God who had provided that great propitiation for sin, the sacrifice of Christ — that it is God who meets the sinner in his deepest wretchedness and helplessness — that the moment I believe, and receive the kindness of God, I am saved. That young man's face now lit up with joy — it was the joy of a new-born child of God. God had, during the repeating of those words, met his weary, anxious soul, and spoken peace, through the finished work of His own Son. To the one, the precious gospel had proved the savour of death unto death; to the other of life unto life. I found the Lord had been preparing him for three months for this message of mercy and love. Ah, there is often a striving and a struggling before the heart is made to really give up all hopes in self, and accept Christ as its entire salvation. This is the work of God by the Holy Ghost. My reader may perhaps say, "Well, after all, I intend myself, some day, to strive hard to give up all my hateful sins, and serve and love God with all my heart — would it not be right to do so?" Oh, yes, certainly it would. But have you not tried to do so, and failed? and may you mot continue to fail until it is too late, and you are lost?

Perhaps you may say again, is not that what Christ meant, when He said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate?" No; certainly He could not by that striving mean self-righteousness. He was speaking to the self-righteous Jews; nay, it was their very self-righteousness that made it so difficult to enter the "strait gate." Surely the death of Christ is too strait a gate or door to admit one particle of self-righteousness. His own sheep, even amongst or in the Jewish fold, had to be led out through that door: and no sinner on earth can be saved in any other way than through the death, burial, and resurrection of Him who is the door — of Him who gave His life for the sheep.

God grant that many of my readers may be thus stripped of all pretensions to self-righteousness, and self-striving, and self-dependence, and self-intentions, and own themselves so utterly, hopelessly bad, that God has well met their deep need, by the death of His adorable Son. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

C.S.

Chapter 17

019. The Lunatic and his Keeper

The Lunatic and his Keeper On leaving the Gloucester station the other day, I found that one of my fellow-passengers was a lunatic, in the care of a keeper. I soon found that this keeper held some most dangerous opinions respecting the Temperance movement. With him temperance was a John the Baptist, to prepare sinners for Christ; and, as near as I could make out his meaning, he thought it was about one-half of a sinner's salvation; a sentiment as much like blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, whose blessed work it is to bring sinners to Christ, as anything I have heard.

I should be most sorry to speak one word against temperance as a great social benefit amongst men. Right glad should I be, where drunkenness is such a frightful evil, if there were not a drop of drink to be got in the land. Entirely apart from the question of a sinner's salvation, there can be no doubt the moral government of God so orders things, that a sober man must enjoy a greater amount of social happiness than a drunkard. But when the foundation of the gospel is attacked, is a Christian to be silent? God forbid. This caused me to speak very strongly of the use that Satan may make of the Temperance movement. This may startle my reader; but lot me remind you that it is ever Satan's policy to use the best things adapted to accomplish his purposes. He is wont to appear as an angel of light. I will just refer to a parallel case. No one can question that the law of God is holy, just, and good. No one can question the immense benefit of that law in God's moral government of the world; or that in this respect, and for this purpose, to abolish it would be to turn this whole world into one wide hell. And yet it was this very law that the ministers of Satan were seeking to mix with the work of Christ, for justification before God. The Epistle to the Galatians was written for the very purpose of meeting this work of Satan. Now, if he took up so good a thing as the law, is it any wonder that he should take up so good a thing as temperance, and use it in the same way? It was not enough, said they, for salvation, that a man should believe in Christ, he must also be circumcised and keep the law. This keeper was just saying the same thing over again; trying hard to prove that it was not enough for a poor, lost sinner to believe in Christ. He must take the pledge first, and be a temperance man; then he was fit to believe in Christ. Mix the two together, and the man might be saved. A man must have poor eyes that cannot see this to be the devil's work over again. And now mark the rebuke of the lunatic. He suddenly stopped his keeper with these words, "Christ must be all." Yes, my reader, in the business of thy soul's salvation these are the words of truth. I felt they were the words of God, though through a deranged man. He spoke again, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils;" and when I put the question to all in the carriage, "What is it to be a Christian?" one said, "It is to do all the good I can to my neighbours;" another said, "It is to love God all I can;" another said, "I do not know much about it." "Ask me," said the lunatic. "Very well, what do you say it is?" "To have a broken heart!!" was the reply. "Is not a Christian," said he, "like a tree? Is not Christ the root, from which the tree gains the sap, which produces and support all the twigs, the leaves, and fruit? Christ is all." What remarkable words from a man who had to be watched every minute!

Suppose my reader had to cross a fearful mountain current, rolling deeply beneath a solid, firm bridge, built at great cost by the government, and stretched across the frightful gulf. A man sees

you, and, pretending to be your friend, he brings a plank, far too short to reach across. He tells you the bridge is not sufficient, that you must walk first on his plank, or that, at all events, you must walk a little on one, and a little on the other; what would you say to such a proposal? The plank might be useful enough for other purposes; but if you trusted it for crossing the gulf, you would find it a fearful mistake. Christ is the bridge across the gulf of destruction, and temperance is man's plank. It is useful in its place, but far too short to lay across the gulf. Trust it, and you are lost. Shall I say that Christ is not able to save to the uttermost? that He who converted the mad persecutor, Paul, cannot convert the poor drunkard until he has half saved himself? I tell thee thou art welcome this moment to Christ. Did He ever send a sinner away? Never. He is the only one who can deliver thee from thy hateful sins.

"But, oh!" say the modern ministers of Satan, "the bridge so often falls, and lets its travellers into the gulf — there are so few of its travellers get safe over, that you had really better try the plank." Find me a stone loose in that foundation which God hath laid! Christ fail! Christ let a soul perish that trusts in Him! Do you mean to say that? It is plain enough, if a traveller falls in who is on the bridge, that the bridge itself must fall first. It is plain enough, too, that whatever plank man or Satan brings, it is calling in question the all-sufficiency of Christ Jesus, for the sinner's entire and eternal salvation. But perhaps you may say, "Do all who are on that bridge, that is, who are saved by Christ alone, go safe to God?" Yes; if one were lost, then Christ would have failed. Their going safe over is the proof that they are saved by Him. "Then how is it that so many who profess do fall, and perish at last?" Profess what? Many are in this day walking on a plank of their own. They can only walk until their own weight sinks them in; and then they say the bridge has let them in. The fact is, they never were on the bridge. Suppose the plank you are walking, or trying to walk on, is the law — the keeping of the commandments. You have believed Satan, that Christ is not enough for your salvation. He gently lays you down the plank — the law. Can you walk across the gulf on that plank? It is far too short to carry a sinner across. You feel your sins are getting heavier and heavier; another step, and the plank sinks lower. Hold! stop! man, you will be in! Another is trusting to his sacraments, ordinances, and the like. He goes back to Judaism, and calls it High Church. He is walking on his own plank; it is sure to let him in, and all that are blind enough to follow him. Yes, and if thou art trusting to thy pledge, to thy temperance, to thy morality, or to thyself, in any form, thy plank is too short, and keeping to it, thou wilt perish for ever. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, or by the pledge, or by anything that man can do for himself, "then Christ is dead in vain." Yes, if any plank could have been found able to carry the sinner across the fearful gulf and torrent of iniquity and sin, God would have spared His Son — those words would never have been heard from the holy lips of Jesus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Oh, what has that bridge, cost God? The death of His only-begotten Son. It is not my loving God with all my heart that makes me a Christian, but believing that God has loved me with all His heart — so loved, that He spared not His beloved Son! It is not my doing all the good I can to my neighbour that makes me a Christian. No, it is God that has done all the good He can to me, when an enemy. As the lunatic said, it is learning this love at the foot of the cross that breaks my proud heart.

Reader, hast thou thus got a broken heart? Is Christ thy root? thy bridge? Is Christ thy all? If not, beware of Satan's planks. It is quite true what the apostle says of "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which [says he] I tell you before, as I have also told

you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." But it is also true that Jesus is the Saviour who shall deliver, who hath delivered, and who doth deliver His people from their sins.

Fellow-believer, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord."

C.S.

Chapter 18

020. Vol 01 - Plain Words

Volume 01

Pain Words

021. The Little Garden or, "Fruits of Repentance."

The Little Garden or, "Fruits of Repentance."

I was passing a little garden the other day; when I could not help standing to admire the beautiful order in which it was kept. Every foot of land was laid out in beds, and every bed growing something, bidding fair for fruitful crops. Peas, beans, plants, trees, nay everything looked well. I thought as I looked at this garden, what man in his senses, would expect vegetables and fruit, without the seed being first sown and the trees being first planted? There must be the seed, the plant, the tree, before there can be the fruit. Everybody knows that it is, the tree that grows the fruit, and the fruit is sure to be what the tree is. Fruit there cannot be without the tree first. It is not good fruit that makes the good tree, but the good tree that grows the good fruit.

I thought again, how many there are that are perplexed about the fruits of repentance, who might learn a lesson by this little garden? Next to it, there was a piece of land that had been dug and manured some time ago, but had had nothing sown in it. Oh, what docks and weeds! I thought that is all that mere education can do for fallen human nature. Exclude the seed, the word of the living God, and the more education, and the bigger the docks and weeds. "Do you know," said a lady to a Christian friend, who was carrying the good news of Salvation to the lost, "what sort of people those are that you are visiting? what a life of infamy that woman has led ever since she was a child! and her husband, what must he be to take up with such a woman; They must be told to repent." "I know all about it," said the dear Christian friend who was about to set Christ crucified before these two unhappy persons, who were both ill; "and if I did not know that I was as bad in my fallen nature as they, I should not go to speak to them of Christ." My friend had learnt that we are by nature all alike, lost, guilty sinners, and that it is only as we are upheld by God, that we are kept from the most fearful sins. Now what did this lady mean by "they must be told to repent?" She meant that they must be like this little garden, before ever they could be worthy of Christ, or before it was at all proper to set Christ and salvation before them. They must be told to bring forth the fruits of repentance; and then those fruits would make them good trees, or Christians. And how many would have told them to do so? They would have told them to be very sorry for their sins; to forsake them entirely; to lead a new life; to serve God and love Him, and then give them a faint hope they might be saved at last through Jesus Christ. One might just as well say to the crab-tree, Now you must cease to grow crabs, never grow another, and begin from this time to grow good apples; and if you do this, the gardener will come and make you an apple-tree. That man is a poor gardener that does not know that before anything but crabs can be got from that tree, there must be a new nature; that is, apple-nature, grafted or implanted in that tree. And that man knows very little of the utter depravity of the human heart, or of what God says in His Word, that expects anything but sin from a sinful nature. No, there must be repentance, before there can be the fruits of repentance. There must be a new nature before there can be holiness of life. An apple graft cannot bring forth crabs, and that which is born of God cannot sin. The old nature of man is sin itself, and brings forth nothing but sin; the new nature implanted by God is holy and divine.

If my friend had told these persons to bring forth holy fruits of repentance in their sinful condition, she would have denied the depravity of man; and hypocrisy would only have been the result. But to the praise of the God of all grace, she set at once the finished salvation of Christ before them; and they were both converted.

Many are perplexed as to what repentance is, and what difference there is betwixt faith and repentance. This may make it simple. Suppose the inhabitants of Scotland had a very wrong opinion of her Majesty, the Queen; they thought her austere and cruel, and consequently hated and dreaded her. Now she sends her son, the Prince of Wales, to make known her real character. He arrives in Scotland. Every act is an act of kindness: no expense is spared for the good of the people; and all he does is in the name of the Queen: and thus having given full proof first of her love to them, the Prince gives command that all Scotland shall now repent (or as the word always means in Scripture, to change their minds). Now this change of mind in Scotland would be by believing the Prince. To believe the son, would change the mind toward the Queen; there could not I be one without the other.

It is so as to repentance toward God. This whole world has been deceived by Satan about God. All have a dread of God: they think Him a hard master; and they hate Him, and in their blindness they prefer sin and Satan’s world to God. "The God this world hath blinded their eyes." But "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16-19.) "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared. Him." And was not every act of Jesus an act of love to lost sinners? Oh, look at Him. When did he spurn the sinner from his presence? Hear His sweet parable of the Father’s joy in receiving the lost one who had spent all amongst harlots. His arms were wide open; little children were welcome there. Ah! the woman who was a sinner gave Him more heart-joy at His blessed feet, than the Pharisee’s dinner on his table. (Luke 7:37-50.) Was any thing spared to show out the love of the Holy God to lost sinners? No! When the fearful hour for which Jesus came into this world arrived, when He said, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt;" and again when on the cross He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" did God spare His own dear Son? No! And unspeakably fearful as was that hour of darkness, when the Holy One of God was made an offering for sin; yet He did not save Himself; He did not come down from the cross. He who made all things, endured the utmost penalty of sin. And did not God accept that amazing sacrifice? He did, and proved His eternal satisfaction with that one sacrifice, by raising Jesus from the dead. And all this reveals the love of God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "In this was manifested the love of God towards us," &c. (1 John 4:9-10.)

Since Jesus then has proved that all men have an entirely wrong mind about God; yea, since Jesus has manifested undeniably the love of God to sinners, God now commands all men to repent, or change their minds towards Him. Hence, if there be real faith by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the Lord Jesus, there must, be an entire change of mind toward God. The one implies the other, and where there is this wondrous change of mind about God, by the Holy Ghost, not a mere change of notions, there is the utmost certainty that this will produce the fruits of repentance, sorrow for sin, forsaking sin, serving God from the heart, loving God, joy in God; yea, an entire change of life. My reader, dost thou understand? There must be fruit, there be must sorrow for sin,

there must be holiness of life. But thou must have life first, faith first, a change of mind toward God first, just as the seed must be put in the ground first. The word of God is quick and powerful. May God, without whose blessing this paper is not worth reading — oh, may He open the eyes of the blind, and through Christ Jesus give thee repentance unto life; so that by the power of the Holy Ghost thy soul may be filled with all joy and peace.

C.S.

Chapter 20

022. A Lesson from an old Schoolmaster

A Lesson from an old Schoolmaster

"Wherefore the law was our Schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The apostle was speaking of the Jews. He does not say the law is a Schoolmaster to the Gentiles; but the law was so to the Jews. In that very ancient school, there were not only the ten commandments, which brought to light the wickedness of man (Romans 3:19; Romans 5:20; Galatians 3:19), but also there were many very wonderful picture lessons, all of which pointed forwards to Christ.

One very striking lesson demands our most serious attention. There was not a man to be found in all the earth fit to come into the presence of the Holy God, without the blood of a slain victim. No, not one; not even the high priest of Israel. The people of God once a year, stood one nation out of all the nations of the earth, and out of that nation one man; yet even that one man must not come into the presence of God without blood. "The high priest alone, once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." (Hebrews 9:7.) "And the man that dare approach the mercy-seat of God, without the blood of the sin-offering; that man must die." (Leviticus 16:2.) The bullock was slain, and its blood did the high, priest carry in and sprinkle seven times before the mercy-seat. Again, I repeat this lesson of the ancient schoolmaster, that no man could be allowed to go into the presence of the Holy God, without blood. And we are not left to guess what this picture or type meant; a reality; but pointing forward, as the word says, "The Holy Ghost, this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." (Hebrews 9:8.)

We may now go a step further, it was so, and it still is so, for "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (ver. 22); and in this very chapter, the present, the only way into the presence of God, is distinctly set before us. "Christ, by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." Surely the death of this Holy One — made sin — the sin-offering is in itself an everlasting proof that there cannot be mercy and forgiveness to any sinner, but by His blood. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) There is not one thing any man can say with more certainty that he has than the certainty with which believers in Christ can say, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14.)

Assuredly all men are sinners, "For all have sinned." (Romans 3:23.) I learn then that there is not one man now in the whole of this world that can either have forgiveness of sins, or be fit for the presence of the Holy God, except by the blood of the Lord Jesus, who was the sacrifice once offered for sins. Oh, what swarms of despisers and rejecters of Christ in this day. Art thou one, my reader? Perhaps thou sayest, "I am not so great a sinner as many; I try to pay all I owe; and do no harm to any one." Hold! do no harm to any one! Hast thou believed in Jesus, to the saving of thy

soul? Dost thou say, No? Then art thou the greatest of all sinners; for to reject Christ is the greatest of all possible sins, and this thou wilt find to thy cost for ever. To disbelieve Jesus is to sin against God, who sent him to die for sinners. To sin against that precious Christ, who died for sinners. To sin against thyself; oh, sin of all sins; to plunge thyself into eternal torment. Is this doing no harm? This is that monster sin, of which the Holy Ghost convinceth;"Of sin, because they believe not on me." (John 16:9.) Ah! ponder this well. Thou hast, but a moment to live compared with eternity; and if thou shouldst continue to reject the pardon preached through the blood of Jesus, then, when thou liftest up thine eyes in torment, then wilt thou know what thou hast done in rejecting Christ. But perhaps thou sayest, "I do believe in Christ, I believe he was a good man, and if I follow, his example and be good as he was, I shall be saved." If this is thy Christ, it is a false Christ, an antichrist; of which there are scores. The true Christ is not only perfectly man, but the mighty God; as it is written, "But unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (Hebrews 1:8.) This Christ of the Scriptures "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. But now, once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Art thou following this Christ? Then the very first step is to believe in His death and resurrection; and to know, for certain, that He "was delivered for out offence, and was raised again for our justification." Yea, to know assuredly, on the testimony of God, who cannot lie, that being justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Art thou thus justified by faith in the death and resurrection of the only one true Christ, set forth in the Holy Scriptures? then follow on to know Him, and to walk worthy of Him. The God of peace be with thee. But if thou art trampling under foot the blood of Christ, if thou art still rejecting the peace preached through His precious blood; oh, do not fool thyself to perdition by calling this following the Christ of the Scriptures. Remember what the old schoolmaster teaches in his picture. No man was then fit for the presence of God, without the blood of a victim; and, God declares now, "without shedding of blood is no remission." Oh! the utter vanity and delusion of trusting in anything but the blood of Christ for salvation. No matter how religious thou mayest think thyself, if thy religion is not based on the one sacrifice of Christ, thou art utterly unfit for the presence of God. It is "by the blood of Jesus that we have boldness to enter into the holiest." (Hebrews 10:19.) It is not by doing the best we can; and surely it is not by leading a life of sin, that we may ever expect to have boldness in the presence of God. Do the Scripture say that if you follow the example of Christ then you will be saved? And if it did, do you follow that Holy One, who had not where to lay is head? He was without sin — are you without sin? Say, yes or no. If you say, "Yes, I am without sin," then you make God a liar. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10.) If you say, "No, I have sinned, but I believe God is very merciful and will pass it by." Impossible! For when God gave shadows of these things, no man could approach the mercy-seat without the blood. And now, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." God is rich in mercy, but how has that mercy been shown? Was it not in His wondrous love in giving Jesus to die for our sins? May God, by the Holy Spirit, convince thee, as thou readest this little paper, that thou hast deeply sinned, in not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving Him as thy whole salvation. My reader, if thou hast thus been convinced; if thou hast, by the Holy Ghost, seen that the blood of Jesus doth cleanse thee from all sin; if He is thy very life, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, oh! canst thou not say that no tale is so sweet to thee as the wondrous story of His redeeming love? In one word, if thou dost, in thy heart believe on Jesus the Son of God, who died for thy sins and rose

again, then know assuredly that thou art saved. Doubt it not: every doubt dishonours the risen Christ. Thy carnal reason would never have believed thus in Christ's death. The human mind hates the cross. If thou hast true faith in the true Christ, this is God's gift. (Ephesians 2:8.) And it is by the Holy Ghost; therefore thou hast the Spirit, and He is the witness and proof that thou art a child of God. See! oh, see now, that thou walkest as a child of God. But remember the walk is not to get to be one.

C.S.

023. "Conversion"

"Conversion"

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." (John 3:6.)

There are two families on earth; one family are the children of wrath, the other are for ever justified and made one with the glorified man, Christ Jesus. As he says, "Behold me and the children God hath given me." (Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 2:13.) Every child of Adam has the nature of Adam, fallen and utterly sinful; and every child of God has the nature of God, which cannot sin. "He that is born of God sinneth not." (1 John 5:18.)

Plain as the vast difference is betwixt the two, yet, I have met with many who know nothing of what it is to be born again; they are so blind as to think that that old Adam nature is not so bad, but that with education and training, it may be good and holy. Others again are so bat-blind as to suppose that a little water will regenerate a fallen, sinful child. We know it is not so, but that the child grows up a fallen, depraved sinner. But there is another class who think that conversion, or being born again, is a change of the old Adam corrupt nature (called in Scripture, "the flesh"), into a holy, pure nature. Many who are taught to pray for a new heart, mean this very thing; they pray to be converted, that is, they mean to get the old Adam nature changed into the new Christ nature. This is a very perplexing mistake, and one that gives great trouble to awakened souls. I cannot find any such view of conversion in the whole New Testament. It nowhere says, that that which is flesh (that is, our fallen Adam nature) shall be changed. We shall be perfectly freed from it at the coming of Christ: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (Php 3:21.) Until then, we who are born again, who are the children of God, who have the Spirit of adoption, who are joint-heirs with Christ — yea, the Apostle says, "Ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body." (Romans 8:15-23.) Suppose a soul really quickened by the Holy Ghost; now, such a false view of conversion might keep that soul in doubt and bondage all his life. He who believes in Jesus, will most earnestly pray and desire to be fully freed from that evil Adam nature, which is the plague of his heart; and it is most certain that when Christ comes this will be for ever the case. "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is." Faith triumphs in this blest anticipation. But now the soul really quickened by the Spirit, is told that at conversion this old vile nature is changed and made holy. Such an one is very happy for awhile but by-and-by he finds there is still the same old fallen nature with its corrupt lusts, and now owing to this wrong view of conversion, he is utterly confounded, and begins, seriously to question whether he ever was converted at all. No one can tell what misery such go through; for it is after we are born again that we know what the plague and sinfulness of sin in the flesh really is. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;" and again "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Does, not this prove that the regenerate believer has still an evil nature; the old man corrupt; and that if it were not that the blessed Holy Spirit dwells in him, he would doubtless fulfil its hateful lusts. The Lord, keep each believer watchful.

What then is regeneration? It is wholly of God — a new creation. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new, and all things of God." Mark in this matter, all things of God. Nothing of poor, corrupt, fallen man: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In, the beginning when God created this world, that was not a making it or transforming it out of old materials; so in the new creation, it is not a remodelling or purifying of the old corrupt human nature. Never in Scripture.

Christ, having finished redemption, arose from the dead, the Head of the new creation. The Spirit of God does not begin with something in the sinner, but communicates that which is entirely without the sinner; yes, the very resurrection life and nature of Christ, who is risen and at God's right hand; and thus are we "born from above." Oh, what a life! Christ must die in heaven before this risen life can be destroyed in a single believer. Because He liveth, we live also. It must be so; it is one life in Him and in us. And what a nature to have the new nature of the risen man, Christ Jesus! "As he is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17.) What a wondrous position this is, as to the old man, the old nature of Adam, reckoned dead! Before God everything of the old nature ("old things passed away"), all new in Christ; quickened with Christ; raised with Christ; seated with Christ in heavenly places. We have not to wait until death; all is now ours in Christ the risen head.

How can these things be? How is a person converted? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, &c., so is every one that is born of the Spirit." "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." This is how, and the only how — the only means whereby sinners are converted. All else is sham and delusion. It is foolishness to men, but the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Just as the serpent was set before the death-smitten Israelite, so now Christ crucified, and risen again, is set before the lost, dead, sin-smitten, sons of men; and he that believeth is passed from death unto life, is born of God, hath everlasting life. He that looks lives. My reader may ask, How may I know that I am born of God — that I am a child of God; how do you know that your body was ever born? Why, your very human existence proves that. So does the existence of the new nature prove that you are born of God. I do not look within or go to the glass, to see if my eyesight is good. I look out at an object; if I see it clearly, that proves I have good eyesight. Have you seen Jesus dying on the cross for your sins? Have you seen Him rise from the empty grave, for your justification? Is He your only trust? Do you see Him at the right hand of God having first purged your sins? Do you see Him interceding for you? Do you see Him clearly; glorious, yet precious, and fall of tender love to such poor, lost sinners as you? Ah! if this is your sight of Jesus, it is not the eyesight of the old man. The old corrupt human heart never thus sees and trusts in Jesus. The old nature look within, and wants to find something good for Christ. Faith, which is never of the will of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God, looks without to Christ, and sees Him to be everything from God to the poor sinner. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Therefore the carnal mind, the flesh, can never trust in Christ. If therefore my reader trusts in Christ alone, you do not need ask, Am I converted? It is most certain. But do you say, "I find so much evil in my old nature?" That is just what every child of God finds and mourns daily; if you were not a child of God you would not mourn over it. But what saith the Scripture? "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." (Romans 5:15.) Precious promise! Happy state! Yes, if a child of God, however tempted — yea, though you may have fallen — though you still find it a hard conflict

— yet, through the grace of God, sin shall not have the dominion. Bad as the flesh is, and it could not be worse, the believer is not a debtor to it; but more than conqueror, through Him that loved him. So be it with thee.

C.S.

Chapter 22

024. The Telescope; or, "How may I know that I have the right faith?"

The Telescope; or, "How may I know that I have the right faith?"

I received a package the other day of samples of Telescopes, and other glasses. Of course I examined them to see if they were the right things or articles. When it began to be dark, I unwrapped one of the Telescopes to try it; after arranging the slides, I placed it to my eye, when to my astonishment a star was quite visible. I took away the glass again, and I found there was no star to be seen with the natural eye; but through the glass it was seen plainly, and seemed to be near. Well, thought I, the Telescope that gives such a sight of a star where to the natural eye there is not one, must be the right sort of glass.

True faith is exactly like this Telescope. The mind of fallen man is in darkness as to the things of God; and without faith, man gropes in darkness and knows not whither he goeth. Now the moment the Holy Ghost imparteth faith to the soul, Christ is seen as the star was seen in the sky. And oh! what a sight! when Christ is seen by faith. If that is the right glass which reveals the unseen star; that only is true faith which reveals the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." The natural eye without the glass could not see the star. Man without faith cannot understand why the glory of God shines in the face of a risen man in heaven; the Lord Jesus Christ; without faith he cannot see this glorious Christ. "What is faith?" said a doctor to his patient, who was an evangelist. "Well, doctor," said he, "when I came to you I put myself entirely in your hands; that is faith. When a lost sinner trusts himself entirely in the hands of Christ; that is faith."

I Have you, my reader, seen Christ to be your Saviour; crucified for your sins; raised from the dead for your justification? Do you see Him to be all that you need, without a single make-weight? Oh! the wickedness of thinking of adding anything of our own, such vile worms as a make-weight to the worth of Christ. God sees the sacrifice of Christ the shedding of His blood, that which puts sin and sins away for ever. Are you in this light of God? And can you say, The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth me from all sin? Then most assuredly you have true faith. For the natural man without the faith of Christ will never believe this.

Another thing as to the Telescope: it did not make the star; it had nothing to do surely at all in producing the star; it only enabled me to see the star, and know that it was there. This illustrates a most important fact as to salvation. Many, when seeking salvation, though they know it cannot be had by works, yet suppose that salvation is in some way suspended, or incomplete in itself, until they have believed rightly! And thus they make faith to have something to do with producing salvation, and thus they are led to look at faith, instead of the finished work of Christ. They say, "Oh, that I was sure I had the right faith, or believed enough, then I should be saved!" This is making faith a Saviour. Faith has no more to do with producing salvation, than my glass had to do with producing the star. That star was created and shone in the heavens ages before I was born. I speak now of all those who through grace shall be saved. These were all certainly foreknown of God in eternity, before ever light twinkled from that distant star. "Who hath saved us and called us

with an holy calling not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." Surely it is plain that our faith had nothing to do with producing the grace that was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began. And when Jesus was manifested, it was not our faith that induced Him to become the substitute and surety of all who should through grace be saved.

No, not our faith; it was His love. It was God who laid on Him the iniquity of us all; and it was God who justified Him from the iniquity of us all, when He raised Him from the dead. He sat down having purged our sins from the sight of God; long, long before we were born. Our faith had nothing to do with Christ thus purging our sins, or with God justifying us in Christ. This was absolutely finished long before we had actual existence. God saw in the blood of Christ the perfect and eternal satisfaction for all our sins, and this one sacrifice put away all our sins from the sight of God. You will say then, "If Christ thus finished the work of salvation for all who through grace shall believe, what does take place when the sinner believes? Just what took place when I looked through my glass; I saw the star I had never seen before, and I knew it to be there. Just so when the Holy Ghost reveals the salvation already finished by Christ. I know now salvation my salvation is there, though I never knew it before. Sin was purged from before God, when Christ died and arose from the dead; this saved me; it is now purged from my conscience by faith in that blood, when God calls me. God who justified me then in my representative, Christ, now gives me, by faith, the knowledge of justification in my own soul. Faith does not produce this complete salvation, but sees it to be in Christ, and knows it is mine on the testimony of God. "Be it known unto you, that through this man (Christ crucified and risen) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38.) Do you believe what the Word of God says here? I do not ask what sort of faith have you; there is only one true faith, all else is unbelief; but I ask, Do you know in power this forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus? Do you thus see Jesus? If you do, you have true faith as certainly as I had a good glass, when I saw the star. Oh! look nowhere but to Jesus. Is he seen? Do you believe the forgiveness through Him, not through the merit of your faith but through, Jesus? If you thus see Him, thus believe in Him then you are justified. You say from your heart you believe in Jesus, then God says, you are justified. What do you make of that? Will not that give you peace? Cannot you now say, looking steadily through the glass of faith at Jesus, "Who was delivered for our offences" (hold steady and look at the cross), "and was raised again for our justification."

Stretch out your slides, and gaze at His glory. Oh! let faith take its utmost survey of the glory of the risen man, and as you look at Him, remember all you see is yours, as certainly as you see Him by faith; all, all is yours. The peace of Jesus is yours; yours for ever. Can there be condemnation laid on Him now? Never. And you are justified with Him; sanctified with Him; what shall I say? for ever blest with Him. Now do not let the glass shake with doubts and fears. Look again on His cross and resurrection. Cannot you now say, with holy confidence, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." If you do not thus see Jesus, and know that you are justified, and have peace with God then I beg, do not pretend to have the true faith. There are many in this day who do not know Jesus at all; who do not know that they are justified; who do not know anything, in fact, and yet say they have the only true faith.

If my reader is one of these, wilt thou tell me how it is, that all who did believe in the days of the Apostles knew they were justified, and had peace with God; whilst thou sayest that thou art a believer, and yet thou neither knowest that thou art justified, or that thou hast peace with God? May God reveal His Son to thee, so that being justified, and having peace with God, thy whole being, body, soul, and spirit, may be cheerfully devoted to His service of love.

C.S.

025. Redemption

Redemption

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." — Exodus 12:13.

I knew a person who had, for some years, been deeply anxious about her soul. She longed to know, for certain, that she had redemption through the blood of Christ; even the forgiveness of her sins. She felt that if she died without redemption, she was lost for ever. She went from place to place, to hear the preaching of the word. Her, anxiety became very great; yet nothing that she heard gave her peace. She was constantly thinking that she had something to do, before she could have redemption. She tried to lay hold of the promises; but they gave her no relief. She tried to serve God and keep His commandments; she found she failed at every step. She tried forms and ceremonies; but all in vain. She then thought she must have stronger faith, and tried to understand, more clearly, the value of the blood of Jesus; still all was darkness. God would not even have her faith, as the price of her redemption. Her heart sank in despair; she could do no more. It was when she was in that state of self-despair, she heard those words, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The Holy Ghost spake, in her soul, in that moment, and said to her, "It was God who spake these words." In a moment she felt the vast difference betwixt herself seeing the blood of Jesus, and God seeing it. She thought, Yes, God sees such value in the blood of Jesus, that He will pass over me; and the destroyer shall not touch me. From that moment, she believed what God hath said about the blood of Jesus. From that moment, she had peace through the blood of Jesus. Now she knows, with certainty, that she has redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of her sins.

Surely, this one case, out of many thousands that might be told, shows the importance of the subject before us.

Before speaking of these wonderful words, "When I see the blood," &c., let me remind you of the condition of this people, Israel, as described in the previous chapters. They were slaves under Pharaoh, in bitter bondage. "They sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God." (Exodus 2:2-3.) God heard and pitied them; He said, "for I know their sorrows." Yes, such also is the plain fact, man has sold himself, a bond-slave, to Satan. There is no denying it. Oh! what a cry of misery ascends from this world of sin. How bitter is the slavery of sin, if there were, no lake of fire hereafter; even now, what bitterness and anguish has sin brought. Every heart knows its own bitterness. God heard their sighs; and has he not heard yours?

God is love! He heard their sighs, He knew their sorrows, and He came to save. The people heard that God had looked upon their affliction (Exodus 4:31), and they desired to go forth and worship him. Just like the person above, they anxiously desired to go forth and serve God; but, as it was with her, this only made their burthens the heavier. Their affliction and sorrow were now very

great. How often is this the case, when the soul is awakened to thirst after God. Then Satan brings all, his force to crush the sin-burthened soul. The next thing, we find the promises of God, in chap. 4, entirely fail to give the least comfort. "They hearkened not for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." In the following chapters, 5-12, we see, by the conduct of Pharaoh, how loth Satan is to give up his victims.

How many who read these lines will say, "How like me all this is! The more I have desired to serve God, the heavier has been my burthen. I have tried to get comfort from the promises; but all in vain. Still anguish of spirit; still the burthen of sin; still uncertain as to my interest in Christ." Poor soul! if this is your condition, let us now look at this redemption chapter. God grant that this may be the beginning of months to you. Do you see, the Lamb was slain and the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts? And do not you see, that every soul, young or old, that took refuge in the blood-sprinkled house, had an interest in that blood. God said, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." He did not say, When I see how good ye are; or, When I see that you deserve my favour; or, When you have repented enough or believed enough. No; the blood is first and uppermost in God’s thoughts. It was His token of love to them, just as and where they were. He did not even say, When ye see the blood; but, "When I see the blood." Now, I repeat, did any person within that blood-sprinkled house need to ask, How may I know that I have an interest in the blood? It was most certain he had, on the authority of the word of God. And every soul that simply trusted in what God. Said about that blood was saved that night.

Now, we all know that redemption from Egypt was a type of redemption through "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." And, in the very same way, is not the blood of Christ God’s token of love to lost, burthened sinners? Jesus did not die that God might love us; but because He loved us. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us." "God did so love the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9-10.)

Mark, it is not what you see, but what God sees, in the blood of Christ. He knows all your sins; and yet He sees the blood of Christ. He sees that the sufferings and atoning death of His beloved Son justify Him, in passing over all your sins, however deep their crimson dye. He says so, plainly; and is righteous in "justifying freely every sinner who believes in Him, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:1-31.) Do you say, How am I to know that I have an interest in that atoning blood? Why, do not you see, every Israelite who believed God had an interest in the sprinkled blood. And if you search the New Testament through, you will find that every sinner who trusted God about that precious blood shed on the cross, knew, with the utmost certainty, that he had redemption through the blood of Christ. Mark, you have not to trust in a promise. Redemption is no longer a promise, but an accomplished fact — a finished work. If you were dying with thirst, and a person promised to bring you water, you might trust his promise; but when he has brought the water to you, you have not then to trust in his promise, but to drink the water. God has fulfilled His promise: He has sent His Son. The blood has flowed through His pierced wounds. It is all finished. Peace through that blood is come to you. May God open your heart to receive that peace on the testimony of God, who raised up Jesus from the dead. Oh! how strange that men should forget this, and go back to the promises, as though God had still to do something to save sinners. It is done. The blood has been freely shed. God sees that blood. I only ask, Have you been

brought to take your last refuge in that blood? Can you say that the blood of Jesus is your only trust? Then it is most certain that you have an everlasting interest in that atoning blood. You have redemption through that blood, according to the infinite value that God sees in the death of Christ. Up, then, arise, and away from Egypt! With girded loins, and staff in hand, as the redeemed of the Lord, away, away! Adieu, adieu, to Satan's bonds and Satan's world! You are no longer your own, but bought with a price — and such a price. Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God — and to such a God.

C.S.

026. "Life"

"Life"

"We do not deny," say the doubters of the Gospel, "that so long as a believer has Christ, he has life, or eternal life; but if he sin, he no longer has Christ; and, therefore, no longer has eternal life." This is, perhaps, the most seducing doctrine that Satan can bring against the real child of God. By this wile of the enemy, numbers of God's dear children are hindered from all enjoyment of peace with God.

Let not my reader, however, suppose that a mere profession, covering over a wilful course of sin and wickedness, is what is defended in this paper. No; there are thousands of unconverted professors hastening thus to destruction, to whom that passage applies, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:8.) Yes, be not deceived; if the Holy Ghost has not brought you, as a lost sinner, to receive Jesus as your Saviour — your Saviour from the guilt and condemnation of sin, by His death on the cross, and your living Saviour to deliver you from the present power of sin — no matter what profession you make, no matter what you have; if you have not Christ, you have not life. "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (1 John 5:12.) Indeed, this first Epistle of John was written to meet these two very deadly errors, so prevalent in our day; on the one hand, that it is enough to take the name of Christ, and attach it to an unconverted, unholy life; and, on the other hand, if a true child of God should be overcome and sin, he no longer has Christ, and, therefore, no longer has eternal life. Now, the true child of God, one of whom this verse speaks — "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake" (1 John 2:12), yes, one who is born of God, has the very nature of Christ, and this new, divine nature cannot sin; as it is written, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Yes, though every child of God has this new, divine nature, in which he stands before God, and which shall endure, in unspotted holiness, for ever and ever; which cannot be killed, nay, which cannot be touched, because "as he is, so are we, in this world." Yea, though no language can express the perfect, blameless standing of every new-creation believer in Christ, yet every child of God must, at once, admit, that we have, whilst here below, still to wage fierce battle with our old nature, corrupt with all its lusts: nay, further, that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Chap. 1:8.) Yes, the beloved disciple, John, puts himself with us, in that little word, "we." If you, my reader, are a child of God, can you not say, that this very sin itself, in your old nature, is the greatest trouble you have? "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Can you say, you have never sinned since your conversion? Impossible; nay, sin, before your conversion, appears nothing compared with sin against one who has so loved you. And now, says the wily enemy (spoken of 2 Corinthians 11:14) to the true little children of God, "If any man sin, he no longer has Christ; and, therefore, no longer has eternal life." Dear fellow-tempted believer, if this were true, what would become of thee and me? If we had no Christ, when we need Him most, oh, where would be the use of His living priesthood on high? But, blessed be the God of all grace, we can meet the adversary with, "it is written." "My little

children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is a propitiation for our sins," &c. I do not see how it could be plainer. Satan, through men, says to the children of God, If any man sin, he no longer has Christ. The word of God says, carefully limiting this to the children of God, that though this is written that we may not sin — and surely it is the inmost desire of every true child of God not to sin — yet, if any man sin, showing that every child of God is liable to fall, in the hour of temptation, that if he should sin we have then Christ, in a very special way. And now mark, it does not say, if he repent, or if he weep bitterly — no, it is, if he sin. I say, above all things, is not this just where the weak, failing believer needs Christ — if he sin. When he sees, in that look of unchanged love, such as Jesus gave to Peter, that he still, though so utterly unworthy, has Christ, and, therefore, still has eternal life, he will repent, and he will be sorry. But lest this should be put as a merit, it is plain out, "if any man sin." Now, at such a sad moment, what is Christ to him? An advocate. And what is an advocate? It is one who stands up, in open court, to plead and maintain the cause of other. And is it true, that, even when the true Christian sins, that he not only still has Christ, but that Christ stand up to plead and maintain his cause? Yes, it is written so. "Oh!" says the believer, "on whatever ground can Christ maintain my cause, in the high court of heaven? Whatever can He plead, when I sin?" He pleads His own prevailing blood. He is the righteous One. And He is the propitiation for our sins. And, mark, whom he pleads with: it does not say, with His Father; no with the Father. Even when we sin, still he owns us brethren. It is my Father, and your Father, the Father. Oh, what a secure resting-place for the weary heart is this endearing name, the Father! He does chasten us, as sons, but is ever the Father. How perfect this living work of Christ! Oh, blessed, loving, watchful shepherd! oh, thou all-prevailing priest and advocate! my only security is thy faithfulness to me, not my faithfulness to thee.

Fellow-believers, let us walk in the light, as He is in the light. With such an advocate, let us fully confess our sins "for he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Everlasting is the efficacy of that precious sacrifice for our sins. Everlasting is the life we have in Him. Everlasting is His love to us. He cannot break his promise; "and this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life." God will not alter His own record, "and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

It is not because we do this or that, but "because he liveth, we shall live also."

Before one of Christ's sheep can perish, one must be found more mighty than God. "For," says Jesus, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:28.) Oh! my fellow-Christian, reject not these precious words of life. Thou surely needest them, or they would not be given thee. Say not, if this be true, then, I may sin as I like. Nay, no true believer can say so. He cannot like sin. Sin cannot be the believer's object. It was so with Judas; he sought opportunity to betray Christ. Not so with Peter, yet he fell. Oh, beware! Watch and pray, lest thou enter into temptation. Still, child of God, for thy comfort, remember — "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not; and, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."

C.S.

027. "The Justifier"

"The Justifier" A dear little boy, who loves the Lord Jesus, wrote me a letter some time since, asking me to write a tract, to show what it is that children should believe, so that they might be quite sure of going to heaven. There are many besides children who want a plain answer to this very simple but deeply-important question. Many even who have been born of the Spirit have not this blessed assurance. The cause of this, no doubt, is, in great measure, because they cling to opinions which are not scriptural. How all-important, then, it is to search the Scriptures, and receive nothing but what is in strict accordance with God's revealed word. If I am resting my souls salvation, in the least, on what is false, the Holy Ghost cannot bear witness to what is untrue; and therefore I cannot enjoy His witness in the full assurance of faith. That plain answer to the stricken jailor is often quoted: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But it is also added, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Now, the question is, What is the word of the Lord about Jesus, on whom they must believe? Or what is it that must be believed, so that you may be quite sure of going to heaven? No doubt, the word of the Lord which Paul preached was the same as the word of the Lord which he has written, and which we find especially in the Epistle to the Romans — for this is the epistle of the gospel of the grace of God to guilty sinners. Try every thought, then, that you hold by what is written in this word of the Lord. The great subject in this epistle is the righteousness of God in justifying the ungodly. The first to the third chapter is occupied in proving all men alike utterly lost, guilty sinners. "For there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Chap. 3:23.) The twentieth verse proves the utter impossibility of anyone being justified by works. So that no little or great children can be sure of heaven by good works. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So that I hope the reader will remember this once for all, that he cannot he saved by keeping the commandments. The more he tries, the wore he will find he is a sinner, and breaks them.

Let me ask you now to notice, when man is thus proved guilty, and that he cannot justify himself by keeping the law, then the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner is revealed. Now, I am a sinner; and if I know and believe the righteousness of God in justifying me, I way be quite sure of going to heaven. Do note in these passages, it is not the righteousness of Christ in His holy life on earth — precious as that is; it is something far deeper. The spotlessness of Christ in His life could not help to justify the sinner in the least. Let me give an illustration. A criminal is under sentence of death. He stands before the judge. The judge longs to acquit the prisoner; for, though a vile criminal, the judge loves him. Now, how can the judge acquit the prisoner, and still maintain the dignity of his own office, and of the just laws which demand his life? That is just the question. A man steps forward, and says, "I am perfectly innocent. I never committed a crime against the laws of my country. And now my lord (addressing the judge), I wish you to impute, or reckon, my righteousness to the poor prisoner." The judge replies, "Your righteousness only makes this man's sins the blacker. The law demands his life." Another man steps forward. "I am a criminal also, like the prisoner at the bar; and I offer to give my life for his. Will not that justify you and uphold the law,

in forgiving the prisoner at the bar and saving his life." "Officer," says the judge, "take that man into custody; he is also guilty; the law demands his life. How, then, can he be the substitute of another?" A servant enters, and presents a note to the judge. The judge is greatly moved; he knows the hand: it is from the prince of the whole realm. He opens the note. "Gentlemen of the jury," says he, rising from his seat, "this is the most wonderful message I have ever received." He reads: "My lord, knowing your great love for the prisoner, and my love to him being the same; as also I know your righteousness in upholding the laws of this realm; my life is without spot, that life I freely give in redemption for the life of the prisoner. Let me be executed: let him be spared." The judge sits down. The foreman rises and says, "I hasten to express the united verdict of this jury, that in such a ransom the prisoner can not only be acquitted, but my lord the judge is perfectly justified, and the integrity of the law maintained to the utmost."

I have, then, to believe that God loved me when a guilty, lost, condemned sinner. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." I have to believe that God so loved me, as to take my part, though a sinner — that God is for me — that it is God who justifies me. I have to believe in the righteousness of God in justifying me.

Oh! let me ask you, reader, has the Holy Ghost given you this precious faith in the righteousness of God in justifying you? Have you thus seen God in the gospel, meeting you in perfect love, through the propitiatory blood of Jesus? Satan and conscience may accuse of ten thousand sins. In this, Romans 3:21-26, it is as though God said to you, "I know you are a sinner; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But, pointing to the blood of Jesus, God says, "Now let Satan set forth all your sins; I also set forth the propitiatory death of Jesus to declare my righteousness in forgiving your sins, I justify you freely by my grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. I have found a ransom. My righteousness is revealed to the utmost in His death. The law demanded thy life. And what a life has been given for thee, believer! Not the life of one like thyself, a sinner. No; if Jesus could have been such, He would have had to die for himself. No; I have given my Son, without spot or stain, equal with myself. I tell thee, poor sinner, if thou believest on me, the utmost penalty of thy sins was borne by the Holy One, the Prince of Life. Peace be to thee through His blood. When He was put to death for thy sins, did I leave Him in the grave? No; I raised Him from the dead for thy justification. (Romans 4:25.) I justify thee. My love to thee is infinite and everlasting. Nothing shall ever separate thee from my love."

You then, reader, do you in the secret of your own heart believe the love and the righteousness of God, in thus saving by the death of His Son Jesus Christ? — all this "to declare his righteousness: that He might be just (or righteous), and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." What, then, can possibly hinder your going to heaven? God, who has forgiven you your sins, and justified you freely, is perfectly righteous in doing so, and He is for you. I say, in conclusion, if you believe God, you may be quite sure of going to heaven. But, "he that believeth not is condemned already." Fearful is the doom that awaits every unbeliever. If you are, and remain, a rejecter of Christ, the day is coming when God will be for ever against you. You have rejected Him in the day of mercy, and He will reject you in the day of judgment.

Believers, "we love Him, because He first loved us." Is He not worthy of the surrender of our whole being — body, soul, and spirit? May our hearts be filled with praise, and our lives be devoted to His happy service!

C.S.

028. Worship; or "One in Ten"

Worship; or "One in Ten"

Luke 17:12-19. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

It must have been a grievous sight — ten men met the Lord Jesus; and these men were "lepers, which stood afar off." Suffering from that loathsome, incurable disease, they might wander from place to place, seeking relief, but none could give it; nay, none dare touch them or be near them. Such is the awful picture of man’s condition as a sinner. His very nature itself corruption and sin. Afar from God — utterly unclean and incurable. He may wander from place to place, but none can give him relief. No remedy can he find for loathsome sin. There was this difference, however: the poor lepers knew their condition. And when Jesus met them, they cried to Him for help. How many thousands of leprous sinners know not their condition. Fearful to think, yet such is the case! In the sight of a holy God their sin is far more loathsome than leprosy is in the sight of man. If my reader has not been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, then certainly this is his awful condition, though he may not know it. But when Jesus meets a sinner, then, like the poor lepers, the sinner both knows his condition, at least in measure, and knows that He alone can save.

I fear great numbers who profess to be Christians have never really known their condition. How can they? They are either quietly careless about it, or they are still going about from place to place, trying ordinances, commandment-keeping, or one remedy or another, to heal the poor, old, leprous self, which can never thus be healed. But when Jesus meets the poor sinner, then He comes to a dead stand, like the poor woman who had spent all that she had upon physicians, and yet was no better. There is now nothing but Jesus. The poor lepers cried in the bitterness of their hearts to Jesus. I wonder if you have ever thus cried?

What a strange reply did Jesus give them. "Go show yourselves unto the priests." Now it was not the least use going unto the priest, unless they were healed. The leper was to go unto the priest, in the days of his cleansing; and the priest would look to see if he were healed. (Leviticus 14:1-3.) And Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests; and yet there was not the least sign in themselves that they were healed. They had only the bare word of Jesus to rest upon. And did they stay until they felt they were healed, or did they look at themselves until they saw some amendment? Oh, no! They might have stayed for ever, mourning and sighing, and saying, I cannot feel I am cleansed; I cannot see any amendment in myself. No, they believed the bare word of God the Son; — they went. "And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed."It is so

with the sinner. Oh, those wretched doctors that set you looking into yourselves for signs of amendment! You have not to wait until you feel you are cleansed. The shiner is saved by faith, not by feeling. God declares that the blood of his Son cleanseth from all sin. And the moment the lost, leprous sinner believes the bare word of God,that moment he is cleansed. Blessed Jesus! He is the only anointed one, to heal the sin-burthened, broken hearts.

One of the ten, "when he saw that he was healed turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan." But why did he not go to the priest and fulfil the law? Why was not one bird killed over running water, another bird dipped in its blood, and let fly upon the open field — shadows of death and resurrection? Why did he not need the washings for his cleansing, and the blood of the sin-offering, as commanded in Leviticus 14:1-57? He came to Jesus, the substance, of which those offerings were but mere shadows. He goes not back to the shadows, but comes to Jesus, the substance, and owns Him God — falls at His feet a cleansed worshipper, giving glory to God with a loud voice.

Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." This poor Samaritan stranger had not the Jewish religious tendencies of the other nine to draw him to the law and its shadows. The religion of the nine kept them from taking that happy place at the feet of Jesus as cleansed worshippers, giving glory to God. And it is so at this very day. Is there even one in ten, of those who are cleansed, who are Christians, who heartily give glory to God, and know their happy place as purged worshippers? No, their minds are full of dismal doubts, whether it is so or not. Oh, this sin of unbelief, how easily it besets! and especially how it besets the nine, who have their self-righteousness to contend with. I believe we are little aware how the pure gospel of God’s pure grace has been corrupted by Jewish leaven.

How many washings and offering were required under the law. But one word from Jesus, and the leper is cleansed. The many sacrifices of bulls and goats could never take away sins — could never bring the sinner to God. But "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." Has He failed? Oh no. Every sinner that believes on Him is brought — not half way — no! but really into the happy presence of God, a cleansed worshipper. Perish the thought that would undervalue the death of Christ. It cannot possibly be true that the believer is half saved, or half cleansed, or brought half way to God, or made half fit to be a worshipper. Fellow-believers, "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." It is done — yes, and still more wondrous, "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Yes, I repeat. Jesus died to do all this, and He has done it. If God has given my reader faith, in his own bare word, like the one in ten, then pause and survey what Jesus has done for you. He has sanctified you by his death, and brought you, perfected for ever into the very holiest, to God. That is your place, without sin through the blood of Jesus. I say you have not to hope to get there; you are there; it is your home. Jesus expects you to open your mouth and give glory to God, with a loud voice. His blood cleanseth you from all sin. It is written of Him, "who being the brightness of Gods glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Oh, do you know that Jesus sits there, the living proof that your sins are all purged away? Was it not amazing love for such a one to be made a sin offering for you, that you might be brought to God, happy with him, a purged worshipper? Your sins would shut you out of

His presence for ever. His blood brings you into His presence for ever.

Now look once more at the leper cleansed. He gave Jesus thanks. He did not hope he was cleansed. He gave thanks because he was cleansed; and this drew out unfeigned worship. Are you a believer, and would you dishonour Christ with a cold hope that you are cleansed? or will you honour Christ, worship Him, and give Him thanks, because you are cleansed by His blood? It is every believer's privilege, with holy boldness, by the blood of Jesus, to worship in the holiest. (Hebrews 10:1-39.) Where are the nine? Are you one of them? Have you believed in Jesus, and are you now going to ordinances to be made perfect? Surely not. Would you add anything to the blood of the Lamb? Oh, return to Jesus — fall down — worship Him! — give Him thanks! — give the full glory to God with a loud voice. Do not be ashamed of Him. Do not doubt Him. Trust in Jesus with your whole heart. Trust in His blood. Trust in Him alive from the dead, and trust in nothing but Christ. From this moment may you walk in the blessed, present, certain assurance that you are a cleansed worshipper by the blood of the Lamb.

C.S.

Chapter 27

029. The Burial of the Ethiopian

The Burial of the Ethiopian

Whilst there is life, however ill the patient may be, there is hope; and the anxious friends will naturally get the best medical aid they can; but when the person is dead, then the burial must take place, a town full of doctors can do no good then. This is the light in which Scripture now views man's spiritual condition. Dead in trespasses and sins. An Ethiopian, of great worldly authority, was driving through the desert; he had been to worship in the city of God. If anything could have been done, in any city, to improve his spiritual condition, that was the place. It was full of moral doctors, but he was returning as he went. As yet he knew not his dead condition. Reading the Word of God, where the prophet Isaiah describes the adorable Substitute, he read these words, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not his mouth. In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation; for his life is taken from the earth." At this moment the Spirit of God sent his servant Philip, to give joy to his anxious and troubled soul.

Philip opened his mouth, and from Isaiah 53:1-12, preached unto him, Jesus. Now, men of God in those days, were wont to show plainly, that if Christ died for all, then all were dead. The Ethiopian might well be no better for going to Jerusalem, how could he? What could the doctors do for a dead man? or what even could the law do for a dead man? Just as much as physic, or doctors, can do for a corpse. The death of Christ had shown that man's case was beyond the reach of anything, but boundless grace. And what had God done in boundless grace for dead, lost man? He had given his Son to die for him, — to take his place in death, — that He might be the first-born from the dead. That He might rise from the dead, and be the beginning of a new creation; in which death, and sin, should be no more.

Yes, men of God in those days did not preach the death of Christ for the improvement of man, but as the death of man before God; and the resurrection of Christ as the life, and the only life of every believer in Christ. Now it always followed in those days; the moment a person believed, he was dead, and that Christ had died for him; he had his burial there and then. Indeed, the Lord Jesus expressly taught his disciples to bury every body that believed. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 believed, and immediately there were 3,000 buried that very day.

It was just so with this Ethiopian: the moment he believed, he pulled up at once, and said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be buried, or baptized?" How simple this is. He bad learnt he was a dead sinner, and what should hinder his burial? The way it was done was this, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." That is, he buried him in water, as a dead sinner, a figure of the death and burial of Christ the adorable Substitute. And then he was raised out of the water, and went on his way rejoicing. He did not surely go down into the water to wash the black man white; no, it was to bury him. The water of baptism surely is not the infusion of some virtue or grace into the dead sinner. And don't for a moment suppose it can wash him from his sins and blackness; no, it is simply the figure or expression of the death, burial,

and resurrection of Christ; and shows most strikingly how God looks upon every believer as dead, buried, and risen with Christ. This is fully shown in Romans 6:1-23, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection," &c. Is it not a great blessing, that this all-important foundation-truth, of death and resurrection, should be set forth so plainly by baptism? No wonder that Satan should use every effort to pervert the use of this striking figure. Just mark what peace it gives to the soul when once understood. Suppose a person struggling with anxious perplexity, deceived with the notion that to be a Christian, means to have the old nature made better; oh, what years of wearisome disappointment! What doubts and darkness, ending in self-righteousness, infidelity, or despair. What a deliverance for such a one to see the truth as it is in Christ; and to submit gladly at once to the burial of the old man. That is, to the fact that he has been fully judged, condemned, and put to death in the person of Jesus on the cross. Oh, wonder of all wonders, "dead with Christ;" "buried with Him;" "risen with Him."

Oh, my reader, do you believe this in your heart? Is Jesus thus revealed to your soul, as thus bearing your sin and curse on the tree? Who then shall now condemn you? you believe that your sins have once been laid to the charge of Christ, and borne to the uttermost in the bitterness of death. Nay, more, that precious body, which could only die for others sins, has been laid in the grave, buried.

Yea, God has raised Him from the dead, and received Him to glory. The glory of God shining in the face of this exalted Jesus, shows plainly that your condemnation, once laid on Him is gone, gone for ever. Precious Jesus; divine, holy Substitute; the wrath of God will never more be laid on Thee; Thou canst not be condemned again. And yet thou wouldst have to be, before the least of thy chosen, believing ones could be. Thou art their Surety. What a place hast Thou taken; oh, my precious once bleeding Substitute, now living Surety, all glory and praise be unto Thee! Believing this, we gladly give our whole old selves, to be buried in water — the likeness of his death. What a deliverance, no more vain struggling to wash the black man. I now look at my old self, as a black dead mass of moral putrefaction, utterly incapable of improvement or amendment, only fit to he buried. And thus ends the standing of man in the flesh before God. Yes, as one may say, here ends old self as a child of Adam. The first man sinned, and by sin came death, and death is passed upon all men, for all have sinned. The Lord from heaven descends — takes a human form, and receives the sentence of death, — and bears the curse due to sins in his own body on the tree. This, as to man’s standing before God, is the end and crucifixion of the whole world before God. The believer is passed from this old world of sin, darkness, and death, to the new creation of righteousness, light, and everlasting life. The death of Christ is the end of the old, and his resurrection the beginning of the new world, of which we speak.

Thus, in the burial of baptism, the believer is buried, expressive of the death and burial of Christ, the judgment and end of his old self, and he is raised out of the water, a figure of his blessed resurrection, in Jesus, the beginning of the new creation. Oh, my reader, has all things thus passed away with, you? Have all things, and all things of God, thus become new with you? You need not be left in any — no, not the least uncertainty as to this. The precious words of Jesus left on record are these, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him

that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life," (John 5:24.) As certain as these are the words of Jesus; then if you do hear them, if you do believe on God that sent Him, then is it not quite as certain that even you have everlasting life, — shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life? God be with you now, and give you power to walk as one alive from the dead.

C.S.

030. "The Risen Christ"

"The Risen Christ"

I was speaking in Woolwich the other day, and in trying to set forth the risen Christ, the following illustration came to my mind: — Suppose God had made known, that nothing could possibly save England from invasion, and conquest, but the resurrection from the dead of her greatest general, the Duke of Wellington. The enemy is on our shores; the moment of peril has arrived. The good news flashes along the wires; what is it? Wellington has risen! England is saved. Yes, the good news would not be merely the history of his past life, great as was his victories; but the fact of God having fulfilled his promise in raising him from the dead. "Wellington's risen," would be the joyful sound. What his resurrection would be to England, the resurrection of our blessed Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, is, to every one who believes the good news of God. The apostle Paul had seen the risen Christ in heavenly vision, above the brightness of the sun. This heavenly vision had to do with every thought, and step, of his after life. In that risen Christ a new creation was opened up to him. Every thought in his heart was changed. He had been struggling hard to establish his own righteousness and blameless life. All this he now tramples under foot, as dang and dross. Old things passed away; all things became new. The risen Christ is everything to him. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain," and "ye are yet in your sins." Some, in this day, can preach what they call Gospel, without the risen Christ at all. They will point to the life of Jesus on earth in the flesh; and tell men the way to heaven is to imitate the example of Christ, as He lived on earth. Such a Gospel was not worth a straw to the apostle. He says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." And again he says: — "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth, know we him no more." In all the preaching of the apostles, the promises of God are shown to be fulfilled in this one thing; — the raising of Jesus from the dead. They had been slow to understand the Scriptures, that Jesus must suffer and rise from the dead. The Jews expected the Messiah to improve their condition as a nation. They knew no need of death, and resurrection. They did not understand the solemnities of Calvary; when Jesus died the appointed, sin-bearing, sacrifice, the holy One, the righteous One, was laid among the dead. But they knew not the everlasting destinies that were sealed in that sepulchre.

Let us stand by the tomb of Jesus, in solemn meditation. What a mystery of love. What a place for the Son of God to take. The atoning Lamb, slain for us, dead and buried. All this foreordained of God. His purpose was not the improvement of the old creation, but the beginning of a new creation. Jesus must be the first to rise from the dead. The great stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. Jesus arose from the dead. The linen cloths that bound his body are calmly laid aside. The napkin that was about his head was folded, and laid in a place by itself. God has triumphed gloriously; Jesus has passed through death, and now He is "The beginning, the first-born from the dead." (Colossians 1:18.) "All this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The rejected stone becomes the beginning of a new creation. Oh, behold this living stone, the risen Christ. Adam was the beginning of the old world, and he began it in sin and death. But

what a creation must that be, which has the risen Christ for its beginning and foundation. Oh, blessed first-born from the dead, all thy brethren are one with Thee in resurrection. We do not yet see this new creation, but we see Jesus, crowned with glory; and we know that what He is before God, that God sees us to be, "for as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17.) Surely what a translation it is, when a sinner is brought to God. From darkness to light. From death to life. From sin to holiness divine.

Through this risen Christ, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38.)

These are the words of God, who cannot lie. So that he who believes God, is as certainly forgiven all sins, as that Jesus has died and is risen, My follow-believer, how plain this is. If Jesus is risen, then you aye forgiven. And not only forgiven, but justified through Him, from all things. This is what gladdens my heart; — dead with Christ, risen with Christ, justified with Christ. When He arose from the dead He was justified of God from all things; my every sin was laid to his charge, and from my every sin, He was justified when He arose from the dead. He is the first risen I man, behold Him! Is He not sinlessly perfect, absolutely righteous, glorious in holiness. Brightness of the Father’s glory, there can be no spot on Thee! Fellow believer, this risen Christ is thy righteousness. Thou art certainly justified from all things, through and in Him. If thou thus lookest at this risen Christ, and believest this one blessed fact, that thou art risen with him, then mayest thou be well, assured that there can be no condemnation to thee in Christ. Who can condemn the holy, risen Jesus? then who can condemn those who are risen with Him? Think what it is to be one with Him, in resurrection, life, standing, and spotless, cloudless righteousness. Boundless grace to take our place, and be made sin for us in the old creation; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, the beginning of the new creation. The justification of the believer is thus the risen state of Christ. Not the justification of himself — his old, sinful self. No, all that he was and is, has been, not justified, but condemned, and put to death, and buried in Christ. So that God is now perfectly righteous in giving the believer this justified state in the risen Jesus, who first bore our sins in his own body on the tree. How complete, then, the justification of the believer in the risen Christ. We shall be amazed when all this is manifested in glory, that we did not more fully believe it, and declare it to the whole world.

Now, if the risen Christ is thus the believer’s justified state, mark, it never alters, — never varies. It must be what He is, unchanging, perfect, and everlasting. You must see plainly the risen Christ is ever spotlessly perfect before God; yea, more, He is incapable of failure; therefore the believer’s justification in Him — yea, his perfection in Him, must be everlasting. It cannot, it need not be repeated. Yea, even further, so real is the oneness of the believer with the risen Christ, so really is he risen with Christ, that the new nature is incapable of failure. He that is born of God cannot sin. His standing before God is in resurrection, in that new creation of which the risen Christ is the beginning, and into which not a breath of pollution, can ever come. In one word, the standing and justification of the believer is identical with the standing and justification of the risen Christ, and, therefore, perfect and everlasting. The first words of the risen Jesus were, "Peace be unto you," and what a peace this gives the poor heart, — Oh, my reader, is it yours? The peace of the risen Christ. Perhaps you say, — But my walk and my works are not perfect as you describe. That is quite true; and if your standing and justification were according to your works, it would be as

imperfect as them. No, the believer is not justified by works, but justified freely through divine grace, and called to walk according to his justification. And as many as walk according to the rule of the new creation, as risen with Christ, peace be on them. Whilst our standing before God is perfect in the risen Christ, the enjoyment of God's peace reigning in our hearts, depends much on our walking in the spirit, as dead and, risen with Christ.

C.S.

Chapter 29

031. "The Live Bird let Loose"

"The Live Bird let Loose"

Leviticus 14:7.

"And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field."

How very good God has been in giving us such plain pictures in his Word; setting forth man's moral condition, and his own great deliverance, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And certainly there are few more striking than the picture or type of the two birds. To a person deeply anxious to know, with certainty, that he is cleansed from sin, this picture is most valuable. I have seen such, brought by the blessed truth set forth in this type, into the most abiding confidence of faith. And God gives me this confidence, that many more will be brought, by this little paper, into his own perfect peace.

Let us now look at the picture. This was the law appointed of God, in Israel: — "The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry 'unclean, unclean,' all the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall his habitation be."

What a terrible picture of sin, leprosy is — what a living death of wretchedness and desolation. The disease itself most loathsome. The person covered with sores so as to be unfit for human eye. Wandering alone, or with others in like wretchedness. Those most dear to him not allowed to come near. His food left him by a brook, or under a tree; or living as best he could from the wild fruits of the desert. At times there must have been heart-aching longings for home. One thing was very remarkable, if the leprosy had covered him all over, from head to foot, all turned white, then he was clean. The priest is appointed of God to express God's mind, or judgment, in the case. The manner of his cleansing was this, — "Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed, two birds (the margin reads sparrows) alive and clean, and cedar wood and scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water; as for the living bird, he shall take it and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over running water, And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy, seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open fields." (Leviticus 14:4; Leviticus 14:7.)

Then the priest comes down to this poor, anxious leper, by the brook in the valley. Solemn moment for the poor leper; will he be rejected and left in his wretchedness; or cleansed and restored to his longed-for home? He watches every movement of the priest; one bird is killed: its blood falls into the earthen vessel. How expressive of the death of Christ. And now the priest takes the other bird in his hand; watch him. He dips it in the blood of the dead bird; you see the blood on its feathers. He sprinkles the blood on the poor leper seven times, the perfect number. He is about

to speak the sentence of God on the poor, anxious leper; the leper listens with breathless silence. He fixes his eyes on that live bird, held captive in the priest's hand — thoughts of happy home rush into his mind — his liberty is bound up in that little captive bird. If it is let go, then the leper is free. The priest pronounces him clean — the bird is let go loose into the open field — tears of joy gush down the cheeks of the cleansed leper — his streaming eyes gaze on the flight of the blood-stained bird, a living witness of his cleansing and liberty.

Ask him how he knows he is cleansed, and his reply would be, — the priest of God pronounces me clean. The bird is free, and flown away, that is how I know. Yes, as certain as the living bird is flown away, so certain is it that he is cleansed. For this is the way God has made known his mind to the poor leper. The bird could not be set free; until he was pronounced cleansed. Then followed the washing of his person in water. Nothing could be more plain, or more precious, than the truth thus set forth. The one bird shewing the death, and the other the resurrection of our blessed Lord. This is God's only way of cleansing the wretched sinner from his sins. And, blessed be God, your case cannot be too bad for God's cleansing. If you are a sinner all over; if like the leprosy, having spent itself turns white; if you have spent all in sin; if character, health, friends, home — if all is gone. If weary of life; however wretched and desolate, God meets you in the death of his own beloved Son, with the certainty of the forgiveness of all sins, through his blood, to every one that believes.

I think I hear my reader saying, Yes, yes, I have read that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, but how am I to know that it cleanseth me? You say, "my poor, trembling, anxious heart wants to know that! can you tell me?" Oh, yes blessed be God, his word leaves no uncertainty. How did the leper know he was cleansed? He believed God's priest, and the token he gave him in the living bird. And has not the precious blood of Jesus been shed; has it not been spilt on this earth, as the blood of the bird that was killed? One bird could not be killed, and then let fly, so there had to be two, to shew the death and resurrection of our precious Substitute. Watch that bleeding Surety die for sin, and then laid captive for you (trembling believer) in death. Now, as the blood of the bird was sprinkled seven times on the leper, before the living bird could be set free, has not God as surely pronounced his judgment, as to the perfect, and everlasting efficiency, of the blood of Jesus for every one that believes him? The bird was let loose because the leper was cleansed — Christ is risen — the believer is purged. You don't suppose that the priest, if he had the mere feelings of man, would pronounce the words so as that the leper could not tell whether he was cleansed or not — nothing could be more cruel than such uncertainty. There was the priest's word, and the bird was flown loose away. This gave him the utmost certainty and joy. And can we then suppose that God has spoken in his word so indistinctly as to leave the anxious believer in cruel uncertainty? Oh, no; God could not have spoken more plainly. He says, having raised the captive surety from the dead, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Do you believe Jesus died on the cross, bearing your sins in His own body on the tree, there taking our place as Substitute for our sins? Just as the bird could not be let go unless the leper was pronounced clean; so Christ our Surety could not be let go from the prison of death, if His blood had not purged our sins. But God by the very raising of our Substitute from the grave, pronounces every believer justified from all things. I repeat again, the leper knew he was cleansed; the priest said so; the bird was free in the open field. I know I am forgiven, and justified from all

things, God says so, and my captive Surety, the blessed Jesus, is risen, and free in the highest heavens. God could not give me a greater proof of the certainty of my justification, than He has in raising Jesus from the dead, for my justification.

Then, do you believe the precious blood of Jesus has been shed? And do you believe that God hath raised Him from the dead? Then God pronounces the forgiveness of all your sins through Jesus. Nay, more, He pronounces you and every believer justified from all things. God pronounces every believer justified. This, gives you the clearest certainty.

Now, as the leper being cleansed by the sprinkled blood, then washed his person in water; so, my fellow-believer, being justified, let me beg of you to seek the constant washing of the Word. Your standing is certain, justified from all things in the risen Christ. But your walk needs the constant washing of His precious, priestly service. As the blood upon the ear, the thumb, and the toe of the cleansed leper, and the oil upon the blood, so may we who are bought with His precious blood be filled, led, and kept by the Holy Ghost. Yea, may body, soul, and spirit, be henceforth sanctified wholly unto Him. Amen.

C.S.

032. The Great Supper, or a Promise of One

The Great Supper, or a Promise of One

Luke 14:16-24.

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

How utterly contemptible are all human thoughts of God, when compared with the revelations of Himself in his blessed Word. Here is a short parable, spoken by our Lord, which scatters to the winds our dark, uncertain thoughts of God. God’s great salvation is likened to a great supper which a certain man made.

I was speaking about this parable lately to a man who had been butler in a family for many years. I said to him, "Just tell me what you do, when dinner or supper is on the table." "Oh," said he, "I merely open the drawing-room doors, and say, ’Dinner is on the table,’ which means all is ready. The guests then take their seats." "Well, now," said I, "suppose when you took off the covers, that there was a bit of paper on every dish with this sentence on it, ’A promise of a supper,’ what would you say?" "Say, why, sir," he said, "I should not know where to put my face; I never heard of such a thing." I said, "No, I suppose not; no man would ever think of serving his fellow men, as unbelief would represent God." Now, this is the simple question; is the Gospel-feast a present, certain reality, or is it the mere promise of salvation, leaving the anxious sinner in disappointment and uncertainty? Is it a real supper, or the hope of one? Is it the certainty of salvation, or the hope to be saved?

Let us now look at the parable. How plain the words, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many." The supper was made before the invitation was sent. "And sent his servant at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready." In Matthew 22:1-46 it is, very emphatic, "I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready." It is quite true, before Christ came, faith had then to do with the promise. But now Christ has come. He has died; he is risen; he is in glory. All is finished. All things are ready. The promise is fulfilled. It is no longer the promise of salvation, but salvation itself. "But, they made light of it."

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse." How truly this was fulfilled, and is still, in the rejection of Christ by the Jews, who were the fathers, and unto whom the promises had been made. And though the Gospel-feast as been spread before all nations, man, if left to the freedom of his own choice, invariably makes light of it. The ground, the oxen, the wife, yea, the slavery of Satan is chosen by the human heart, before God's great Gospel-feast. But divine, boundless grace goes still further, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." And again. "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Truly, every believer can say, —

"Why was I made to hear thy voice, And enter whilst there's room;

Whilst thousands make the wretched choice, And rather starve than come."

It is now supper time; the table is filling fast. Do you say, "I am such a poor, wretched sinner, the Gospel-feast cannot be for me, until I am better?" Poor, do you say? Why, you are of the very sort who are to be brought in quickly; and why that word quickly, but to show you must be brought to Jesus at once, just as you are? "Ah," but says another, "Sin has so blighted, and ruined, and maimed me, I am not fit for the Gospel-feast." Maimed! why it is the maimed one that is to be brought to Him. "Ah," says another, "but I have been a professor, and have halted so shamefully and so often." Halted? Why you are the very person; for the halt were to be brought. "But I am no scholar, I don't understand anything; all seems dark to me." Dark! why, it was the very blind that were to be brought; and what a welcome. What a real supper. Now, when a man is brought, and sat eating at the supper-table, is it presumption for him to know with certainty, that he has his supper? You would take the man to be mad, if he said be hoped he had a supper; or he hoped he should get one. And is not God's salvation as great a reality as any man's supper? How can it be presumption, then, to believe God, and know with certainty, that since He has given me faith in Christ, and brought me to believe in Him, that I am saved, forgiven, and justified from all things?

God is perfectly righteous in leaving those who make light of it to perish. He says, "they that were bidden shall not taste of my supper." And his sovereign grace is displayed, in the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, whom he compels to come in. All are welcome, but all are not saved. He that hears his words, and believes in God, who sent Him, hath everlasting life. And he that rejects his words shall perish.

There is one point we must notice in Matthew, "And when the king, came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." He was speechless; cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is most solemn. The vilest sinner is welcome at the supper table. But let no man presume to come there in his own clothes; or, as the figure evidently means, in his own righteousness — the clothing of the saved sinner, must be of the brightest white. But his very best suit is filthy rags. These filthy garments must be taken away; and he must have a change of raiment.

Come with me to the grave of Jesus. Whilst he lay there, where was righteousness? Look abroad on the face of the whole earth; and I repeat, where was righteousness to be found? Nowhere; all had sinned. The whole world stood guilty before God. All was darkness, sin, and death. The only righteous One, lay dead in the grave. But look, the stone is rolled away; the Prince of Life arises

from among the dead. Ah, there, and there alone, is righteousness, — perfect, bright, unsullied righteousness. Believer, that risen Christ, is thy change of raiment, God's best robe for thee and me. What a change of raiment, my old rags, my old self, put off in thy death, Lord Jesus; and thou, risen Christ, my everlasting righteousness, to shine for ever in the brightness of the glory of God. Thus poor, maimed, halt, blind one, has God not only met thee in unbounded grace, but has provided thee a robe of righteousness, that fits thee for His holy presence. Yes, the father not only fell upon the neck of the prodigal, and kissed him, just as he was, but the best robe was ready, and the ring, and the shoes were ready — all things were ready for the feast of joy. The prodigal could not have been happy in the father's house clothed in rags. The redeemed saint could not be happy in the presence of God, in the filthy rags of self-righteousness. But God has given him the best robe — better than Adam wore in innocence; better than highest angels wear, for both have failed, and the robe has been polluted — the Son of the Morning sinned, and Adam, the lord of the lower creation, fell. But the risen Christ can never fail; no spot can ever soil the best robe. God hath made Him to be our righteousness — "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30.) As truly as He was made sin for us, that is for all believers, so certainly are we made the righteousness of God in Him.

What a wondrous feast of grace, where all things are of God. When a person is invited to supper, he is not even expected to bring his own knives and forks, much less is he expected to pay for it. It is so at the Gospel — the sinner has nothing to give; all to receive. My reader are you at the feast? If you believe God, then it is as certain that you are saved, as the man who believes his friend and sits down to his supper, knows that he has his supper.

God give my reader this blessed certainty — and grace to walk with garments undefiled.

C.S.

Chapter 31

033. How did the Jew know his Sin was Forgiven?

How did the Jew know his Sin was Forgiven?

"Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish: and he shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt-offering before the Lord: 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 the burnt-offering, and shall pour out his blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering. And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar, as the fat of the offering of peace-offerings: and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him." — Leviticus 4:23-30.

Suppose you had met the Jew, returning from the priest; and you had asked him, how he knew that his sin was forgiven him? what would he have said? Would he not have said; "I know my sin is forgiven, because God says so. My sin came to my knowledge, and I could get no rest to my spirit until the blood of my sin-offering flowed. This hand has been laid on the head of the goat. It thus became my substitute. It was killed — I saw it bleed and die — Its blood touched the horns of the altar — It was poured out at the bottom of the altar — The atonement was made for my sin — and God said, "And it shall be forgiven him." Thus, by these words of God, I know, with the utmost certainty, my sin is forgiven."

Now this was a shadow of good things to come; a Type of the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the sinner's substitute; who died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Ah my reader, you are still going on in sin, blinded by Satan? Your sin may seem a very light matter — oh, you think, God is not so particular. "Poo, poo," you say, "God will never cast me into the lake of fire; I am not so bad." But ah, when the Spirit of God convinceth of sin — when man's sin cometh to his knowledge — then there is no rest, day nor night. The most fearful, the blackest sins, have been committed, in ignorance of their full, fearful character — the very murder of Jesus. Peter says, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17.) And Paul, speaking of himself, says,"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy became I did it ignorantly in unbelief." — 1 Timothy 1:13. When Saul's sin came to his knowledge, he was three days, and nights, and ate nothing. Oh my reader, has your sin ever come to your knowledge, in the presence of God? Do you feel something of its fearful vileness? Have you not loved the world, that murdered Jesus? Yea, have you not long rejected him? May God bring you into the light of his presence now, while there is mercy. For most certainly, your sin shall come to your knowledge, either now, before the mercy seat; or hereafter, before the judgment seat. Ah, there will be no sin-offering then; no mercy then; no forgiveness then; but the awful weight of sin, in that place where the fire shall not be quenched. It will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living, God. Be not deceived. But perhaps my reader says, "This is no comfort to me. The weight of my sins is more than I can bear; they crush me down, down, down. I can get no relief. I know that without shedding of blood there is no remission. I don't doubt the blood of Jesus has been shed; but how am I to get to know that my sins are forgiven? That is the question of all questions to me."

Remember the Jew; how did he know that his sins were forgiven? Laying the hand on the victim, shewed identification — or substitution. In each offering, where blood was shed for atonement this took place. In the burnt-offering it was so. "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him, to make an atonement for him." — Leviticus 1:4. And so with the peace-offering. — Leviticus 3:2. And so with the sin-offering, in this chapter before us. — Leviticus 4:1-35.

Now though man could not reach his hand to heaven, and put it on the head of the Son of God, (Oh, who could even have thought of such a substitute?) Jesus could, nay Jesus has come down from heaven, and freely offered himself, the sinner's substitute. He has put forth his hand, and identified himself with, and for, the vilest of the lost. Yes, look at him going up to Jerusalem. See him give his hand to be nailed to the tree — His body to be broken on the cross. Yea, he was made an offering for sin. Oh hear his dying cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" His precious blood has been poured out. Full, infinite atonement has been made. God hath accepted him for the justification of every sinner, who shall believe God, who raised up Jesus from the dead. All this is done. It is finished.

Now I ask, with all reverence, Is not the blood of Jesus of as great value as the blood of a goat? And is not what God says, about the blood of Jesus, as true as what he said about the blood of the goat? Many learned teachers (blind leaders of the blind) deny this. For whilst the blood of a goat gave the certain knowledge of sin forgiven, to the Jew, they say that the blood of Jesus does not give this certainty. Is this your estimate of the sacrifice of Jesus? Yea, it is exactly the thought of every unbelieving heart. Is it not this that keeps you, my harassed, anxious, reader, in such bitter bondage? Oh how fearful, to lower the sacrifice of Christ below the blood of a goat. Why, there was no value, in itself, in the death of bulls, and goats. These only pointed forwards to the one sacrifice, of infinite and everlasting value; through the value of which, and on the certainty that it would be offered, God pardoned the sins of every believer, from Adam to the Cross. — Romans 3:25.

God proclaims forgiveness through that blessed Jesus. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins," — Acts 10:43. And again, "Be it known that through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." — Acts 13:38.

Now, if the Jew knew that his sin was forgiven, because God said so; then if you do believe God, about the blessed Jesus, do you not see that you must be forgiven, for God says so. He says, "whosoever," and "all who believe are justified." Can you not, from your heart, now say "I have believed; I do believe; that Jesus died for me." Then praise the Lord, and tell everybody you are forgiven. God says so. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin."

"Blest Lamb of God, thy precious blood Shall never lose its power, Till every ransom'd saint of God Be saved to sin no more."

C.S.

Chapter 32

034. Naaman, the Leper, dipped seven Times in Jordan

Naaman, the Leper, dipped seven Times in Jordan This man was "captain of the host of the King of Syria; was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour; but he was a Leper." — 2 Kings 5:1.

What does earthly greatness afford after all? A man be ever so popular; he may prosper in business to his utmost cravings; or he may climb the highest pinnacle of political honour or military greatness. Naaman was all this; but he was a leper. And man, no matter what his position in this world, he is a sinner. Ah, this spoils all, makes every cup of this world bitter.

Leprosy was incurable. Still it spread, until the whole person was filthy — bloated, pimpled, and scabbed — wretched picture of man's ruined, utterly ruined, lost condition through sin. And, what is still worse, like the leper he finds every effort in vain to cure himself. The fearful poison spreads. Oh, how loathsome is sin! My reader may have long hoped to get better, but have you not rather got worse? Not a physician in Syria could cure the leper. Not a remedy on earth is found for sin. Search all nations, man has found no cure for sin. The whole world is one great leper-house. God hath chosen the weak things of this world. A little captive maid is God's messenger to this mighty Syrian. She says, "Would God my Lord was with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would cure him of his leprosy." And I can say to my reader, "Would God thou wert at the feet of Jesus, He would cleanse thee from thy sins." The King of Israel had no such faith as this little maid; he only thought the Syrians sought a quarrel. He, thinking of himself, said, "Am I God to kill and to make alive?"

"And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard," he sent for the leper to come to him. "So Naaman came." So like man was his way of coming! Such gifts, such horses and chariots! And he stood at the door. But Elisha received none of his gifts. The salvation of God is not to be sold. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, "Go wash in Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come to thee, and thou shalt be clean." He does not even come out to him; he sends a messenger. It must be by faith, not by sight, or by sign. God gives his bare word. He that believeth is saved.

Now Jordan was the type or figure of death. The ark had stood there, whilst, all Israel passed, over dry shod into the land of Canaan. Most striking illustration of Jesus taking our place in the river of death. There was no cure for this great leper, but to be seven times dipped in the river of death. There is no means in the universe by which a sinner can be cleansed, but by the death of Jesus. His blood alone cleanseth from all sin. This made the leper uncommonly, or rather commonly angry; for it is the anger of the human heart against God's mode of cleansing from sin. Surely, the leper thought, there would have been some great thing done to him. And so with the sinner; surely, he thinks, God must do some great thing to me or in me, by which I shall be saved. Burial in Jordan; why this is contemptible!

Besides, are not the rivets of my own country, "Abana and Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?" And he went away in a rage. So now, one poor leprous sinner will say, Are not the doctrines of my own church better than this salvation through the death of Christ alone? My church tells me to fast; to keep the vows of my order; in fact, to keep all the orders of my church. Is It not far better to wash in these rivers of my own religion, than to simply believe God about the death of Christ? Well, try hard; wash, wash, wash: but find me one, out of all the millions who wash in man's own religions rivers, that is clean from sin. Find me one who knows even his sins forgiven by all his fasting, praying, and order-keeping. No, there is not one who washes in the old man's rivers who either does, or even can, know, with certainty, that he is saved. Naaman's servants say, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" All nations bear witness what man will do (if doing would do it) to get clean from sin.

"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

How beautifully, to be sure, this does set forth death and resurrection, the two great lessons of God. The death of Christ the end of sin; the resurrection of Christ the beginning of an entire new existence. The old leper goes down into death; burial with Christ. The new man comes out in all the freshness of the new-born child. Oh how spotlessly clean is that new creation. "And he was clean." This is God's only way of cleansing. "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unreprovable in his sight." (Colossians 1:22.) Jesus went down into death. Every believer is dead with him, buried with him, risen with him, perfect in him; without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. (Romans 6:1-23, Ephesians 5:1-33.) Oh, to know the power of resurrection; being made conformable to his death. To leave poor old leprous self in Jordan. Ah, the old leper takes some dipping. Often, when we think we have learnt the death of self on the, cross, self still needs some dipping. Ah, you are occupied with the old leper still; remembering his sorry scabs and running sores. Oh, down with the leper, down, down to Jordan. Down, down in death is the only fit place for self. For its righteousness and its wickedness the grave of Christ is the only place. Look away from the old leper, to the risen Christ. If Adam were full of the poison of sin, God hath made the risen Christ to be our wisdom, sanctification, righteousness, and redemption.

There is no leprosy in the risen Christ. And "as he is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17.) "For ever perfected." "Clean every wit."

Oh, my reader, hast thou learnt this wondrous lesson? Hast thou gone down into death? Art thou risen with Christ? Then set thine affection on things above. Every old spot of leprous sin is gone. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away, all things are become new, and all things of God." (1 Corinthians 5:1-13.)

C.S.

Chapter 33

035. "As it was in the Days of Noah"

"As it was in the Days of Noah"

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man, they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the days that Noe entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." — Luke 17:26-27.

If these words were but the mere opinions of men, we might disregard them, but since they are the words of the Son of God, they must, and will he fulfilled to the very letter. Let us then carefully enquire, how it was in the days of Noe.

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart, was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.) Yes, God saw. It does not tell us what man thought, but what God saw. There is no deceiving God. God sees all that takes place under the sun. Just think of God seeing the imagination of the thought of the heart. Could my reader bear to be in the presence of a fellow man, if he knew every thought you ever had in your heart? and what was the wickedness of man then, compared to the wickedness of man now? Has not man murdered the Son of God, and for 1800 years rejected him? and Jesus foretells that this wicked rejection of himself, will go on up to the very day that Christ is revealed.

I dare say man thought the days of Noah were days of wonderful progress. But "the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence," what is it now? let it even speak for itself. The world’s newspapers say, we have no sooner recorded one deed of violence, but we are called to report another. But what is it before God? and what will it be very shortly, when the true church of God, shall be taken up to meet Christ, and Satan deceives the whole world? Peace shall then be taken from the earth. (Revelations 6.) And men shall kill one another, in that day of tribulation, tribulation such as never was, and never will be again. It will be as literally true, as it was in the days of Noah, when the earth was filled with violence; yes, far more literally true than men expect.

I look upon the translation of Enoch, as a type of the translation of the whole Church of God. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.) And then all the world becomes infidel, filled with blasphemous wickedness, except a small remnant of godly Jews, who will be saved as Noah and his family. So that it may be asked, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? And God revealed His purpose to Noah that He would destroy man from the face of the earth. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saying of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness, which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:1-40.) And still the world went on; its buildings, its commerce, its pleasures, and its sins, — men would not believe God. The ark grew larger every day, a witness of the coming judgment; certainly there was no appearance of the coming flood. Indeed, human reason would have said it was impossible, — what? God destroy this beautiful world, only just in its infancy? Many of the wise men of this age would have said, Oh, no, Noah; you are quite

mistaken; it is only your opinion; besides, a great many prophecies have to be fulfilled yet, — all the world has to be blessed, and filled with righteousness, so that you must be mistaken; Noah; you had better give over working at that great ship, and give up preaching such peculiar views, as you hold; come and enjoy yourself, man, and don't be such a narrow-minded bigot; do you think everybody is wrong but you? But the flood came, and destroyed them all. "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh;" "and the Lord shut him in." Every soul that was not shut in with Noah, was shut out. There was then no hope; it was too late. Yes, and it shall be so in the day of the Son of Man. We read in the parable of the Ten Virgins, "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord! Lord! open to us?" But it was too late. A Jew, as he listened to the discourse of Jesus, in Luke 21:1-38, foretelling the certain destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the Jews, amongst all nations, might have said, "Ah, that must be a mistake; why this city is to be the centre of the whole earth, and blessing shall flow out through it, to all nations: we scattered among all nations! nay, all nations shall come up, and worship in Jerusalem." But the day of fierce destruction came; and the city is trampled under foot; and they are scattered amongst all nations. In like manner, men, may say now, "Be as it was in the days of Noah, the earth filled with violence, and wickedness, when the Son of Man cometh, up to the very day? Oh, that is only your opinion; — why, man, the world is to be converted! 'Apostate christendom destroyed?' why christendom has to extend, until all the world are Christians; aye, every man, woman, and child!"

Thus man rejects the word of God, just as blindly and as fatally as in the days of Noah; or when Jesus foretold Judah's awful doom. Yes, in like manner shall they say, Peace and safety, up to the very day of Christ. It is quite true the world shall be filled with blessing; but this did not hinder the flood, did it? It is quite certain that Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of the whole earth. (Isaiah 2:1-22.) But did this hinder its awful destruction? It is quite certain, that the knowledge of the Lord, shall cover the face of the earth. But will this hinder the words of Jesus being fulfilled? "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh." How can the future reign of Christ, in blessing over this earth, which shall take place after he comes, hinder the fearful judgments, which will surely take place, at His coming? No, the world will go on increasing in wickedness, until He comes. His words will surely come to pass. It will be exactly as it was, the world will be taken with as great surprise, as it was in the days of Noah.

Oh, my reader, are you ready to meet the coming Lord? do you, like Noah, believe God? or with the world, are you rejecting Him? are you shut in with Christ, as Noah was shut in the ark? or are you shut out? God saw, and God sees your every thought, the gospel still sounds; God, grant that you may hear, believe, and live. If my reader is a Christian, let me beg of you to search the Scriptures, and see if these things be so. Jesus says, "Behold I come quickly." (Revelation 22:1-21.)

C.S.

036. "As it was in the Days of Lot"

"As it was in the Days of Lot"

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." — Luke 17:28-30.

"How can this be?" some of my readers may ask. "We thought Christianity would spread, until all the world would be converted. Does not the Scripture say, 'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea?' — (Isaiah 11:1-16.) How then, can this world become as wicked as Sodom; and that wickedness go on, until the very day that Christ is revealed from heaven?" The answer is very simple. The Scripture nowhere teaches, that the time of the earth's blessing will take place before Christ comes, but after. There can be no doubt, but that it will be exactly as Christ says. As it was in the days of Lot; yes, until the very day that Christ is revealed from heaven. Yes, my reader may live to see that day. If not a believer, but a rejecter of Christ, you may be taken with as great surprise, as when they had just taken their shutters down in Sodom, to commence another day's business, and another day's sins. But let us see how it was in the days of Lot. There are some most solemn lessons, connected with this subject. There was Abraham, the man of God, outside Sodom, in unhindered communion with God. There was Lot in Sodom; and, consequently, out of communion with God; though saved so as by fire. And there was the doomed city of wickedness. There was but one Abraham on the face of the earth. And how few, at any one time, have really walked with God. Of the first two men born of a woman, one set aside God's sentence on the earth; and tried to bring the best he could grow, an offering to the Lord; and was rejected. The other, Abel, owned the sentence of death, and approached God, through the blood of a victim, Enoch also walked with God; but there was only one Enoch in his day. So of Noah; but there was only one Noah, out of the whole world. And in the new world, so soon filled with idolatry, there was only one Abraham. And again only one Isaac. And only one Jacob. And only one Joseph. And then, not one man of faith is named for some hundreds of years. And then a little child is found hid by faith, in an ark of bulrushes. But, on the face of all the earth, there was only one Moses. Aaron even worshipped a calf. And then a Joshua — a Samuel, a David. And what is the history of the Prophets but that of a very few men at any time, on the face of the whole earth, fully walking with God? How often they had to walk alone; even the nation of Israel, utterly departing in heart from God. And when Jesus came to his own, did they walk in his light? Alas! they rejected and killed him. Aye, and after the resurrection, there was but one Paul. And since his day, how few have walked with God, in the power of the heavenly calling! Alas! how earthly, and worldly, the great house of Christendom has become. Sad contrast to the heavenly, exalted, Church of God. And will it be so up to the very coming of Christ? There can be no mistake about it. He, who cannot lie, says it will be, as it was in the days of Lot. Oh, far, far worse than it is now! The Lord then appeared to Abraham, as he sat, pilgrim like, in the tent door, on the plains of Mamre. (Genesis 18:1-33.) There was unhindered communion at once. Not so with Lot; the Lord would not

even go into the city, where he was; but sent his messengers to pull him out. First the eye lusted after Sodom, then the tent pitched towards Sodom; then in Sodom itself, Where are you, my fellow christian? The eye on the world; the tent towards it; or are you in it? Sad place for a child of God! The Devil is the god of it. Destruction is its end. When a man has got his utmost wish of this world, what can it afford? Ask that grey-haired old man; What does the world afford you, prosperous, rich old man? I hear you have got a good bit of property in Sodom. Does it satisfy? He shakes his head. "What does it afford?" He says, "An empty, aching heart; that is all." What are, all the riches, and honours, of Sodom, to be compared with one hour's real communion with God. Oh, for more real separation to him; to feed on Christ with him; to talk with God. Not so Lot. All confusion and vexation. He tries to reform Sodom! and loses all power, even over his own family. Child of God, is it not so? true picture of every worldly christian! How can we say, Lead us not into temptation; and then settle down in Sodom? But God is rich in mercy. "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and daughters?" Oh, precious grace, it is just what God is doing at this very time. The terrible day of the Lord is very near; but God still waits in mercy, and is awakening whole families. It is as though the Lord said, I would not have those, so dear to you, to perish; go and wake them up; tell them of my mercy, and tell them of my coming judgment. Oh, my reader, if saved yourself, have you no sons, or sons-in-law, or daughters? Are there none you love, for whom you would pray; and to whom you would speak the warning word? But Lot seemed, to his own children, as one that mocked. Oh, sad effect of Sodom. My reader, your children watch you; they may see you clinging, and grasping at Sodom's property. You may get your heart's desire in this world; and when you warn your children, you may seem as one that mocks. Ah, you may see them left to perish. Still poor Lot lingers. His property is there; and "the men laid hold upon his hand" the Lord being merciful to him. Thus was he, his wife, and two daughters, brought out. Not a word about sons, and sons-in-law. Even his poor wife looked back, and perished. The sun was risen. The city was astir. Lot was out. Oh, what a cry of wailing and bitterness, as the first drops of liquid fire fell. It was too late. And is this the doom that awaits this deceived world? Yes: it shall come as a thief in the night. Roll on, poor world; thou hast rejected Christ; thou hast preferred a murderer, for thy God. The Devil that deceiveth thee, shall be cast into the lake of fire with thee. Oh, my reader, is this thy doom — art thou still a rejecter of Christ? Do ponder the end. Today there is mercy; pardon through the precious blood of Christ. God only knows to-morrow. Oh, may God speak to thee now, being merciful to thee. Remember, it is Christ who says, "In such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh."

C.S.

Chapter 35

037. Vol 01 - Bread cast upon the waters

Volume 01 Bread cast upon the waters

Chapter 36

038. "Your dying Hour"

"Your dying Hour"

"I have just been to the funeral of a very dear friend," said I to a merry-looking man, whilst waiting for the train. "And it is no small comfort, when a friend departs, to know with absolute certainty, that that friend is gone to be with Christ, which is far better."

"I should think," said he, "there are very few that die who have that certainty. At least not many would like to chance it, if it were put to them to-day; I mean if the question was put, Are you so sure of heaven, that you do not mind dying to-day?" I replied, "I fear even amongst those who profess to be Christians, too few would stand that test. But it was very different with my departed friend. She had only been ill a few days, and on the day before her death, knowing there was no human possibility of recovering, she calmly said, 'I would not exchange places with the Queen.' Not the shadow of a doubt passed over her happy soul. She rested not in anything she had done, but in the finished work of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Precious Jesus! thy blood and righteousness never fail in the hour of death. Nothing can be so certain as that which God has said, 'that whosoever believeth on him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

"Well," said he, "it is a happy thing when a person has such confidence; but I fear there are very few who have the happiness to enjoy it. Man is so given to sin, he has such strong inclinations to sin."

"Very true," I replied. "But you are not a man of all sin; you have not committed all sin. But God is the God of ALL grace, and that grace is seen on the cross, surpassing all your sins. Who can tell the value of the blood of Jesus as God sees it? I myself am the chief of sinners; I have not one particle of worthiness. But I tell you, if we are all killed before we reach home, I have no fear or question whatever, about my salvation. It was eternally settled by the death of Jesus."

"Ah," he said, "it seems to me a poor thing to hang one's salvation on."

"What is? Is Christ a poor thing to trust? Is God's word a poor thing to trust?"

"Oh! no, I mean it is a poor thing to hang on faith. To think that if you have faith you will be saved, let you sin and do as you like."

"Ah! my dear sir, but the man that has real faith in Christ, does not want to sin. He hates it and longs for delights in holiness; and he is the only one that gets delivered from sin. But now you try, from this day, in your way, never to sin again."

"I have tried," said he, "many a time; but still I sin in thought, word, and deed. I think I now see that to believe in Christ is the only way both to get saved, and give up sinning."

Reader, what as to your dying hour? You cannot help the thought crossing your mind at times, can you now? Your dying hour may be very near — yes, very near! Now are you prepared for that hour? What, are you going on carelessly in sin? Well may you tremble at the thought of your dying

hour. Are you trusting in forms and ceremonies of human religion? Ah! these will utterly fail you in your dying hour. But mark the blessed condition of every saved sinner: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Is this your condition? Are you justified? Have you peace with God? Then, my reader, if you should fall asleep before Jesus comes again, yours will be a happy dying hour.

C.S.

039. "Be Thou Clean"

"Be Thou Clean"

Mark 1:40-45. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth [his] hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

What a wretched being a leper is! afflicted with a horrid disease, which no one can cure, and shut out of society, as too loathsome for the eyes of his follow-men. Sad, but true, picture of man’s moral condition. Fallen — utterly fallen. The very heart filled with the loathsome disease of sin. His whole nature corrupt — incurable. This little paper may be put in the hands of one who feels the wretchedness of sin. Thou hast sinned. The leprosy has broken out; art thou trying to hide it? God knows it, and thou art wretched. Oh, how wretched! What a burden on thy heart! What is that thou wast saying? "I wish I had never been born!" Why? Oh! I see thou hast tried many physicians, but no cure. The leprosy is still there, and spreads. Thou hast tried temperance, morality, religion. Thou hast tried to amend, and tried hard, but all in vain; thy case is too bad for these remedies. God knows thy deep sorrow, thy despairing groans. Who are those two persons there? A loathsome leper and the Son of God. Well now, look; the leper, just as he is, speaks to Jesus. He does not ask what he must do to cleanse himself. He came to Him, "beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him,If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Does Jesus say, Go and get better first? No. See! Jesus is moved with compassion; and though no other person would touch that wretched leper, Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, and said, "I will, be thou clean." What a wondrous change! That man, whom no one could cure, was in a moment healed; as soon as Jesus had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Ah! I see your mistake. You have not yet fully seen the love of God to the ungodly in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, trembling sinner! look in the face of Jesus! See Him moved with compassion at the sight of thy leprous wretchedness. Art thou thus brought to Him just as thou art? It was God who sent Him from heaven, that thy leprosy might be cleansed with His very life’s blood: and now, raised from the dead, He speaks to thee just as thou art, "I will, be thou clean." My fellow-leper, there never was a poor wretched sinner, thus brought and given to Jesus just as he was, but that moment he heard the voice of God in the words of Jesus, and those blessed words were true of him, "and he was cleansed."

Wouldst thou rob Christ of His glory? Wouldst thou say that thou must got better before Christ can heal thee? Thou wouldst not give an earthly physician such a character. Wilt thou then say of the

Great Physician, He receiveth none, and cleanseth none but those who are getting better? The blessed Jesus rejected none. Thou mayest be too great a Pharisee for Him, but thou canst not be too great a sinner.

Oh, reader! if now thine eyes are opened to see Jesus receiving thee just as thou art, and renouncing all pretensions to righteousness in thy self-believing on Jesus, thou, even thou, art cleansed, and cleansed for ever. "For, by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." C.S.

"How bright, there above, is the mercy of God!" —

"And void of all guilt, and clear of all sin, Is my conscience and heart, thro’ my Saviour’s blood."

"Not a cloud above" — "not a spot within."

Christ died! then I am clean: "not a spot within." —

God’s mercy and love: "not a cloud above."

’Tis the Spirit, thro’ faith, thus triumphs o’er sin:

"Not a cloud above" — "not a spot within."

Chapter 38

040. "Have I repented enough?"

"Have I repented enough?"

I do not know a more perplexing question than this, to a really anxious soul. I met a person lately who had spent years in trying to ascertain how much repentance is required before a person may be quite sure he is saved.

"Which of the two repentances have you been trying?" saidI.

"Why, are there two kinds?" he enquired.

"Oh yes," I replied: "the repentance of the law, was a man trying to forsake all sin, and do all righteousness, and thus be saved. (See Ezekiel 18:30.) But the repentance of the gospel is the giving up all pretensions to righteousness." The meaning of the word we translate "repentance" is simply a change of mind. The kind of change of mind depends on the connection in which it stands. It may be of sorrow, or it may be of joy, unto death or unto life. The change of mind, or the repentance of the law, was on the principle of works. The change of mind, or repentance of the gospel, is not of works at all, but entirely of grace. Sorrow for sin, and forsaking sin, and living to God — if anything are works, these are. If thus seeking salvation by works, you can never have enough of this repentance to get saved. It is a thorough mistake to think of getting saved by the good works of the repentance of the law.

You may think it a light thing to go on in sin. Oh, you can easily repent some day. Fearful, fatal, delusion. You are becoming more hardened every day.

Let me now turn to the repentance of the gospel.

God is a God of truth, and the truth is that man is a lost sinner, utterly without righteousness; as it is written, "There is none righteous, no not one." Now man’s mind is in total darkness as to this. He thinks he is not so bad as to be past mending. And there is another thing.

God loves man in this lost and guilty condition. He sent His beloved Son from the throne of glory; and with burning love for the poor, guilty sinner. He died on the cross — "the Just for the unjust." Oh look at that dying Lamb of God. See from that pierced side the blood of atonement. He bowed His head and died. All was finished. God hath raised him from the dead; and now God can meet thee through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He does meet thee. He does love thee, poor broken-hearted sinner. God meets thee in love! Thou thoughtest He could only meet thee in deserved wrath. He commands thee in the gospel to change thy mind. What is that? To believe what is true. That thou hast nothing but sin in which to meet Him. Give up, only give up all pretensions to righteousness, and as a lost sinner I point thee to the cross; and I tell thee, as surely as thou art brought to know thyself as a lost sinner, feeling thy utter need of Christ, God meets thee through the finished work of Christ, and pointing to the cross on which all thy sins were borne, He says, There sinner! now I have nothing against thee. It is not thy meeting God with the works of thy repentance; but God meeting thee through the death of Christ. May the goodness of

God thus lead thee, my reader, to repentance, even to the full moral judgment of thyself in His presence, and the full knowledge of His wondrous love to thee, a lost sinner, and thou shalt find these glad tidings the power of God unto salvation. By the Spirit of God thou shalt have godly sorrow for sin and power to forsake it; yea, God shall work in thee to will and to do. These things certainly accompany salvation, but are never its conditions, otherwise grace would no more be grace.

C.S.

Chapter 39

041. "Thy Sins be forgiven Thee"

"Thy Sins be forgiven Thee"

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." My friend, though a stranger to me, let me ask you this question: Could anything make you so truly happy, as to know for certain that your sins were forgiven? To hear those words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee?" Yes, thy sins: all of them — every sin of thy heart and sin of thy life — forgiven thee. Is it possible that this blessedness shall be thine? Compared with eternity, thou hast only a few hours to live. At the end of these few hours, what is thy prospect? What a thought! soon, very soon, thou wilt be in glory or in hell. Nothing can be more certain. Is thy foot lifted up in the paths of sin? Hold! another step, and thou mayest be lost.

Whatever had that man done to whom Jesus spake those wondrous words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee?" Let us look at Mark 2:1-12. Why, this seems strange; he had done nothing; he was too sick to do anything. He could not walk, nor even stand. He was borne of four, and they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. What a picture of man’s condition, sin-sick; so prostrate that he can do nothing! Sin-palsied; so bad, he cannot walk; cannot stand. True of you, true of me, true of all. "For all have sinned." "There is no difference." Every limb palsied every thought defiled with sin. And they let him down to the feet of the Son of God? Have you been let down? Every sinner saved by grace has a letting down — down, down, down — and many a time, when he thinks himself let down, self has still to be let down, down.

Some are let down at once, utterly lost sinners, at the feet of Jesus, and at once are saved. It takes years to let down the self-righteous pride of others. But to be let down in the deep sense of sin and misery, fairly to sink at the feet of Jesus, and then to hear the first words of the Son of God, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," — this is blessedness indeed! Oh, my reader, have you, now, have you, been brought as a lost, helpless, hell-deserving sinner, to Jesus? Oh, have you? Hush! listen. Look at Jesus. He proposes no conditions to that helpless man. He does not say, If thou wert a little better, or if thou wouldst walk a little, or if thou wilt promise this or that. No, blessed Jesus! that would not have been like Thee; that would not have been grace. Oh, how men do misrepresent Thee, my precious, pardoning, gracious Lord! Jesus pardoned first, and then gave power to walk. And still He pardons first, and then gives power to walk in holiness before God. Is not this just what a sinner needs! To be pardoned and saved first, and that being settled, then he has divine power, by the Spirit of God, to live as a child of God, and walk in holiness.

Look again at Jesus. What are those wounds in His hands and side? Oh! they tell us He has been dead and is alive again. "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." "He died, the just for the unjust." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." All is finished. Reader, dost thou believe?

C.S.

Chapter 40

042. "Two Things which God hath joined together"

"Two Things which God hath joined together"

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.)

There are two things joined together in this verse. These two things man tries to put very far asunder. Read the verse again. Now what are those things? They are believing and having. As we have it in another place, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Sometimes a person will say, with great anxiety, "I do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sure I trust in none else. I feel I am a lost sinner. I fully believe that the death of Jesus was the atonement for sin. I have no doubt that God raised Him from the dead. I know that it is only through the shedding of His precious blood that sins can be forgiven. But I cannot get to know that I have everlasting life."

If this really is my reader's condition, if you have heard the words of Jesus — if you do really trust in Him alone, then there is no question — there can, in that case, be no question whether you have everlasting life or not. I only ask, do you really trust alone in the finished work of the Lord Jesus? If so, I have no need to ask, have you everlasting life? If one of these things is true in you — namely, real faith in Christ, — I know the other is. You have everlasting life; for Jesus says, "It is most certain, it is most certain, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Yes, in one breath, Jesus joins these two blessed things together — BELIEVETH-HATH! The discovery of this to the soul gives perfect peace. No more perplexity; no more uncertainty. The more deeply you feel your own unworthiness, the more amazing will the love of Jesus appear in dying for your sin. Oh yes! Sin will appear more and more terrible, and the glory of the cross shine brighter and brighter; the world will be now with thee lighter than vanity, for thou, even thou, hast a home in the mansions of light. And though tempted in a world of sin, opposed by a subtle enemy, and groaning over inbred corruptions, yet still thy trust is alone in Jesus, and thou hast everlasting life.

I think I hear thee saying, Is this true of me? Trembling believer, Jesus has said it; it cannot be false. This moment, if thine ears are opened by the Spirit of God to hear the words of Jesus, and in thine heart to believe on God who sent Him, then certainly thou, even thou, hast everlasting life. And how blessed, how perfect, the salvation of God! Thou not only hast everlasting life, but thou shalt not come into condemnation. Jesus says it and He will keep His word to thee. Yea, even more still, — thou art passed from death unto life. Just as all Israel passed through Jordan with the Ark of God, so, my dear follow-believer hast thou passed with Christ from death into resurrection, and therefore into everlasting life. Open thine eyes, for thou art risen with Christ. As surely as He took thy place in death, the divine Substitute, so surely has God given thee a place with Him in spotless brightest glory. Go in peace, then, and doubt no more. But there are two things more joined together. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Whether thou goest to the

ale-house, or to church; whether thou art living in open sin, or trusting in thy strictly religious life; I tell thee, if Jesus is not thine only trust thou art condemned already; thou art waiting the execution of divine vengeance as a rejecter of Christ. "Search the Scriptures, and see if these things be so."

C.S.

Chapter 41

043. "Why are ye troubled?"

"Why are ye troubled?"

If living a stranger to Christ, you may well be troubled. The thought of death, and judgment to come; may well give you trouble. If this is your condition, God grant that your trouble may be greater and greater, until you find rest in Jesus. This little paper may be put into the hands of a doubting Christian. To such an one these words of Jesus have peculiar application. (Luke 24:38-39.) Jesus alive from the dead, speaks these words, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet." What tender love is this! Blessed Jesus! He had said unto them, "Peace be unto you;" and it touched His tender heart that there should be trouble or a thought in their hearts! How could such deep, sincere love bear to be doubted? He had loved them unto death; His very body had been broken on the cross for them; His very blood had been shed for the remission of their sins; as their Substitute He had died the accursed death of the cross for them — the Just for the unjust. One had denied Him, and all had forsaken Him. But now God had raised Him from the dead, for their justification. And now the object of His eternal desire was accomplished — redemption was finished. His heart, overflowing with unutterable joy, had found vent in those ever-precious words, "Peace be unto you;" how could He then bear a cloud of trouble, or one doubting thought, in the hearts of those He had so loved? Oh! it makes my heart melt whilst I look at Jesus and hear those divinely sweet words, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet." My reader, do you believe that that agony and shameful death of Jesus, the spotless Son of God, on the cross, was for your sins — that He was delivered for your offences — and that, having endured their utmost penalty, God raised him from the dead for your justification? For this is true of every sinner that believeth. Yes, and if you are brought by the Holy Spirit thus to trust in Jesus alone, then it is true of you; and these words are written for you. With a heart still filled with joy, Jesus says, "Peace be unto you." Like Peter, you may have denied Him; or, like the rest, you may have forsaken Him; but look at Him, listen to Him; oh! what words of love — yes, love that cannot bear to be doubted; and words to you: "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" How do you answer these words of Jesus? Do you say, I am such a vile, ungrateful sinner? He says, "Behold my hands and my feet;" now look at them, what do you think about those wounds on the risen body of Jesus? Do they not speak peace to your troubled conscience? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Oh! yes, my fellow-believer, Jesus feels keenly every doubting thought that arises in our hearts.

Blessed Jesus, Thy work is finished; here our souls rest. Our sins were laid on Thee; they cannot be laid on us. On our account wrath was on Thee; on Thy account it is peace, endless peace, to us. May my reader hear the words of Jesus, "Go in peace, and doubt no more." He does not say, Look at your faith or your feeling — He does not say, Look at your sins or your failings. We might look at them in despair. But He says, "Behold my hands and my feet;" as though He had said, Is it not enough? could I love you more?

C.S.

Chapter 42

044. How are you to be saved?

How are you to be saved?

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Who would have thought that that question, which so many ask, would have tempted Christ? It is the language of one "willing to justify himself." What shall I do? No words can more plainly show the ignorance of a fallen sinner. Whilst these words are on his lips, he knows not his lost, fallen, helpless condition. The Lord knows the pride of the deceived heart. The religionist can repeat the law, and no doubt thinks he can keep it. "Do it," says Jesus, "and thou shalt live;" and then answers his tempting question with one of the most striking parables in the word of God. This parable of the good Samaritan is the answer to man's question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It describes man's condition — yours. Fallen among thieves, stripped, wounded, left half dead. What a picture! and how true! Man is not innocent — not happy; but fallen, guilty, helpless, undone. Look at that dying man by the road-side; he cannot walk a yard further, no, not a step. He cannot oven call for help. Do not you see he is dying? Is this the man to talk about doing — eh? Poor dying man, the law cannot help thee! The priest and the Levite have to pass thee by; they cannot help thee. Reader, thou art this man; this is thy spiritual state. The law cannot help thee; the priest and the Levite cannot help thee. Thine own efforts, thy resolutions, thy struggling! I tell thee there is only one that can help thee. "A certain Samaritan came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." This is Jesus, the Son of the living God. Infinite love — mighty to save? God so loved, so pitied, fallen, helpless, naked, dying man. He saw him where and as he was. Yes, this is the glory of the Gospel. God, full of tender compassion, rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins; yes, even then God sent His beloved Son to man, laid by the road-side fallen in sin and misery. (See Ephesians 1:1-10.)

Man could do nothing: Jesus came to him where he was. What a journey of love! He came to do all for the sinner, and He has done it; it is finished. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will towards men."

Oh! my reader, dost thou thus know Jesus? Is it no longer what shall I do? But art thou resting on what Jesus has done on the cross? Hast thou been brought to know thy utterly lost condition by the way-side? Has Jesus come to thee — has He bound up thy broken heart, pouring in oil and wine? Has God revealed to thee Jesus, taking thy place as a sinner, and now giving thee His place in spotless purity for over. Dost thou know that it is not thy taking care of Jesus, but Jesus taking care of thee? yea, and until He comes again, that He hath committed thee into the hands of God, who keeps thee with His mighty power! yes, that He will take care of thee? (John 17:11; 1 Peter 1:5.)

If thou art a doer for eternal life, thou art a rejecter, a despiser, a tempter of Christ. But if thou knowest and believest the love of God in thus sending Jesus to thee, thou hast eternal life. It is the gift of God. Let thy work now be to show forth the praises of Him who saw thee; and saved thee,

and loves thee for ever. "We love him, because he first loved us." Read the parable over seven times. (Luke 10:1-42.)

C. S.

045. Who is to blame?

Who is to blame?

Let us suppose a vessel foundering at sea. We know the vessel to be exceedingly rotten, and so leaky that it is filling — that it must shortly go down. On shore the utmost effort is made. The life-boat, with capacity to hold every person on the sinking ship, is launched. The mariners pull alongside the rotten, sinking vessel. The captain of the life-boat begs every person on board immediately to let go the old rotten ship and trust himself in his hands in the life-boat, with the certainty of being brought safe to shore. The people on board resolutely refuse the invitation. One says, "The old vessel is not so bad; she only requires painting," &c.Another says, "Away with both you and your life-boat! we have a carpenter of our own, whose business it is to mend the old ship. Who do you think is going to leave this fine old ship and trust to that poor-looking boat?" The vessel fills and sinks. And now tell me, if every fool-hardy despiser on board goes down, who is to blame? Plainly themselves. The life-boat was sent to them and they refused.

Man is that rotten ship — fallen, ruined by sin, filling fuller and fuller of sins until he sinks into perdition. Christ Jesus is the life-boat. God so loved this poor, ruined, sinking world that He sent the life-boat, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Did the world believe God? Oh no, they rejected oven such love, so great salvation. They murdered the Son of God. The death of Jesus was the offering of Himself, the atoning sacrifice for sin, God raised Him from the dead; and the risen Christ becomes the life-boat of every soul that trusts in Him.

But, my reader, may I ask you a home question? Where are you — in the life-boat or in the old ship? Are you in Christ or trusting to the self-righteousness of old human nature? Are you one of the redeemed? Can you say that you "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins?" (Colossians 1:14.) Or are you still in and of that world, which is guilty of rejecting and murdering the Son of God?

Perhaps you do not care for these things. Are you filling up the measure of your iniquity? You know when the old ship gets full it sinks, and when your last sin on earth shall be filled up and you sink into endless perdition, you will remember who is to blame. But are you trusting to outward forms and ceremonies of religion? Now what good will this outside paint do? The ship is sinking, and if you stay on it, you will go down with the very paint-brush in your hand. Oh my friend! all the baptisms, and sacraments, and ordinances that man can perform will never keep one ruined sinner from sinking into hell! Woe be to your poor soul if you trust in them. Do you say there are so many opinions — how am I to tell who is right? Whoever points you to Christ, the life-boat, is right; and whoever keeps you in the old ship, is wrong. Do you not see that? Are you trying — no matter how — to mend the old ship; that is, your fallen human nature, called in scripture "the flesh?" Then you maybe quite certain, sooner or later, if you continue in that condition you will, as the old ship, go down. Think where! Oh the bottomless pit — and who is to blame?

Oh give up the vain attempt to mend the old ship. Own yourself a lost, undone, ruined sinner — believe the grace of God in sending you Christ the lifeboat — trust Him with all your heart — confess Him with your lips and life. You cannot be in both. If you are in the old ship, no matter how self-righteous, you are sinking fast: there is not a moment to be lost. It is indeed great presumption for any one in the old ship to say, he knows he is safe. But if you are in Christ, the life-boat, you cannot be too sure. He never did and never will lose one.

C.S.

Chapter 44

046. If thou knewest the Gift of God

If thou knewest the Gift of God

John 4:10

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." A weary one sat at Jacob's well; He had left the land of the Pharisees. It was Jesus. He came in love to His own, to save them from their sins; but they received Him not. Weary and grieved was His tender heart, as He sat about the sixth hour at Jacob's well.

There is a woman coming with her water-pot to the well. She is one to whom the proud Pharisee would scorn to speak. She is a despised Samaritan, and that is not all; she is a poor wretched being, living in open sin. She little knows that she is about to meet the eye of Him who knows all that ever she did. She arrives at the well, and is astonished that Jesus, being a Jew, should ask her to give Him to drink. "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to, drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

He did not say, If thou wert not so great a sinner. He did not say, If thou wilt reform and become a holy woman, then I will give thee living water. No! No! No! He let her know, that He knew all that ever she had done. But there was such a depth of pity, grace, and compassion in the wondrous countenance; such tender love to the sinner in those words, that it won her heart, it converted her soul. Christ was revealed to her; and leaving her water-pot she went to the city so full of Christ, that forgetting her own shame, she said, "Come see a man which told me all that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" My reader, can you meet the eye of Him who knows every thought of your heart from childhood? All at ever you did, open and naked to His eye! And can you say that you are not a sinner? How was it, think you, that there was nothing in Jesus to repel this wretched sinner? And what can those words mean, think you — "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c.? Is this the one great thing needed by a poor wretched sinner? It is; there can be no mistake about it, for Jesus says it. Of whatever nation my reader may be; whatever the sins you may have committed, the first thing you need is not the waters of the Ganges, or the intercession of saints, or works of amendment; no, the thing you need is to know the gift of God. Do you ask who and what is that gift of God? The same that met that poor Samaritan sinner; Jesus the Son of God: as also it is written, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The gift of God is eternal life." "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." My reader, it is a gift, a gift, a gift; oh, if thou knewest this! Thou canst not buy it; thou canst not merit it. He that knows all that ever thou didst, all that thou art; sets before thee Jesus the crucified; Jesus the risen one; Jesus the glorified. Dost thou know Him, the gift of all gifts?

Dost thou say, "but my sins are heavy, they press me down, what must I do?" If thou knewest the gift of God! Yes, even though thou hast committed every sin that has been done in this dark world; yet God’s gift, "redemption through his blood" abounds above it all. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." His very business was saving just such burthened, weary, heavy-hearted sinners as thou art. Blessed be His holy name, the work is finished. May God reveal to thy soul, my reader, Christ Jesus. Change of life and holiness of life will follow. But the first thing is The gift of God.

C.S.

Chapter 45

047. "Repentance unto Life" - A Double Change of Mind.

"Repentance unto Life" — A Double Change of Mind.

There are not a few in this day who are very fond of talking about other great sinners. When a person does this, it is a sure sign of a deceived heart; by telling of the sins of others, he is merely showing how much better he thinks himself to be than they. Now some of this very sort came to Jesus, and told Him of the Galileans. (Luke 13:1-35.) Mark the words of Him who knows the heart: — "Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He again repeats the same solemn instruction respecting the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell.

Oh, the millions who are fast locked in this fatal mistake! "I am not so bad as So-and-so:" the drunkard says this, the thief, the liar; but above all the religious pharisee. Is my reader one of the millions thus deceived! Do you think yourself better than others? Are you doing your best to be so? Is this the road you think leads to heaven? Without an entire change of mind about this, you also will certainly perish. Does God think you better than those Galileans or sinners at Jerusalem? He says, "I tell you NAY." And in another place, He says, "There is no difference, for all have sinned." It is true — God says it — you have sinned. May God give you entire new thoughts about yourself; even His thoughts, that you are a guilty, vile, lost sinner; for unless you know, own, and confess this, you shall likewise perish.

Well, still this change of mind about self would never save the sinner without that other — an entire change of mind about God. In Luke 15:1-32 we get exactly man’s thoughts of God, for the blessed Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, stood in their midst; "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners." Now, why did they murmur? Why! because they had got an entirely wrong thought of God; they did not know Him. They tried to persuade themselves that they were not sinners, or at all events, not such sinners as others, and then concluded that God only received such good people as they thought themselves to be. This is man’s thought of God, that He only receives and saves the righteous. The well-known parable that follows in three parts, the lost sheep, the lost silver, the lost son, is Christ’s sermon, unfolding, the character of God; and that character the very opposite of all man’s dark thoughts. The work of the Son in coming to seek and to save the lost sheep; the work of the Spirit in giving the light, as the woman who took a light and sought for the lost silver; and to crown all, the unspeakable joy of the father in receiving back his long lost son, one, mind you, who could not be more unworthy, and blessed be the God of all grace, could not have been more welcome. And now, my reader, have you got this part of repentance, this entire change of mind about God? Though you may feel as vile as the prodigal — if you never did feel so, God grant that you may know yourself so bad that you could not be more lost and undone. May your mind be for ever changed by seeing the joy of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in receiving you as a lost sinner who cannot be more unworthy, and who cannot be more welcome. "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one

sinner that repenteth." When God is thus revealed to the soul in Christ, and sin fully owned and confessed, a change of heart and life is sure to follow.

C.S.

Chapter 46

048. What is Good New to a Man who feel Himself Lost?

What is Good New to a Man who feel Himself Lost?

I was deeply impressed, the other day, with a sentence in a letter I received from a person at a distance, in which he states, "the Gospel as (sometimes) preached in our day, is of no use to a man who feels himself to be lost." When a man has broken the laws of his country, and is under sentence of death, he paces the floor of his gloomy cell, looks through the iron grate and thinks of the fearful morrow. That is something like being lost, as to this world. Let us go down the dark passage, and speak to him at the iron grate. Hark! how he groans. What will you say to him? Would a lecture on morality do? Would you tell him to be a good man and keep the laws of his country? Would he not reply, You very much mistake my case; that sort of talk is no help to me at all; my life is forfeited, I am under the sentence of death. Poor lost one! Would it help him if you engaged to keep the laws of his country for him? Not in the least: the law demands his life, and the day is fixed. The only way of keeping the law for him would be to die in his stead; and the only good news that would meet his case would be the free pardon of his sovereign.

Such is the case of an awakened sinner who feels himself lost. This world to him is a condemned cell. The devil roars in his conscience, guilty! guilty! He has tried to be innocent; he has pleaded "Not so guilty as my neighbours;" he has tried "to mend;" he has tried to keep the law of God, he has broken it more and more. And now, trembling with guilt and fear, conscience, the devil's jailer, has turned the heavy bolt of the iron gate of despair. And thus, sooner or later, is every saved sinner brought to utter despair as to all help in self, or self's doing. Now what is the good news that will meet a man who has thus learnt the truth about himself, and feels himself lost? Will it meet his case to tell him to amend his life, to love God, and keep His commandments? Would he not reply, You don't understand my case at all: if I could do that, I should not be lost: I am lost, I am vile, I am condemned; I have forfeited my life, heaven, everything!

Reader, art thou the man? Have I described thy condition, — art thou one who feelest thyself lost? Then hearken; I will tell thee of One who came to seek, and to save the lost. I come not to thy iron gate to tell thee what thou must do. Nothing that thou canst do can save thee from thy dark condemned cell, nor thy future fearful doom. I tell thee, if the Spirit of God has thus made thee feel thou art lost, I have good news from heaven to thee. There sits Jesus at the right hand of the Majesty on high; that is the blessed One, who came in pity to this condemned cell, who took the sinner's place, died the just for the unjust. Hadst thou forfeited thy life? He gave up His own, even to the death of the cross. Hadst thou forfeited heaven? He left it and became a man of sorrows. Oh think of the glory of this mighty Saviour. He knew that nothing short of His very life's blood could meet thy guilty, condemned state. He gave it freely. What plenteous redemption through that precious blood! Thou hadst sinned against God, and God is satisfied, justified, glorified by this precious sacrifice. God hath raised Him from the dead, "and through Him is preached the forgiveness of sins;" free, full, everlasting forgiveness — through Him, not through thy doing: and by Him, not by thy doing, thou, and all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could

not be justified by the law of Moses.

Thy door is open: come out, and rejoice in the gospel, that suits the man who feels himself to be lost.

C.S.

049. What is Grace?

What is Grace?

I remember a person once saying, "he did not like the word Grace; he thought the word Love meant the same and was much better." This is a mistake; grace goes a great deal further than love. Man loves that which he thinks is in some way worthy of love, and he thinks God is the same as himself, and therefore says he, "I must turn to God some day and try to be worthy of His love; and then He will love me." Now the grace of God is the very opposite of this human thought. I don't know anything like it in the whole world. "What is grace?" said I, the other day. "Mercy" was the reply. Well, it is true the love of God and the mercy of God are both very, very wonderful. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins;" and both the mercy and love of God are thus in grace; that is in pure unmerited favour. Yet this grace of God goes further, yea, far beyond the reach of all human thought.

Let us suppose a criminal, guilty of such crimes as to make him an object of the deepest abhorrence, standing condemned before the judge. Mercy would be a great thing shewn to such an one, but if it were possible in the heart of a human judge to love such an one, so utterly worthless and undeserving; that would indeed be a wonder. But what would he thought if the judge so loved the poor guilty one, as to put himself really in the place of the prisoner; bear the full penalty of all his crimes, and then take him into his own house, make him partner with himself; and say "as long as I live, all that I have is yours"? Ah! tell me where amongst the cold-hearted sons of men, where was ever grace shewn like this? No! No! The glory of this grace belongeth alone to my God. Oh, how shall I tell of His wondrous grace! My reader, you may have heard of it by the hearing of the ear, but has this grace ever reached your heart by the power of the spirit of God? That God should thus love and pity, and shew mercy to the guilty; yes, the ungodly! the guilty! the lost! as to send His own dear Son in sweetest grace, to take the very place of the lost and guilty, in purest grace to bear all their sins in His own body on the tree! Oh look at the cross! God in grace meeting man's utmost need. Ah! Do you in your very heart believe it? Then you may cast yourself before such a God, confessing all your sins, your wretchedness, your misery; spread it all before Him. Don't try to make yourself a bit better than you are before Him. He will pardon the confessing sinner in faithfulness to the blood of Jesus. Jesus died for the purpose; that God might be just, not only in pardoning but in justifying every sinner that believeth. But oh, this is not all; God in pure grace takes the utterly unworthy sinner, pardoned and justified, into perfect partnership or oneness with Himself in the ever blessed Lord Jesus. In this grace He met the murderer Saul; from that moment Paul became the partner or joint-heir of Christ. What a change! From that day he could say, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." Right well did he know that nothing could ever separate him from such love as this. Yes, and God by this very little paper can in the wonders of His grace, meet a murderer, a drunkard, a harlot, or worse than all, a deceived Pharisee. Yes, and from this moment the days of my partnership with Satan may be ended. Oh, God grant it. May this be thy happy portion; pardoned, justified, for ever one with Christ. This was grace, not only to take the sinner's place, but to give the guilty worm an everlasting place with Himself in resurrection glory.

This salvation is wholly of God.

C.S.

050. "Hath" and "Are"

"Hath" and "Are"

These are the words of Jesus, the Son of God —

" Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." — (John 5:24) Can these words be untrue? Impossible! Anxious inquirer, God has blest them of late to many souls. They are most certain — most certain. Yes, it is Jesus who says them. Do you hear His word? Do you believe on God who sent Him? Then ponder these three words, "hath everlasting life." What a certainty "hath" gives. It is not, "I hope so." No, hath never hopes, but has, not only life, but everlasting life. Do you ask, How is it possible that I shall not come into condemnation? I am such a great sinner; I think no one is plagued and burdened with sin as I am. Then hearken.

These are the words of God the Holy Ghost —

"Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." — (Acts 13:38-39.)

Blessed message of God to a sin-burdened soul! Is it true? Reader, do you believe in your heart that God thus proclaims the forgiveness of sins through Jesus alone? How simple — how certain! Do you believe God about the death and resurrection of Jesus? Then God justifies you from all things. He say so; does He not? Read it again and again. And just as surely as you believe God, just as surely you are — not shall be, but ARE — justified from all things.

Think of these two things —

"HATH everlasting life."

"ARE justified from all things."

C.S.

Chapter 49

051. "The Righteousness of God"

"The Righteousness of God"

What a wondrous depth of meaning there is in the thought, that the vile, lost sinner should be clothed with — yea, made — the righteousness of God! I only know of one greater wonder than this, and that is, that God's most precious, holy Son should have been made sin, and have died the accursed death of the cross.

How very sad that this is almost forgotten in our day. It is almost forgotten that the law brought out man's sin, and proved he had no righteousness. "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:19-20.) Men forget this, and still vainly try to be righteous by keeping the law. If you try to be righteous in this way, instead of finding yourself righteous, you will find that you are in the same condemnation as the devil himself. But there is another thing as little known, that whilst the law proved man to be without righteousness, in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. "But now the righteousness of God without law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26.) Is it not greatly overlooked, that in the salvation of lost sinners the whole transaction is of God? Man cannot do one thing, neither is he asked to do anything, but to receive, as the free gift of God, the righteousness already wrought out and accomplished by Christ. The whole thing, from beginning to end, is of God. It is not, as man would tell you, that if you keep the law and believe on Christ, then you shall be saved. No, but without law, for man cannot keep it. You cannot keep it. God has, in His own grace (because He so loved poor sinners, who were without strength to keep His law), given Christ to die for the ungodly. Christ crucified has been set forth the great propitiatory sacrifice. It was God who gave Him to die for sinners, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. It is God also, who gives faith to believe. It is God who justifies every sinner who does believe. It is God who shall finally glorify every sinner whom He has justified. The blood of Jesus has been shed, and it is God who has set it forth for the remission of sins. Is He not just, and the Justifier of him that believeth? All, all this vast transaction has been accomplished to declare His righteousness in bringing the lost sinner to Himself. I believe it. I say, fearlessly, that not only is God perfectly righteous in justifying the ungodly sinner in this His own way, but that from eternity to eternity the cross of Christ is the glory of God. Yes, when He raised our adorable Substitute from the dead, it was by the glory of the Father. Man, through sin, had sunk to the lowest depths; God, through redemption, has raised him to the highest glory. All is finished; and is not God divinely righteous? This robe of divine righteousness is "upon all them that believe."

Art thou, my reader, clothed in this wedding garment? Then thou shalt be a happy guest in the courts above. See now that thou walkest with garments undefiled.

C.S.

Chapter 50

052. "How can a Sinner be Justified?"

"How can a Sinner be Justified?" With men this is clearly impossible. Man, with all his boasted wisdom, could not devise any plan of effecting this. For instance, a prisoner stands at the bar, really guilty of the crime charged upon him; the judge may forgive, but can he say to that guilty man, you go away from this bar justified; from this time no person can lay anything to your charge?

God alone can justify the guilty, and be righteous in doing it. Romans, chapters 1-8, shows God's wondrous plan of justifying the guilty.

All are guilty, Jews or Gentiles, religious or profane. There is no difference, all have sinned. God says so. Conscience says so. You know, I know, it is so. Guilty! Guilty. "Yes," you say, "that is what perplexes me; I know I am a sinner; how then can I be justified, so that no charge can be laid to me?"

Let us see first how this cannot be done: how you cannot be justified; and then see what God's only plan is of justifying the sinner. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." (Romans 3:20.) In the sight of men the believer is justified by works, as in James 2:24. But in the sight of God it is absolutely impossible to be justified by works of law; still guilty, guilty. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "For if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain." (Galatians 2:16-21.) "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the works of the law is evident," &c.We have broken the law; it can only curse us. We cannot even have forgiveness by all our efforts to keep the law, much more be justified. Do you say, "We must do our best to love God and keep His commandments, and then hope He will for give us and justify us?" Where does He say, if we do our best? or where is the man that does his best? No, on the doing plan no man shall be justified. God hath said it, and it is hard to fight against God.

Let us now look at God's only way of justifying the ungodly. It is Christ that died! Oh, wondrous answer to all my sins! "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood," &c., "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is God that justifies. (Romans 3:19-28; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:31-34.) My reader, let your thoughts dwell on the cross of Christ. Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear God's testimony about the death of Jesus, the propitiation for sin. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Romans 5:8.) What man could never do God has done. He hath laid our sins on Jesus; they are put away by His atoning blood. God hath raised Him from the dead. He that believeth is justified from all things. And God thus not only is just in forgiving the believer's sins, but is righteous in justifying the believer. Though once guilty, yet justified, so justified by the death of

Jesus, that not one charge can be laid to him that believeth. Oh, think of it, my fellow-believer! God hath so justified you by the blood of Jesus, that nothing can be laid to your charge — all, all has been borne by Jesus. Is not this enough to give you peace? Yea, the peace of God is yours. Yes, yours for ever.

C.S.

Chapter 51

053. "How does the Believer know that he is justified"

"How does the Believer know that he is justified"

Certainly not by looking at his feelings. His feelings are as changeable as the wind. Nor yet by looking at his prayers, or his good works: all that he does is mixed with sin. If he looks at himself in any way, he can find nothing that will afford a sure ground of certainty that he is justified; that is, that he is so clear of sin, that nothing can be laid to his charge for ever. Can you, my reader, with eternity before you, with the prospect of standing before that Judge who knows every secret of your life, can you say that you are clear of all sin, so clear that nothing can be laid to your charge? Are you not ready to say, "How can any sinful man in this world know that he is thus clear of all sin?" You will be astonished at the believer's simple, yet certain answer. It is this — Christ is risen. But you will ask, "What has that to do with a believer's justification?" It has everything to do with it. "If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17.) A saved sinner knows and believes the love of God in sending Jesus to be his surety and representative. His eyes have been opened to see Jesus, bearing his sins in His own body on the tree. He knows that the blood of Jesus, his surety, has met every claim of Divine holiness to the uttermost. What love and mercy to lost sinners! Now the believer can say, "As surely as Jesus was condemned for me, was delivered to death for my offences; as certainly as God dealt with Him, on the cross as my surety for my sins, so assuredly did God raise Him from the prison-house of death for my justification." Now if a surety is cast into prison for the person's debt he is bound for, when that surety comes out of prison, having paid the full demand, is not the person for whom he paid it as clear of the debt as the very person who was his surety, and paid it? And he knows he is clear of every claim. Why? Because his surety is now out of prison. Just in the same way does the believer look outside himself to Christ, his adorable surety. Oh ponder this well: it was an awful engagement, when Jesus became the surety of all who through grace should believe on Him. Yet still He trusted God. He knew that God would justify Him from all these sins and guilt, as He says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." He did not leave His soul in hell; He raised Him from the dead, completely cleared from all our sins, no more to be forsaken, but to be received up to the highest glory. Now Christ had no sin to die for of His own, therefore His death was entirely for us. Just so He had no sin to be justified from of His own, therefore His resurrection also was entirely for us; He died as our surety, He rose from the dead as our representative, so that whatever God did to Christ on the cross is reckoned unto the believer; and whatever God did to Christ at His resurrection, He did to us in Him as our representative. Christ is risen. Is He perfectly and for ever clear of all sin? Even so doth God justify every believer — see Romans 8:29-34, Hebrews 10:14, 1 John 4:17. It is God that justifies.

Romans 8:29-34 : For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not

with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Hebrews 10:14 : For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

1 John 4:17 : Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. My reader, if thou art looking at thyself in any way, thou art far from knowing that thou art justified. If the Holy Spirit shall give thee real faith in Jesus, looking entirely away from thyself at Christ, thou wilt not ask for anything to make thee more certain that thou art justified from all sin, than this one triumphant answer — Christ is risen, who is even at the right hand of God.

C.S.

Chapter 52

054. Vol 02 - Tracks for young Christians

Volume 02 Tracks for Young Christians

Chapter 53

055. Victory!

"Victory!"

Grace abounding; shown in the triumphant departure of Isaac Myers, late of Rotherham: — Lord's Day, June 24, 1860.

About six months ago, some Christians in Rotherham united in prayer, at the earnest request of the beloved mother and sister of the departed, for the conversion of the remaining six brothers and sisters of this family. Though Isaac knew nothing of this, yet immediately the Spirit of God began to work powerfully on his heart; but when he did get to know that he was being prayed for, it affected him very deeply. The first token of answered prayer, was the burning of all his song music. His sister saw him at the works, and told him how much she had wanted to see him, as she had heard that he had said, he would sing no more songs for men at a certain place. He said he had felt he must put it all away, so that the devil would have less hold of him. She said, "What made you come to that decision?" He replied, "I had been trying for a week or two, to serve two masters. Invitations to sing made me miserable, so I burnt it all. I had felt troubled about five weeks; but last Sunday, I heard Mr. Rossell, and felt I must decide." Thus had God been dealing with him, at the very time his friends had been waiting on God in prayer. As soon as his sister told him he had been prayed for every day by name, he burst into tears, and said, "I am a poor ignorant thing, but keep praying for me, that I may live and grow." His sister spoke to him again after some time, enquiring how he was as to spiritual things, when he replied, "I have got Christ!"

It is known to many, that he passed through great exercise of soul, especially during the last three months of his life; but it was not until the Lord's day, exactly one week before his departure, that his soul was brought into the full and blessed liberty of Christ. His beloved wife was very ill that day, and he was taken with deep misery respecting her, fearing she would die. He felt that if she died, he should die also, and thoughts of death troubled him. He could get no relief. He said, "I flew to God's word to see what God would say to me; He showed me that the precious blood of Jesus cleansed me from all sin, from every spot. I saw the death of Christ for me, as though there had not been another sinner. I went from portion to portion, of God's Word, and saw Christ every where in the word, until I was so full of joy, that I forgot my wife. I saw I had never fully believed God; I knew before that I was his child, but God never before then revealed to me by His Holy Spirit, that Christ had done everything." On Monday he went for the last time to his work, was taken ill, but remained until afternoon, though in great pain.

Tuesday. The pain extended over the chest; spoke of being in heaven before Monday; had a strong presentiment to that effect. Seemed to dwell with delight on the resurrection, and the fashioning of his body like unto the Lord's.

Wednesday. His sufferings were very severe; scarcely able to speak, but said, "Ah, mother; I shall be in heaven on Monday. It will be all Christ. No pain! no sorrow! During Wednesday night he was racked with pain. Some one remarked that the Lord had heavily afflicted him; he replied, 'Not one

atom too much. My acceptance in Christ is as clear as the noon-day sun. Don't fret; rejoice for what the Lord has done for me.'"

Thursday. — Great weakness. But he said, "I am going through deep waters." A beloved brother said, "This is the time for God to help you." But he was too weak to speak more at that time.

Friday. — His sufferings were so great that he could scarcely speak a word. He just said, "Surely the Lord will make short work."

Saturday. — Had a little sleep in the morning and had less pain. Then the pain returned with agony, until about twelve at noon; it then ceased, and exhaustion ensued. But during the afternoon in a burst of joy, he said, "Oh, what has Jesus done for me a poor sinner! Washed me in his own blood from every spot, made me perfect, yes, perfect, if I were to live for twenty years, and never sin, I should not be nearer heaven. Oh, the blessed Jesus, the Christ of God! He left his seat of glory, and came into this world to die for me; yes, for Isaac Myers, of Rotherham, just as if there had not been another sinner in the world! Oh! oh! that I could tell it everywhere; that I could shout it to the whole world; that I could tell to all I know, and all I don't know, the joy I feel. He has washed me, and washed me clean. He has given Himself for me; I am his! He is mine. He is in me. I am in Him. He fills me. I shall soon be with Him in glory."

Here his strength failed; but after a short interval, he again broke out into a strain of great joy, "Look! look! look!" as though the vision of heaven were suddenly opened. He said, "What a large place; Look at them; what numbers. This is the first time I have seen Paul; he is in the midst of that group (pointing to the right); what a glorious man he is, but not like Christ; there's none like Him. And there is Dawson (meaning the late honoured servant of Christ, William Dawson). How did he go? Why gone in a moment, like that (dropping his hand quickly on the bed). Absent — present — heaven in a moment. That is how I should like to go, only, I would be humble, and wait. Listen! I wish you could hear that chorus! The Handel's festival!! Nothing to it!! I shall join it soon. Oh to sing that song, 'Worthy is the Lamb.' He is worthy. He is worthy. He came down here, and when he came down, did he set himself up? Oh, no! He took no place here. He humbled himself, but God has given him a place. God has highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; all power is given to him in heaven, and on earth; but he has not taken it yet. This humble Jesus is the Christ of God — the mighty God. Jehovah Jesus — all honour is his. He could restore this poor shattered frame, if he saw fit; and he will build it up again, and then, Oh then — Oh then, it will be like his."

"I shall be like Him. Oh, what mercy, boundless mercy to a poor sinner. He tells me by the Spirit I am perfect now; it is his work, — his finished work. I used to think I must do something to get to heaven, but now I see He has done it all. He is my all. If a man has Christ he has everything. He gave Himself for me. He has made me meet for his presence, and He is going to take me to glory now. Heaven. Jesus. So soon, so soon. In less than a week. He would take me now if it were not for the sake of others. He has made me ready. Oh, mother, "There's not a cloud above, not a spot within." That's it exactly. He lets me stay a little longer that I may tell his love; and He is taking me away for a special purpose. It will be told all over Rotherham, and in every place where God is worshipped, that He has taken a poor sinner, Isaac Myers, to glory. God has opened heaven the New Jerusalem to me. You know it was revealed to Paul, and it is revealed to me, as direct from God as the rain drops from the clouds. And it is for the sake of many in this town. It will reach the

hearts of many. My death is to be for the life of many. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Help me to sing his praises. Oh, tell it abroad, make it known, that He has taken me to glory. The Lord is coming to take his own. Not believe that! I know He is coming, What a moment, when all his are caught up, to be with Him for ever! But I am going to Him, He is coming to receive me. I wish I could have you all fastened to me, to all go together. But it won't be long, it won't be long!"

He was delirious at times, and about one on Sunday morning he appeared to be dying. The watch was looked at, as his friends thought he was going. But he suddenly shouted out, "There is a heaven; do, do, let the world know there is a heaven." He then held his hands up, and said as he seemed to behold the heavenly vision, "Hush, hush, there is heaven. There is the white robe, the crown, — one broken, but another crown. Glory." He said, "Shout, Glory." And his friends all at once were constrained to shout Glory. Oh, what a moment, — never to be forgotten by them. He appeared to be in full view of the New Jerusalem; said he saw his departed relatives who sleep in the Lord; seemed to have great joy in seeing William Dawson, whose preaching was greatly used of God to him when a boy. His countenance, indeed the whole scene, was heavenly. He then said, "I am now about to swim, and there is the strong arm of Christ."

He feared that his friends would think him delirious as he spoke of the rapturous vision, and took great pains to correct this, being anxious lest his words might not be believed. He said he had been astonished at the manner in which the Spirit of God had enabled him to speak to his shopmates. The thoughts given him were far beyond himself; and after trying to convince his friends that he was perfectly sensible, he then again manifested the most solemn, tender concern for three of his fellow workmen. It was deeply affecting. "Tell them there is a heaven," and afterwards, "Tell them there is a hell, and if they don't alter their opinions, they will go there."

He gave his hand to be kissed by all present, then prayed for his beloved wife and children; then for his brothers and sisters, beginning at the eldest and going to the youngest; for all his many relations, then for his shopmates, and for others by name, — Mr. Rossel, Mr. Jones, Stanley, Bennett, &c. He then prayed for Christians of all denominations, except the Unitarians. He said, "I have no authority in God's Word to pray for them as Christians, — they deny the blood." Solemn words, on the borders of eternity.

He then prayed again for his wife and children. Had great confidence for his family. He then shouted with a loud voice, "Victory! Victory!" He required all present to shout, and all joined, even his young wife, — all shouted, "Victory! Victory!"

He was then exhausted, and said "Water, water." But when water was offered him, he said, "

No! no! No more of this world's water."

He was then fearfully convulsed, and delirious for some time: then tried to sing the word Hallelujah. When he could speak, his happy cry was, "Nearly gone, nearly gone! Almost home." "I am ready:" this he said a few minutes before he departed. Then he threw up both his bands, as if beckoning for one to come from above. His last words were, at the moment of departure, "He is come, He is come!! " This closed the last moments of Isaac Myers. He was gone, gone. Present with the Lord.

One day, before this triumphant departure, there was published, in a periodical a most fearful contrast to the above, a death-bed scene, as witnessed by Mr. Richard Weaver. He says, “One night, after I had gone to rest, I was awaked by a knock at the door of my house; an old man was there, who said, ‘Oh, Mr. Weaver, come and pray for my poor child.’ I went, and oh, that fearful sight. There was the mother on her knees, crying, ‘Oh, God, save my child. Oh Lord have mercy upon her.’ The young husband says, ‘Oh, Richard, pray for my dear wife. Oh, my poor wife; my poor wife.’ And there lay the young wife and mother, with the death sweat upon her brow, and horror in her voice, shouting, ‘Oh, I am damned, I am sinking into hell. Oh, William, oh, my dear husband, train my child for heaven; I am dying, and hell is my doom. Take him to my grave and tell him his mother is damned. Oh, my babe, your mother is being damned.’ And while her poor husband groaned, ‘Oh, that my wife had never been born.’ She tore her hair and screamed, ‘Can’t you save me? oh, husband, save me.’ And so she died with those dreadful words, ‘I am damned.’” My reader, have you ever reflected that one of these two ends must be yours. Victory through the blood of the Lamb! or damnation through unbelief. You may be within seven days of the eternal world. You may be troubled at the thought of death; so was Isaac Myers. And I pray you to note, that uncertainty and trouble was not removed, until God the Holy Ghost became his sole teacher by the Word of God. This is God’s way, to bless his own Word. The confusion of human opinions cannot give true rest to the soul. Though he was a child of God, man’s teaching had failed to give him full rest. God’s teaching never fails to give it. On that memorable Sunday he was turned from man’s words to God’s words. He flew to the Word to see what God would say to him: God showed him that the precious blood of Christ cleansed him from all sin. The infinite value of the death of Christ was so revealed to him, that he saw he had never fully believed God. Did the Spirit reveal to him some new or second work to make him perfect? No! no! he revealed to him that “Christ had done everything.” What a bursting in of light. What a deliverance from false doctrine and unbelief. Believing what God says. Christ has done everything. A child is heir to an estate: the title is secure, the witnesses competent. But the child is perplexed by persons telling him that he must not be too sure. That it something like depends on himself as to getting the estate. He is confused, the uncertainty gives him trouble. At last one day the matter is made clear; he finds his father has done everything to make it secure. I see now he says, “I never before really believed the will of my Father.” There is no new will, no new work done. He only believes what has been done. He is turned from the false thoughts that perplexed him. Such was the change of mind that day, when God showed Isaac Myers, that Christ had done everything. Every false thought of unbelief was swept away. He was turned from the false thoughts of man, to what God says about the blood of Christ. His acceptance in Christ (not in self made better), was as clear as the noon day sun. All believers in the New Testament times had this clearness; and all believers now, turned from self to Christ, have this same clearness, as to their acceptance. The Apostle, speaking of all believers, says, “he hath made us accepted in the beloved,” Ephesians 1:6. Surely God’s Word is as clear as his creation works. Then every believer’s acceptance in Christ is as clear as the noon day sun. God says it. It must be true.

It must be so, because the offering of the body of Jesus Christ does so thoroughly sanctify every believer, that his perfection, through that death — sanctification is everlasting. As saith the Scripture, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” Hebrews 10:10-14. He had formerly thought he had something to do, as though his fitness for heaven was progressive; and depended on works. Yes, he thought this, though a child of God. Now; he saw

that Christ had done it all. He knew four months before that he had Christ; but he did not know what Christ was to him. Now he has been turned from man to God; he says, if a man has Christ he has everything. He had had everything in Christ: now he believed it. That makes all the difference. Do you say you have Christ for justification, but you must have a second work, for you have not yet got Christ for sanctification. Then like him you have not yet fully believed God. For this is certainly true of every believer in Christ. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is (not was or will be at some second blessing, no is), made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” 1 Corinthians 1:30. My fellow-believer, that is plain enough, is it not? and what, think you tot his? “Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” Colossians 1:12.

Yes, Isaac Myers was right, when he believed what God said, and always wrong whilst he doubted. “He has made me meet for his presence:” and what had made him meet? The progressive work of the Spirit in him? No. The Spirit had shown him that the blood of Christ had cleansed him from every spot. Not a cloud above, not a spot within. This is the Gospel that gave him such a triumphal departure. Man nothing to do to fit himself for heaven: Christ had done everything. Is this your Gospel? then preach it to every one. Seldom are the hearts of dying sinners gladdened with such a Gospel. He had tried hard at man’s Gospel, of partly Christ and partly his own doings, to fit him for heaven; and it could give him no peace in the prospect of death. No, my reader, neither are you prepared to die, if this mixed Gospel is yours. It must be all Christ, before you can dwell with exultation, on the prospect of departing before next Monday to be with him. This was not a death-bed repentance. It was on the day before he was taken ill, that God thus revealed Christ to him. How wondrous the sovereignty of God. He whom Christ washes “is clean every whit,” John 13:10. The same thrust of the spear brought out blood and water. He that is pardoned is also cleansed: cleansed from all sin. Yes, completely justified as well as sanctified. “Washed,” “sanctified,” “justified;” this is the divine order of Scripture. “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified,” 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Isaac Myers saw that Christ had done every thing; not left one thing for him to do. He saw the death of Christ had not half saved him, and then left him unwashed, and unfit for heaven; away with such unbelief. That precious blood had perfectly fitted him for heaven, without a spot. Oh, precious, heaven taught lessons. He was now a happy worshipper within the vail, without spot. The blood of bulls and goats could never bring the worshipper there. The blood of Christ had brought him there. The sacrifices of the law made nothing perfect, and needed a second work, or repetition. The blood of Jesus purged his conscience perfectly from every spot, and needed no repetition. And now, is this the state, standing, and position of only a few persons amongst believers, who attain to an extraordinary degree of self-holiness within? or is it the blessed state of every believer on earth? Undoubtedly, of every child of God, born of the Spirit, saved by the blood of Christ. The Scriptures leave no uncertainty as to this. “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, &c.,” Hebrews 10:19. This is just what the blood of Jesus has done for every saved Christian, without one exception. This is what the offerings of the law could not do, no, not for one sinner on earth. This is what the Spirit of God insists upon in the tenth of the Hebrews. Are you saying, my fellow-believer, that this is not true of you? You are so unworthy, you cannot surely be within the vail, without spot of sin. Then are you saying, the blood of Christ is of no more avail than the blood of a goat. “Christ also hath suffered for sins, the just for

the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Has he failed? Dare you say so? True, you are unworthy. God looks on his blood and He says it is worthy; yes, finished is the work that glorifies God, in bringing you within the vail.

Ah, like dear Isaac, is it not true that you have not fully believed God? Blessed, divine certainty, it is all done. Can you say, "Precious Jesus, my soul now rests in thy finished work; yea, I rest in Thee?" Ah, it is a hard struggle, in our day to get delivered from the false doctrines and traditions of men; many are sorely perplexed, even the real children of God. The Gospel is so obscured, that often God has to lay his children on a bed of affliction, away from the teachings of men, that He way teach them Himself. And much did He teach Isaac Myers in one short week. Yes, God taught him more in one hour than he had learnt from man in all his life. Oh that men were wise, that they would take the word of God, and look for the blessed teaching of the Holy Ghost.

But, perhaps, you say, do you set aside good works altogether? Oh dear no, this is the only way to have them. As soon as he really believed God, knew that Christ had done everything to fit him for heaven, that he never could be more fit, than the blood of Christ had fitted him — without spot in the holy presence of God. — Then, see how this faith worked by love. Oh, how he longed for his shopmates. He thought of their daily toil, and said, "Poor things, they toil, and toil, and spend, and spend, and what is it all for? If they go on rejecting Christ, the time will come, when the most they would ever think of asking for, would be a drop of cold water to cool their burning tongues. And even that cannot be granted them." And then, oh how he did yearn for their conversion. The reality of heaven, — hell — the coming of the Lord — was truly astonishing. It seemed at times as if the veil of the future state was removed. Heaven was his. The spotless robe washed in the blood of the Lamb was his. The broken crown — solemn thought. He had been a backslider. Yes, whilst salvation is all of God, given in freest grace, without works, yet the crown of reward must be fought for. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." — Revelation 3:11. Oh believer, watch and pray, lest thou lose thy reward. Seek a real close walk with God. Seek to walk in the light of his countenance. Fight the good fight, and he shall give thee a crown that shall not be broken. And there was another crown. Oh, is my reader a wandering child of God; oh, return with confession to God thy Father. Thou didst run well — who broke thy crown? Beware again. Precious grace to thee and me! there is another crown. Let us press on in the strength of God — the fight will soon be won. Thou art saved — God is faithful to forgive — The crown's before thee, battle on. Look not to man — The eye of the Lord is upon thee. Perhaps my reader says, "I don't know whether I am a believer; I have tried to do my best to get fit for heaven, but all is darkness." Another says, "I will do my best some day!" Ah, this is not believing what God says to poor, helpless, lost sinners. He says, "Be it known unto you, that through Jesus is preached unto you, the forgiveness of sins, and through him all who believe are justified from all things." Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." I ask, then, do you hear the words of Jesus? do you believe on God that sent him? Then, what does, he say? Hath everlasting life. Do you believe Him? He says all that believe Him, are justified from all things. Is it so? Then why doubt? It is as true of you as the dear departed one. The moment you fully believe what God says, all is settled peace. The work is finished. Jesus has died. He is risen. He is glorified in heaven. He will soon come in glory. I finish with the words of the departed one. "What a moment will that be, when all his are caught up to be with him for ever!" "

Even so come, Lord Jesus.” C. S.

056. Joseph, Type of the Risen Christ.

Joseph, Type of the Risen Christ.

Read Genesis 45:1-28.

It is most interesting and profitable to trace in the Old Testament histories the shadows of God's purposed blessings in the risen Christ. The history of Joseph is a picture pencilled by the hand of God. When the light of resurrection is thrown upon it, the whole is lit up with indescribable beauty. When Joseph made himself known to his brethren, he had been, as it were, dead about twenty years. Yes, twenty long years had passed away since his father had said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Thus, with rent clothes and sackcloth upon his loins, had Jacob wept for him. But now Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive." As a type of Christ, death and resurrection are the two great points. The pre-eminence of Christ was shadowed forth in the dreams of Joseph, Genesis 37:1-36. The sheaves of the field, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to Him.

"Jesus! Lord of all creation, To Him shall all creation bow."

"God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," Php 2:9-10. The pre-eminence of Joseph filled his brethren with envy; the pre-eminence of Jesus filled the Jews with hatred. The brethren of Joseph said, "Behold this dreamer cometh; come, therefore, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit." And the Jewish brethren of Jesus said, "This is the heir, let us kill Him."

Joseph was cast into the pit. "And they took him and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty: there was no water in it." The wickedness of their hearts was thus manifested; they cast him into a pit, and they sat down to eat bread. The Jews crucified Jesus, and then sat down to keep high Sabbath. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver; Jesus was sold for thirty. Like Isaac, in this shadow, Joseph did not actually die; there was no water in the pit. But with our precious Jesus, He sank in the deep mire. He says, "All thy billows are gone over my soul?" Yes, Isaac, when laid on the altar, was spared; Joseph, when cast into the pit was spared; but when Jesus was nailed to the cross, "God spared not his beloved Son." Cruel as was the treatment of Joseph's brethren, yet he was not forsaken; but Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Oh! why was He thus forsaken on the cross? Oh! why did it please Jehovah to bruise Him? Ah, "His soul was made an offering for sin!" "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities." The sufferings of Joseph were against his will; but the death of Jesus was his own voluntary offering. "I lay down my life for the sheep." Yes, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Thus hath our God commended his love to us.

Joseph is sold into Egypt, and his brethren have got rid of him. Jesus is killed, and the world has got rid of Him. The lies and deceit of Joseph's brethren succeed so well and so long, until Joseph

is almost forgotten. If ever remembered, he is only remembered as the one that is dead, or “the one that is not.”

Oh! dark, cruel world, thou hast killed the Prince of Life, and boastest of progress; long and well hast thou succeeded with thy lies and delusions. But thou art doomed; thy day is at hand; thy seven years of plenty will soon be run out; then shall thy sevenfold judgments come. If thou rememberest Jesus, it is only as one that is dead, or one that is not. Oh! despising, rejecting world, thou shalt soon find Him to be to thee the terrible Lord of heaven and earth.

Let us return to the history. Seventeen years of age was Joseph when he fed the flocks with his brethren; and he was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Seven years of plenty had also run their course, so that for twenty years the foul sin of his cruel brethren had been concealed. But at last “the famine was sore in all lands.”

How often this is the case. Sin may be forgotten whilst years of plenty roll away. Whilst the prodigal rolls in luxury, we hear nothing of his sins or his father’s house; but when all is spent, and the famine comes, then he cannot forget his sins, and must return to his father’s house. Truly, “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.”

“I cannot forget the things I did sixty years ago,” said an old man to me, the other day, on his dying bed. Should these lines meet the eye of one who has rolled in plenty! And now every worldly hope is blighted; that idol once so dear to you is gone; wealth and wealth’s friends are gone. In poverty and need you find it a cold, cruel world; little did you expect the treatment you have met. Is it a famine in all lands to you? Oh! the thousands of hearts thus wrung with bitter anguish in this cold, deceitful world.

Let me speak a little further. How about your sin? is that question settled? Have you to add to your heavy sorrows a troubled conscience? Perhaps sometimes, the remembrance of sin is unbearable; at such a time the thought comes, and sticks like a poisoned arrow, “My sins have brought all this on me.” But you try to forget them. The seven years of plenty were ended; the seven years of famine began. As the prodigal remembered the bread, so Jacob heard there was corn in Egypt; and the ten brethren of Joseph must go down and buy, that they may live, and not die.

Ah, when the Spirit of God begins to deal with a man, how He can bring sin home to the conscience. Joseph was governor over all the land; to Joseph they must come; no other person under heaven can give them bread. They knew not that it was he. In like manner the soul must be brought to Jesus. “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

Yes, “Joseph’s brethren came and bowed themselves before him, with their faces to the earth.” What must, he have felt, for he knew them, though they did not know him. No doubt they were much altered in twenty years. Remorse had marked the features of some; felt need had brought them all. It is so with the sinner, when first seeking salvation; he may not come with the full confession of sin, so much as with the desire of being saved.

“Joseph spake roughly unto them.” The question of sin must be bottomed. The cutting cord of a guilty conscience must be pulled a little tight. “Ye are spies.” And now mark their defence, — “We

are all one man's sons; we are true men." They stood in the presence of him they had rejected, and, as it were, killed, and could talk of being true men. What a picture of this world! — men can reject Christ, and then can pretend to keep the law.

They say they are twelve brethren; the youngest is with their father; and then, meaning Joseph himself, they say, "And one is not." The cord is pulled a little tighter. Except they mend and fetch their youngest brother, they shall not go hence; and, instead of getting corn, they are all put into prison. And thus God seems sometimes to treat the awakened soul roughly; instead of giving salvation, the poor, anxious one finds himself in Joseph's prison. But on the third day — for resurrection is the only door out of Joseph's prison — "This do, and live," says Joseph; let a surety be given, and you are set free, till you bring your younger brother. But, oh! what bitter anguish guilt gives. "And they said one to another, We are surely guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us." Oh! how bitter is the grief of the heart! When guilt weighs upon the conscience, you look back upon past sins with indescribable remorse. But this is not true repentance; that has not come yet.

Rough as Joseph appeared to be to them, there was nothing but love in his heart; "He turned himself about from them and wept." They little thought it was Joseph, for he spoke to them by an interpreter. However hard God's ways may seem to the trembling, guilty soul, He is love. When Jesus beheld the city, He wept. The substitute is bound before their eyes, and they receive their sacks full of corn. All seems over; they have got their corn, and they depart from that mysterious governor. A moment's relief. This often happens to the soul. You have certainly got a blessing; perhaps your heart feels as full of it as their sacks were full of corn. But you have not fully repented yet; the question of sin is not settled yet; you are not truly and fully converted yet.

Ah, it was a sore stroke, when one opened his sack at the inn, and espied his money. Their distress was greater than ever. "And their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done to us?" Yes, in a moment, even when you thought you had clean done with sin, some circumstance opened the sack mouth; the remembrance of sin comes rushing like a mountain torrent; oh! the heart fairly fails. Thus must heart and flesh fail, when conscience is brought into the light of the presence of God. Satan roars at such a time, "God is against thee, thou vile sinner." Well is it, at such a dead thrust at the soul, to remember that Satan is a liar. But, alas! at those times, one seems ready to swallow every word he says.

They return to their father. The sorrowing old man is overwhelmed with grief when he bears their account. "All these things are against me," said he. Little did he think how all these things were for him. The only thing before his mind was the death of his Joseph.

Still the famine was sore in the land. To Egypt's governor again they must go. Poor, troubled, tossed soul! to Jesus you must go. What trouble of conscience! Benjamin must be given up; Judah becomes surety for ever. All this must be the experience of the soul that only knows the death of Jesus. Well, if they must go, the old man says they must take the best of the land — a little balm, a little honey, spices and nuts, myrrh and almonds, and double money. Ah, how like Cain's religion; he thinks God wants man's best fruits. They knew not Joseph; man knows not God. He makes fresh resolutions, fresh efforts at self-righteousness; a little balm, a little honey; and it is a little, is it not?

They came with their gifts, but found Joseph's feast. It seemed so strange. Brought into his house, they are afraid, they think he seeks occasion against them to fall upon them. But instead of deserved wrath, it is "Peace be unto you, fear not," and gave them water to wash their feet. Joseph comes home at noon. Again they bow to him; his heart is moved with yearning love; he says, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? is he yet alive?" What he must have felt, and they knew him not. They say he is alive, and they bowed down their heads. But when he saw his long-loved brother Benjamin, he could hold no longer; he said, "God be gracious to thee, my son." He made haste, and went out, and wept. What a picture of Divine grace! Oh! my reader, if you knew the yearning heart of God!

Joseph still refrains himself. They all sit down to the feast. Ah! see what man is. "They drank, and were merry with him." Sin is forgotten again, and they are merry. But this is not conversion. Sin may be forgotten for a time; you may feast at the board of the Lord; but forgetting and forgiveness are two very different things. Their sacks are filled again. There may be repeated blessing, and still ignorance how sin is for ever put away. The cup is found in Benjamin's sack; this fairly breaks them down. "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." Ah! such is now the overwhelming remembrance of sin, that they give up all attempts to clear self, and yield themselves up as guilty. Judah wishes to be surety for his brother. There was, doubtless, a great change in them from that day when Joseph was cast into the pit. There may be any amount of anguish, sorrow, and remorse, as it was with Judas Iscariot, and still no true conversion, and no true change of mind.

What did change their minds? Let us now look at chap. 14.

We have seen them brought to utterly despair of clearing themselves; they are guilty before God.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren, and he wept aloud."

What would be their thoughts when he said, "I am Joseph?" Can you imagine their astonishment? What a change of mind; every thought in their hearts would be turned. The very Joseph whom they had cast into the pit, of whom they had long spoken as dead, now alive again, now before them, lord of all Egypt. They could not speak; they were troubled; and well they might be at his presence. Justice could have demanded their lives, but, in grace, "Joseph said, Come near to me, I pray you." And Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Joseph who was as dead is alive, and makes himself known. This gives them the true change of mind about Joseph.

Oh! how like the revelation of the dead and risen Christ to Saul of Tarsus; the one was as sudden as the other. Saul was on his murderous mission to Damascus, his heart filled with hatred to the name and followers of Jesus. Suddenly a light above the brightness of the sun shines round about him; a voice speaks, and says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Astounded at these words, Saul replies, "Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus."

Joseph said to his brethren, "I am Joseph." Jesus said to Saul, "I am Jesus;" and the effect was the same. The moment Saul heard those few words, "I am Jesus," every thought in his heart was

turned. It was the revelation of the living Joseph that changed their minds; it is the revelation of the risen Jesus that alone gives the true change of mind not to be repented of.

“And they came near.” Blessed place for the poor, guilty sinner to be brought to God. Oh my fellow-sinner, think, oh! think, what grace is this! The God against whom you have sinned is the one to go to, and so near. Ah, He knows all your sins, only don’t seek to justify self; own you are guilty; own it to Him; He knows you cannot clear yourself, He knows you are guilty. And now hear the words of Joseph; he said, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sent into Egypt.” He says, “God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity on the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.”

Truly this in most precious as a type of the risen Christ. Peter, speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, says, “Him being delivered by the determinate council of God, ye have taken, and, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up,” Acts 2:22-36. He then shows that this was God’s promise to David; indeed, his purpose in all Scripture. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.” Thus that same Joseph whom they cast into the pit, God made lord of all Egypt. That same Jesus whom men crucified, God hath made Lord of heaven and earth. The making known of Joseph changed his brethren’s minds; the making known of the risen Jesus gave repentance and remission of sins to three thousand souls. But if, in this shadow, God purposed by Joseph to save much people alive, what I ask, was God’s wondrous purpose of grace in the death and raising again of Jesus from the dead. The purpose of God in resurrection is so little thought of in this day, I scarce know how to speak sufficiently plain to be understood. Take this illustration: — a gardener has his vinery so blighted, the vines are so dead, that he cannot possibly have fruit from the old vines. Knowing this, he purposes, and brings in, an entire new vine, new kind, new stock, that he may have fruit. He does not purpose to improve the old vines, but to set them aside, and have an entire new vinery. The old vinery of Adam’s race is blighted with sin. God sees it so dead in trespasses and sins, that He knows fruit there cannot be found in it. Man is ruined, dead, blighted with sin. Now, this is the long forgotten truth. God did not purpose, in sending his beloved Son, to improve the old vinery, but to set it aside in death, even the death of Jesus, proving, that as Jesus died for all, then were all dead. And thus, in raising Jesus from among the dead, God has begun a new vinery, so to speak; an entire new creation, having entirely new life, new nature, everything new, and everything of God. Men could not make a greater mistake then they do in trying to improve the old vinery. In Christ risen from the dead, the beginning of this glorious new creation, all is perfect and everlasting; and if any man is in Him, old things are passed away, all things become new, and all things of God. 2 Corinthians 5:14-18.

If Joseph had not been sent into Egypt to preserve life, they must have perished in the famine. If the gardener had not got a new vine, the vinery would have perished with the blight. If Christ had not died, and risen again, the whole world would have perished through sin. If Christ had lived for ever in the flesh, though in the midst of this world’s blighted vinery, He could not have improved its condition; He must needs die, and be the first born from the dead, or all must perish. Nothing could atone for sin, but his precious blood. Nothing could give life to the dead but the life of the risen One, who destroyed death by dying.

Now, mark, all blessing in this type flows from this risen Joseph. He is lord of all Egypt. His brethren are not only forgiven — and, oh! how forgiven! “He kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them.” What assurance of forgiveness. But this was not all, they were blessed with earthly blessings in the land if Goshen. Grace not only forgave, but abounded over all their sin. My fellow-believer, we have not only forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, but God hath blessed us in this risen Christ with all blessings in heavenly places. Now, for your everlasting comfort and joy, do ponder this well: — that vile as was man in putting Jesus to death, yet was it really God who foreordained Him to this very death of the cross, for the express purpose of saving you with a great salvation. View the amazing death of the cross as a transaction, entirely between God and his Son, for thy salvation. God sent him for the very purpose; Jesus died for the very purpose of cleansing thee from all sin, and bringing thee into an entirely new creation, where sin can never, never be; where the blight of death, or breath of pollution can never come: oh, blessed fact, sin can never mar God’s new creation, in the risen Christ. Oh, wondrous, stupendous grace. God’s eternal purpose, God’s greatest work is thus shadowed forth in the history of Joseph. That very Jesus, who died on the cross, who lay in the cold grave, is now the head of the new creation; exalted above all principalities and powers; “Head over all to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Oh! the eternal mystery, kept hid from ages. Poor, dead sinners of the Gentiles raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Oh! what a triumph to God. Look at the old creation, and then at the new. Look from Adam, its beginning; to the cross, its end. (Ah, and there is another end for such as despise that cross — the Lake of Fire —) sad scene of sin and misery, doom and death. Now look at the new, heavenly, holy creation, “Christ the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” Oh! view it rise and swell; every soul that passes from death unto life filling up the heavenly body. When Joseph’s brethren were come, it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. What must be the joy of God in the new risen creation. There is joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth. But when that bright resurrection morn shall come, that morn without a cloud — so near — when the whole redeemed Church shall rise to meet the Lord; ah! then what a scene of unmingled delight. God will have his infinite joy, his eternal rest. Oh! bright and glorious prospect, view my soul that fair creation. The delight of God shall beam in every eye, shall ravish every heart. Desolate, weary pilgrim, thou, shalt be there. The love that died for thee, the love that is gone to prepare thy place in those mansions of light will, oh, yes, He will bring thee there. Press on! press on! what is this world’s vain store to thee?

It grieved Joseph, when the misgiving hearts of his brethren said, “Peradventure Joseph will hate us.” How often does Satan whisper those dark peradventures. He says, “Perhaps after all, God will deal with you as you deserve.” They had not rested fully and alone in the love of Joseph. They had a secret leaning on the life of the old man, their father. This is too often the case with the believer, some secret trust in the old man, its religiousness, or its morality. The heart has not been fully brought to trust in the love of God, in Jesus alone. Then our old nature is found to be sin itself. Then follow misgivings, and terrible conflict. We are compelled to own ourselves vile, and utterly dead. When Jacob was dead, Joseph’s brethren drank still more deeply of his kindness and love. And when we are stripped of everything not a particle left of old self in which we can trust; then it is sweet indeed, to find the unchanged love of our Jesus still the same. Oh! Lamb of God, thou art worthy of our entire, our only trust — thine is love beyond a brother’s.

Once more, reader. Have you thus learnt the love of Jesus? Do you know Him? Have the thoughts of your heart been thus changed about Jesus? Have you ever found yourself in his presence, as the brethren of Joseph? Have you heard the words of Jesus, and believed on God who sent Him? then He says “You have everlasting life.” Oh! fear not, you shall not come into condemnation. You are passed from death unto life. No man can be said to have true repentance, or a true change of mind, until thus brought alone to Christ. You need no other but Jesus to speak to; no creature heart so kind as His. Oh! have you owned your sin to Him, to Him alone? Have you thus been brought to Him? Oh! poor doubting one, look again at this lovely picture, this beautiful illustration of the meeting of a poor sinner with Jesus the risen Christ. God give you now to hear his own sweet words of untold love.

Every man had to go out whilst Joseph made himself known to his brethren. This at once changed their minds. His forgiving love melted their hearts. “They were troubled at his presence.” But he said, “Be not grieved.” He was a lovely type of the risen Jesus. When the risen Jesus made himself known, and stood in the midst of His disciples, He said, “Peace be unto you,” but they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. But now, mark his tender words. He said unto them, “Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet,” Luke 24:36. Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead. He says, “Peace be unto you.” Do you believe Him? Forgiveness, perfect, everlasting, certain forgiveness is preached to you. What love to the guilty and lost. Joseph had not one angry word. Jesus would not have us feel one troubled thought.

Vile as was man’s act in crucifying Him; vile as have been our sins in rejecting Him; yet, now He makes himself known in perfect love. Oh! look at His wounded hands and feet. Ah, we! our sins gave agony and death to Him. His death gives peace everlasting peace to us. The peace of Joseph’s brethren was the peace that Joseph gave them in his own presence. There was nothing but peace in his heart to them. For this Jesus died, that we might have peace through his blood. It is not our happy feelings that give peace, it is the blood of Jesus. He has made peace for us. He is our peace. He died for our sins. He rose for our justification. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Joseph wept upon his brethren. This was enough to melt the hardest heart. They deserved the severest wrath — he showed them the freest love. Poor, weary, doubting one, is not this a true picture of God? Did not the father fall upon the prodigal’s neck? was there one angry look, or one hard word? Ah, when God is thus revealed to the poor soul, trembling beneath the burden of guilt, then what a change of mind. How melting, the certainty of pardoning love. God would have us perfectly happy in his presence — not a doubt — not a cloud — not a spot remains. If God appointed Joseph’s sorrows to save much people alive, has He not, by the death of Jesus, brought an innumerable company of lost sinners into the life and glory of the risen Christ. This was God’s eternal purpose. This, is God’s greatest work. Words fail to express the greatness of that mighty work which He wrought in Christ to us-ward, when He raised him from the dead. Nothing can be more certain, than that the very place God hath given the risen Christ, is the place He hath given to all believers in Him. Joseph was not ashamed to own his brethren before Pharaoh. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. Have you, my reader, believed this wondrous love — this wondrous power? Then, you are risen with him. What manner of persons ought we to be? Dead with Christ — risen with Christ — one with Him for ever. Well might the Apostle say, “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." — Romans 12:1-21.

What a change it must have been to Joseph's brethren; starved with famine, oppressed with guilt, seeking a little food. Read over again chap. 45, and mark the unbounded kindness of Joseph. What full forgiveness! what provision for the way! changes of raiment to every man. What joy in his presence! Yes, the beggars and aliens, are the brothers and joint heirs with Joseph, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.

Glowing as is the picture, it is but a shadow of the heavenly relationship in which the believer now stands.

Once an alien, without God, an enemy by wicked works, trying to hide and forget sin; then a convicted, trembling, guilty, wretched, famished sinner, in the presence of the God of righteousness, yet God of grace. A person once said to me, in London, after hearing the subject of Joseph, "Oh, that I know for certain that God loves me as Joseph loved his brethren." I replied, "If you did, that alone could not give you peace; you must know that God not only loves you in purest grace, that you have not a particle more merit than Joseph's brethren had; but, also, that God is infinitely righteous, through, the death of Jesus, in showing you this unbounded love."

Yes, believer, this amazing change in thy condition and relationship could only be brought about by the tremendous judgment due to thy sins being first laid on Jesus, the righteous One. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," 1 Peter 3:18. What a change! Brought to God. Once, with all the world, dead in trespasses and sins; now brought with Jesus from among the dead. What a new existence, new creation! One with Christ, "Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead," Colossians 1:18.

Yes, happy fellow-believers, "We are the children of God; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Romans 8:16-17. Our standing before God, in Christ, the beginning of the new creation, is "glorious," without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; holy, and without blame. Yea, so unspeakably real is the oneness of the risen Lord, and the risen Church, that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Oh, amazing grace! "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Yea, "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ," Ephesians 2:6.

Oh! my fellow-believers, if this is our standing in the risen Christ, what ought our walk to be? As surely as the rejected Joseph was manifested, in due time, the lord of all Egypt, so surely the rejected Jesus will, very, very soon, be manifested, in brightest glory, Lord of heaven and earth. I have no doubt this type will then be fulfilled as to his brethren, the Jews; they shall look on Him whom they pierced, and shall say, "What are those wounds in thy hands?" And when they hear those tender words, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends," then the conversion of Israel will be as sudden as the change in Joseph's brethren. But, great as will be their earthly blessing and glory, what is it to be compared with the heavenly glory of the Church! "Then shall the world know that the Father hath loved us, even as He hath loved Christ," John 17:23.

Blessed Jesus, by faith, we now see Thee crowned with glory and honour. But, oh! come quickly, and manifest thy glory; then every knee shall bow, O Lord, to Thee.

C. S.

Fast now wears the weary night, The night of sin and sorrow;

Soon shall break in glory bright The long expected morrow.

Wake, awake, and sleep no more, Farewell to the long, long night;

Turn from earth, and upwards soar, Watch to see the glory bright!

Brighter far than midday sun, Sudden as the flash of light;

Hark! the sound, the victory’s won, Millions rise in glory bright! Not a spot of sin is there;

All are clothed in purest white;

Now they meet Him in the air, Meet their Lord in glory bright!

Sat on thrones, with crowns of gold, What a rapturous, wondrous sight!

How shall all thy praise be told?

Jesus, come in glory bright!

We shall see Thee as Thou art, We shall know, in heavenly light, All Thy love, and never part;

Come, dear Lord, in glory bright!

Great Stones and costly "And he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God." — 1 Chronicles 22:2.

I need not say that the building of Solomon’s Temple is one of the most interesting studies of antiquity; and when that building on Mount Moriah is seen as the type of God’s present heavenly building, it becomes infinitely more interesting. In this building, then, the first thing that presents itself is this: David, the father, provides beforehand the materials of this temple; even the stones, the iron, and brass in abundance, without weight. He says, "I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold" — a talent of gold being worth about £5475, the value of this gold would be £547,500,000 sterling — "and a thousand thousand talents of silver." A talent of silver being worth upwards of £342, the silver would be worth more than £342,000,000 sterling. Thus David’s provision for this costly building, in gold and silver, was upwards of £889,000,000 sterling, besides an incalculable quantity of brass, iron, wood, and stone. Such was David’s provision for this costly temple. Besides, the riches of Solomon, the son, were quite equal to those of the father David. 1 Kings 10:1-29 gives some idea of Solomon’s riches. The gold alone that came to him in a year was equal to £3,646,350. (Ver. 14.)

More than 150,000 men were employed in the rearing of this wondrous building. (1 Kings 5:15.) "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house." (1 Kings 5:17.)

Now what do "great stones" mean? A builder in this country would consider a stone three feet every way a great stone. But we find these great foundation, stones, sawn and hewn, were indeed "costly stones, even great stones; stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits." (1 Kings

7:10-11.) A cubit, at the lowest, is one foot six inches: it is the measure from the elbow of a man to the end of his fingers. Thus these great stones were at least twelve feet every way, and fifteen feet every way. If you just cast it up, you will find they weighed about 250 tons each. There was one stone in the temple, after its restoration, thirty feet by thirteen by seven and a half feet. There are similar great stones in the ruins at Balbec, which may have been built by Solomon, called the "House of the forest of Lebanon." Solomon built three houses, which answer, I doubt not, to the threefold glory of Christ; and as the same sized stones formed the foundation of each, (1 Kings 7:11,) so is Christ the foundation-stone, alike, of the Church of God in heavenly places, the future kingdom of Israel, and of millennial blessing to the whole world. The cross we shall find to be the foundation of all. To return to that which occupies us at present, the temple. Vast quantities of cedar trees were brought from Lebanon. But for many centuries there has been a difficulty as to where and how these great costly stones were obtained. A dear friend, who lives near Jerusalem, told me a few years ago that there are immense caves under Jerusalem. And the quantity of broken stones, but especially some great stones, half cut, but never finished, makes it clear that these great stones were got out of pits, prepared in this manner: the top was levelled and marked out, then the sides were cut by drifts, then the under side cut. But just think of the greatness of the labour required, in raising these great stones of the pit out to daylight, and moving them, and putting them in their place. Isaiah may have referred to these caverns when he speaks of the stones of the pit. (Isaiah 14:19.) The temple was built on a rock, by the side of a frightful precipice. We are told by historians that 600 feet of foundation work had to be built to the level, on one side, where Solomon’s porch stood. The foundation stones were dovetailed, or mortised, in a most wonderful manner into the very rock. The joint was so finely wrought that it could scarcely be found. Thus they were rooted, and grounded, and built, into the very rock. And the house, when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building." (1 Kings 6:7.) Thus the silent growth of this earthly temple set forth the predestined heavenly building of God. As David the father gave the materials to Solomon the son, even so Jesus says, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my hands." (John 10:1-42.) And again, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John 17:2.) "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me! and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." (6.) "And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." (6:39.)

Yes, he would be a foolish builder who began to build, and did not know whether he had materials to finish. And it is blessed to remember that God, the great master builder, foreknew every stone chosen, and precious, that is built and shall be built in the heavenly temple. Is it not most plain that those great stones, 250 tons weight, never got out of the pit by any effort or work of their own? As we say, they would never have seen daylight if they had not been drawn out. You might just as well have put a ladder of ten steps, and told these stones to climb up it and get out of darkness, as set the ten commandments before a dead sinner, and tell him to try and climb them, and so get out of the pit of sin. Jesus said to those who had long been trying this plan, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44.) In the judgment of a builder, there would be no way of getting those great stones out of the pit, but by going into the pit, hewing and drawing them out. And all that were drawn out were out,

and no others. Now, does not the cross of our Lord Jesus reveal God's judgment of this matter as to sinners? If David counted the cost of this earthly temple in gold and silver, God also counted the cost. The price was the blood of the Lamb. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18.)

If those were great stones and costly, surely believers are great stones and costly. "He spared not his only-begotten Son, but gave him up for us all." I am not much of a mason; but I should say a stone fifteen feet cube would cost no trifle. And, fellow-believer, fellow-stone in the living temple, think what thou hast cost.

Thus God saw no way of raising sinners from the dead but by sending His Son to die for them. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." And having died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was numbered with the dead. There was the end of all judgment due to our sins. The full ransom-price was paid. Despised, indeed, He was of men: yea, never was a stone so rejected by masons, as was this stone by Judah's builders. But oh! what were God's thoughts of His blessed Son as He lay in the grave? God saw Him the foundation-stone. As our substitute, all our sins had been laid on Him. "So Christ bare the sins of many." And now, infinite atonement being made by His precious blood, this stone, rejected by man, was raised from the dead by God. Therefore "this is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12.) Language cannot find words to express "the exceeding greatness of his power to uswardwho believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when be raised him from the dead." (Ephesians 1:19-20.) The raising of those great stones was, indeed, a grand figure of this; but what would have been the power required, if every stone of the temple had to have been raised up together with the first foundation-stone? This heavenly temple, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, was chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Yet every stone in this living temple, was once dead in trespasses and sins — ah! dead as stones; "But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-6.) Now, whether we think of what we were as lost, dead, buried sinners, or what was the tremendous undertaking for one to stand our substitute, and bear the full, unmixed wrath of God due to our sins — or of what we shall for ever be as living stones in the heavenly temple — surely the raising up of Christ, the foundation-stone, from the dead, and in Him the redeemed Church, and on Him its eternal destiny — the destiny of every saved sinner through eternal ages — I say, surely the raising of Christ, the foundation-stone, was the greatest event, the greatest work, that ever God wrought. Oh! vastly strange that this, God's greatest work, should be so little thought of in our day.

Now the temple was built on the rock of Moriah — the place where divine judgment was stayed by the altar of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; for there the Lord answered by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering: (1 Chronicles 21:26-27 :) even so the voluntary offering of Jesus, and the shedding of His precious blood, is the foundation of every sinner saved by grace, from the deserved wrath of God. One thing is certain, that where the foundation-stone was laid, there the temple was built. Standing on that bold rock of Moriah, "the house that is to be builded for the Lord

must be exceeding magnifical of fame, and of glory, throughout all countries." Now, when God raised Jesus, the foundation-stone, from the dead, where did He place Him? "Far above all principality and power," &c. (Ephesians 1:21.) "And he is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Colossians 1:18.) God did not raise him from the dead to improve the old creation, but to be the beginning of the new creation. Not to build an earthly house, or earthly society, but a heavenly temple. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" — "Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places inChrist Jesus." That word in Christ Jesus is very precious. It is very blessed to see this in the type; all those great stones were covered with cedar wood. "And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers. All was cedar: there was no stone seen." (1 Kings 6:18.) Thus in the heavenly building there is not a sinner seen. Every saved one, though once the greatest sinner, now fairly wainscotted in Christ — hid in Christ. And not only was the stone covered with cedar wood, but this overlaid with pure gold. "So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold. And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house." (Ver. 22.) It is written, fellow-believer, "Ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:10.) It was not the stones themselves that were seen, but the gold upon them: so it is not ourselves, but Christ upon us. Yes; the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom we are complete. And all within, how perfect! Beautiful carvings of knops and of open flowers; all covered with pure gold.

You observe all was done to these stones. Not one atom did they do. They were hewn, they were drawn out, they were built in the temple, they were covered with cedar. The pure gold was put upon them. It is so with the poor sinner. Salvation from beginning to end is all of God. Look at the poor prodigal. Not an atom of merit. The father met him as he was, fell upon his neck, and kissed him. He had not to buy a new robe. No, the robe was ready, the shoes were ready, the ring was ready. Like the gold that covered the stones, so with this new best robe, he had not even to put it on. No, the father said, "Put it on him." Just so with Joshua, when the filthy garments were taken away. God said, "Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." "So they put a fair mitre upon his head." Yea, the new creation work is all of God. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17.) The fact is, all this seems too good to be true, and the poor heart is so slow to believe God. Yet true it is, and if the temple was for glory throughout all countries, this heavenly building of God is for God’s glory throughout all ages, predestinated "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved," (Ephesians 1:6.) "That in the ages to come be might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus;" (2:7,) yea, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." (3:10.)

If the change was great, as every stone was drawn out of the pit of darkness and placed in that temple of splendour and dazzling light, what is the change when a sinner is taken from the dungeon of darkness, "and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:20-21.)

O! what thousands of poor sinners have been built, into this heavenly temple of late. Silently and swiftly is God taking out the appointed stones.

"View the vast building, see it rise; The work how great! the plan how wise!

O wondrous fabric! power unknown! That rears it on the living stone." To every believer God does not say, "Ye shall be built, but ye are built." Oh that every believing reader may enter into the full joy of being complete in Christ! For God has made such a blessed finish of it, within and without.

It may be asked, If salvation is so entirely of God, what has the person so saved to do? Well certainly he can do no more for his salvation, than the great stones and costly could do, for their hewing and drawing out of the pit. But let us turn to a passage in 1 Peter 2:4-10 : "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." It is God who hath laid this chief cornerstone, elect, precious, "And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." O! surely the more I see what God hath made Him to be to me, the more precious He will be; as it is written, "Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." Yes, here is the grand test to every heart — what is Christ to you? Can my reader say, He is everything to me: before Him I had nothing, and after Him I can have nothing. I do not ask what profession you make. Every religious builder who in trying to improve humanity, in one way or other, makes light of Christ. This whole world is one vast pit of darkness, sin, and death. God has no more thought in the gospel of improving this dark pit, than Solomon had, when taking the great stones out of the cavern of perpetual darkness. He took out the stones. God is now taking out of the world sinners for Himself. Now man disallows this. He sees no need of a new creation. He says, Why not build up and improve the old. And thus the new-creation temple, built on the risen Christ, from the dead, is almost forgotten amongst the builders; and instead of waiting for the coming of the Lord, and the manifestation of this heavenly building, men are vainly dreaming that Christianity will gradually improve this dark cavern of sin. The masons of Solomon would not have made a greater mistake, if, instead of going on, hewing and drawing, they had commenced building in the dark cavern.

No, believer. I ask thee to look at yonder risen Christ, raised from among the dead. There see God’s chosen foundation stone. Is He precious to thee? An thou built on Him? The faith that rests in Him shall never be confounded. To thee the Spirit of God says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (v. 9.) This is what the saved sinner should do.

Nothing can be more pleasing to God than thus to show forth his praise, who hath taken us, like the stones of the pit, out of darkness: and as they bore the shining plates of gold that reflected and displayed the riches and magnificence of their great builder, even so may Christ be seen on each of us, reflecting and shewing forth the exceeding riches of divine grace. O! what grace shone in all the ways of Jesus! Even when crucified on the accursed tree, still grace shone forth: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And that was a bright rejection of Christ, when they stoned Stephen to death. He said, as it were, "Do not say anything about it, lay not this sin to their charge." O! for more of the bright shining of Christ in all and on all our ways. God would have us

enter into the full joy of being able to give Him thanks, "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14.) Is this my reader's joy? Can you thus give God all the glory? Are you in the pit or in the temple covered with sin, or covered with Christ? Ah! it was of no use, though out, and hewn, and sawn on one side or every side, if still left in the pit; no place in the temple; no plates of gold; no knops and open flowers. Those half-cut stones in the caverns of Jerusalem are solemn warning. You may have long felt the axe and the saw of conviction, but are you out of the cavern? This must be the work of God. Paul planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. "So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." God is the builder. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:5-16.) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Now God's way of getting stones is in this manner: the Spirit of God taketh the axe of conviction and strikes deep; the word of God is the power, unto salvation, to every one that believeth. I met a poor old sinner the other day, who thought that no poor stone ever had the chiselling he had had in the pit of sin. The Spirit of God enabled me to set the death and resurrection of Christ before him; and whilst quoting these words out he came, drawn out and delivered by the power of God. "Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." O! I love to see great stones drawn out of the pit. The old man said, "How blessed it will be to go home knowing I am saved." "Yes, indeed," I said. "And hearken to these words of Jesus, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.'" (John 5:24.) Yea, just as Lazarus heard the word of Jesus when down in the sepulchre of death, so was this old man "born again by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23.) The hour is come "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." (John 5:25.)

If my reader has never yet heard that voice, may this be the hour. God grant that from this moment you may yield yourself up to God, as a stone in the hands of the mason, and clay in the hands of the potter.

We must not, however, carry the figure too far; for, whilst a sinner is, as to that which is good, as dead as a stone, yet, for that which is evil, he is terribly alive. Yes; a live rebel against God — a voluntary, wilful rejecter of Christ, the only foundation-stone. "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matthew 21:42-44.) In the day of judgment you will not be condemned, because you had been in the pit of darkness, but because you refused to be taken out. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, (the dark pit,) and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The remembrance of the love of God in sending His Son to this dark pit of sin, will be like the worm that dieth not. Oh, what unutterable remorse! Was it not in love to the bitten Israelites, that God bid Moses lift up the serpent in the wilderness? Even so has the Son of man been lifted up. For sinners Jesus died — lost, ungodly sinners. Yes; it was these God so loved. If He had only bid you

get out of the pit yourself, you might have said, How could I, since I am as helpless as a stone. But He sent His Son, and you have rejected Him: you have refused to be saved. Oh! it would have been blessed had your heart been broken on Him with the sense of His love. But if not, it must be crushed before Him in the judgment with the sense of His everlasting wrath. A very little while, and the end of the present scene shall come. The stone cut out of the mountains shall smite the nations, and they shall become "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor." (Daniel 2:34-45.) This terrible day is closed by those solemn words, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:32-46.)

There is one point of contrast, however, betwixt the earthly temple and the heavenly building we must notice. To have seen those huge blocks of stone so built in the rock, one would have thought they would have stood for ever. But the time came when the Chaldeans prevailed against them. And, again, when restored in later times, as our blessed Lord foretold, the Romans prevailed, until not one stone was left upon another. Where are those two pillars, "Jachin," which means, "he shall establish," and "Boaz," "in it is strength," though they were such brass pillars as the like were never cast? They stood at least twenty-seven feet high, and six feet diameter; yet they are removed and gone, and not a trace of this wondrous building remains. But Jesus, speaking of Himself, the only foundation, says, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of bell shall not prevail against it." Jesus did not say to Peter, Thou art this Rock; but, Thou art a stone. Yes; Peter, a stone, needed to be built on the rock as much as any man. He found this need as much in the high priest’s hall, as on the swelling billows. Christ is the foundation-rock; and that Rock is not at Rome, but in heaven. And where the foundation is, there must the building be. Ask a mason if this is not so. Yes; God is not building His Church at Rome, but in heavenly places in Christ. Against the Church, so high, so blest, so secure, the gates of bell shall not prevail. How can they? Eve was not made or built of the flesh of Adam; but she was built of his very bone, and that bone so near his heart. And the Church, the spotless bride of Christ, all glorious within and without, is also built in Christ, so that "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Ephesians 5:30.) Some talk about Christ letting the saint slip through His fingers. Nay, the devil would have to pull Christ’s fingers off before one of His little ones could perish. No, when time shall be no more, this holy building of God shall be seen "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Ah, then it will not be like the plates of gold covering the stones. We shall be changed. We shall be like Him, fashioned like unto His glorious body, like unto a stone most precious — no speck of sin, no dull shade of grief, no cloud of sorrows — clear as crystal. This, my fellow-stone, is our eternity. Highest archangels will be ravished with wonder. "The streets of the city pure gold; as it were transparent glass." Our feet, that now tread the dirty streets of this sin-defiled earth, shall soon tread the golden streets of the city of God. What heart can conceive what it will be to be there? No temple there to shut in and hide the glory. No; God and the Lamb are there. They are the temple of it. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And all thine, my fellow-believer. Yes; though too bright for mortal eyes. Yet wait a little longer. A few more struggles, a few more victories over self, sin, and Satan, through Him that strengtheneth. Yes, though "Jachin" and "Boaz" be removed and gone, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God. And I will write upon him my new name." Thus speaks Jesus, the faithful and true

witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Hark! he also speaks to God. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Blessed Jesus, thy will shall be done: we shall soon be with thee. We ask no more. Thou couldst not ask more than for us than to be with thee.

There is but one point more and I close. (Read 1 Chronicles 22:17-19.) Now, if David thus commanded the princes of Israel to help Solomon, saying, "Is not the Lord your God with you, and hath he not given you rest on every side?" how much more hath God given us rest and perfect peace through the blood of the Lamb. And now he says, "Go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel to every creature; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end." If my reader has not this "rest on every side," then do not think to get it by preaching or doing; let me point thee to Him who gives it, even to Jesus. But if you have peace with God, then "set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise, therefore, and build."

What a privilege to be a fellow-labourer with God. There is work for every mason, and every man who has found rest to his own soul. Some may be felling proud cedars, others striking with the stern axe of conviction down in the deep mine, others drawing with strong cords of love divine, and others fitting together the building. Do not say I can do nothing. "Is not the Lord your God with you?" "Arise, therefore, and build."

God give us more willingness of heart, more singleness of eye, more simplicity of faith; and as the building grows in silent power, yea, when the top stone shall be brought with shouting, to Him be all the praise.

C.S.

God and the Lamb — ’tis well, I know that source divine Of joy and love no tongue can tell, Yet know that all is mine.

There in effulgence bright, Saviour and Guide, with thee I’ll walk and in thy heavenly light, Whiter my robe shall be.

There in th’ unsullied way Which His own hand hath dress’d; My feet press on where brightest day Shines forth on all the rest. But who that glorious blaze Of living light shall tell? Where all His brightness God displays And the Lamb’s glories dwell.

(There only to adore; My soul its strength may find, Its life, its joy for evermore, By sight, nor sense, defined.) God and the Lamb shall there The light and temple be, And radiant hosts for ever share, The unveil’d mystery.

Full Redemption At the earnest request of many beloved labourers (in the present harvest of souls) to write a series of tracts for young converts, I now have much joy, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, beloved young Christians, in leading your thoughts, in my first paper to you, to that all-important subject, full redemption. Before reading, however, will you lift up your hearts in prayer, that our God and Father may bless it for establishing and confirming your faith, and that He by His Holy Spirit may enable me, from time to time, to give you His own precious truth, in all faithfulness and love? And will you also ask that many who read these papers, who are not saved, may by reading be awakened and converted to God?

Well, beloved young Christian, then, you have been brought to God, your sins are forgiven through believing the blessed testimony of God. You have redemption through the blood of Christ. You may not know, however, but you will soon need to know, the greatness, the fulness, the completeness of that Redemption. As a young child learns much by pictures, so the young Christian may learn much of the completeness and blessedness of divine truth by the types or pictures of the Old Testament. If you turn to the Book of Exodus you will find an exact picture of the way in which God has brought you to Himself. Even Moses, (drawn out), when he was thus raised from the river of death, was a shadow of Him who was to be raised out of death; the first to rise from among the dead, that He might be the risen Deliverer of His people.

Mark the condition of the people, (read chap. 3) crushed with the cruel oppression of Egypt's slavery: groaning beneath the iron rod of Pharaoh. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmaster; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and large." (Exodus 3:7-8.) Is not this man's condition everywhere, bond-slave of Satan? How fearful the misery which has come upon the whole race of man through sin. Behind the fair surface of human society, what an hideous reality of woe. Man believed the enemy, doubted the goodness of God, and fell, and deep indeed was that fall — from the happiness of the garden to the misery of Satan's Egypt. But God heard the cry of misery and affliction. Could there be a more thrilling picture of God for us than this? He came down to deliver, when there was no friend for poor man. When there was none to help, His right hand brought salvation. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9.) I wish you to think much of this wondrous love. There does not appear to have been one thing to draw the heart of God towards the children of Israel, but their very bondage, and sorrow, and His own covenant love. If you look at the end of chapter 2, they cry because of their bondage; but they do not look up to God, but God looked upon them. "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Yes, it was all of God — there was no merit in them. God heard, God looked, God came down to deliver. Blessed God, what love and pity thus to reveal Thyself the Friend of the oppressed! Has it not been exactly so, my dear young Christian, with your soul? God heard your groans; and what groans, throughout eternity, if God had not come down to save. I often think how Jesus died for our sins, so long before we were born, who live in these last days. Surely our redemption is entirely of God. It was not we who looked to God, but God who looked upon us. Yes, long before time began, God chose us in Christ, in whom we have redemption. Ephesians 1:1-23; Ephesians 2:1-22, are full of this blessed theme. There the soul is ravished with contemplating how redemption is of, and flows from, God's eternal love. But let us trace the picture a little further in Exodus. If you read chap. 4, you will find, that though God had thus revealed His compassion and love to Moses, and sent him with the commission of deliverance, yet the children of Israel were in total ignorance of this wondrous grace in store for them. It was not until after Moses had met Aaron, that the gospel of God's deliverance was preached to the people. "And the People believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." How little, when groaning in bondage, did you think of the loving purposes

of God. But when the Spirit of God met you, as Aaron met Israel, then faith came by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. In chapter 5 the condition of the people becomes worse and worse. They desire deliverance. They desire to worship. But their burthens become heavier. They lose their straw, and cannot do their work. The chapter ends with many stripes, but no deliverance. It is sore work often for the awakened soul, passing through this experience. Would make bricks, but has no straw; would do good, but evil is present. Longs to worship; strives hard to keep the tasks of the law: gets only stripes, but no deliverance. How long poor Luther was in this brick-kiln. Have you been there, reader? Then you know, as the officers did see, "They were in evil case after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task." The apostle well describes the struggles of the brick-kiln in Romans 7:1-25. Only bear well in mind, that the full redemption was not known in the brick-kilns of Egypt. Neither can full redemption be possibly known, to the soul passing through the experience, of which the brick-kilns of Egypt were but a picture. By the way, it is just possible my reader may be in this very state. You may have believed, so far as the Gospel has been made known to you; you may earnestly long to worship God; you may long to escape the bondage of sin and Satan; all this may be the yearnings of the new nature, but still you have not learnt the full redemption. You do not enjoy deliverance. You say, I have no strength to do what I want to do; just as the people had no straw. They had no straw, and you have no strength; and now Satan presents the tasks of the law, and says, these must be fulfilled. What a picture the officers of Pharaoh were of those who preach works for salvation. "Go, therefore, now, work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks." "Go, therefore, work; for except ye keep the law ye shall not be saved." How like in substance is the language of both. In chapter 6, mark that whilst the people were under the cruel burthens of the brick-kiln, the very promises of God failed to give relief. Read the tender words of God in verses 1 to 8. What words are these. "I have also heard the groaning." "I have remembered my covenant." "I am the Lord." "I will bring you out." "I will redeem you." "I will take you to me." "I will be to you a God." "I will bring you in unto the land." "I will give it you." "I am the Lord." I say, is it not most remarkable that, whilst under the tasks of the brick-kiln, these precious promises entirely failed to give relief. "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."

If my reader is a quickened soul, still under the bondage of the law, this is sure, sooner or later, to be your experience. You will say, Yes, the promises of God are very precious, but I cannot fulfil my task. I have tried to keep the law, but how often, nay, always, I fail. Ah! whilst ever the soul is standing on its own responsibility under law, all that it finds is failure, sin, anguish of spirit, and cruel bondage. And every child of God knows what a tendency there is thus to cling to self. But most surely this springs from ignorance of full redemption. No, my dear young Christian, we do not stand in our own responsibility under law, like the brickmakers of Egypt; but in the risen Christ, through whose precious blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. And now God puts forth His power in the plagues of Egypt, in His governmental judgment of the proud oppressors of His people; but still no deliverance. These are solemn pictures, as taken up again in the Book of Revelation, of the judgments of God in the last days. Ah! in that day the proud oppressors of God’s people shall be broken to pieces. But I return to our subject.

It may seem strange that so great a display of the Lord’s power should have been made in Egypt, and yet not one soul delivered. We see the very same thing in the Gospels. After all the rich display of power and grace in the blessed life of Jesus, yet at the close of His ministry amongst

men, had there been nothing more than this, He must have remained alone. Blessed as was that ministry, great as were those miracles, heavenly as was His teaching, holy as was His life, yet had He not died, the Just for the unjust, not one of all the sons of Adam could possibly have been saved. What a place this gives to redemption! It was so in Egypt! We have seen the tender compassion of God; we have heard His sweetest promises; we have witnessed His terrible power against the enemy. We have seen all this from chapters 3 to 11. But it is not until the blood of the Lamb is sprinkled, that one soul is delivered from bondage. How very exact is the teaching of God in these types.

Chapter 12. Do, my young reader, ponder well this deeply interesting chapter. May the Spirit of God so bless it to your soul, that it may be the beginning of months to you. Sure I am, it would be even so to many old Christians, did they but understand the full redemption it shadows forth.

Blind, indeed, must be those eyes, which cannot see that this chapter 12 sets before us the redemption blood of Christ; as saith the apostle, "For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7.) Just as the lamb without blemish, of the first year, was put up until the fourteenth day of the same month, and then killed by the whole assembly; even so did our Jesus, as the lamb without spot, offer Himself to God. Yes, on the very passover night, He gave Himself up for us. He said, "I have heartily desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15.) Was ever love like this? And the blood was to be sprinkled upon the door-posts of the house. And the Lord said to the children of Israel, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood I will pass over you." (Exodus 12:13.) And God kept His word. Not one person perished that night who believed His words about that blood. God said, "when I see the blood,I will pass over you." And, my young Christian, think what God sees in the blood of Christ! It is not what you see. We have as yet very limited views of the value of the atoning death of Jesus. But what does God see? The place of highest glory into which God has raised the once-bleeding Jesus, is the answer to what God sees in the value of the cross of Christ. Unmingled grace, flowing throughout eternity, to the millions of the redeemed, proclaims what God sees in the blood of Christ!

What a token of love, the blood of the Lamb! Whilst the death of Jesus shews out the righteousness of God in all its brightness; and surely also His wrath against sin, in all its blackness; yet what a token of love to the poor sinner! Dear reader, I often get comfort in thus thinking of God. His righteousness maintained, to the utmost, yet His love shewn to us in all its fulness. Why were the door-posts of Israel sprinkled with blood? God loved them. Why did He deliver every man, woman, and child who dwelt in those blood-sprinkled houses? He loved them. Now go up to that blood-sprinkled post; what do you react in that blood on the post? God is love. The blood speaks and says, I am the token of God’s love to you; but it also declares, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Draw near the cross; what do you read there? Blessed lessons, that shall never be fully learnt when eternal ages have rolled away. Oh! why this Holy One thus dying? Why those pierced hands and feet? Why no place to lay that precious head? They who loved Him are fled! They who hate Him are gnashing their teeth around Him? But, why this three hours’ darkness? Why is He forsaken of God? Why that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In those hours of darkness, forsaken of God, did Jesus pay the full price of redemption; and, bowing His head, cried, "It is finished." And thus died the Lamb of God! Yes, on that cross I read, "God is love." But I also read, "Without shedding of blood there is no

remission."

If our sins could not be remitted even to Him, when He bore them in His own body on the cross, then surely they cannot be remitted to us on any other ground, but through His precious blood. What a token of love to the sinner, then, is the cross of Christ! Sure token on which my soul rests for ever. And now to return. Was it not very striking, that though not one of the Hebrews were delivered from Egypt before this very night of the passover, on which the firstborn of Egypt were slain, yet not one was left in bondage after. Solemn truth! death there must be; death passed on Israel's lamb, their substitute; but death passed on Egypt's firstborn. Even so death and judgment have passed on my reader's Substitute, the Lamb of God; or death and eternal wrath must be your portion for ever.

Thus the blood was sprinkled on the door-posts, and thus the Lord brought them out of Egypt. Even so Christ has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And now, that the lesson of redemption may be fully learnt, let me ask you to read chap. 14. What a picture of Satan's last effort! The sea before — the whole army of Pharaoh behind. The people are terribly afraid. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." And what a deliverance the Lord wrought that day! The sea was divided, so that the children of Israel passed through on dry land. But that very sea that saved them, drowned every enemy that pursued behind. Not an Hebrew was lost — not an Egyptian Was spared. "And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them." Thus the Lord saved Israel. And what a salvation! Could it have been more complete! No more brick-making — no more cruel bondage in Egypt — no more beatings and oppressions. What a sight that was, as Israel looked upon the Egyptians, dead on the sea-shore! And if this, the mere figure of our redemption, were so complete, what must the reality be? It is very terrible to the poor, trembling soul, as it first learns the value of redemption like Israel of old, the rolling waves of death before, Satan and the whole array of sins in hot pursuit behind. But what was it to the Captain of our salvation, when, at the close of His life in the flesh, the prince of this world came against Him, and with the dark billows of God's wrath before Him, and no escape. Ah! there was no passing on dry ground for Him. The full power of Satan let loose against him the utmost hate and rage of man! What were the armies of the Egyptians, compared to that fearful hour when all our sins were laid on him! Stroke after stroke of divine wrath against sin fell upon Him. All God's billows went over His soul. But why this sea of death rolling in upon His soul? Dear young Christian, all this He freely bore that we might pass through death and judgment dryshod. Yes; He came to this Egypt of cruel bondage, that "by his death he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And oh! how complete the deliverance! Blessed Deliverer, He is no longer beneath the dark wave of divine wrath, but raised from the dead. As the Egyptians lay dead on the sea-shore, so even God has said He will remember our sins against us no more for ever. (Hebrews 10:1-39.) As the Red Sea destroyed Pharaoh and all his host, so Jesus by His death destroyed him that had the power of death, which is the devil.

It is thus we stand still, and really see in the death of Jesus the salvation of God.

Now what an entire new position this was to Israel, out of Egypt — brought to God, though in the wilderness! How much they had yet to learn! But they could now sing the song of Moses. And what a song of complete deliverance! Read it over, and let me ask now, Is this the language of your heart? Can you thus rejoice in God's complete deliverance? Do you understand the teaching of this blessed inspired history? Has the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, thus changed the position of every child of grace! Has the whole power of sin and Satan, when brought against your holy Substitute, been conquered and destroyed? Surely as Israel looked back on the Red Sea, and saw the dead bodies of their enemies, they did not hope they were saved from Egypt's bondage. And can I look back at the empty grave of Jesus, and hope that I am saved? Surely it is a finished work. No; they sing, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously The Lord is my strength He is become my salvation." Yes; every sentence breathes certainty and joy. And should not the language of the Christian be equally confident? "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath deliveredus from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12.) In so short a paper I can only just glance, as it were, at the blessed lessons set before us in this divine picture. The Red Sea had separated Israel thus from Egypt: Israel, as it were, became dead to Egypt, and the Egyptians became dead to them. Have you, my reader, thus become dead to the world by the death of Christ? And has the world thus become dead to you? Not one of the armies of Pharaoh was left to throw a stone at God's redeemed people. Have you realized the amazing fact, that such is the value of the blood of Christ, that not a sin can be laid to your charge?

It is not death like a narrow stream separating you from heaven; but that narrow, dark, deep stream of death in which Jesus took your place and passed through for you, separating you for ever from the world, from sin, and Satan. Yes death and judgment, sin and Satan, the world and all behind: yes; as Israel sang on Canaan's side of the Red Sea, so may we sing on heaven's side of the cross.

Oh! what a happy place this is to be in, is it not? I think I hear my young reader say, "I trust I believe all you have said, but still, I am not so happy as I was some time ago." Well, what is it, think you, that makes you less happy? At first, when God spoke peace to your soul, you were filled with thoughts of Christ, and these made you happy; but now you are thinking more of yourself. Is not that the case? Have you been put under the tasks of the law again? Nothing can more effectually sap the enjoyment of peace than this. You may not have been put under law for salvation, but as a rule of life. You will soon find brick-making in Egypt, as a rule of life, to be brick-making cruel bondage. I never met a person yet under the law, as a rule of life, that enjoyed peace with God. I feel so much depends on clearing this point up for the youngest convert, that I must seek grace to speak on this, as on every other matter, the whole counsel of God.

Now, just as redemption from Egypt delivered the Hebrews entirely in every sense from the bondage of brick-kilns, so the death of Christ delivered even the believing Jew from the bondage of the law. I say Jew, for though, in the writings of men, it is often assumed that the whole world was, and even is, under the law, yet this is great confusion, and utterly opposed to Scripture and to fact. Surely the law was not given from Adam to Moses; and when given, was it given to any but the children of Israel? Yea; and not given to them for four hundred and thirty years after the promise given to Abraham, confirmed in his seed, which is Christ. (Galatians 3:1-29.) But the Jews

were under law, and for this very special purpose, that the offence might abound. Transgression of known commands, as in the case of Adam, was needed to convict man of sin, and prove his need of the redemption provided of God. Transgression did come by the law, but righteousness could not. The passage translated "sin is the transgression of the law," is very much misunderstood; as though there could be no sin without the law. This clearly cannot be the meaning, as is evident, if you compare it with that passage, "For until the law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law." (Romans 5:13.) Indeed, those who know well the Greek tell us the passage is not "sin is the transgression of the law," but "sin is lawlessness." But to return: the Jews were under the law, that is certain; and was not one great object of Christ's death to redeem them from the law? as it is written, speaking of Jews, the apostle says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," &c. (Galatians 3:13.) And again, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." (Galatians 4:5.) Redemption, then, from the law was as real as redemption was from sin and the curse. See how this is insisted upon in Romans 7:1-25. There the believer is as dead to law by the body of Christ as he is dead to sin in chap. 6. But what is it to be dead to the law, or redeemed from the law? Well what was it to be under the law? When that is understood, then it is easy to see what it is to be redeemed from it. The illustration of the brick-kiln helps us to clearly put the matter. The Hebrew slave was responsible to do what he could not do, and hence his bitter bondage. Man, under law, is in just this position. He is responsible to do what he cannot do. Important to remember, Israel put themselves in that position. (Exodus 19:1-25.) But that is just the position of any man, Jew or Christian, if under law, he is responsible to do what he finds he cannot do. The law is most holy, just, and good; but man finds himself lost, carnal, sold under sin. When he would do good, evil is present with him. Now, if he is in this position, he must be wretched. He does the thing he hates; and what he would do he cannot do. But, you say, "this is exactly as it is with me." To be sure it is, and so it is with every one under law. Whilst as a Jew of old, you were never under the law, a moment's reflection will convince you of that; yet, like the Gentile Galatians, you may have been entangled with the yoke of bondage. Now, if this be the case, is there any wonder at the miserable lives that so many Christians spend. Cruel bondage all their days; feeling they ought to fulfil the whole law, yet failing at every point, until almost driven to despair.

Now, if the precious death of Christ redeemed them from it, who were in this state under the law; is it possible that his death should place us, who never were under it, in that condition? Most clearly not. But then, my reader may ask, if the law is not the rule of life, is there no principle of holy obedience? Oh, yes, most surely, as we shall see in these papers; only the principle of holy obedience cannot be the same as legal bondage. The law told man what was right, but gave him no power to do it; yea, only excited him to do what he knew was wrong; and thus it only condemned him. Now from that state, those who were under it were redeemed entirely. As they had once been brought out of Egypt, entirely delivered from its cruel bondage, so were they entirely redeemed from sin, and death, and law. And more; we who were not under law, but utterly lawless, sin and death having passed upon all, whether transgressors under law, or sinners without law; we, too, have been redeemed from the whole old ruined condition of lost and guilty man, and brought to God on a totally new principle from man's responsibility altogether. No longer the bond-slaves of sin, but sons of God, born of God, having a new nature; yea, having the Spirit of God dwelling in us; as it is written, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And yet there is one other character of redemption

which marks its fulness above all others, and that is, it is eternal redemption. "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:12.) The Israelite might possibly have got back to Egypt, but not so the believer, who has eternal redemption through the blood of Christ. Oh! who can fully tell what it is thus to be eternally delivered from sin, and death, and condemnation? My old former self dead! My old former state for ever passed away! My young Christian, do ponder these words — eternal redemption. The guilt of all your sins eternally put away. Death, even the death of the cross, has put an end to them all. No question of hope — it is so: we have eternal redemption. Where this is understood, what rest it gives. Even in this particular, the shadow was very striking. Redemption from Egypt being completed, then, but not till then did God make known His Sabbath or rest to the Hebrews. We heard of the Sabbath in Eden; but from Adam to Moses, we hear of no Sabbath for man. Surely, God says in this, there can be no rest for the sinner but through the blood of the Lamb.

Eternal redemption gives eternal rest. Surely, when we are in the glory, it will not be more complete. Nothing can add or take away from its value. And is this the place of boundless blessing into which God has brought you, my reader? Then will you, can you, glory in aught but the cross of Christ? In my next, I hope to look with you at the "lessons of the wilderness." In the meantime, may our God lead you, after reading this paper, by His Holy Spirit to search His own precious word. This is the one desire of my heart, knowing that nothing else can meet your need.

C.S.

Chapter 55

057. Lessons of the Wilderness: Shur, Sin, Rephidim

Lessons of the Wilderness: Shur, Sin, Rephidim

We will now, beloved young Christian, in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, look at the lessons of Shur, Sin, and Rephidim. (Exodus 15:1-27; Exodus 16:1-36; Exodus 17:1-16.) We shall find each present a distinct, solemn, yet precious, lesson. And first the Lesson of the Wilderness of Shur. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the wilderness of Shur: and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." These are few words, but what a depth of meaning there is in them — so soon after the triumphant song of redemption, only three days' journey from the place of death and deliverance — the Red Sea. And now to find no water. Have ye counted the cost? The cross of Christ, as separating us from the world, is a very solemn matter. "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the World." What was so debased and contemptible in the eyes of the world as a person crucified. And this was what the world was to the apostle, and what he was to the world. The three days' journey very aptly illustrates the exact place into which the believer is brought. Dead with Christ and risen with Him. Yes, the three days' journey, from death to resurrection, has separated you, my fellow-traveller, for ever from Egypt, that is the world. But you say, It looks very strange that the redeemed, who had just been shouting the song of triumph, should be so soon distressed and find no water? Was not this just the way the young Christians at Thessalonica had been brought to God, "Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Thessalonians 1:6.)

Now mark, this is the first lesson after redemption; and if my reader has redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, do not be surprised if you find, the first journey you take in the wilderness, that there is no water. Nay, I believe this is a sure sign that you are redeemed. Do you find it so, or can you still drink of the world's pleasures and be satisfied? Ah, if so, do not be deceived: you are still in Egypt, still in the iron grasp of Satan, who leads you captive at his will. Do not be offended if I tell you the truth. Must I not be faithful? Oh how many are thus going down to perdition, with a lie in their right hand! But with you, my dear young Christian, it is not so. The things that once so pleased you yield no satisfaction now. I cannot express it like Scripture. You find no water. Solemn lesson of Shur. The New Testament is very strong on this subject: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (Read 1 John 2:15-17.) And again, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4.) And when we think of the amazing price of our redemption, can we wonder that our separation from the world lying in the wicked one should be so entire? But at such a time, when you find no water, nothing to satisfy, then beware of murmuring. And the next lesson of Shur is equally striking. "And when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." This was trying indeed — more trying than finding no water. How often this is the case with the young believer, aye, and the old one too. We grasp at that which we think will satisfy and only find bitter disappointment. Have you not found it so? Have you

tried the pleasures, or the riches, or honours of the world, and only found bitterness? You are invited to a gay party. Once this would have been very delightful; but now how bitter to the taste of the new nature. How utterly disappointed you return home. Have you set your heart on some earthly object? You are permitted to obtain it; but how empty. Yea, what you expected to yield such satisfaction only yields bitter sorrow and emptiness. Oh, beware of murmuring. Not one thing has happened to you but what is common to the children of God. This world is a wilderness wide, where there is not a tree in it yielding satisfying fruit. But there is a tree. "The Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Yes, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song of Solomon 2:3.) Surely that tree is Christ. Ah, nothing can sweeten the bitter cup of this life, but sitting beneath His shadow. O what delight, what sweetness to the taste of the new-born babe! How simple then this second lesson of the wilderness of Shur. Are you, my young fellow-christian, beginning to find the waters of this life bitter? Come then near to Jesus: sit at His feet: His fruit shall be sweet to your taste: His words shall be sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Are the things of the world sweet or bitter? Is Christ to you like the one precious tree, laden with sweetest fruit, where all beside is barrenness and waste? Then hearken to the precept of the Lord, to His people Israel. And mark, this was before the law was given. And certainly it could have nothing to do with their redemption — that was all finished. So with you, my reader; if you are a believer, your redemption is as finished as theirs was. Your works can have nothing to do with that. Neither are you under law; but O how much present blessing depends on your hearkening diligently unto the voice of the Lord. He is a rock that can never be moved and His shadow the place of perfect security. But to sit at His feet, to hear diligently His words! And as He says, If ye love me, keep my commands. Not as a servant under law; but as a son, filled with the Spirit and moved by divine love. Yes, most precious and necessary is this obedience of faith.

Elim, was a sweet, green spot in the wilderness, with its twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees. "And they encamped there by the waters." This does so remind one of Jesus, in the midst of His twelve apostles and seventy disciples. Wherever we see Him, He is the one to whom the thirsty may come and drink. May we ever encamp near the wells of living waters. But I go on now to the Wilderness of Sin. (Exodus 16:1-36.)

Every step in the journey brings out the utter worthlessness of man and the sovereign grace of God. The whole congregation murmur sadly: and they said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." This was very sad — but not more so than the terrible sin of unbelief that now so easily besets the believer. One would think, with such a bright future before us, we should have no lingering looks at the world behind. Well, and what was God’s answer to this murmuring? Amazing grace! "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day," &c. And now it is worthy of special remark, that the Sabbath of Jehovah’s rest was given before the law, in connexion with the eating of this bread from heaven. It was first given to Israel as privilege, not by command, or on the principle of law. And here the people rested on the seventh day: and I am not aware of another single instance where the people rested on the Sabbath day. There is something very striking in this. From Adam

to Moses, yea, to this very chapter, that is, for more than 2500 years, the Spirit never uses the word sabbath, either in its root, or in any of its forms. And here, in the wilderness of Sin, it is God's gift to His redeemed people, in perfect grace. And on the principle of grace, before the law is given, they rest on the seventh day. Immediately they are under law, the Spirit never once repeats the words, "They rested on the Sabbath day." I would not have you forget that God expressly gave Israel the Sabbath on the ground of redemption on that very account; as is declared, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." (Deuteronomy 5:15.) Thus they had the sabbath because they were redeemed; but they only rested on it, or enjoyed it, by gathering the heavenly Manna: and this on the principle of pure grace. Bread from heaven! Oh may the Spirit of God open the understanding of my reader to see Christ, the bread of life, in all this. Let it be well understood, that the only ground on which God gives rest to the guilty sinner is through the redemption blood of Christ. Yes; He looks on that precious Lamb "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1-21.) "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." This gives peace. This peace is God's gift in pure grace. As the sabbath was God's gift in grace to every Israelite, so this peace, this rest of God, is God's gift to every believer who has redemption through the blood of Christ. But then you say, "If so, why do not I enter into this rest and enjoy peace with God?" To that question this lesson of the wilderness is a solemn reply. Manna was a type of Christ as the bread of life. The redeemed from Egypt fed upon it. But they gathered a certain rate every day. Is this the case with you, my reader? Are you gathering the sweet manna, Christ, every day, in His precious word? If you had no time to eat your daily food, would you wonder if you were soon out of health? If you have no time to gather up the crumbs of life in the precious word, is there any wonder that your spiritual life declines? Oh read the sweet words of Jesus on this subject! He says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Do you thus come to Him for your daily portion? Each Hebrew had an omer — about five pints of manna; every man according to his eating. The greatest eater had no lack, and he that gathered most had none to spare. Just as with the lamb, every man according to his eating, so with the manna, every man according to his eating. Our deepest need as sinners was met by the blood of the Lamb; and the deepest, daily need of our souls is met, if feeding on Christ. No doubt it is very blessed, on the first day of the week, to meet together to break bread — to remember Jesus — to show forth His broken body — to take that cup which shows forth His shed blood — by that one loaf to express the one body of Christ. Indeed, I would press this. But there is the daily portion the constant need of the soul for spiritually feeding on Christ. In so short a paper I can only ask you to read John 6:30-71 in connexion with this subject.

How very simple then this divine picture. God gave the bread from heaven. The redeemed Israelite gathered it. "A small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground and they gathered it every morning." "It was white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." O that precious, spotless Christ, so small and despised in the eyes of the world! But when the child of God gathers the manna in the morning, how refreshing the dew of the early dawn, as the Spirit reveals Jesus to the soul in the blessed word. And God gave them enough for the sabbath, and so they rested. God has given you rest, my fellow-believer. Do you not enjoy it? Do you not rest? Then you have not gathered enough manna. Read the word more. Think more on Christ. If the

Israelite exclaimed, What is it? well may you say, What is it? — Christ my portion.

Just as God gave them twice as much as they could eat, so they rested on the seventh day. Even so by the gift of His beloved Son He has more than met our utmost need. Thus they rested by gift; not by command. And thus in Christ we rest by grace, and not by works. Some did not believe, and went out to seek manna, but found none. So is it with us when ever we wander from God's eternal gift.

There was a great difference betwixt having the sabbath and resting. There is as great a difference betwixt having peace with God and enjoying that peace. Would you enjoy that sweet rest in God? Then gather the manna — feed on Christ. As the dewdrop contained the manna, so will the Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto you. Oh would you rest? Then grieve not that Holy Spirit by whom you are sealed. The taste of the manna was like wafers made with honey. And what so sweet to the taste of a child of God as the fellowship of the Spirit, in communion with Christ? Oh do, my young Christian, seek this holy, sweet enjoyment of Christ! Does the prospect of being for ever with the Lord gladden your heart? Then earnestly seek for much communion with Him in spirit whilst here below.

We will now look at the third stage of Israel's journey — Rephidim. And again there was no water. Ah! it is hard for the flesh to bear this — to find at every step no water. Yet such is the journey of this wilderness. Think of the path of our precious Lord; and think what awaited his servant Paul in every city. (Acts 20:1-38.) And such is our path, my fellow-traveller, in proportion as we are true to Him. And again (for the people were not yet under law) the Lord met their grievous murmurings in the fullest grace. The Rock in Horeb was smitten, and out came water that all the people might drink. Moses called the name of that place, Temptation and strife. Oh! my young traveller, when your heart is ready to murmur — when Satan whispers, You had better give up the journey, and return to the world — when every cistern fails — when you are ready to sink in temptation and strife — when your thoughts are all in confusion — ah! when Satan seems let loose against you — yea, when everything seems against you; oh! at such a time remember the Rock that was smitten for you. Yes, at such a time look off to Jesus. Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? and was ever love like His? You will be amazed to find wicked, unbelieving thoughts arise in your mind. And "then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." Now, as this is the first and only battle of Israel whilst they remained under grace, before the law was given, it should be studied with the deepest interest by us, who are not under law, but under grace. I do not think this battle of Rephidim typifies our conflict with wicked spirits so much: that we shall get when we see Israel in the land of Canaan. But I rather look at this Rephidim as showing us a picture of the sudden attack of temptation through the lusts of the flesh. It was just as they said, "Is the Lord among us or not?" — at the very moment of their doubting, "then came Amalek and fought with them." Nothing gives the enemy more power than to doubt whether we are the children of God or not; or to doubt whether he is with us and for us or not. And now, my young Christian, this battle of Rephidim is a very solemn question. You will find that, though you have redemption through the blood of Christ — a child of God — have fed with delight on Christ the heavenly manna; yet, to your surprise, the lusts of your old nature are as bad as ever. That which is born of the Spirit has not altered the flesh in the least. If Israel had stayed in Egypt, they would never have fought Amalek. And if you had not the new nature, you would never have known this fierce conflict with the old nature. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the

other: so that ye cannot (or may not) do the things that ye would." (Galatians 5:17.) These are the plain words of God: and every child of God finds it so in his experience. What would he not do, were it not for the Holy Spirit, who dwells in him, preventing him from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

I must guard my young traveller against several mistakes when passing through Rephidim. And especially beware of a broad path that turns out of the way, called "sinless perfection." This path leads to infidelity. Some would tell you that your old nature is changed, and that there is no sin left in your flesh, or carnal mind. This is a very flattering delusion, and for a time may lull you to false security. But when Amalek comes to fight; (though I sometimes think Satan knows better than to fight these deluded ones;) but when Satan presents strong temptation, and you find to your horror and grief that there is still an evil nature in you, so soon excited by his temptations; yea, at such a time you seem overwhelmed with the power of unexpected temptation. And especially if there has been failure, then beware of the hard thrust of the deadly enemy, in trying to persuade you that you are not a child of God. Let this dark unbelief only take possession of your soul, and then where is your strength to fight? But the battle of Rephidim. Read carefully these verses — Exodus 17:8-16. Golden lesson for the young soldier of Christ. Some teachers would tell you, In the hour of temptation, your only safety is to try your utmost to keep the law. I once knew a young Christian, when fighting in Rephidim, as a last resource, write down all the denunciations and commands of God respecting the sin that so harassed him. But this helped him not at all. Nothing could be more striking than God’s teaching and man’s on this important point. Says man, You are under the law as the rule of life, and sin will surely have the dominion if you do not strive to keep it. Says God, "It was the ministration of death, and is now abolished;" (2 Corinthians 3:7-14;) and "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14.) Thus you see, my young traveller, if you are led of man, you will be under law and bondage; "But if led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." (Galatians 5:18.) The contrast betwixt God’s teaching and man’s is very striking, is it not? But, then, the question is, when passing through Rephidim, that is, through fierce temptation — tempted to commit fearful sins — If the law does not help me at such a time, but only excites lust still more — as is said in Romans 7:7; Romans 7:18; I say, if the law does not help, what does? And what is the principle of victory over the lusts of the flesh? I look at the battle of Rephidim, I say, as a golden answer to this perplexing difficulty in the hour of need. To human reason, perhaps, nothing could be more foolish. There was no digging of trenches, forming parallels, or display of military skill; but Moses says, "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." What a picture of the divine principle of prevailing faith! And especially valuable, as I have said before, when we bear in mind this is the only battle Israel fought, whilst on the principle of grace, and not as yet under the law. And, now, if my reader has travelled some length of the wilderness journey, let me ask him to turn over the pages of memory, and then tell me, as we say, is not this picture true to the very life? Just as your hands have been lifted up to God — just as faith has trusted Him, you have prevailed; and just as your hands have been let fall down — just as you have trusted in anything else but God, sin has prevailed. Thus the mighty principle of faith is set before us as the only means of victory in temptation. We never make resolutions but we fail and break them; and we never look alone to God but we are delivered. Do, my young Christian, remember the battle of Rephidim in the hour of temptation. Lift up your heart, and let the cry of faith go up to God. Perhaps you say, My heart is so heavy. And so were the hands of Moses. "But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone,

and put it under him, and he sat thereon: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side: and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

Now there are some very precious and important points of soul-sustaining truth set before the believer, in conflict, in this verse. It is of the greatest moment at such a time that you remember that great stone — nay, the Rock of Ages supports you. Oh to know that however the storm of temptation may assail, your feet are on the Rock that cannot be moved! Beware of those shifting sands, those unbelieving thoughts that you may be on the Rock to-day and off and lost tomorrow. Nothing can more tend to weaken the child of God, in the hour of sore temptation, than these false doctrines. No, my reader, if you have redemption, it is eternal redemption; if you have life, it is eternal life; If you are on the Rock, none can pluck you off for ever. The stone, however, was not put under Moses that he might hang down his hands, but that they might be steadily held up. Neither would I put this blessed truth before you, or rather show you the Rock that sustains you, that you may become careless and cease to steadily trust in God for victory over lust and sin. No! but for the very purpose of encouraging your faith in the darkest hour. But further, for the support of the heavy hands of Moses, Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. And does not He whose name is Jesus, by whose death and resurrection we are justified, "also make intercession for us." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." What divine strength this gives in the hour of strong temptation. There is the exalted Son of God, on the one side, that is, in the very presence of God, holding up the hands of faith, making intercession. And there is on the other side, that is, down here, in the believer, the Holy Ghost making intercession. How doubly held up! But perhaps my reader may be sadly cast down — you may have been surprised by Amalek; perhaps you thought lust and temptation was all gone — you had pictured a path of sunshine: and so it is, if the eye is kept on Jesus. You may, however, have resolved to walk with God, and for a time all was smooth; but the sudden attack of the enemy took you by surprise, your hands were let down, Amalek, that is your sins, prevailed. Has Satan got an advantage over you? Has there been failure? I think I hear you whisper, Little did I expect it, but I have sinned since my conversion, and now I am so unhappy. The brightness of noon seems to be turned into midnight darkness Satan says, "I am not on the Rock now. The great High Priest passed into the heavens will not intercede for me now. The Holy Ghost does not make intercession for me now." Stop, poor doubting one, do not listen after this rate to the enemy. Was not the Rock of Ages cleft for you? Is it not His very blood that has met all your sins, yea, washed them all away? And does not the Spirit say, by John, when writing on this very subject, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins," &c. (1 John 2:1; 1 John 2:3.) Are you His child? Have you sinned? Then think what is taking place in your Father’s presence. What an Advocate! Look at Him, and listen to His pleadings for you: He pleads His own blood. Do not these words meet your case — "If any man sin?" Surely this is not that you may sin: but that you may not sin. But if you have sinned, the knowledge of your Advocate on high lifts up again the arms of faith, and, though Amalek has prevailed, you now prevail again. But perhaps you say, "If I have sinned, have I not grieved the Holy Spirit; and, consequently, has He not departed from me?" No; this is impossible now. The Holy Ghost dwells in you as the seal to the value of the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 10:1-39;

Ephesians 1:1-23.) So that the blood of Jesus must lose its value before the Holy Spirit can cease to dwell now in the child of God. You may, yea, alas! how often we do grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. But one great distinguishing feature of the present dispensation, is that the Holy Ghost abides with us to the end. I have found this solemn fact one of the most sustaining truths in God's word. The apostle uses it for this purpose when writing to the Corinthians. (See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.) Do think of this when pressed hard by temptation, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And see how solemnly this is pressed in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. So really is the believer's body the temple of the Holy Ghost, that if he goes on in sin, and thus defiles the temple, God cannot allow this; and if he refuses to judge and humble himself, and still further refuses to hear the Church, the temple must be destroyed; that is, this body must be dissolved. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Corinthians 11:30.) My reader may not have been aware of all this, but search the Scriptures and see if these things are not so. We have a watchful, powerful foe, surrounded by every manner of ensnaring temptation, and especially so to the young Christian; and still we have to wage war with deadly, hateful lusts. If left to ourselves, utterly without strength, to resist the least of them, how important then to know the Rock on which we stand: and to know that, on one side, we have the risen Lord; and on the other, the blessed Spirit, never ceasing to make intercession for us. And as there was to be no compromise betwixt Israel and Amalek, so let there be no compromise, my dear young reader, betwixt you and fleshly lusts that war against the soul. From this day forward, even though Amalek may have prevailed; yes, though you may have failed and sinned, yet now may the Spirit of God shew you the Advocate with the Father, pleading for you; and now may past failure and sin be confessed to your Father. You will find He is faithful and just to forgive you all sins and cleanse from all unrighteousness. He is faithful and just to the claims of your Advocate, and therefore you are forgiven and cleansed. This is as sure as you have, by His Spirit, made confession to Him. Do not omit this — if sin has prevailed confess it to your Father. And now, henceforth, may He give the reader and the writer the victory of faith. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4.)

Thus the battle of Rephidim sets before us the blessed principle of victory over sin and the world. If my reader fights on the principle of law, you will be overcome; if on the principle of faith, you will overcome. And just as your hands hang down to one, or are lifted up to the other, will you fail or prevail. And you who have trod the greater part of the journey, I appeal to your hearts and consciences. — Is it not so, just as we have looked to God we have overcome; and just as we have resolved to do our best we have failed. What years of sorrow a life of simple faith would save the child of God. Would you, my dear young Christian, then, spend your little while in holy, happy, devoted service to God, then have no confidence in the flesh — never trust self. Pray without ceasing — at all times and in all places. Remember, you are the temple of the Holy Ghost: He intercedes for you; the risen High Priest is your Advocate; God is for you. Though He chasten, it is because He loves you. Oh! do not forget you are never safe from temptation a moment, except that moment is spent in trusting Him. How soon after the manna and rest, came temptation and Amalek. In seasons of richest blessing, when filled with Christ, the heavenly manna, and the heart at rest in God, yet even then how near to danger. How sudden the change to fierce and unexpected temptation. Oh! watch; pray; trust. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise

God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."

C.S.

Chapter 56

058. The Two Husbands of Rom_7:1-25.

The Two Husbands ofRomans 7:1-25. This chapter may be said to be the climax of the apostle's argument on justification and fruit-bearing. Nothing could be more timely than the illustration of the two husbands; and I need not say the inspired argument is unanswerable.

It is of great importance to notice those few words in the middle of the first verse, placed in parenthesis: "for I speak to them that know the law." This shows that the apostle was specially addressing the Jewish believers in this chapter. "Know ye not, . . . how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Ver. 1-7.) Here, then, we have the two husbands. The old husband the Jews had had; that is, the law. To the new husband the Christian has been espoused, that is, to the risen Christ. And just as a woman could not lawfully be married to two husbands at the same time, so is it shown that the believer cannot be married to both Christ and the law. From verses 5, 7-24, the apostle describes the marriage-life with the old husband. Now, just suppose a married couple, whose dispositions are so entirely contrary to each other, that the more the poor wife tries to do her best, the more scolding and blows she receives; until her life becomes so miserable, that she longs for deliverance from this struggle of wretchedness — and you have the exact picture here described of the wretched condition of those who bad been married to the law. It is not that the law had been such a bad husband: it was just, holy, and good. But man's nature was so utterly bad, so thoroughly carnal — sold under sin. This is what Paul and the Jewish believers had found when they were in the flesh under the law. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." I say no couple in this world, ever had dispositions more contrary, than Paul had found his nature and the holy law of God.

He goes on further to describe his condition when in the flesh, married to this old husband: "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Such was the power of sin dwelling in him, that though he fully consented to the law, that it was good, and earnestly desired to do what was right, yet had no power: "how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." Yes, he found sin dwelling in him — yea, its power a fixed law in his nature: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Yes, if even a quickened soul, a child of God, yet in the flesh under law; however the inward

man might long to keep it, yet the sinful nature was far too strong, and thus the deepest wretchedness: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

This, then, is the picture the apostle draws of married life under the old husband. Like some poor woman, who has tried long and hard to please her husband, until at last she loses all hope, and no longer says, Who shall help me to please him? but, O wretched woman that I am, who shall deliver me? Just so the apostle. He did not pray for help to please the old husband; but, “O wretched man that am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” The next verse introduces the new husband: “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We shall find the marriage-state with the new husband, as blessed as it had been wretched under the old. There are two things especially in chapter 8 that mark that blessedness. Espoused to Christ, there is no condemnation, and no separation.

Let us return, then, and carefully notice how the espousal took place. The apostle was here reasoning with those who had been under the old husband; and if we carefully examine the holy oracles of God, we shall find that the Jews had been under law, or married to the first husband, 1,500 years. It is very strange, that many Christians have not noticed that the law was not given for 2,500 years — that is, from Adam to Moses. Now, instead of angry discussion, would it not be far better to search the Scriptures and see if these things are so? Was not Adam tested by a given law when in innocence? Did he not fall by transgression? Did not his whole race fall in him, and so death pass upon all? “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” (Romans 5:12.) Certainly it is most clear, that the whole human race were thus brought under sin and death. But, now, from that point — from Adam’s fall to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, a period of 2,500 years — can my readers find a single passage that would imply, that there was either law, or transgression, during the whole of that period? “For where no law is, there is no transgression.” And there was no law given from Adam to Moses, therefore there was no transgression. But being ignorant of Scripture, some, not knowing the distinction betwixt sin and transgression, jump to the conclusion, that if there were no law then there was no sin, and therefore no need of the atoning death of Christ. But Scripture insists on this very point — that though there were no transgressions, (Romans 5:13-14,) yet there was sin when there was no law. “For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.”

Surely this, and many such passages of Scripture, prove that the law was not given to all men, else how could any sin without law? Who are “the Gentiles without law,” (Romans 2:12,) if the law were given to all, and, as some teachers tell us, all are under law? it is of the first importance to clearly understand this point. Let me give the reader a very simple illustration. Suppose a schoolmaster has a most unruly, lawless set of boys, he well knows the rebelliousness and enmity of the school, but up to a certain day he has never given them a positive command; he now writes the following law; and gives the strictest command, that no boy shall be allowed to make a mark on the wall. There may have been marks on the wall before, but (if I know anything of human nature) the first time the master turns his back, there will be ten times more scribbling than ever there was before, There was the sin of marking the wall before, but now the command is given, sin becomes transgression; conscience would tell them it was wrong to have such enmity as to deface the wall before, but when the commandment comes the scribbling abounds, and this is

transgression. Now the law entered for this very purpose — “That the offence might abound.” (Romans 5:20.) It was added because of (or, for) transgressions till the seed should come. (Gal. I: 19.) Examine carefully the context of this passage. I am not aware that any one truth is more clearly taught in Scripture than this — that there was neither the law, nor transgression of the law, until God gave it, to one nation only, for the special purpose of proving man’s sinful nature in open transgression, and thus, every mouth being stopped, all were proved guilty. Man’s need was shown of that great and wondrous gift, the Saviour Jesus Christ the Lord.

It is marvellous what ignorance prevails on this truth. I asked a christian brother the other day, if he could give me any reason whatever, from Scripture, for the opinion he held — that we in England and all men were under the law? Well, said he, “I should say because we are all the children of Moses.” I was somewhat startled, I confess, by this reason, but I do not know that I ever heard a better. “What do you mean,” said I, “by our all being the children of Moses?” “Well,” he replied, “I mean that we are all of the religion of Moses.” I felt there was sadly too much truth in this last sentence. I endeavoured to show him that the Scripture teaches, distinctly, that we who believe are of the same religion as Abraham. But he seemed to have never read that the law was not given to Abraham at all; no, not even until 430 years after him. Look carefully at Galatians 3:16-17, and see if this was not the case. Then if the law were not given to Abraham, or to any of the nations in his days, or during the 2,000 years before him, or to the nations for 500 years after him; how can it be shown that it was given to all nations? Surely, my reader, there must be great ignorance of Scripture on this subject.

Let not, however, the adversary say, that because there was not the law, and therefore no transgression of the law, that that also proves there was no sin and no need of the atoning death of Christ. There was the same need from Adam to Moses. “For until the law, sin was in the world;” (Romans 5:13;) and though sin was not, could not, be imputed as transgression, like Adam’s transgression, of a positive law; yet death reigned, even from Adam to Moses. And thus was shown man’s need of that which alone can meet his case — the death of Christ, the Substitute. It is also true that when the law was given to that self-confident nation at Sinai, the black catalogue of offences in open transgression made man’s condition still more manifest. But grace abounded, when these boasting law-keepers had murdered the Son of God: even to them, grace proclaimed forgiveness of sins in His name. The boasting law-keepers ever have since then, as at this day, hated and slandered the children of grace. May the blessed God of all grace keep us from returning railing for railing, but rather show them that grace that was first published at Jerusalem. But let not one point be misunderstood. Whilst speaking of righteousness and man’s standing before God, let it not be supposed that we doubt, for one moment, the righteous principles of the government of God, either before or since the law. Take the Book of Job. The law was not given then, and of course it is never named in it, or the Book of Genesis; and yet how distinctly we see the principles of right and wrong, written on the conscience; and yet the law was not given, and therefore was neither the principle nor power of righteousness, nor rule of life, as it is sometimes strangely called. The plain facts, then, of Scripture are these. For 2,500 years of this world’s history the law was not given, from the fall of Adam to the giving of the law on Sinai. That as there was not the law for that period, there was no transgression of the law, after the similitude of Adam’s transgression. There was, however, sin. Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And from the days of Abel downwards, the Scripture clearly teaches the impossibility of

man’s approach to God, except by the death of the Substitute.

Then for 1,500 years the law was given to one nation, fully to show out what man was in open transgression. All have sinned: the Jews have transgressed. The moment the law was given, sin became transgression: “and they danced around the calf.” That text in 1 John 3:4, may be quoted as contradicting the statement of the apostle as to the 2,500 years, when there was neither law nor, of course, transgression. But a reference to the Greek will show the passage to be in perfect harmony. It just shows this — when the law is given, then sin becomes transgression. “Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is lawlessness” — in our translation, “the transgression of the law.” It is most true, since, and to whom, the law was given, sin becomes the transgression of the law; but this does not contradict other scriptures, and say, sin was the transgression of the law during all those ages before it was given.

Very well, then, it may be said, if the law was not given for 2,500 years, and then was given to Israel for 1,500 years, what about the 1,800 years since? Does the Scripture teach that all men have been put under it by Christ, or by the Holy Ghost, since Christ arose from the dead; or does it teach that it was then abolished, as regards believers who had been under it? Most solemn question. May the Lord give both writer and reader, entire subjection to His word; and this will never be, if this great subject is entered upon in a mere controversial spirit. Let us really wait on God in prayer, that the Holy Ghost may bring before our souls the clear light of Scripture. The blessed Lord was born in that nation which was under law, and in Him and by Him every jot and tittle of the law was fulfilled. For them that were under the curse of the broken law, He became a curse; — surely not during His spotless life, but only when on the cross — “For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Not only did He thus bear the curse of that nation, but He was “made sin for us.” Oh! what love and righteousness was this! The Son of God! the Holy One! the Creator and Upholder of all things, hanging on a tree! accursed of men; but, ah! for my sins accursed — forsaken of God. O, my Lord, was ever love like thine! My spotless Substitute, I worship and adore thee for ever!

It is exceedingly profitable to trace in the epistles, the application of the atoning death of Christ, both to the Jews, who were under law, and to the Gentiles, dead in sins without law. Two passages may suffice, many others are equally explicit. Speaking of the Gentiles, the apostle says, “And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath be quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Then of the believing Jews, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14.) Again, of believing Jews, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Then of the Gentiles, “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 3:13-14.)

But, to return, now as to these 1,800 years since the death and resurrection of Christ. Are we, as believers, under the ministry of law written on stones, or is it abolished, even as to those who had been under it? The apostle calls it, “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones.” He declares it “done away.” “That which is abolished.” Man calls it the rule of life, and says we are under it: shall I believe man or God? (See 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.) I would most carefully limit these remarks to believers in Christ. They are led of the Spirit, and therefore not under the law. As the expression of God’s righteous government in the world, the law surely is not abrogated. The

claims of God as Creator remain the same, and thus the law is for the sinner out of Christ. (See 1 Timothy 1:9.) As I said at the beginning of this tract, the chapter before us, Romans 7:1-25, is the climax of the apostle's argument. By the allegory of the two husbands, he shows the utter impossibility of the believer being joined to Christ, and still under the law. And we must not forget the apostle is combating the strongest error of his time, viz., That it was not enough to be justified by Christ, but it was needful also to keep the law. I need not say, that this is still the strongest error of our times. Well, says the apostle, the thing is impossible, and appeals to the Jews who knew the law. Under the law, a woman could not be married to two husbands at the same time. If she be married to another man whilst her husband liveth, she is called an adulteress. See the force of this: if man is looked at as still alive in the flesh, under law, he cannot be espoused to Christ. It would be as great confusion as adultery. The apostle then may well be so vehement in opposing this doctrine. The two states are so different, that it is impossible to be in both. The Jew, who had been reckoned alive in the flesh, was now reckoned dead by the death of Christ; yes, dead to the old marriage state. The Gentiles were found dead in sins, and raised out of that very state and espoused to the risen Christ. (Ephesians 2:1-22; Ephesians 5:1-33.) I do not speak of that now. But of the Jews the apostle says, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4) Hence, do not you see, my reader, the passages that follow, instead of being the proper experience of the Christian, really are the strongest possible contrast. "For when we were in the flesh" — now does he not clearly here refer to a previous state? that is, the Jews' experience under the first husband, the law. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death," and hence all the misery of poor old I, when in the flesh under law. But does the apostle plainly show, that those who had been in this miserable state were delivered from it? To be sure he does, the very thing he states in the next verse; and also shows how they were delivered. Do not miss the how. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead," or as the margin more clearly expresses it, "being dead to that wherein we were held," &c. Thus they were dead to the law by the body of Christ, and married to another, even the risen Christ. Now what a complete deliverance this was to be sure. Had they been left under the old husband, not a Jew could ever have formed part of the joint body, the bride of Christ. Oh! the perverse blindness of the heart of man! Only to think, after this amazing deliverance of those that bad been under law, that now Satan should have so far deceived the greater part of Christendom, as to persuade them that they are in this miserable bondage. Most probably this is the state of my reader. Like a poor woman tied to a husband she cannot please, so with you; the more you have tried to keep the law, the more you have failed; year after year you have hoped to be better, but the more you look at yourself, the more carnality and sin you find. The question is, are you to look at yourself as alive, or dead? I mean your old sinful self. What saith the word of God? Reckon yourselves dead — dead to sin — dead to law. Now, of what use can the law be to a dead man? Can it be the rule of life to a dead man? But this is not all, my fellow-believer; you are risen with Christ; married to Christ risen from the dead. Not one with Christ from His birth during His life, this could never be; He must die or remain alone. (John 12:24)

Properly speaking, A.D. 1863 is not correct; it should be A.D. 1830. That is, the true christian era dates from that blessed moment when Jesus arose from the dead. He had first fully answered for our sins with His own precious blood. Yes, and more; God was first fully justified in His righteous

judgment, passed on our sins. That judgment fell first upon our adorable Substitute, in all its infinite weight. The atoning work was done, before Christianity could begin. May God give thee understanding in this great fact, my reader! Ponder it well. In God's salvation there is no confusion. The predestined bride of Christ lay dead in sins, under the sentence of the wrath of God. And when He became man, who in the beginning was with God, and who was God, well did He know the righteousness of God in passing sentence on man's sin. An infinite atonement proved the infinite righteousness of God. But all must be accomplished before one soul could be married to Christ, raised from the dead. O the depth of the meaning of those words, "It is finished!" The cup was drank. In infinite love the wrath was borne. Thy sins — ah! more, He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We cannot hold too fast this foundation-truth, that alone, before God, in His own body on the tree, He bore the full judgment of God, due to our sins, and all first before He arose from the dead, and hence before Christianity began. It was a complete work, never to be repeated. We are not married to Christ, and the question of sin still has to be settled and re-settled. No, that question was settled on Calvary first, and then we were made one with Christ in resurrection after. Thus if Christianity be really understood, if we know what it is to be married to Christ, risen from the dead, the question of sin before God can never be raised again. If once thus sanctified, by the offering of the body of Christ, for ever perfected is the assured result. (Hebrews 10:14) So perfect is the finished work of Christ that sins can never be remembered against the fellow-believer again.

Thus risen and justified is the Church, and the Church is the joint body, and the joint body is composed first of Christ, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; and secondly, of all believers in this dispensation, joined to Him the living and glorified Head. This is not the subject of Romans 7:1-25, but this is the for-ever-justified place and standing of the believer, married to Christ, risen from the dead. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." To the Jew married to the first husband there was nought else but condemnation; to the Christian married to the second husband there is no condemnation. Is it not dreadful to confound these two states together, as the manner of some is; nay of many? Married to Christ, raised from the dead — all is new, a new creation. Sin, the law, death, condemnation have nothing to do with the new creation. They do not attach to it, do not belong to it. They are passed away. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, all things are become new, and all things are of God." What a state! One with Christ! What a justification! No condemnation. And what a figure for the Spirit of God to use. Marriage! Nothing on earth is so expressive of perfect oneness. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." (Genesis 2:23.) And the Spirit of God applies these very words to us: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Ephesians 5:30.) Now we know that when a person becomes a bride, she enters into a new relationship — the old passes away. She signs her name for the last time on that very day — her very name ceases to be. True, she is the same person, but in a new position altogether. A relationship so permanent that death alone can dissolve the tie; and surely we may say, where there is sincere affection, no relationship so blessed. But when we think that all this is true of the believer — joined to Him who is raised from the dead — what an entirely new relationship. Ah! this is not man's work; this is wholly of God. God raised up our Lord from among the dead, and God has raised us up with Him, and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places. Could man have raised himself from being dead in sins to such a place? Do not forget, the apostle shows clearly the impossibility of even the Jew being both in the old state and in the new.

The whole old state passed away by the death of Jesus. Therefore to go back to that old state — under law — is to make the death of Christ of no avail. Like the person married, the Jew ceases to be a Jew; the Gentile ceases to be a Gentile, and both become one, joined to Christ in resurrection. And, oh, how permanent this blessed relationship! Death can never dissolve this tie. Will Jesus, risen from the dead, ever die again? Oh, no. “Christ being risen from the dead dieth no more.” And we are risen with Him — have the same resurrection-life. Eternal life can never die. Our life is as imperishable as His, nay, it is the very same. I do not speak of His Godhead, but of His risen manhood. And I ask, can Christ die again? Neither can they die who are dead with Him, and risen with Him, and one with Him. Then I boldly say, once married or joined to Christ, nought can sever the blessed and everlasting tie. Oh! that the permanency of this everlasting relationship were better understood. O believer, awake to this wondrous truth! You are not married to Christ for a few days, and then forsaken. Well did He know all your unworthiness and sin, but all was borne first on the cross; and now nought can sever you from the risen Christ. It is one of the unspeakable blessings of this marriage, that there is no separation. What a union! Nay, more; perfect unity. I cannot ask, Is there sincere affection in Christ; nay, words cannot be found to express the love of Christ. “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.” “He that loveth his wife loveth himself . . . even as the Lord the church.” Did you ever enter into this thought — that Christ loves the Church as He loves Himself? Oh, can you thus say, Precious risen Lord, thou lovest me even as thou lovest thyself! What peace, what joy to think of the love of Christ; unchanging, never ceasing love.

There are two more points very strikingly illustrated by this subject. Both, in a sense, are one — I mean justification and righteousness. The apostle, after showing the complete deliverance from the miserable marriage state under the first husband, the law, by being dead to it by the body of Christ, and being married to Him raised from the dead, he says, “There is therefore now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Further in the chapter he says, “It is God that justifies,” and asks who shall condemn.

I thank God for all the opposition and controversy of late: it has had the effect on my own mind of taking every subject before God, and occupies my soul, with His character, in reference to such subjects. Now let us pursue this inquiry in reference to God.

Suppose a son in a family takes a young person to be his wife. Now if the father approve, defend, or justify the marriage, he will justify both the son and his bride. Surely he will receive the one as the other to his home. If that son be ever so rich, and if she were ever so poor before the marriage, I say if the father justifies the marriage, he will never upbraid the bride with her former poverty. They are no longer twain, but one flesh. If he is rich, can she be poor? And if the father defends, who shall condemn? I scarce need apply this. It was God who sent His Son. In redeeming us to Himself, He did the Father’s will. Therefore the Father loved Him, because He laid down His life for the sheep. Do you say, My sins? God laid our sins on Him. “How can I be justified from my sin?” “It was Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again” — do I want full, clear, certain evidence of my justification? “who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” And it is God, I repeat, that has raised us up with Jesus. Yes, God defends the marriage — God justifies the marriage. Man may despise and reject — may kill and crucify; but has not God approved? Does He not defend and justify? Then “there is, therefore, now no condemnation.” Christ hath loved us and given Himself for us. He took our sins and guilt. He bore our judgment. God approves. He raised Him from the dead for our justification from our sins — washed in His blood. It

is God that justifies. Now in resurrection-life; married to Him that is raised from the dead — one with Him. And God defends the marriage. And oh the righteousness of God. God is just, in justifying the marriage. His righteousness is maintained in all its integrity. Both as to our sins, by the blood of Jesus, and as to our present and everlasting life, as one with Christ. For our new creation in Christ Jesus is in righteousness and true holiness. And this leads me to pursue a little further the illustration for the other point — Righteousness. Some do not understand what we mean by showing the unscripturaluess of the modern doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ during His life under the law. To such this illustration may be helpful. My reader will not have forgotten the marriage of England's beloved prince; neither the honour everywhere given to the chosen of his heart on her journey from Denmark. Now did anyone suppose that the honour shown her was the imputed honours of the prince's school-days; or was it honour, in any sense, taken from the prince, and imputed or reckoned to her? Surely not. What then? What was the honour thus shown her at every step of her journey? She was reckoned the future bride of England's prince, and, if the Lord tarry a little longer, of England's king. He was her honour. Yes, when the swelling thousands shouted their joyful welcome along the streets of London, it was not a little honour taken from him and imputed to her. She was received as the joint sharer of England's throne. This is but a faint picture of our marriage with Him who is raised from the dead. The beloved prince did not shed his blood for the Princess of Denmark; but our adorable Lord redeemed us with His own blood. But as, in the one case, it was not the prince's school-day honours that were imputed to the princess, so with us, it is not the mere righteousness of Christ's life, whilst under the Schoolmaster, that is imputed to us. Oh this would be far short of the glory given to us. Truly did He keep the law, and far more than the law, in laying down His life for His enemies; but it is not this, or anything else, that is taken from Him and imputed to us. He, He Himself, is one with us, and we are one with Him. He is our honour; He is our righteousness; He is our glory. Yes, "God hath made him unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Surely this is far more than the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Yes, as different and as great a contrast as there would be, suppose a rich landowner were to marry, and reckon a field to his wife, instead of making her joint inheritor of all his estate; nay, perfectly, as she would be one with himself.

Yes, fellow-believer, we are on the wedding journey — we are going to meet our precious Lord. We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. We are justified from our sins, and from all that attaches to our old nature and standing; but far, far more than this. We are raised from the dead — brought into an entirely new state; no remodellings of the old, but a new creation; and in that new state, one with Christ. Our old life fully forfeited; but now a new life — risen life. Now it is as thus risen, as thus possessors of this new life, that God justifies us. Oh! who can be against us, since God is thus our everlasting defence? And all of God. What could give more peace than this? And shall we give all this up, and go under the old husband — the law? Do remember, we cannot be married to both. If under law, we are not married to Christ; if married to Christ, we are not under law. How clear this makes the whole subject. Do you ask, then, what is the rule of the Christian's life and walk? — Surely, Christ. Wives obey your husbands. Is not this the principle of obedience to Christ — the obedience of love, not of law; and yet the law of love? Do I know Christ in this wondrous, everlasting relationship? Do I know His constant, unchanging love? With this principle I open the whole Bible; and, surely, every intimation of His will should be my delight. And this will be the case in proportion as I know His

love.

I was struck with a remark from a beloved brother; he said, “Christ never took a journey but to do the Father’s will.” Blessed Jesus, be thou my pattern, my rule of walk. When we speak of being delivered from the law, and of not being under law, do not suppose we mean lawlessness, which is the very essence of sin. What we mean is this: We are not on probation, the principle of do this and live. It is no longer the trial of man. It is not now, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” &c. I say it is no longer probation, but pure grace. When lost and guilty, God has loved me with all His heart, and nothing can separate me from that love. I do love Him now, because He first loved me: and love delights to do His will. But what of power.

Now we have seen that man under law has no power against sin, but law rather brings it out in multiplied offences. If under law sin has the dominion — hence the great effort of Satan at all times to put Christians under law. Grace is the very opposite of this, even as to sin and walk. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace.” (Romans 5:14.) Yea, we are “married to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” (Chap. 7:4.) “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, (or, by a sacrifice for sin,) condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Chap. 7:2-4.) There may be failure, evil may break out, but if under grace, sin shall not have the dominion. There may be fierce conflict, hateful lusts at times, but the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, so that we might not do the things that we should otherwise do. (See Galatians 5:17.)

Thus, as espoused to Christ, there is not only delight to do His will, but also power, the power of the Spirit of life. So that we do not break the law, but, whilst not under it, its righteousness is fulfilled in us.

Under the old husband, nothing was made perfect — all was misery and bondage. Espoused to Christ, all is divinely perfect. In whatever aspect you view this blessed oneness, whether as to justification or walk, all is divinely perfect. Perfect justification — no condemnation. Perfect pattern and rule of walk — Christ. And perfect power for walk — the Spirit of life.

Oh! if our hearts did but enter more into these things. What is this world’s wealth to us, who are on the wedding-journey. What want we with the world; what its honours; what its politics, and, we may say, what its religion to us? If dead with Christ, why touch, or taste, or handle? If risen with Christ, let our affections, our thoughts, be there. Ah! let us read our rules of married life in Colossians 1:1-29; Colossians 2:1-23; Colossians 3:1-25; and, oh! that marriage settlement, the Epistle to the Ephesians. But to go through these, would swell my little paper into a large volume. But do read it for yourself, and may you read it as you never did before. Oh, read what God has settled upon us in Christ; how He chose us in Him; how He predestinated us; how He hath made us accepted in Him! What praise, what glory, what redemption and forgiveness of sins, what wisdom, what prudence, what riches of His grace! What a seal, the earnest of our inheritance! But read on, and learn what God secured to us when He raised Christ from the dead. Let faith follow Him up far above all principality and power; raised above every name, and all for us, the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. And then read through the second chapter of our

marriage settlement. See what we were — see what we are: and all of grace — all of God. Then read in chapter 3 of this mystery, kept hid for ages; and, we may now say, lost again for ages. And then comes most blessed instruction for our marriage behaviour. And then, in chapter 5, the wondrous love of Christ to the Church, His Bride. As with redemption, so with our marriage. We have redemption, and yet we wait for it; that is, for its full accomplishment. We are espoused to Christ, and we hasten on to the marriage of the Lamb. Ah! what was the crowd that thronged the streets of London, at the marriage of the prince, compared with that vast multitude who shall shout for joy and gladness at the marriage of the Lamb, when they cry with a voice like “the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints?” (Revelation 19:6-8.)

What a day of unclouded joy, and so certain! For this joy He endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down on the right hand of God. O! shall we not wait for His return? Can we not say, Lord Jesus, come? What will it be to meet those eyes — that untold welcome? O glorious triumph of unspeakable grace! Mercy from first to last — love that could not be quenched. And then for ever with the Lord. The jarring discord of a wicked world heard no more. All hushed in calm, eternal peace. Not a stain of sin; not a wrinkle of imperfection; not a thought unholy. Gaze, gaze, my soul, on the scene of unmingled bliss. All is thine. Yes, He who is the centre and source of it all is thine, and thou art His. What canst thou want beside?

Blessed Lord, awake thy Bride! O call our hearts away, away to thyself! “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God?” “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” C. S.

Chapter 57

059. What was the Sabbath?

What was the Sabbath? and What is the first day of the Week, or Lord's Day Charles Stanley.

"Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy." — Exodus 20:8.

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body in of Christ." — Colossians 2:16-17.

Introduction.

It may be well to give one word of explanation as to my object in writing the following paper. I had noticed, in the present day, on the one hand, a strong legal tendency — a positive imposition of the Sabbath its a matter of righteousness — and on the other, a carelessness and indifference about the Lord's day. I feel it necessary to say, that I have no sympathy, either with the Judaizing, soul-destroying doctrine of the former, or with the cold infidelity of the latter. If I hear any one presenting the shadows of the law, (of which the Sabbath was one,) as the ground of salvation, it is quite clear to me that he knows not the gospel, but is one of those spoken of in Galatians 1:7, — a perverter of the gospel of Christ; and, at the same time, if I see one professing the name of the risen Son of God, doing his own things, seeking his own pleasure, and gratifying his own will, on the Lord's day, I have reason to fear that such an one neither knows the joys nor the claims of a risen Christ. But having found much blessing to my own soul, (and others in different places having in some measure shared that blessing with me,) in tracing through scripture the use of the Sabbath as a shadow of rest in Christ, I was urged to publish what the Lord has taught me in His word on this deeply interesting theme.

I would ask the reader to remember that, in the first part of this tract, there is not one thought of the Lord's Day. It treats simply of the typical import of the Jewish Sabbath. And even as to this, the gospel aspect only is dwelt upon; my object being chiefly to lead doubting souls to Christ.

Dispensationally, the earthly seventh-day Sabbath points forward to the earth's millennial rest, just as the first day, or eighth day, points to the eternal state. It is also clear to me, that a seventh-day Sabbath will be observed again on earth, when the Jews are restored. But into these views of the subject I do not enter here.

What was the Sabbath?

Without having the least desire to share in the human strife and controversy on the question of the Sabbath, I do consider it to be important to know what God's thoughts are on this, as on all other subjects. I ask, then, the reader's attention, not to my opinions, or the opinions of other men, but to the word of God. The Lord give the demonstration of the Spirit, that Christ may be magnified. The first mention we have of God's rest, is in Genesis 2:2-3 : — "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all

his work which God created and made." We are not told that man was brought into this rest; neither is there one word in the narration of the fall, or of God's judgment consequent thereon, to imply that the Sabbath had been imposed as a command. The fact that God sanctified it, is no proof that it was instituted for man, or even then made known to him. He who was from eternity sanctified by the Father was not sent into the world, until the fulness of time came. (John 10:36.) But whether the Sabbath was given to Adam or not, it is most certain that Scripture is silent as to it, from Adam to Moses, a period of more than two thousand years. Now viewing the Sabbath as a part of the moral law, as commonly understood, in the sense of eternal and universal obligation, this silence would present a serious difficulty. But when seen, like all the rest of the ceremonial law, to be a shadow of Christ, this silence is not only no difficulty, but a key to the whole subject.

Sin came in, and man was driven out. He is still out — and God has only one way of bringing him back. That way is Christ. Now as the death of Christ is the only way of bringing the sinner into the real rest of God, so also, if the Sabbath were a shadow of God's rest in Christ, man could not possibly be brought into this typical rest, until the shedding of the blood of that paschal lamb, which pointed to the great sacrificial Lamb of God. Accordingly the lamb is slain — the passover blood is sprinkled — the Lord brings out His redeemed people — the song of redemption is sung — the manna from heaven is given — and then, and not till then, is the Sabbath expressly instituted. "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord." (See Exodus 16:22-30; also Nehemiah 9:14, and Hebrews 4:6.)

Now, as a shadow of rest in Christ, two things were most necessary — that it should be given consequent on redemption — on that very ground; and that it should he given only to those thus redeemed, as the mark or sign of their redemption. And however these principles of interpretation may cross and offend human thoughts, they are God's thoughts; and nothing could he more striking than the care the Holy Ghost has taken to present these two facts. In chapter 19, which unfolds the ways of God preparatory to the giving of the law, we have in the 4th verse — "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." In the very giving of the law, God spake these words and said, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The ways of God are very precious; God must be true to Himself; obedience was not commanded that they might be redeemed, but because they were redeemed; but God says of Israel, "They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways."

It was to this redeemed people the command was given, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." This is still more clear in Deuteronomy 5:15 — "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." Could language be plainer than this? That blood which had separated them from Egypt, and brought them typically to God, and that mighty power which He put forth in bringing them out, were the ground on which God says, "Therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the Sabbath day." Now, had God made known His Sabbath to all men, and given it to them, this wondrous connexion with a complete redemption would have had no meaning in it. But He did not, as Nehemiah bears witness. (Nehemiah 9:9-14) There, we have first God's redemption, and then, "and madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath." How striking is this type! The real rest of God can only be known by those who have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

The Sabbath was most strictly a sign between God and His redeemed Israel. “Speak thou unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you,” &c. (Exodus 31:13.) This is again repeated in the 17th verse — “It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.” (See also Ezekiel 20:12.) The history of redemption is there recounted, and then we read, “Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Do not mistake by supposing that they were to keep the Sabbath to get sanctified. No I it was God’s sign that He had, by the death of the lamb, sanctified, or separated them from Egypt to Himself; and they were to keep it as a sign that they were thus separated to God. It would be a contradiction in terms to say, that this rest was given to the world, and then to say, it was given to a people as a sign that they were sanctified from the world to God.

How strikingly this holds good in the antitype. It is a fact that none have this sign upon them — that is rest of soul, or peace with God — none enter into His rest, but they who believe; none can be brought nigh to God but through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Did you ever meet a man that had peace with God? That man believed on God “that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The poor Romanist, and many others, will not believe God’s testimony about the death and resurrection of Christ, and therefore never can have peace with God — never! No, never do they know “the blessedness of the man” “whose transgression is forgiven;” never once can they give thanks to the Father, knowing that in Christ “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Read Colossians 1:12-14.) No! in all the religions of man this fact is the same: he never can by works enter into rest; to cease from works is the only possible ground of entering into rest. God ceased from His works of creation, and entered into that rest, all being finished; the last thing He did was to build the woman — type of the Church — then He rested from all His works. And did not Christ finish the work of redemption? And has not God raised Him from the dead? “Who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” Is not this proof enough? All heaven owns that the work of redemption is done; the Redeemer has sat down; and God has crowned Him with glory and honour. All heaven shouts, Worthy the Lamb! Reader, wilt thou dare to lift up thy unbelieving head and say, “No! that finished redemption is not enough; it alone can never give me peace with God; I must add my good works, my righteousness.” Remember, God calls thy righteousness filthy rags. Big as the bundle may be, all that thou hast, all that thou art, bears the stamp of sin, and demands thy death. Christ has met this claim, and was swallowed up of death. “He was made sin for us.” In Him was life; death had no claim on Him; yet was His soul made an offering for sin. He bowed His head; He cried, “It is finished;” He gave up the ghost. Now, if God did not raise Him from the dead, and thus prove and declare the work that justifies, that sanctifies, that glorifies the sinner who believes on Him; I say, if God has not raised Him from the dead, then are we yet in our sins; even we who have believed, have believed a lie. But now is He risen. God has declared redemption finished. “He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption.” “Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” May God open the heart of the reader to receive this precious peace, thus preached to him, through the blood of Jesus. To return to the Sabbath, as a shadow of rest in Christ. If there be this controversy between God and man, as to the real rest, God giving it

only in Christ, and man determined to add his own filthy works; and if he really is so determined to carry the burden of sin, more or less, I doubt not we shall find instruction as to both these points expressed by the shadow. For the first point, turn to Numbers 15:32, where we have the case of the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. As the Sabbath was only just made known, enquiry was made, what should be done to him; and the Lord said, “The man shall surely be put to death.” Men may presumptuously deny the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the finished work of Christ. They may think it a light thing to break that Sabbath, that rest, by only gathering a few of the beggarly rotten sticks of their own works. Ponder this solemn lesson. If the shadow was thus guarded by the penalty of death, what will be the consequence to the soul that dares thus sin against the Holy Ghost, by despising the great salvation, the eternal Sabbath of rest in Christ?

Again, as to the second point, the desperate struggling of unbelief to carry the burthen of sin, how distinctly is this forbidden in the express command of God as to the shadow, in Jeremiah 17:21 : “Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burthen on the Sabbath day,” &c. Does not the Spirit in this speak to us now? “Take heed.” Is not unbelief the besetting sin of every believer? No doubt the remembrance of sin should and will humble us to the dust. What soul that knows the Lord has not felt this, and wept bitterly? But doubt not, therefore, the efficacy of that “precious blood which hath made peace.” Take heed, beware of that heart of unbelief, that would doubt the forgiveness of God. Reader, have you pressing on your soul, the burden of sin? Oh! take it to the blood of Christ. It is Himself that says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Oh precious words! oh precious Jesus! whither could I go, but to thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Oh believe Him! Oh! “taste and see that the Lord is good.” He says, “My peace I give unto you.” Christ is the rest of God. Cease from works: enter into His rest. Were it not that it would extend this paper far beyond my purpose, I might take up every line in, the word of God respecting the Sabbath, and we should find it a shadow expressing God’s thoughts of Christ; and indeed, when our understandings are opened, we are astonished to find both in the “Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, the things concerning himself.” This we may say — no command was more strict; no manner of work must be done on the Sabbath, nor even the kindling of a fire; and certainly nothing gave greater displeasure to Israel’s God, than the pollution of His Sabbath. (Read Jeremiah 17:20-27, and Exodus 35:2-3.) Now is there not something very peculiar in the prohibition of all manner of work on the Sabbath? Here the wages of works is death; not only is the wages of sin death, but if works are done; yes! if any manner of works are done for salvation, for rest, for peace, the wages of such works will be everlasting death. (Galatians 2:16-21; Galatians 3:10.) This is the gospel, though so little known, because Christ the only rest of the sinner is so little known. Can anything be so wicked before God, so cruel to one’s own soul, as to bring in some other gospel of works for salvation, and thus deny the gospel of the grace of God? Can anything be so insulting, so displeasing to God, as thus, by any manner of works, to deny God’s Sabbath of rest in Christ? How striking a figure, then, of Christ, was the Sabbath in every aspect. Think for a moment what Christ has finished — oh, the glory of the cross. I ask, Can God allow that glory to be despised? It was fearful guilt to put the Son of God to death by wicked hands; but God could bear this; for whilst it manifested the cruel sin of man’s heart, the death of Jesus was the exhibition of the love of God. But what was the sin of putting Him to death, not knowing what they did, compared with the deeper, yea, deepest of all sin, that of rejecting forgiveness through His precious blood? The gospel was preached to the murderers first; but the gospel rejected, the works of righteousness preferred, then they must perish for ever. The Jews were not

cast off for the murder of Christ, but for the sin against the Holy Ghost, in rejecting the glad tidings of forgiveness through the slain and risen Son of God. They would go about to establish their own righteousness. Reader, you have either submitted to the righteousness of God — “for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” — or you are, even whilst reading this paper, sinning the deepest of all sin, going about to establish your own righteousness, and sealing thus for ever the ruin of your soul.

It may be added, that redemption through the blood of Christ would not alone meet the sinner’s need, nor yet forgiveness of sin; precious as these are, still, they would not enable one dead in sin to enter into rest. We may illustrate what we mean thus: Suppose a redemption price could be paid for a poor criminal already executed, and a pardon to be sent from the throne, this would be of no avail to the dead man without a new life. This is the sinner’s condition before God; and what can meet it, but pardon and life in Christ Jesus? not only pardon but a new life? Man cannot possibly be brought into God’s rest in Christ, but through the redemption-blood and risen-life of God’s precious Son. How clearly this was before His mind, in the institution of the Sabbath as a shadow of Christ. Not only, as I have said, must the work of redemption from Egypt, by the blood of the typical Lamb, be triumphantly finished, but the express type of life from heaven must also be given; and then after that gift of manna, the Sabbath is for the first time made known. (Comp. Exodus 16:4-31, with John 6:31-51.) “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man shall eat of this bread he shall live for ever.” This is God’s order — redemption, life, rest — and no man can reverse it. The cross of Christ is first in God’s thoughts; and what but infinite mercy as shown in the cross can meet lost men?

Let us now pass on to the New Testament, and we shall have no difficulty in discerning whether the Lord Jesus regarded the Sabbath as a part of the moral law, eternal and universal; or merely as a shadow of Himself. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus presents Himself as the true Sabbath or rest: “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” and at that time we find Jesus leading His disciples, on the Sabbath day, through the corn. Surely this is plain, as that when the sun is risen, the shadow must flee away. Again in John 5:8-18. Here was one whose case could only be met by the Son of God. And what was true of His body, is also true of all men as to the state of their souls before God. Now the Lord Jesus in this case not only says “Rise,” but also “take up thy bed and walk.” The man had lain exactly the same number of years as Israel had withered away in the wilderness — Deuteronomy 2:14-16; and as God in grace gave them possession of the land, when all the men of war were consumed, so grace meets the poor man’s full need, when his strength was gone and he had none to help. Jesus meets him in the dignity of divine power, and the Sabbath as a shadow is shown to be gone. That very same Lord who, in Jeremiah 17:21, had said, “Bear no burden on the sabbath day,” now says, “Take up thy bed and walk.” The same thing is seen in the case of the man born blind, John 9:6; one word, and his sight would have been restored, but the Lord must again set aside the shadowy Sabbath, by making clay, &c. Observe that nothing so often filled the Jew with madness as this treating of the Sabbath as a shadow. True, they “sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” To my own soul the teaching in all this is most solemn. Man spiritually is in an utterly lost and helpless state; Christ alone, in the fulness of His work and risen power, can save him; and in doing this, the law, of which the Sabbath was a part, engraven on those stones which were the ministration of death,

must be utterly abolished as a means of obtaining life. That this is fully proved in the epistle none can deny. (2 Corinthians 3:7-11; Gal. 2: 24.) As the Sabbath day shadow would admit of no burden and no works, so Christ the substance — God's rest — must stand alone. Reader, have you been brought to rest in Christ alone? Or are you bewildered with works and Christ? Oh cease from works! break not the true rest in Christ, by your burdens or your works. It was terrible to break the old Sabbath, which pointed to Him that was to come, but, oh! how much more fearful is it to despise Christ. But to return to the case of the impotent man. What could the Sabbath do for him? More than nineteen hundred Sabbaths had passed over him, and he was still withered; but, oh! when Jesus came, He to whom those Sabbaths did but point, one word "Rise!" "and immediately the man was made whole." What a contrast! Do ponder this. Nineteen thousand Sabbath days could never heal you — still the withered bondslave of sin — yea, and if you could keep them all, and at last break one, and that by only one sin, you would be guilty of all, and never enter into rest. But what a change when the sinner owns himself a ruined sinner; so ruined that the holy law of God could only condemn him, and that for ever. For such an one, sabbath-keeping or law-keeping can do nothing, because he can do nothing. Oh! let this be owned; when nothing can help, then is the time that God reveals the real rest of the soul in Christ. At that moment, one word "Rise," and the soul is created anew in Christ Jesus. God takes up that soul on entirely new principles: so entirely new, that to go back to the old dispensation of shadows is to deny the gospel, and to bring in another which is not another, but a net of bondage. This is fully discussed in the Epistle to the Galatians. How solemn are those words, "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." And again, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." In the face of such plain scripture, is it not most sad to think, how many are seeking to be righteous before God, by the legality of Sabbath-keeping; and at such a time as this, when such effort is being put forth to lead the very sheep of Christ into this legal bondage, it is well to be really established in grace. In this sense, how full of meaning is such a word as that in Colossians 2:16-17 : "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Or again, Romans 14:5, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Surely one need only compare this with Numbers 15:32-36, (the case of the man who must be put to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath,) and it must be seen that the principles of the two dispensations are as different from each other as light and darkness. In the past dispensation, the Sabbath once commanded, must be kept on pain of death. In this dispensation, the Sabbath is not once commanded, either in the teaching of Christ, or the apostles after Him; nay, more, to return to any part of the law for righteousness, is to deny Christ altogether, and those that thus bring it in are accursed. (Galatians 1:8.) The hallowing of the seventh day, was the expression of God's rest in a finished creation, and a type of God's rest in a finished redemption. Now, reader, what part had man in creation? Just so much could he have in redemption. He was but a creature, brought in to everything made ready to his hands: so it is in the new creation. In the case of Israel, too, redemption was God's own work. The sending of bread from heaven was God's own work; and as the recipient of God's grace, the Sabbath was then given to Israel. In no other way can you be brought into God's rest in Christ, but as a debtor to the boundless grace of God, that spared not His only begotten Son. Oh! gaze at the wondrous cross of Christ! Behold, in God's raising Him

from the dead, God's own testimony that the work of redemption is finished — finished with glory! glory to God! glory to Christ! Oh, the glory of the cross! Oh, the eternal efficacy of that peace-speaking blood! Can there be any wonder that souls seeking peace by the old beggarly shadows of the law should be kept in darkness and bondage? Ah! how beggarly, compared with the glory of the cross. (See 2 Corinthians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6.) Yes, the ministration of death "is done away," "it is abolished." To one who desires to be subject to the word of God this is enough. To one who has not ceased, and will not cease from his own works, these thoughts will be really shocking. To speak of the Sabbath as a past shadow, could not be endured by any but such as have been brought into God's present and eternal rest in Christ.

If these lines should fall into the hands of such as have long wearied themselves in seeking justification by the works of the law, and are beginning to find that by the works of the law none can be justified, let me beg such to cease from works, and, as lost and guilty, look only to Christ. Just as the bitten Israelite looked at the brazen serpent — just as the dying thief looked at Christ — do you, dear reader, look and live. Thousands and thousands have heard the gospel of redemption through the blood of Christ, and have received forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life. Yes, they heard, they believed, they entered by faith into the true sabbath, perfect and eternal rest in Christ. Even so may the reader believe and enter into rest. — Amen.

What is the first day of the week, or the Lord's Day?

There are those who can see no difference between the seventh day, the Sabbath, and the first day of the week, the Lords day, except the mere change of the day. What should we think of the intelligence of a person who could see no difference between a corpse and a living man? Just as blind must that man be who sees no difference between the ministration of death, and the present dispensation, which is after the power of an endless life; in which all is perfect and eternal; and of which the Lord's day is the joyful expression. The offerings of the former, the dispensation of works, could never take away sin; could never give the conscience perfect peace. The work of its priesthood was never done. But in this dispensation of grace, "after he (Christ) had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:1-22.) Now, as there is such an immense contrast between the dispensation of works by Moses, called the ministration of death, and the dispensation of the fulness of life eternal, by Christ Jesus, so the Holy Ghost has most carefully distinguished between "the seventh day" of the one, and "the first day" of the other. Indeed, to take in the full range of God's thought, would be to see the one as the last day of the old creation, and the other as the first day of the new. God's rest in the old creation was broken by sin, since which the whole creation groans. God's rest in Christ, the head of the new creation, can never be broken. We might as easily mingle light and darkness, as the principles of the two dispensations; and hence the necessity of seeing the former to be utterly abolished by the cross of Christ, before we can have the least apprehension of the present in the power of resurrection. Everything in the past is on the principle of obedience to a carnal commandment. Everything in the present springs from the power of a risen life. Oh! that we did but know more fully "the power of his resurrection." (See Php 3:1-12.) This will account at once for the striking contrast between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian's first day. The one was strictly commanded, and legal obedience enforced on pain of death, to those who had engaged to keep the covenant of works. But to believers, as sons, there

is no command at all to observe a Sabbath. Obedience in them is that of sonship. There is nothing in common between the two; all is contrast; and not only so, but the one can only begin, on the ground that the other has really come to an end.

Turning to Matthew 28:1 we read, “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,” & c. It was then the angel of the Lord said, “He is risen.” So in Mark 16:1, “And when the Sabbath was passed,” the glory of the resurrection at once burst forth. The shadow of the Sabbath passed over the sepulchre of Jesus and disappeared; it vanished before the glory of the risen Son of God. It is very remarkable that Jesus remained in the silent tomb until the Sabbath was fully come to an end; and not only so, but until the dawn of the first day of the week very early in the morning. The night seems to have been pieced on, as it were, in perfect keeping with the fact that the Church has to wait a little while; the night of which is now far spent. The dawn of the resurrection morn shall soon break forth. The sun of the new creation shall soon arise, in all his strength and glory, to set no more. The Sabbath, as a shadow, having thus served its purpose in pointing to Christ, and now having passed away, let us inquire what there is in the word of God respecting the first day of the week. Great as was that work of creation from which God rested on the seventh day, yet infinitely greater was the work of redemption, from which Christ rested, and which God declared accomplished and accepted, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. On the first day of the week “He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” “He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” “God raised him from the dead.” “As it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.” (Acts 13:23-39.) “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner,” & c. The epistles also are full of the glory of the resurrection of Christ. The whole question of our salvation hangs on the resurrection of Christ. Now it was on this first day of the week that Christ arose, the first-born from among the dead — the first-fruits of them that slept. (1 Corinthians 15:20; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5.) “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalms 118:22-25.) The question is, On what day did God take up from the dead His rejected stone, and give Him this glory? Plainly, on the first day of the week. This, then, is the day of all days which the Lord hath made; and without a command, those are glad and do rejoice in it, who are one with Him that is raised from the dead. I know this passage looks forward to Israel, as to the time of the manifestation; but faith sees in the resurrection of Christ the pledge and assurance of all that is yet to come. “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus.” As Jesus was the first-fruit pledge of the coming harvest, so that day on which He arose is a foretaste of the eternal peace and joy at His right hand in the glory.

It was on that first day, that Jesus opened the scriptures, and showed His disciples how He “ought to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory.” (Luke 24:1-53 — see the whole chapter.) It was on that same day at evening, being the first day of the week, that Jesus, for the first time, declared the glad tidings of peace through His broken body and shed blood. “Peace be unto you,” and He showed them His hands and His side. Oh, what a gospel of peace, in the wounds of Jesus alive from the dead. And, again, the next first day, He came with the same message of peace. Who can tell the deep joy of the soul which has long been tormented with the awful sense of sin — when, for the first time, “Peace be unto you,” is heard from the lips of Jesus, and conscience is for

ever satisfied, because God is glorified by the wounds on the risen body of Jesus. Surely, that soul will rejoice on the day, the first of all days, when God raised up His Son from the dead. But the disciples, though thus blest, were commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father — the Holy Ghost. (Acts 1:4-8.) Now, it is most remarkable that the Holy Ghost did not come until the day of Pentecost was fully come. (Acts 2:1.) “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” Surely there must be some reason why the Lord Jesus remained in the grave until the Sabbath was so fully past, and the Holy Ghost remained away until the Pentecost was so fully come; for the Pentecostal scene — like the resurrection — began early in the morning of the first day of the week. The institution of this Pentecostal feast in the 23 of Leviticus, will throw much light on this part of our subject. The sheaf of the first-fruits in the 11th verse, “He shall wave before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath.” Now the morrow after the Sabbath must be the first day of the week. Christ was that first-fruit sheaf, which was waved in resurrection acceptance on the morrow after the Sabbath — not on the Sabbath, but the first day after the Sabbath was past — on the very day the Jewish priest waved the literal sheaf, Christ arose from the dead. 15th verse, “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath, shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord.” To my own soul the typical instruction in this is very full. The waving of the first-fruit sheaf was on the morrow after the Sabbath, and the two wave-loaves are also offered on the morrow after the seventh Sabbath, or first day after the Sabbath. How wondrously everything met in Christ. On the very night the passover was slain, Jesus was offered, the Lamb of God without spot. On that very morrow after the Sabbath, when the wave sheaf was waved, on that very first day of the week, Jesus, our Surety, was raised from the dead, and accepted for us. Seven Sabbaths had to pass away, and the morrow after the seventh must be fully come — the Pentecost — before the Holy Ghost could be given, to baptize the disciples into one body, the Church of the living God. Then was the Church, answering to the two wave-loaves, to be taken from Jew and Gentile, presented before the Lord. The sweet savour offering connected with the sheaf of the first-fruits, *&* c., contrasted with the leaven baked with the loaves of these first-fruits, is full of solemn instruction as to the perfection of Christ, “Who hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,” (Ephesians 5:2,) and the leaven of imperfection that is found in the Church. As to itself, it is only as seen in Him who loved it and gave Himself for it, that it is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, (ver. 26, 27.) But why, I ask, were they to wait? and why did the Spirit delay until the Sabbath was seven times past, and this first day of Pentecost was fully come? Was it not to show that the Sabbath, with the whole economy of the law, must be seven times past, utterly past, before God could begin to build the new-creation Church? It may be necessary to notice, for some, that the Church had no actual existence before the day of Pentecost. When Jesus told Peter about the Church, He did not say, On this rock

I am building, but on this rock I will build my Church. Now, that Peter afterwards understood this to refer to resurrection is very clear. (Acts 4:10-12; 1 Peter 1: 34; 2: 4-9.) Surely, as living stones we are not built upon a dead Christ, but built up in Him who is alive from the dead. Unless Christ raised from the dead is seen to be the foundation of the Church, the Church of God is not seen at all. That there may be churches or assemblies of men without any connexion whatever with the

resurrection of Christ is very certain. But that the Church of God is risen with Christ is also quite as clear; “for he is the Head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead.” Alas! resurrection is beyond man’s thoughts altogether. But it is God’s thought, and that which is the marvellous contrast to everything that is earthly. Should the reader wish to see more of this, let him turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians. The resurrection of Christ in mighty power is seen in chapter 1: 18; the Church is then seen as His body, raised up with Him, in chapter 2 and thus built upon Him the chief corner stone. Chapter 3 shows this mystery to have been kept hid from ages. To return to Pentecost. On this first day, the glad tidings of salvation, through the death and resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed, for the first time, to the wondering multitude. Three thousand heard the word, received it gladly, and were baptized; “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” When God formed man of the dust of the ground, all his members were fashioned, but he was not a living soul until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Even so, it is quite true, the disciples of Christ were gathered together, but they were not a living temple of the Holy Ghost, until He descended on the day of Pentecost. What a change! a timid band of fearful men now stand forth in the mighty power of God; and this great event took place on the first day of the week, even the morrow after the seventh Sabbath. Surely the believer needs no command to remember, with gladness, such a day.

Let ins now notice Acts 20:7, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,” & c. It does not say, when the disciples met to keep the Sabbath; no, the word Sabbath is never once used in scripture to denote the first day of the week. But they were disciples thus met, and their object was not even to hear Paul; — no, the preaching of Paul is secondary to “breaking bread.” What was this “breaking bread,” that was thought so much of by the early disciples, not on the first Sunday in the month, or the second, but on the first day of the week? The first Sunday in the month has no meaning in it, except as it expresses man’s self-will, to do as he likes for his convenience. “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26.) This passage in full of solemn instruction as to what it is for disciples to break bread. It is the Lord’s redeemed people, remembering their Lord’s death, and showing it forth until He come. This was the object of the disciples when they came together on the first day of the week. Am I a disciple? Have I redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of my sins? Then with solemn, holy joy, let me eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, on the first day of the week — that is the memorial of His broken body, and of His shed blood; let me thus confess and show forth that my salvation is not by works, but entirely of Christ. Thus may I be turned from every idol to serve the true and living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. But let us beware of making the Supper of the Lord, either a mass, or a sacrament of works for salvation; no, it is the commemoration of that finished redemption which is the eternal salvation of every one that believeth. It is for those who believe God and are saved (not for those who doubt God’s testimony and hope they may, partly by works and partly by Christ, be saved) thus to show forth the tokens of this finished work; and though truly blessed for the Lord’s believing people at any time to break bread, remembering His great love, yet how very fitting, on the day of

His triumphant resurrection, to come together to break bread in remembrance of His death. This is no matter for human choice. If a child delights to do its parent's will, simply because it has discovered its parent's pleasure; much more surely, in the true spirit of sonship, shall we delight, yes, rejoice, in the first day of the week; and loving Him because He has so loved us, we shall, with longing hearts, desire to do the will of Him who has thus saved us by His grace.

Christ loved to reveal Himself to His disciples on the first day of the week; and faith will still count on this. The Holy Ghost was pleased to use the preaching of the gospel on the first day of the week; faith will count on His still loving to bring many souls to Christ on that day, and of course at all other times.

Disciples came together, then, on the first day of the week to break bread — disciples should love to come together now to break bread. Disciples then made collections for the poor, on the first day of the week — they should love to do the same now. Oh, how thankful should we be that we have such an opportunity — such a privilege — on the first day of the week to meet together, to break bread, to preach Christ, and to care for one another, none molesting or making us afraid. Shall we lightly esteem such a favour? Oh no, God forbid. How can they who are not their own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ — how can such say, "I am not a servant, but a son, therefore I will do my own pleasure; I will go here and there; I will do my own will?" Ah, this savours more of Satan, than of the spirit of adoption and love. Oh! my brethren, we need more to feel the claims of the mercy of God, and more yielding of our bodies to God. (Romans 12:1-2.) If we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, surely it is that we should bring forth fruit to God. It is the tree that bears fruit, not the fruit that bears the tree. Christ is the vine and we are the branches: without Him we can do nothing. If the reader is not a branch in that living vine, he can do nothing. If we are in Christ, we can do all things through Christ strengthening us.

One word as to Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This is the only passage in which "the Lord's day" occurs in Scripture, and I doubt not it means, as commonly understood, the first day of the week — the day which the Lord has made. The sum of it all is this: — the Lord's people, on the Lord's day, remembering the Lord's death, and preaching the gospel to the world.

But, it way be asked, is there nothing to the world about Sabbath keeping now? Nothing, I answer, but to hear the gospel, believe and live. Man never could enter into rest by works. Peace and life are God's free gift. Every act of obedience must spring from life in Christ. "We are created anew by Christ Jesus, unto good works." Jesus said, "My peace give I unto you." "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, (that is the Jew under law, and the Gentile without law,) and hath broken down the middle wall of partition; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, in ordinances." "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." In conclusion, should the reader be one of those who has long and anxiously desired this "peace of God that passeth all understanding," this assurance of perfect rest in God, and has never yet found it, let me ask, Have you not sought it by the works of the law, Sabbath keeping, or what not, instead of looking simply to Jesus? Are we not told, that He hath "made peace through the blood of his cross," and that since Christ hath been set forth crucified, "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse?" You cannot possibly have both. If you cling to the law and try to do the best you can, you let go Christ. (Galatians 5:4.) If you cling only to Christ, you magnify the law, for all its condemnation fell on Jesus — its ministry is

abolished and you are free, you are justified, you have peace, you cease from works, you enter into rest, even the true Sabbath of God. The love of God fills your soul, the Spirit of God bears witness that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from all sin. The Lord's day will no longer be a day of bondage and sin, but a day of thanksgiving and joy. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus — old things are passed away — all is new. This new nature will as surely delight to do the will of God, as the old nature is contrary to Him.

If you have ever compared the present state of the Church with what we find in the New Testament, you must have been struck with the sad contrast as to the certainty of peace with God. Every believer then had peace with God and could say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." "He is our peace." But, now you may meet with a hundred Christians, and not three of them can say, with confidence, "We have peace with God." Why is this? Converse with them a little, and the reason is plain enough. There is confusion about the gospel. Christ is not the alone Sabbath of rest to the soul. There is not that real giving up of self as utterly lost in sin. There is a trying to mix up works — a secret commending of self to God; and never being able to do this, the soul is perplexed, now looking at Christ, with a little joy and brightness; again, looking at self, and all is darkness and doubt. Oh! this is not the gospel of the grace of God! Cease from works; cling only to Christ.

I have no doubt whatever that the tendency, in our day, to go back to ordinances is, above all things, the cause of the great spiritual dearth amongst Christians. Oh, Protestants! if you would be used of God in stemming the tide of Popish delusion, awake, awake! search the scriptures; preach Christ or do not preach at all; better never preach, than preach law and Sabbath-keeping. May God grant that many may yet be sent forth, full of the Holy Ghost; that the name of the Lord Jesus may be magnified; and may the tossed and perplexed children of God find and enjoy their full Sabbath of rest in Him.

Let no one suppose that it is as a licence to sin that the ministry of the law is shown in this paper to be abolished. — "God forbid!" Ponder the sufferings of the Son of God, and may the cross of Christ forbid the thought. If I found a child bound by a chain, and a serpent assailing it, should I deliver the child from that by which it was held, that the serpent might devour it? Oh, no! but that the child might escape the serpent. (See Romans 7:4-6; Romans 8:2-4.) Nor do I speak of the law as abolished in regard to God's moral government in the world. (1 Timothy 1:7-10.) But what I mean is this — that for righteousness before God — for salvation — for peace — for life — for justification — the law is utterly abolished by the cross. The precepts of the New Testament are invariably given to those who are saved — never once to any man to be saved by keeping them; and yet this is what thousands are trying to do, and hoping to be saved at last. This is utterly, fatally wrong. Salvation — life and peace — first, and obedience as the result of union with Christ risen from the dead. As the old Sabbath was God's sign to Israel, so peace, the real Sabbath of rest in Christ, is God's present sign that we are His redeemed ones; and, as surely, uncertainty about salvation, is a distinct sign that it is sought by the works of law. Do you say, What shall I do then to be saved? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." C. S.

Justification in the Risen Christ; or "The Faith which was once delivered to the saints." In these days of perplexity, nothing can be more important than the enquiry, What was the faith once delivered to the saints? and what is the obedience of that faith? A knowledge of the former gives

the certainty of salvation; whilst a clear apprehension of the latter, shows us the walk consistent with so great a salvation.

Let not my reader be surprised if he finds the "faith once delivered" widely different from the faith now delivered. There must be a difference — the results were so different. Then, it gave immediate, certain peace — now, years of weary perplexity, ending in coldness and indifference. Then, it produced a holy life, deadness to the world, consecration to God — now, professors, and often real Christians, are the most active men of the world, alive to the world, leavened with its principles, pursuing its pleasures or its wealth: little time for God or His word, and little communion with God. There are many blessed exceptions; but is not this the general result of modern teaching? Then, as surely as every effect agrees with its cause, so surely does modern doctrine differ from the "faith once delivered to the saints."

There is, however, one point of saying agreement. I say, saying point; for without it none could be saved. It is this — through the death of Jesus is preached the forgiveness of sins. And from this point — the blessed cross of Christ — ancient and modern teaching immediately diverge. The ancient doctrine went onward, leading the soul into the glories and beauties of the new creation, in Christ, the beginning, raised from the dead. The modern doctrine goes backward, and leads the soul into darkness and perplexity, under bondage to law. The one gives deliverance, the other bondage, The Romanist and the Protestant both proclaim the death of Jesus; but both also put the perplexed soul under law, and thus neutralize the blessed truth of the cross. The Romanist preaches the law for justification, and thus makes the cross of no effect; as it is written, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4.) Many Protestants preach the law for righteousness — put the saved person under it for righteousness as a rule of life; and thus to them also Christ is dead in vain. "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Suppose a river separated a slave state from a free state: a bridge of escape is laid across that river. Now suppose another bridge is laid across the river back again. A poor slave escapes; but instead of going onward on free soil, he is persuaded to recross the other bridge; surely he is back again in bondage, and the first bridge is made of none effect. The cross of Jesus is that bridge, by which those who were in bondage under law have been brought into liberty. Now in the days of the apostles, some of Satan’s builders erected another bridge, and sought to persuade the freemen of Christ to recross the river, and become again entangled in bondage. Against these the apostle wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. Alas! in our day, so generally has Christendom recrossed this Jordan, that to defend the ancient doctrines of the Church is called a new gospel. I would ask my reader a very important question. On which side of the river are you? In the land of bondage, under the yoke of law? or risen with Christ in the liberty of the new creation? If in the latter, it is a miracle of grace. We in this day are born, so to speak, in bondage. We first breathe the very air of legalism. If any one doubts this, let him take up the catechisms, and early books for the young, and he will be astonished how "do" and "live" are written everywhere. And thus that is habitually taught as gospel, which is the very opposite of the ancient doctrine of the Church.

I desire, then, in entire dependence on the teaching of the Spirit of God, to enquire in this paper, What was the ancient doctrine of the Church on the all-important subject of Justification? To justify a lost, guilty sinner must have astonished angels. None but God could have conceived the

thought. To justify implies not merely to pardon from guilt — that is negative justification; but the necessity of positive righteousness. To pardon a wrong-doer is one thing; but how to justify the wrong-doer seems impossible — nay, with man it is impossible. The Scriptures and facts prove all men guilty. Then the great difficulty was how could God be just or righteous in justifying the guilty? As I was saying the other day in Leeds, a mill-owner passes a law, that any person proved guilty of stealing a pound of wool shall be immediately discharged the premises. A young man is proved guilty; the wool is found in his pocket. Now tell me how the mill-owner can, not only spare him, forgive him, but justify him. What would you think of such a master? Why, you would say, he was as bad as the thief. Now this was the difficulty. Man was proved guilty, had the sin in his very heart and life. Now I ask every man who denies the atonement, On what other principle can God justify the guilty? To the awakened sinner this is a tremendous question, How can I be justified and have peace with God? It must be evident that if man cannot justify that which is not positively righteous, surely then God cannot justify anything short of righteousness. But in man there is no righteousness. All are guilty. "So that death is passed upon all men, for all have sinned."

How does Scripture, then, deal with this amazing question — the justification of the sinner, and God's righteousness in thus justifying him? I answer, Through Jesus, the resurrection from among the dead — Jesus and the resurrection — Jesus "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree" — the Just dying for the unjust. Yes, Jesus crucified and Jesus risen was what the Holy Ghost did set before lost sinners: His death for atonement — His resurrection for righteousness or justification. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:25) Thus, whilst His precious blood clears from all sin, His resurrection brings me into a state of absolute righteousness in Him risen, and therefore complete justification. And it is on this positive righteousness for justification that ancient and modern teaching so widely differ — modern teachers having got to the wrong side of the river; that is, having left the christian ground of a new life in resurrection, and gone back to the land of legalism and bondage, finding themselves, as they suppose, under law; say they, The law must be kept perfectly, and without this there is no justification. They thus go back to law for righteousness. But, then, finding that practically the believer thus put under it only breaks it, what must be done? Oh, say they, you are under it, and break it; but Christ kept the law for you in His life, and this is imputed to you for righteousness. I would say, in answer to many enquiries on this solemn subject, I cannot find this doctrine in Scripture: it cannot be the ancient doctrine of God's Church. The basis is wrong — to refer to the illustration, on the wrong side of the river. Justification is not on the principle of law at all. "The righteousness of God without law is manifested." "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Read Romans 3:19-26.) Now every doctrine of God's word is clearly stated, not in one verse merely, but in many. Take the atonement: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" — "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" — "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust:" and hundreds of other passages. But does Scripture ever say that Christ kept the law for us for justifying righteousness? I am not aware of a single text. And yet, if it were so, there are many places where it should say so. Take Romans 8:33. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Does it say that it was Christ that kept the law? No; but, "Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Now is not this the full statement of Scripture as to God's justification of the elect? And yet, plainly, not one thought in it of Christ's keeping the law for the justified. And the most careful

examination of every passage will be found in perfect harmony with this statement. Look through the Acts. Not once does the apostle preach, Christ kept the law for us, but "Christ died for our sins," &c. 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 is a notable proof of this. The apostle does not say, We thus judge that all men are under the law, and that Christ kept it for them; no; but, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." There is not a thought of keeping the law for them, but "died for them and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Does not this prove that the apostle did not go back to Christ under law for righteousness, but onwards to resurrection. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things of God." Thus resurrection is the right side of Jordan. Thus the old things of the law, its righteousness and its condemnation, passed away. I am not taken back to Christ under it for righteousness, but taken forward to Christ in resurrection; and there I am made the positive righteousness of God in Him, as surely as He was made sin for me. "For he hath made him sin for us who knew no sin," (surely that was on the cross,) "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." What deep, solid peace this gives! It is thus risen in Him, one with Him, we are made "the righteousness of God in him." Thus, as our fall in the first Adam not only brought condemnation, but the actual death-state of sin, much more resurrection in Christ not only brings acquittal from condemnation, but an everlasting state of life and actual righteousness absolutely perfect and sinless, the righteousness of God in Christ. Thus, for the believer, Christ, by His obedience unto death, has become the end of the law for righteousness. The end of the law was the curse, and our adorable Jesus became a curse. In Him, our dying Substitute, the life once forfeited by us has been given up, the condemnation due to us fully executed. And when God raised him from the dead, He raised Him as our justified Surety. So the Holy Ghost applies Isaiah 1:6-9 in Romans 8:34.

If you ask what do I make of the life of Christ, I answer, Whatever the word of God makes of it. Surely my precious example (1 Peter 2:21-23) — surely the food of my soul, the bread of life (John 10:1-42) — and surely the revelation of the Father. (John 14:1-31.) Oh! to follow Him. This is far more than legal righteousness — to have His spirit, to tread in His steps, who, the last moment before He was bound, put forth His hand to heal His enemy’s ear. This was not an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. In the midst of the solemnities and sufferings of Calvary, I hear Him cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Yes, even here He could say, (was ever love like this?) "Lo I come to do thy will O God!" But when I come to the solemn question of justification, it is by His blood from all sin, and in His resurrection made the righteousness of God in Him. He once was condemned to death for us; but now God hath raised Him from the dead, for our justification, as our Surety. Now, as man, in the very body once broken for us, God has justified Him in highest glory as the Surety and Head of the Church, His body. That elect body is raised from the dead with Him, and seated in Him where He is, as He is, "that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." I might multiply page after page of this resurrection-righteousness. With the apostle, if there were no resurrection gospel, then there were no gospel at all; "for if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins." But Christ is risen, and the believer is risen with Him, and therefore not in his sins, but righteous in the risen Christ, the beginning of the new creation. I have no doubt, that ignorance of the new creation in Christ risen, is the cause why men defend legal righteousness. No wonder that to one ignorant of resurrection, the gospel of the righteousness of

God, in justifying the believer through the death and resurrection of Christ, is a new gospel. Jesus and the resurrection is as new a doctrine as it was at Athens 1800 years ago. Indeed it is one of the sad wonders of these last days, that the ancient doctrine of "through Jesus the resurrection" should have been so lost. The modern doctrine is, through Jesus the justification of the old man under law. The ancient doctrine was, death and burial to the old man, (see Romans 6:1-23,) and perfect justification, not of the old man, but of the new man, in the risen Christ Jesus. Oh! my reader, if you are dead with Christ, are you not justified from all sin? If you are risen with Him, are you not righteous in Him? He is your righteousness: not was, but is. (1 Cor. 1:36.) You are God's righteousness in Him. (1 Cor. 5:21.) Thus clothed in the risen Christ, is not this the righteousness which is of God by faith. (See Php 3:9-10.) Thus is thy need met, fellow-believer — so met, that there is now no condemnation. Dead with Christ, risen with Christ, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ." (Romans 8:1-39.)

Surely there was not a greater difference betwixt the bondage of Egypt, and the freedom of Canaan, than there is betwixt modern preaching and the doctrine of the new creation. Oh! my brethren in the ministry of Jesus Christ, let me beg of you to search the Scriptures on this momentous question. Many have found to their joy that these things are so. I pretend to no new light: I merely point to the word of God. By the eye of faith, I have seen the risen, glorified Christ, and I desire to obey the heavenly vision. (Acts 26:19.) And now as to obedience. Here again I find ancient and modern teaching equally opposed, as in the justification of a sinner. The ancient doctrine was the obedience of faith — the modern, the obedience of law. The one has all power for a holy walk — the other has no power. I do not find the law ever presented as the rule of life or walk to the risen child of God. The law was perfect for the purpose for which it was given. But the new commandment goes much farther: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Solemn words! "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16.) The principle of obedience in this chapter is very beautiful. The first thing named is the election of God the Father; then the sanctification or work of the Spirit in separating the soul unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Then the abundant mercy of God the Father in begetting us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Thus, being children of the resurrection, our obedience is not on the principle of bondage under law, but the obedience of children of resurrection. And was not this the ardent wish of the apostle Paul as to his walk and obedience? "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death." (Read the whole passage, Php 3:4-14.) Now could anything be more clear than this? The risen Christ was his rule of life, as well as his righteousness for justification. Surely we may all say, how little have we attained to this power of resurrection in our walk!

We find the same doctrine in Colossians 2:20. If dead with Christ, why act as though we were alive in the world? "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ, in God." (Colossians 3:1-2.)

Now let me ask, have we not almost lost, in this day, both the doctrine of righteousness in the risen Christ; and also the rule of Christian walk: dead with Christ and risen with Christ? The writings of

the apostles are full of both, whilst their lives bore witness to the truth they preached. Does not Paul say, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them," &c. (Galatians 6:14.) And, surely, what a rule of walk — the new creation! All the old things passed away all things become new — all things of God. Could anything be more opposed to this than the way in which many teachers take back the believer into the land of bondage. The more one dwells upon the glorious doctrine of justification in the risen Christ the more reason we see why the apostle should so vehemently oppose the Judaizing teachers in Galatia. To take back the believer under law, is to rob him of the new creation; you rob Christ of His new creation glory.

It may be replied, who doubts the resurrection, both of Christ on the third day, and the general resurrection at the last day? The general resurrection is a Jewish doctrine, (John 11:24.) but never taught by the Holy Ghost to the Church [Let it not be supposed that the real resurrection of the body is doubted, either the first, the resurrection of the saints, or the second, which will be the resurrection of the lost.] What the blessed Spirit teaches in the word is, that the believer is now dead with Christ, now risen with Him; translated from a state of sin and death, to a state of righteousness and life in the risen Christ. And that now he is called to walk as a dead and risen person. This is what he is now in his surety — the risen Christ. So that as to sin, righteousness, and life, he is in Christ exactly what be will be when the day of redemption of the body has actually taken place. Now, is not this far more than the modern doctrine of putting him under law, and then telling him, because Jesus kept the law for him he is justified when he breaks it? Besides, the modern doctrine gives no power for real practical righteousness; for if I am under the law again, I shall find it as Paul describes the man who was under it: "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:1-25.) Thus sin has the dominion if I am under law. But how blessed to know I am dead and risen. Now "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14.) As to justification, then, blessed divine certainty: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, dead with Him, then justified from sin; risen with Him, then righteous in Him. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1-39.) How can there be, if my whole old state is passed away in His death; if my present and everlasting state is only what He is risen — absolute spotless righteousness — how can God, then, condemn that which is absolutely righteous? And that is what the risen Christ is, and what the believer is as risen in Him — the very righteousness of God.

I must confess, I do not see how God would be righteous in reckoning the breaker of the law righteous because another kept it; nor do I see this taught in Scripture, far from it. But through the precious atoning death and justifying resurrection of Jesus, I do see how God is perfectly righteous in justifying the believer. The law could not be made more honourable than by the death of Jesus Christ the Lord. God did not justify sin, but punished it in His Son. The sentence was executed to the utmost. The old creation thus came for ever to an end in the grave of Christ; but in the resurrection of Christ, God gives me a new life in perfect everlasting righteousness. Now, though He could not be righteous in any way in justifying my old man, yet He is everlastingly, gloriously righteous in justifying me as a new creature in Christ risen from the dead. And being thus justified

in the risen Christ, He gives me His Holy Spirit for positive righteousness of life and walk. (See Romans 8:1-39.) So that whilst on the human plan, as put under law, I should only break it; yet, on this divine plan, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

I am told, I fail to shew what justification is. Well, if you exclude justification in the risen Christ, I must then say the subject is all confusion to me. Admit the risen Christ to be my righteousness and justification, and all is more clear than noon-day sun. In fact, this ancient doctrine, of justification in the risen Christ, has been well nigh lost; and in its place, the modern notion of Christ's legal righteousness under law, has been put in its place. I have no desire for controversy, but however attacked, still to press this ancient doctrine of God's elect, to the glory of Him "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." It is on this blessed principle of resurrection I am justified, and have a justified life. My old self could not be justified; my new self in Christ cannot be condemned. Either Christ risen or nothing.

Do, my fellow-believer, search the precious word of God. See how Jesus taught He must die or remain alone. (John 12:24.) See how, in the Acts, the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. How all that believe in Him are both pardoned and justified. Oh! with what power did they bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! Ah, see how in their epistles they set forth no condemnation through the dead and risen Christ. Oh! may our blessed God lead my reader into the happy regions of the new creation. It is Jesus who says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.)

O! anxious, bewildered souls, through Jesus is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:38.) For this He bled and died. What words are these to the sin-burthened soul. "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." What sayest thou, reader? Has the Spirit of God made thee feel thy wretchedness and sin? Then what divine comfort in Him "who was delivered for our offences." Heaven bears witness, for Jesus is there — earth bears witness, His blood was shed here — the Spirit bears witness — the Father bears witness who sent Him from above, who raised Him from the dead, that through Jesus is preached to thee the forgiveness of sins. Dost thou bear His word! O! dost thou believe God who sent Him and raised Him from the dead? As surely as thou believest on God, who raised Him from the dead, so surely thou art justified from all things. (Acts 13:39.) The word of God leaves thee in no uncertainty. Hath everlasting life — shall not come into condemnation. All that believe in Him are justified from all things — passed from death unto life. These are the incorruptible words of God. Dost thou believe God? Then thy sins are forgiven. Then thou art justified in the risen Christ. Thou art dead with Christ — thou art risen with Christ. By His blood thy sins are for ever put away. (Hebrews 10:12-18.) Risen with Him, there can be no more condemnation — afflictions, temptations, failure there may be; but thy High Priest lives evermore to save thee to the end. O! reader, my prayer to God is that from this moment thou mayest have the enjoyment of divine certainty, not only as to present forgiveness, but that thou mayest know thy justification of God is unchanging and everlasting. "For whom he justified, them he also glorified." Yes, the one is as certain as the other. Art thou justified? Glory is certain. God cannot lie. It must be so. How art thou justified? In Christ risen from the dead, thy surety. But if thou art justified in thy surety, Christ risen, is He not also glorified? Then in thy representative thou art both justified and glorified. This is thy standing now

— risen in Him, justified in Him, complete in Him — the very righteousness of God in Him. It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Christ died, Christ is risen, Christ is glorified, Christ intercedes, and all, all for thee. Nothing, no, nothing, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. O! believer, there is no hell for thee, there is no condemnation for thee; thy righteousness, thy justification, thy glory — what Christ is and shall for ever be. O! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed, and in a few more swiftly-passing moments to see Him as He is and be like Him, for ever with the Lord. O! come Lord Jesus. My heart longs that the whole Church of God might even now awake to its perfect and everlasting justification in the risen Christ. Oh why oppose this as a new doctrine? Is it not the ancient faith of God's elect? When it was fully preached, every believer, being justified by faith, had peace with God. Being dead and risen with Christ, they knew that there was now no condemnation to them that were in Christ. Baptism did, then, strikingly illustrate the doctrine of justification in the risen Christ. Believers were buried in the likeness of His death. (Read Romans 6:3-7.) The old life buried, raised in Christ to walk in newness of life — not old life or old self justified, that could not be; but condemned to death and buried with Christ. God's sentence executed to the utmost on the old nature in the substitute dying on the tree. But what is this new life but life in Christ risen from the dead, and therefore a justified life. Adam is dead; Christ is risen — Adam is condemned; Christ is justified. My reader, where are you — in Adam or in Christ? Dead and condemned, yet risen and justified. Your old Adam-state passed away, your new Christ-state shall endure for ever. He is the resurrection from the dead. As a person is taken out of the water of baptism, so has the believer been taken out from among the dead — reckoned dead, risen, and justified. Your old Adam-state passed with Christ and raised from the dead in Him. Ah! soon shall prayer be turned to praise and faith to glad fruition. O! my fellow-believer, why shouldest thou go down among the dead in Egypt? "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians 5:14.) Satan will try to hinder thee. In the risen Christ is thy righteousness. To take thee back to law for righteousness is the work of Satan. Let it be distinctly borne in mind the Gentiles were never put under law. It was the schoolmaster to the Jews unto Christ. But even the believing Jew is now no longer under the schoolmaster. It was a bright witness of God's righteousness with the creature; but it only found sin in man: yea, by it the offence did abound. In the blessed Jesus it found no sin. He was the fitted, spotless Lamb of God. But His spotless life is nowhere in Scripture spoken of as vicarious. It was His death, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Yes, Christ crucified, Christ risen. This was the faith once delivered to the saints. How clearly this is the doctrine of 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. The Gospel the Apostle Paul preached gave the certainty of present salvation, unless they had believed in vain, and they could not have believed in vain if Christ were risen. If He were not risen, they had believed in vain, and were yet in their sins. If Christ were risen, they had not believed in vain, and were not in their sins. And is not the same doctrine taught in Acts 13:1-52? In that sermon, so used of God in the conversion of a multitude of souls, the glad tidings the apostles preached were that God had raised up Jesus from the dead; and through Him thus raised, was preached the forgiveness of sins; and by Him, all that believed were justified from all things. And, again, at Thessalonica, Acts 18:1-28, what was the Gospel that produced such wondrous results during the three memorable weeks Paul preached to them? "Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ."

Yes, in vain you look for any other Gospel in the preaching of the apostles. Nothing but His death could atone for sin; nothing but His resurrection can justify the believer. It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again. And is not our God using this simple Gospel in our day, in bringing a multitude of souls into the enjoyment of perfect peace? To Him be all praise. It is of little moment whether men approve or disapprove, God will own and use His own blessed truth. May the faith of my reader be the faith once delivered to the saints — Christ dead and risen; and may your walk be as dead with Christ, and risen with Him. Surely, such a justification as the believer has in the risen Christ, demands the joyful surrender of body, soul, and spirit to God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1-21.)

Thus is the believer justified from all sins — dead with Christ; thus is he justified in Christ — risen with Christ, God is righteous in justifying the believer as risen in that Just One. Yes, that Just One, who first died for his sins. O fellow-believer, look at that risen Surety, Christ Jesus! Is not God righteous in justifying Him by raising Him from the dead, and seating Him far above all principality and powers? Is He not, then, just in justifying thee as risen and complete in Him? Thus art thou in Christ risen; and therefore there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

C.S.

Chapter 58

060. Doors shut and Lamps put out.

Doors shut and Lamps put out.

2 Chronicles 29:1-36. In reading the Old Testament histories it is important to remember that these things happened, and are recorded, for our admonition. in looking, then, at the history of Judah, during the reign of Ahaz, we see the most fearful results of backsliding from God. "He burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen." (2 Chronicles 28:1-27.) How terrible! Man cannot turn from God, but he must turn to Satan. "He sacrificed also, and burnt incense in high places." And the nation went with him in this worship of devils. He was delivered into the hand of the king of Syria, and into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with great slaughter, "because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers." Having thus departed from Jehovah, he still adds to his wickedness, in looking to the world to help him. "At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him." Instead of help, there is only increasing distress — Judah was brought very low. He then proceeded further in wickedness. "For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria, but he helped him not." How rapid the downward course! "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz." And this is the downward course of every heart that departs from the living God. Sin cannot be played with. May the Lord use these solemn scriptures, in awakening the spirit of watchfulness, and dependence, in every child of God who shall read these lines.

"He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him. and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria, help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel." Who can tell where departure from God may lead to? Mark the sad climax in the downward course of Ahaz, "And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God: and abut up the doors of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem." This was the sad course of Judah's backsliding — the true picture of every heart that departs from God.

One of the first steps, then, in this downward progress was, the burning the little ones of Judah in the fire of Moloch. Oh, fearful thought to a parent's heart: the backsliding sin and worldliness of the believer now, may, unless grace prevent, sacrifice his children to everlasting burnings! The true path of faith is very narrow and strait. Satan's world lies all around on every, side. To turn aside is to lead my children, into the paths of the destroyer. Oh! think of this, ye parents who take your children to the world's concerts, and amusements; and think of this as those little eyes watch your ways at home. I believe we cannot depart one step from God without affecting our children. It is no use in such a case to pray for their conversion; this only hardens their hearts, if we ourselves are leading them into the paths of Satan. As with the history of God's nation then, so in the history of his children now; departure from him must bring misery and sorrow. The nakedness and captivity of Judah, is a most striking picture of the spiritual condition of the wanderer in heart from God. The captives were indeed restored to the city of palm trees, Jericho. It was beautiful to the eye, but it

was the city of the curse. (Joshua 6:26.) It is so with the child of God. If Satan has ensnared you, no matter what the circumstances, on earth, surrounded with beauty and plenty, yet it is the city of the curse. It is truly awful when the child of God, instead of returning to his Father, still plunges on in wilfulness and sin: he may seek help from the world, but all is in vain. The Lord brings him low; and in the time of distress, to still go on trespassing against God his Father! Such we know is the course of man's desperately wicked heart. Oh! how true this picture is! When the child of God looks for help to this or that, he finds ruin instead of remedy. Then the progress is rapid. A portion of time for prayer, or reading, or the means of grace, as we say, is given up to business or pleasure. The prevailing passion of the mind begins to get a fast bold in secret over the person; sin now gets such power, that soon the climax is reached; real worship is given up; the doors are shut, and the lamps are put out: and all this may take place, and yet a great show of outward religion. "He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem."What numbers of the real children of God in this day are in a similar condition, instead of enjoying unhindered worship in the full light of the presence of God, with them it is as though the doors were shut and the lamps put out. This then, was the state of backsliding Judah, when the history of God's restoration by Hezekiah began. One would have thought the case utterly hopeless. The confession of Hezekiah is very bitter: "For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel," &c. 2 Chronicles 29:6-9. Thus he bows, and the priests and Levites with him, before the chastening hand of God. This blessed brokenness of heart before the Lord is a sure sign of restoration.

These words may describe the state of my reader. You may remember the days of your spiritual youth, when the presence of your God and Father was your home and joy; in the light of that presence, you then knew that the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed you from all sin. Oh, how sweet it was to pour out your heart to God in praise and thanksgiving. Well, now! How is it now? You may be as busy with outward religion as Ahaz. But have you in secret been turned after sin, the world, or Satan? Is your heart and your eye off the Lord? Is it dark? Have you shut the door practically of the Lord's presence? the happy, holy liberty of entering with boldness, by the blood of Jesus, into the holiest, within the veil? Is this your place of worship? Hebrews 10:1-23. Or, as to the enjoyment of your soul: Is the door shut and the lamps put out? My reader may say, "This is all true, but it comes very far short of my case. I seem to have gone the whole length of Judah's sin and departure. My backsliding began so imperceptibly, I was not aware until my poor heart was ensnared with idols. I turned away from the Lord. I gave up prayer, for I could not bear to keep up a false appearance. I plunged into sin, and, oh! the anguish and misery, no words can describe it; since then everything has seemed to go against me. Nothing can give me relief or comfort. I have tried the world in every form, but it helped me not. Truly I am brought low, so low that I have no hope now of being better." If this should be the state of my reader, may God now deal with him as He dealt with backsliding Judah. As surely as He dealt in chastening with His people then, so surely must He chasten the wandering child now. May there be the same bowing of heart in brokenness before Him. Oh, broken-hearted one, thou mayest boldly come before the throne of grace: there the doors are open and the lamps are lit. (Hebrews 4:16.) This subject demands plain words. It is no mere theory — sin is a reality; temptation is a reality; human weakness is a reality;

backsliding is a reality. But, blessed be God, His grace is a reality that abounds beyond it all.

Man would have said, The work of restoration must begin with breaking in pieces the idols, and in correcting the outward things. God's work of restoration begins in the holiest. I believe this is a deeply important principle. The real work of restoration must begin in the presence of God, who is still the Father of the wayward child. However the nation had disowned Jehovah-God, He did not disown the relation in which He stood to them. However the child of God now may disown and dishonour the relationship of a child, God can never disown the relationship of Father. I never saw this so forcibly as the other day. I found my fellow-traveller on the rails was, and had long been, in deep distress of soul. He had been a Christian many years; and, a happy worshipper within the veil, had long enjoyed the blessed relationship of a child in the Father's presence. But he had been overcome by sin and plunged in despair. Oh! what need we have of constant, watchful dependence on God. Well, I tried in every way to comfort him in the way my God had often comforted me; but all in vain. He got no relief. I could not understand the case, until one sentence explained it all. He said, "I want to come before God as a sinner, and feel my sin before God?" The thought came with such force — this is nothing else but wanting God to deny his relationship as Father. I tried to show him that, whilst a sinning Jew of old could most properly say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and so an awakened sinner now; but that the sinning child may, and must, come, not as a sinner bearing guilt and condemnation, before God, but as a failing child, in full confidence, to a still ever-loving Father. If the believer sin, the New Testament does not say he has an advocate with God. No; but, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1-2.) What matchless grace is this! What a relationship! Nothing can break it! It is the knowledge of this relationship, even when the believer has sinned, that breaks the heart and restores the soul. Jesus is the propitiation. He has stood my surety, bearing my guilt and condemnation, before God. He has felt my sins before God; has borne them — so borne them, as to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that place as a sinner before God I, as His redeemed child, can never come. To go back and, as an unconverted sinner, cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and try to feel my guilt as a sinner before God, surely this must be to set aside the full value of the atonement, and, so to speak, seek one's own condemnation. Is there any wonder, then, that God cannot, own this ground. It would deny entirely the basis on which the Christian now stands as a child. If I could for once stand again before God as a guilty, condemned sinner, I should be lost. For Christ could not die for me again. Once, more blessed truth, He has borne my sin and died for me. I am, by His death, reconciled to God. He is now always my Father. And my only true place before Him, even if I should have sinned, is as a confessing child. I believe it is ignorance of this relationship that keeps numbers in bondage and misery. To return to our chapter, then. It is most remarkable that the work of restoration begins in the house of the Lord. "And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord." "Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify; and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord." (2 Chronicles 29:16.) My fellow-believer, we have a Great High Priest, who rose from the dead on the first day of the week, yea, the first of months to us, and appeared again unto his weak and timid ones on the eighth day. That blessed High Priest is gone into the inner place of the house of the Lord. I speak not of a place of worship on earth. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which were the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Oh! my fellow-believer, has sin made thee groan? Look up; there is the Living One, once pierced, once dead for thy sins. God Most Holy, thy Father, sees that body once broken on the cross, and hears the pleadings of thy righteous Advocate. Oh! how little the backslider thinks of this wondrous One in brightest glory as He pleads for him. But such is the case. And where is the man on earth that could approach this inner place of living light and holiness, but through the living intercession, and precious death, of this glorified Surety-Man, Christ the Lord.

Oh! ye wanderers, ye fallen ones, ye sorrowing, desolate backsliders, the innermost place of His holy presence is opened to you by the presence of Him who bare your sins. Pure grace has thrown open the doors, and a Father's loving welcome awaits you. There all is light. I think I hear one say, Impossible! I have sinned too deeply. How can I be happy in such holiness and light? For it often happens that a backsliding child of God would own the fullness of grace to an unconverted sinner, and yet, as a child, or, rather, forgetting he is a child of grace, tries hard to find something to bring to God for restoration. But what was the next step in Judah's restoration? "Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah: and he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Lord." It was not three, five or six, but the Hebrew number of perfection, seven, of each kind, that were killed, and their blood sprinkled upon the altar. How much depends on our receiving the testimony of God, to the perfect value of the one offering prefigured by these sacrifices. This is the only ground of restoration and worship. The moment I believe it my soul is restored. The testimony of God was very clearly expressed in these shadows. "The king and the congregation laid their hands upon them." The goats for the sin-offering showing identification, as God had directed in the law. And his words were most plain. "And it shall be forgiven them." (Leviticus 4:20; Leviticus 4:26; Leviticus 4:31; Leviticus 4:35.) They knew it was so; for why should they doubt the word of God? And when the wanderer is thus brought back to God his Father, the word of God to him is quite as plain. "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) Why, then, should he doubt it? "From all sin." These are wondrous words of comfort.

"And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also, with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel." (Ver. 27.) What a change! Thus is the deep need of the soul met; not by looking at self-not by improvements of self. But God sets before us the one offering of Christ. The burnt offering sets forth the perfectness of His spotless person, and the devotedness of His heart in voluntarily offering Himself up to God. And just as we see this, the song of the Lord begins and continues. And the result is, bowing of heart; in worship. What is there to hinder joy and worship, when I see that He loved me and gave Himself for me — that He has met all my sins perfectly — not some of them, but all of them — that He has identified Himself with me. Yes, it is Christ that the Spirit sets before the backslider, and the moment He is seen again, the soul sings for joy. Think how deeply Judah had sunk; and yet now see the effect of these sacrifices, which were but shadows. What joy and profound worship! My fellow-believer, however far thou mayest have wandered, there is surely virtue in the precious blood to bring thee, a purged worshipper, into the very presence of God. There is something unspeakably sweet, when the restored soul bows and worships. And now they consecrated themselves and came with thank offerings. Surely nothing is

more sweet to our God than thanksgiving. He would have our hearts filled with joy. Does not the rejoicing of Hezekiah and all Judah put us to shame. They only had the shadows-offerings that pointed forward; but we have the full knowledge of the true offering of the body of Christ; and yet how little real joy, and worship, and thanksgiving. Yea, many Christians never know the joy and certainty that these Jews had. The next step (chap. 30) is the celebration of the passover — the feeding on the lamb in remembrance of redemption. Thus "They did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers." (Chap. 30:22.) What a sight this was, to see backsliding Judah feeding on the Lamb with great gladness. Does it not show us that Christ is not only the object of faith to the one that has wandered, but at once the food of the soul. Nothing yet about fruit or works. It is all Christ. "So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem." Oh what volumes of wondrous grace does all this speak to the poor backslider! The Lord's presence is still open. The precious blood still speaks perfect peace. The post goes in all haste to invite to come and feed on the Lamb of God. They eat other seven days. Yes, He who is our perfect offering is also our perfect food. We need nothing more than His blood to take away our sins. We need nothing more than His own person to feed our souls.

"Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves." (Chap. 31:1.) This is God's order. The heart of a wandering child must be broken by the gracious, yet chastening, hand of his Father. (Hebrews 12:5-8.) The soul must be brought into His presence, in the full apprehension of the perfect value of the blood of Jesus. Then filled with joy, then worship and adore. Then feed on Christ with gladness of heart. And then — but not until then — when all this is finished — they brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, "until they had utterly destroyed them all." it is only in the presence of God, feeding on Christ, with joy and gladness, that I can get strength to break in pieces every idol in which my heart might trust. Grace first spreads the feast. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Man would say to the backslider, Lovest thou Jesus? If so, come and dine in His presence. Not so the ways of our precious Lord with His weak one. Thus was Peter's self-trust broken to pieces. Confession there must be. It was when the children of Judah kept the feast that they made confession to the Lord God of their fathers. (2 Chronicles 30:1-27.)

It is the knowledge of this precious grace of God that gives strength to bring forth fruits. The wandering child has no more power to bring forth fruit than the dead sinner. Fruit can only spring from, an ungrieved spirit in communion with Christ. It was so in 2 Chronicles 31:1-21. The sacrifices being finished, the soul filled with joy, the joy of communion and worship. The idols are broken to pieces, and then there is abundance of fruits. "And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children brought in abundance of the first fruits." Yea, such was the greatness of the store that the first fruits had to be laid in heaps. "And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps they blessed the Lord and his people Israel." (Ver. 8.)

Thus these chapters set before us in type God's gracious dealings with his wandering child. The priesthood of Jesus within the vail for us. Based on the full value of His blood meeting all our sins, past, present, and future — all borne, perfectly borne by Him. The soul that is brought to understand this, in the presence of God, is filled with love, joy, and worship; yea, feeds with

unspeakable joy on Christ the Lamb of God. This gives power for practical sanctification. And in separation to God every idol is broken to pieces. All was barrenness and darkness; all now is light and fruitfulness. Oh wanderer! God is still thy Father — His presence still thy home. Jesus still pleads for thee. The blood still speaks peace. Still he says, Come and dine. Oh ponder this unchangeable love! Return to thy Father: thou wilt find Him as ready to receive thee as in the days of thy first love. The more thy heart rests in His grace, the more freely canst thou confess all to Him. His joy shall be thy strength, and in it shalt thou break every idol. And thus feeding on Him, and abiding in His presence, fruit shall abound to His praise.

It is very instructive to notice the teaching in these chapters, after Judah's restoration and blessing. "After these things, and the establishment thereof." (Chron. 32:1.) Well, one would have thought all was ended — the idols broken, and abundance of fruits and good works. So might the child of God think when restored to full joy and communion, feeding on Christ, separated front every idol, and walking with God, abounding in every good work, entering with holy boldness within the veil, his soul dwelling on the precious blood of infinite value, overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness of the finished work of Christ, until he bows in adoring worship, yea, with untold gladness, feeding on the precious Lamb. But ah! "After these things, and the establishment thereof." Yes, after he is established in the unspeakable grace of God, even then, as one may say, begins the tug of war. "Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself." This is important to bear in mind. In like manner, often in seasons of sweetest enjoyment, Satan is bringing up his hosts to encamp around us, to watch every opportunity to win us to himself. It is very strange, but oft we find it so, that we are more off our guard at such a time of blessing than any other. Now, "when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes, and his mighty men, to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city, and they did help him." (Verse 3.) Child of God, do not mistake, Satan means to fight. He can bring hosts of wicked spirits against thee. (Ephesians 6:1-24.) Re can bring bands of men against thee. (Job 1:1-22.) He can harass with evil thoughts like fiery darts. Wouldest thou conquer like Hezekiah? Cut of, then, the enemies' supplies. How sadly the believer may minister to the adversary by supplying him with weapons of temptation. Ah! why shouldest thou supply water to the kings of Assyria? As the people stopped all the fountains, they said, "Why shall the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" And beware lest when Satan comes he should find much opportunity of tempting and harassing thee. Whatever gives a handle to Satan, cut it of. "Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken." In times of conflict, what need of being strengthened with might in the inner man! In this day, the wall of separation betwixt the world and the church has been sadly broken down. If the soul would have the victory, this wall must be rebuilt. Yes, as they "raised it up to the towers," so the believer must build the wall of separation up to the very watch towers: and, like Habakkuk, we need to sit on those watch towers, yea, watch against all conformity to the world. (Romans 12:1-21.) The words of Hezekiah are very beautiful here. "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed, for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him, With him is an arm of the flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah." (Ver. 7, 8.) And if they thus rested in his words may we not rest ourselves on the words of God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This is the great anchor of the soul when passing through conflict — "God is for us."

If we compare this account, in the book of Chronicles, with the account in 2 Kings 18:1-37, we find that the best side is chronicled. In the Kings we see what Hezekiah was in himself. The treasures of the sanctuary were given to the king of Assyria; yea, he even "cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it unto the king of Assyria." (2 Kings 18:15-16.) In the Chronicles we see rather what God records about him. Precious grace! Whilst our sins and failures are blotted out, the gift of a cup of cold water in His name is chronicled above. Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptation, said he to them who were too sleepy to watch one hour. The stopping of the watercourses, the building of the wall, the confidence of faith: these are the points the Spirit chronicles of Hezekiah. Yet after this came the hosts of Sennacherib to invade Jerusalem. Isaiah, who prophesied at this time, gives a full account of the rage and blasphemy of this enemy of God. Let not the child of God put off the armour and suppose the battle is over — we wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Hezekiah wrestled with wicked men in earthly places. His conflict was but a type of ours. The cities of Judah were taken. (Isaiah 36:1.) This looked very sad after such joy and worship. And sad indeed is the havoc Satan often makes, even amongst the most spiritual children of God. Hezekiah had given way in the matter of the gold of the pillars. Gold covering the stone and the wood was a striking type of Christ, our covering and righteousness. Now, as we are seen of God as to our standing, covered with Christ, "complete in him," (Colossians 2:1-23) so practically should we before men put on the Lord Jesus. But only let us give way to Satan the least by putting off Christ, and we shall find instead of this satisfying the devil, he instantly takes advantage, and redoubles the attack. Suppose the believer finds himself in worldly company, he feels beneath the surface there is enmity against Christ. To put on Christ would give offence — Satan whispers, "You had better not name Christ here." If you listen you fail, and will assuredly receive damage. Which of us has not found this so to our cost? Boldly, yet meekly, to have put on Christ would have secured victory. This is a very common temptation. Satan seeks first to get our thoughts off Christ, and then, so occupied with ourselves and our failings, that he may persuade us to make less and less profession of the blessed Lord we love. Faith he cannot destroy; whatever advantages he gets, still, with the real child of God, there is trust in Him. This enraged Rabshakeh to madness; be says, "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" (Chap. 36:4.)

Oh! terrible is the host of hell that Satan brings at such a time, to try the faith of the child of God. What threatening, crying, blaspheming, and hoaxing Rabshakeh’s rage is an exact picture of Satan’s enmity. "Answer him not," was the command of Hezekiah. All do not pass through this storm and tempest. It is well for those that do, to remember the trial of their faith is more precious than gold. When the wicked infidel letter was read to the king, he "went up to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord." These are two points of immense value to the tried soul seen in the conduct of Hezekiah during this fierce trial. "Answer him not," "and spread it before the Lord." Silence and Prayer. When Satan throws out a flood of infidel questions, answer him not, but spread all out before the Lord. Nothing can, at such a time, sustain the soul, but the most entire dependence on God. As Rabshakeh spake of the nations around, so Satan points to this one and that; they once professed to be the servants of God, and where are they? and you are no better, he says; you had better give up all profession of Christ and make a covenant with me — "cast off the restraint of Christ." Answer him not; get before God in prayer. The prayer of this tried soul is very beautiful: "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art God, even thou alone." Oh! it is a blessed place to get before the mercy-seat, and contemplate God

there. "Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear: open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God," &c. (16-20.) And the Lord did hear, and did save, and did deliver. The angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrian. Oh! what a relief to the tossed soul when thus brought through torrents of temptation. But the progress of a child of God does not end here. He may have learnt the value of redemption; he may have been restored by the intercession of his Advocate to communion in the very innermost presence of God. He may have long fed on Christ, the bread of life. He may have then broken the idols to pieces. He may have abounded in good works. He may then have passed through fiery trial. All this Hezekiah had passed through in the type; but the death lesson had yet to be learnt. And so with the Christian: he may have passed through all this, and yet the death lesson of the old man not yet learnt. Read, now, Isaiah 38:1-22.

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death," and the word of the Lord to him is, "Thoushalt die and not live." Yes, and after all the blessed enjoyment of Christ we have been speaking of, to find nothing in self, the old man, but corruption and death. This, indeed, makes the believer, who has not learnt the death and resurrection lesson, cry out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Ah! old me, old I, must die, must perish, must be turned to the wall. Poor Hezekiah, he turned his face to the wall and wept sore. Like Job of old, this brings out the leaven of self-righteousness. "Remember now, O lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked, before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight; and Hezekiah wept sore." Oh, and it is sore work to learn fairly the death lesson of the flesh. The rage of Rabshakeh without is but a mere trifle compared with the full discovery of the death within. What mourning and pining in secret. For peace, Hezekiah had great bitterness. A new third day life of fifteen years is granted Hezekiah. In a word, death and resurrection is the solemn, yet precious, lesson of this chapter. This history reminds one of the order of the Epistle to the Romans. After righteousness, redemption, and justification have been dealt with, in chap. 3-5, still the death and resurrection lessons of 6, 7 are needed to introduce us to the full blessed truth of no condemnation in Christ. (8.) I have no hesitation in saying, that though this death and resurrection lesson is the most difficult to learn, alas! how few do learn it; yet it is the most blessed lesson of the Spirit of God. It is truly blessed to learn the value of that precious blood that brings us to God. To feed on Christ with joy and gladness; thus to have strength to break in pieces the idols, and so to taste the sweetness of restoring grace, as to abound in good works. To be sustained of God when passing through fierce conflict. But to learn that we are dead with Christ, and risen with Him; and that, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And that if thus justified there can be no condemnation and no separation. Oh! my fellow Christian, this, this is the lesson God the Holy Ghost would have thee to learn; and this forgotten truth is the very foundation of Christian doctrine, as taught in the New Testament. Do read the sixth and seventh of Romans, and ponder what is involved in being dead with Christ any risen with Him. This is the heavenly key that unlocks all gospel truth. True certain peace with God cannot be enjoyed where this is not known. No longer under law — the power of death — but under grace, bringing forth fruit to God through the power of the risen life. "Dead with Christ." (Romans 6:8) "Risen with Christ." (Colossians 2:12.) Ah! this gives peace that the rage of the adversary can never shake. But as my object in writing this paper was chiefly to address the backslider, if such should be my reader, let me take you by the hand, and lead you into the presence of your Father. You may be ready to say, "It is of no use; it is all darkness. My sun has gone down in the sun-dial of backsliding Ahaz ten degrees." Well, God shall

give you this sign — He shall bring it back. Just as we know that it is not the sun that actually goes down, but the world that turns away from the sun, so is it with the Christian now: Jesus, his Sun of Righteousness, is ever the same; it is himself that turns away: and according to the degree of his backsliding, so is the darkness of his night. He restoreth my soul, and all is light. Come, then. You have wandered; you have sinned. Worship given up; doors shut and lamps put out. I would not hide the fact; sin against God as your Father makes sin more fearful. Do you feel this? The sorrows of Judah were a faithful picture of your own in departing from Christ. But look now within the veil. What an Advocate! "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins." It does not say, If any man reform, and deserves an advocate. No; "if." And what an "if!" "If any man sin." Boundless grace, thus to meet the need of the fallen one! "And he is the propitiation for our sins." God can never forget Calvary. He who bled and died is the living, tender Advocate. Hark! He pleads His blood. God is faithful to the full value of that precious blood.

Oh! what shall hinder now the full outpouring of thine heart in confession? He waits, He delights, to forgive. The love of God — the tenderness, the blood of Christ. Dost thou confess? Jesus claims thy forgiveness. God is faithful. Oh! hast thou confessed to Him? Then, on the certainty of the faithfulness of God, thou art pardoned and cleansed. (1 John 1:9.) Remember the seven bullocks. Oh! ponder well the sacrifice of Jesus — that one perfect offering for sins — all thy sins. Think of that voluntary love. I think the song of the Lord begins in thy heart. Yes, thou mayest sing again, and bow thy head in worship, thanksgiving, and praise. Thou, restored one, art welcome to God. The table is spread. Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me." In sweet communion, feed on the Lamb. Yea, feed again, again. Is thy heart filled with Christ? Oh! still with gladness feed again; abide in Him. Now break the idols. Follow Jesus, heart and soul. Snap goes a band that held thee to the world — down goes an idol that drew thine heart from Christ. Strike again, and do not spare. God give thee entire separation to Himself! And now for fruits. He claims thee, body, soul, and spirit. Give all to Him. Seek His glory alone. Seek to please Him — the obedience of faith — the service of love. Oh, how sweet! But take care be not puffed up: torrents of temptation lie before thee. Thou hast to march straight through hosts of raging men and devils — men and devils who hate thy Christ and hate His truth. Answer them not. Be much in prayer. There is no safety but in entire dependence on God. "With us is the Lord our God." (2 Chronicles 32:8.) Human resolutions may all fail in the hour of temptation; but God will never fail the soul that trusts in Him. What calm peace this gives, thus to know God is for us, and God is with as. This can never be enjoyed with a bad conscience. Surely the thought is horrible; allowing known evil and God for us — God with us. What! the child of God cherish one secret sin, and have God approve. Impossible the thought!

Let not my reader mistake: if thou wouldst have victory over the enemy, not one idol must be allowed. Thine heart must lean on none but God. "Be strong and courageous; be not afraid nor dismayed." Satan may come like Sennacherib against thee: he may roar about past failure: he may seek to frighten with present danger. Poor trembling one, keep up heart; God is for thee, God is with thee. Ah! and if He turns thy face to the wall, and shows thee the deep corruption of thy old nature, even this shall work for thy richest good. It is hard work to fairly give up the life of the old man. "Remember now, O Lord," says Hezekiah, "I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore." (Isaiah 38:3.) This may be, too, the struggling in my reader’s heart. If so, no wonder you

should, for peace, have great bitterness. No pen can describe the pang of that heart, which, whilst sincerely seeking to be righteous, finds only corruption, like the boil of Hezekiah.

Poor leper! there is no relief but in owning thyself a leper all over. In our old man, human nature — yes, boasted human nature, morally speaking, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness — all is ruin: wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. The blessed cross of Christ is the end of this ruin, and His grave its burial. Has my reader well pondered this fact, that God is perfectly justified by the death of Christ, on the cross, in dealing in unbounded grace and mercy. Even the believer that has long travelled the journey, does well to ponder this fact. If God reckons you dead and buried with Christ, is not that enough? Is it not the end of your old self before God — the full end of sin and the curse? The judgment of the most holy God fully borne in death, by Jesus the spotless Lamb of God. If all this is put to the account of the weakest believer, then as to condemnation, he no longer exists. He had been condemned, and put to death, in the person of his substitute. But this is not all. If the death of Christ is the end of my old Adam nature, the resurrection of Christ is the beginning of my new nature. How simple God's gospel is; how opposite to man's confusion. Dead with Christ, risen with Christ. These two facts settle everything, as to standing, hope, and walk. As to standing, the believer is simply as Christ is — once dead, now alive for ever; once condemned, now no condemnation. Yea, the resurrection of one could not take place, except as the guarantee of the other. Risen with Christ. Sin, death, and condemnation left for ever behind. Is not this so of Christ? Then is it not so with my reader, if risen with Him? What a justification is this; how infinitely beyond mere pardon! Our sins are forgiven for His name's sake. This is blessed. But to be risen with Christ, one with Him, complete in Him. As He is, so are we in this world — justified as He is justified; both of one, he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified. If you ask what is justification, Scripture replies, Dead and risen with Christ. (Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25.) And therefore there is now no condemnation. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Yes, my reader, if you clearly understand what it is to be risen with Christ, death and judgment behind you, as to your standing; it must be the standing of Christ; not as keeping the law on earth, but as risen and in heaven. Where this true simple doctrine of justification by death, and oneness with Christ in resurrection, is not known, all is pitiable confusion. Men will even tell you, though you break the law, yet Christ kept it, and therefore this justifies you — that is, Christ keeping the law justifies you in breaking it. This seems to me to be sheer nonsense, and worse. Where does the scripture speak of Christ keeping the law as a substitute, that the believer, though breaking it, may be justified? I ask, where? The whole theory is false and unscriptural, and they who teach it cannot appeal to scripture, but to mere human opinion for proof. If I am under the law at all, its authority cannot be, maintained except by cursing me. It saith to all that are under it, "The soul that sinneth shall surely die." (Ezekiel 18:20.)

Yes, dead with Christ, risen with Christ. This is the believer's standing, justified from all that he was; and justified for ever in all that he now is, as a new creature in Christ Jesus. And this, too, is the base of his hopes. He cannot hope for the improvement of that which is ruined and dead, nor does he. No, he waits for the risen Christ, and longs for that day of redemption when, fashioned like Him, he shall see Him as He is, and be like Him. "And every man that hath this hope in him

purifieth himself even as he is pure."

Yes, my reader, so far from the moral law being thy rule of life, it will be found as God describes it — the rule of death. (2 Corinthians 3:7.) As a young man said to me the other night, "I have been trying for twenty-five years to keep the law, as I was told I must, and I have only got worse. I have resolved and prayed when I arose in the morning, and before night I have felt myself so bad that I have been almost in despair." And is not this the general effect of modern preaching? Now the rule of walk is — dead with Christ, risen with Christ. And most certainly the power of walk is the Spirit of God. But this walk in the Spirit cannot be, if you are put under law, as says the scripture, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye, axe not under law." (Galatians 5:18.) But my reader may say, What has all this to do with me as a restored backslider? It has, this to do with you: if you allow false teachers to put you under law, you are sure to backslide again. Here are the two things: man would lead you under the law, the Spirit would lead you to Christ. If under law, you break it, and are again entangled in bondage; if led of the Spirit, you bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Do you ask, "Then am I to break the law? do you mean that I am at liberty to sin?" Far be the thought. (See Romans 6:1-23.) Dead with Christ, risen with Christ. Are you dead, with Christ, that yow may sin? are you risen with Him that you may sin? The precious pattern and example, Christ! does looking to him teach you to sin? Dead and risen one, the Spirit loads thee to Christ as a new creature, Christ is thy delight. What was the rule of His holy life? The Father’s will. Not merely the law. The law did not command the scenes of Calvary; yet even there the beloved one could say, "Lo, I come to do thy will." Let thine eye rest on that blessed obedient Holy One. May the Spirit of God keep thee pressing toward that mark. I ask, is this antinomianism? Then give me more of it. It is the path that shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day — the path ever hated by man; but blessed are the feet that walk therein.

Dead with Christ, risen with Christ. Lowest thoughts of self, highest thoughts of Christ. As a child of Adam, nothing but sin in me, but dead and buried; as a child of God, risen with Christ, His nature mine, His life mine, Himself mine, my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, my redemption, my all and in all! But oh! his love, his love to me, once lost, now found; once dead, now alive again. He loved me and gave Himself for me. Does my heart know His love? Then shall not His will be my delight? How sweet the obedience of faith that works by love! Can we not say we love Him because He first loved us. If there be no power for obedience in that law which could only curse me if I were under it; yet there is power in the blessed Comforter sustaining the heart, in the sweet sense of this grace and love. Oh! my reader, art thou redeemed by the blood of Him who loved thee, and gave Himself for thee? Then he claims thy whole heart, He has given thee a new nature, that delights in Himself; He has given thee His Holy Spirit, the source and power of fruit to God. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 2:1-3.) If ye live in the Spirit, then walk in the Spirit. There can be no enjoyment of communion with God unless we are thus walking in holiness, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. Whilst the old nature is turned with its face to the wall, may we learn to walk softly and meekly, in watchfulness and prayer, in unfeigned dependence on God, knowing truly our own weakness, but proving also the power of His Spirit; may we be kept from the ways of this evil world, the corruption of our old evil nature, and even from the ways of the professing Church; and thus, "with open face beholding, as in a glass, the

glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

C.S.

Chapter 59

061. Awake, Awake! Behold the Bridegroom cometh.

“Awake, Awake!” “Behold the Bridegroom cometh.”

Matthew 25:1-13.

1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8. And the foolish said unto the, wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

What a difference it would make in the professing church, if this, and similar portions of God’s word, were really believed. The invasion of England could not give greater surprise, or alarm, than would be the awakening of the slumbering church to the fact that the Lord was really coming: yet such is the case; and the ignorance and sleepy carelessness of the great mass of professors, but proves the divine inspiration of this parable.

Let it be remembered that this parable was spoken before the present state of things had any existence; and yet, no person could now write a more striking description of the present state of that which bears the name of God on earth. True, it was spoken to the Jews; but its instruction to us is no less solemn.

Now, to come to the point at once, what would be the case with the multitudes who profess the name of Christ, if He should come at this moment? What would mere profession be worth — the lamp without the oil?

It is written, the “foolish took no oil with them.” Yet they took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. How common this is in our day! It is quite enough to belong to some religious society; a name to live, but dead. Perhaps, a beautiful lamp; but no oil, and no light. Is this my reader’s condition? Then, there is not a moment to be lost — no, not a moment; for it is Jesus who says, “Surely, I come quickly.” Rest not a day, nor night, until you know with certainty, that you have oil in our vessel.

These are the words of truth, “Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh.” And again, “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace mid safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3.) Yea, is it not the Lord Himself who assures us, this awful event will take the world with as great surprise as did the flood in the days of Noah, and the overthrow of Sodom in the days of Lot. Now, to say the least of it, does not this subject demand a most serious consideration?

However men may explain away the Scriptures, the fact is the same: we are evidently approaching this great event — the coming of the Lord. The very world seems conscious that some great event is at hand. If you have not got oil in your vessel, then what a terrible day is at hand. What a test this is! Look at it fully. Test your condition by this great event. Suppose the trumpet sounds, to call the dead and living saints to meet the Lord in the air, in one hour from the time you read these words, (and who can say it will not?) now are you ready to meet Christ? Does the thought give you joy? Are you sure you are His — that your sins are pardoned — that He is your Saviour, your righteousness, your sanctification, your all? Does your heart long to see Him, who has loved you, and given Himself for you? Oh, what joy then to know, in one hour you may see Him, and be like Him! Before God, is this your blessed hope? Or, are you afraid to think of the possibility of this taking place in one hour?

I must speak out, from close observation, and careful comparison of this parable with the actual state of things in this day. It is evident we have arrived at the time when the alarm must be sounded. The Lord grant that the timely warning may be heard. Is it not fearful to contemplate how few know with certainty, or even wish to know, that they have oil in the vessel. In our day, it seems quite enough to be a member somewhere, and then fall fast asleep. If any one questions the truth of these statements, let him faithfully and affectionately put the question to all the members of any church or society, in almost any town in England; and the answer from at least five out of ten be, “I hope I have oil in the vessel, but cannot say with certainty whether it is so or not.” So let me press home the madness of leaving this solemn question in uncertainty. The moment is fast approaching, when the door being shut, it will be utterly in vain to cry, “Lord, Lord, open unto us!” How fearful the sound of those words, “I know you not.” Who can conceive the everlasting anguish of heart to reflect on a life of self-delusion; — a lost soul to say, I was a professor, a teacher, or a preacher? I often read the parable of the ten virgins. Oh, fool that I was! little did I think my own case was described in that parable.

Oh, my readers, let me ask you, point-blank, Are you saved? Have you the blessed assurance, that God has for Christ’s sake forgiven your sins? Have you received Christ? Let me once more remind you, it does not matter a straw what profession you make; if you have not got Christ, your profession will only aggravate your misery. These are the words of Him whose name you bear, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” Oh dead, sleeping professor, “Behold He

cometh." What would you think, if you saw a child trying to stop a railway train? Just as soon will human reason and unbelief hinder the coming of the Son of God. "Every eye shall see Him." The moment is fixed. What a moment for this world! What a moment for the five wise, and what a moment for the five foolish! What a moment to you and me! Glorified in the presence of Christ; or cast into outer darkness. Momentous question. Oh, sleepy world, awake, awake! And blessed be the God of all grace, what an awakening there has been, and still is, in so many different parts of the world. Amongst all classes, the mighty power of the Spirit of God has been felt.

Cold professors, empty lamps, have been awakened from the sleep of death. The drunkard, the harlot, the most careless and hardened have been suddenly awakened to the awful sense and burthen of sin. No words can describe the agony of soul through which they have passed. Thousands, and tens of thousands, have been brought to enjoy the blessed certainty of God's pardoning love and righteousness, the Holy Spirit assuring their hearts that the blood of Jesus cleanseth them from all sin. God has been pleased to use the humblest means in accomplishing this mighty work. I have seen one after another brought to hear the word by a servant girl. She continued in prayer for them, and, in answer to prayer, they were immediately brought to God, and found peace. Little boys have gone into the street, and brought in careless sinners, who have gone out justified from all things. In one place a blind infidel; in another, a cursing old sailor, utterly broken down with the sense of sin, and then filled with the joy of Christ. Old men from seventy to eighty, and little children of six, alike brought to know the certainty of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Whole families converted! Yes, and though fifty miles, yes, I have known them hundreds of miles apart, yet converted at the same time.

Oh! do not all these things say, "Behold He cometh, go ye out to meet Him?"

One word more as to the lamp. A man must have oil in his lamp, or he cannot have a steady light. Oil first, and then the light. He may light the wick without oil. There may be a great blaze for a moment, but it cannot endure. How soon it goes out! In like manner a man must have Christ first, then the light; he must have the Holy Spirit first, and then a holy walk will follow. A sinner trying to get salvation by a holy walk is like a man trying to get oil by burning the cotton.

If this is your case, my reader, if you have been seeking salvation by good works or a holy life, if you ever have made a great effort to be a better person, yea and for a time have made a flaming profession that you were a better person, then let me ask you to take an empty lamp, polish well the outside; put in your wick, but put no oil in it; place it on your table at night, light the wick, and sit down and watch it. All! what a flame for a moment; but I think I hear you say, as it goes out, "Ah! that is I; I have done my best to burn, but my lamp is gone out." Man's utmost effort ends in darkness. Oh! how many who once appeared flaming lights are now in the darkness of despair; they never had Christ, and therefore could not endure. We cannot alter God's order. There must be the cause before the effect. The flame would as soon produce oil as good work's produce salvation. The five foolish virgins found, to their cost, that the one thing they needed was oil. "Give us of your oil," they say, when it was too late.

What a wail of despair will arise in that day from multitudes who have had the formal lamp of profession, but have never had Christ in their heart. There is a solemn danger in the present day to the children of Christians; they grow up zealously attached to the sect of their parents, and, with an empty lamp, slumber in fatal security; or sincerely striving for a time (without oil) to imitate the

light of their parents, they become discouraged by repeated failure. Satan whispers, “It is all a sham;” and they are but too ready to be snuffed out, in infidel darkness.

Anxious, awakened soul, dost thou say, Tell me how I may get oil for my empty lamp — salvation for my perishing soul? How can I be ready to go in and be with Christ, ere the door is shut on all without? Ah! is this the cry of thy wounded heart? Then I have good news for thee. All is done; God hath fulfilled His promise, in that He hath raised up Jesus from the dead. Precious, bleeding Sacrifice, Thou hast finished the work which thy Father gave thee to do. Lamb, once slain, alive again! And oh awakened sinner, however deep the crimson dye of thy sins, through this dead and risen Christ is preached unto thee the forgiveness of sins, and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things. Acts 13:38.

Better news God could not send thee; more sure God could not make it. If God were to appear thee this moment, and speak to thee face to face, He could not say more. It could not be more sure; is the word of God to thee — forgiveness of sins to thee, my reader. Is not this what thy burthened heart wants — to be justified by God Himself from all things? I think I hear my reader say, How can I know with certainty that I am justified from all things?

Tell me two things, and I will tell thee a third.

1st. “Dost thou believe with certainty that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross, the sacrifice for sins?”

“Oh, yes, I believe that in my very heart.”

“How knowest thou this? God says it in His word, that is how thou knowest, is it not?”

“It is.”

2nd. “Dost thou believe with certainty that God hath raised up that same Jesus from the dead?”

“Yes, with certainty, I believe that in my very heart.”

"How knowest thou this? By the same bare testimony of God’s word. Then I will tell thee a third thing. That same sure word of God says, “All who believe are justified from all things.” Now, if I am certain of the first and second, why not of the third?

I know Jesus died for sins; God’s word says so. I know God raised Him from the dead; God’s word says so. I believe God. I know, then, that I am justified from all things; God’s word says so. Yes, God says plainly, all who believe are justified from all things. Oh! awakened soul, ponder these words of life. It does not say, he that feeleth, or he that doeth; feeling and doing will come after; it says, “All that believe are justified from all things.” Do you believe that Jesus died, that Jesus rose again? Then why not believe what God says to you, and to every sinner that believeth? He says you are justified. Oh what deep, unspeakable joy this gives to every soul that believes what God says. Do you, I ask, believe God? Then you can no move doubt the certainty that Christ died, than doubt the certainty that you are justified. Your feelings and doings have no more to do with one than the other. Christ has died the sacrifice for sins. God has accepted the atonement; for He has raised Jesus from the dead. You believe this in your heart, and God declares you are justified. Blessed, unchangeable truth. Have you thus heard the voice of Jesus — the call of God? Jesus

says to you, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24. Ah, all here is positive, real, everlasting. Away with doubts and fears; away with a negative, dark, uncertain, false Christianity. To the soul that believes these words of Jesus, all is positive, clear, certain, yea, everlasting truth. Oh, reader! dost thou hear the words of Jesus — dost thou believe on God who sent Him? Then He who cannot lie, says, “Thou hast everlasting life.” Could Jesus speak more plainly, “Hath everlasting life.” Oh, how many souls have been gladdened with these words of late; and why not thy heart; why shouldest thou any longer be in doubt, since Jesus speaks so plainly to thy anxious soul. God in His word and by His Holy Spirit, thus witnesseth to thee; thou needest no greater witness than God. Faith is the gift of God. Dost thou believe God; then surely thou hast heard His word, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Yea, for thy comfort will I read thee a verse of God’s soul-sustaining truth, wherein thou mayest see how completely salvation, from first to last, is wholly of God, and therefore cannot fail, “For whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Romans 8:30. Solid rock, this, my reader; all, all of God; from beginning to end — all of God. Rest, oh my soul, in God. Hast thou been called of God? Hast thou believed God? Then thy justification is as certain as thy call; and thy everlasting glory as certain as both. Arise, poor drooping sleeper, and awake to the certainties of God; predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Enough, my God, enough. Glory, everlasting glory be to thee, my God; thou art my justifier through the blood of the Lamb.

Once more. Hast thou, my reader, received record of God; “and this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the son, hath life.” 1 John 5:11. Yes, if thou hast believed the record of God, thou hast received Christ; thou art saved; thou hast oil in thy vessel; now for the light; now for a holy life. Stop, don’t mistake; it is no use trying for a holy life if thou art not sure first that thou hast oil in the vessel. The objecting unbeliever will say, “Oh, this man means to say, if we only believe, we may go on in sin, it is no matter; good works and a holy life are of no use at all.” I answer plainly; good works and a holy life are of no more use for salvation, than the burning of the wick is for oil. But I should be foolish indeed, to say the oil was of no use for giving and sustaining light. Nay, without the oil, the wick will not give light; and equally true is it, that without Christ first, without salvation first, there cannot be good works and a holy life. It is thus Paul, and every true servant of Christ, since his time to the present moment, have had to battle against the false, absurd doctrine of works for salvation. The sons of darkness cannot see this, and hence the hue and cry of slander. (See Romans 3:8.) We fully confess “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of law.” “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” “Being justified by his grace.” Then, says the Apostle, “I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.” Titus 3:4-8. This is the simple clear truth of holy Scripture — oil first, and then the lamp burns. Salvation first, God’s free gift, then a holy life. Oil for light, not light for oil. Christ for a holy life, not a holy life, for Christ. This is the immense difference betwixt the truth of Scripture and the lie of darkness; the one sets forth Christ first, the salvation of every believer, and the only power and source of a holy walk; this gives peace, joy, the certainty of salvation, and power for holy works. The other sets forth works first, with the, vain hope, that if they can be perfectly performed, the soul may then be saved, and sad to say, this is pretended to be the gospel of Christ. Alas! the soul, under such blind teaching, is left like the lamp without oil, in helpless darkness; sometimes a little flickering of hope and then the

sinkings of despair. Has God now delivered thee, my reader, from this awful darkness? Art thou now certain that thou hast oil in the vessel; Christ in thy heart; that his words are true; thou hast eternal life? Oh, has God thus shone in everlasting mercy upon thee? Then “I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” Read Romans 12:1-21. It is only to the children of God, who are saved, that the precious precepts of God’s word are addressed. Oh, then, my fellow-believers, we who are saved with an everlasting salvation, at such a cost, let us arise, and trim our lamps. Have we not burnt too dimly? We are called to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Oh, how we have failed! What conformity to this world what worldliness! what carnality! what self-will! How little subjection of heart to God. What disgraceful sectarianism. How little real love to all God’s redeemed children. How little seeking to win souls to Christ. How little real secret communion with God, without which, the outside is mere sham. Oh, come, let us return in confession to our loving Father. Let each one, with lowliness of heart, spread out his whole case before Him, who is faithful and just to forgive, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The Lord is at hand. Behold the Bridegroom cometh. The lamp must be trimmed. Now may the Lord take off the charred crust, and so fill us with the Holy Ghost, that the little while before we see our Lord may be spent in the full light of His presence.

Oh, my fellow-believer, the Lamb is worthy of thy whole heart. Yield all to Him, body, soul, and spirit. Yes, all: time, property, thoughts — all, all to Christ. Keep not back part. He kept nothing back. He gave all — Himself for thee. Was ever love like His? Oh happy, saved, pardoned, justified child of God, hear the cry — the midnight cry — Awake, awake! and brightly shine. Christ is thy light, thy life, thy all. By His death and agony; by His tears and groans; by the blood, and by the water that came from His pierced side; by His pierced hands, and pierced feet; by the bowing of His head, and giving up of the ghost by His resurrection and glory by His appearing in the air, to call thee to Himself by His smile and by His welcome; — oh, awake, awake! shake off thy worldly slumber; prepare to meet thy Lord. Behold He cometh, go ye forth to meet Him. Oh, God! grant that the henceforth of our little while may be spent to Thee. May not only our words and actions, but the very motives of our hearts, bear the light of thy countenance. Keep us, oh, keep us, by thy mighty power.

Rejecters of Christ; cold, empty professors; a few more words and tears for you. Think of those words, “and the door was shut,” “I know you not.” Satan’s world is now your choice; what will it afford you in that coming hour? what will property be worth then? what pleasure will sin afford then? what will the applause of men and Satan be worth then? Look that day in the face, and tell me, what is there worth having when compared with Christ? How fearful the choice of the human heart. Hast thou chosen Satan’s world for thy portion here? Then Satan’s hell will be thy doom for ever; and time so short. May God awaken thee from thy fatal sleep. The form of godliness without the power, will be of no avail at the coming of the Lord; only those who had oil in their vessels went in. Yes, all who have not the Spirit of Christ will be left out; and then, oh think of the fierce day of the wrath of Almighty God. We know not the moment when the blood-bought Church of God shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Many things have doubtless to be fulfilled before the Lord of glory shall come to this earth in judgment on the living nations. But I do not know a single prophecy which has to be fulfilled before Christ comes to take up His saints to meet Him. Let us, then, my fellow believers, be watching and waiting to meet our Lord. Oh, what will it be to see that

face; that smile — the warmth and depth of whose love no pen can write, no tongue can tell. Ah, sorrowing, suffering child of God, wait a little while, and thou shalt enter the joy of thy Lord; thou shalt be tempted no more; thou shalt sin no more; thou shalt grieve Him no more. And those that have gone before. It was hard to part, what will it be to meet — to meet to part no more! Oh, what is this world to us, who look for joy, so lasting, so divine? “I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.” Oh, think, ye poor world-despised children of God, of the glory that awaits you, for ever with, and like, the Lord. C. S.

Chapter 60

062. What God hath said on the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the Present Age.

What God hath said on the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the Present Age.

There is a vast difference betwixt taking up the word of God, to hear what HE hath said, and taking it up to search out passages that seem to uphold any theory that one may hold. Now, all true Christians must feel that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most interesting subjects that can occupy our thoughts.

It is proposed then, in this small tract, to look carefully at what God has said.

First, at what God hath spoken by His Son, in the four Gospels; and secondly, at what God hath spoken by His Spirit, in the epistles of the apostles.

Before turning to the words of the Son of God, let us read, as introduction, the words of Gabriel, sent of God: “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Surely every “shall” in this wondrous passage, must be as really and an literally fulfilled as was the birth of Jesus. God said He should be born: it came to pass. God says He shall reign over the house of Jacob: it will surely come to pass.

Let us now turn and hear what God hath spoken to us by His Son, in the four Gospels. I would notice the seven parables in Matthew 13:1-58. The present period was then unknown, and Jesus only spake of it in parables. But we who now have the teaching of the Spirit of God, and know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, can read them more like histories than parables. The first is the parable of the sower. Instead of God setting up that blessed reign of Christ, foretold in all the prophets, there is this time of sowing or preaching the word. And how searching the words of Jesus; only one part out of four even of those who professed to receive the word, are saved and bring forth fruit. “Some fell upon stony places,” “some fell by the way side,” “and some fell among thorns.” Oh! reader, beware lest thou art one of these classes, and thou perish for ever. Oh! beware of the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches. But some will ask, does the Lord Jesus teach that this state of things will continue; or does He teach that, by and by, all will receive His word and be saved? Let the second parable answer that question. A man sowed good seed in his field, an enemy sowed tares. He explains it himself: “He that soweth good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that soweth them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (or age); and the reapers are the angels.” So that you see, my reader, plainly, whoever may preach the conversion of the whole world, Jesus taught the very opposite. That only one part out of four of the seed sown brings forth fruit to perfection; and that in the world, the wicked and the righteous would grow together, until the very end of this age. The wicked should then be “cast 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." The third parable, the mustard-tree, teaches, that when the professing body should have greatly increased, the wicked spirits who tried at first to pick up the seed would lodge in its branches. Judas was one of the first of these birds; but now their name is legion. The fourth parable, the hid leaven. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." This, perhaps, gives the saddest picture of all; but not more sad than true. So far from the Church converting the world, the whole of professing Christendom has become leavened with the working in secret of this woman's leaven of iniquity. Leaven in Scripture always denotes evil: the leaven of the Pharisees — leaven of Herod — leaven of malice and wickedness. The fifth, sixth, and seventh parables teach the same truth. It is not the whole field, but the treasure in it: not the whole world, but the one pearl — the one Church of God, that is being taken out of the world. All are not converted, but in the great net of the present dispensation of time, there are good and bad. "So shall it be at the end of the age." The wicked shall then be severed from among the just.

Matthew 24:1-51. In this chapter we find the plain teaching of Jesus to His little flock of Jewish disciples. it is the same subject as the seven parables, only in plain words, not in parables. In the first few verses Jesus foretells the destruction of the Jewish temple — which, we all know, came literally to pass. He was seated on the Mount of Olives — the very spot where His feet shall stand when He comes to reign. The disciples came and enquired privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (or age)?" Now read carefully from the fourth to the last verse, and mark, there is not one thought of the world's conversion. He foretells there will be false Christs — deceivers — wars, and rumours of wars — famines, pestilences, earth quakes — persecutions, sorrows, death — iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold. And instead of the world receiving the gospel, it is preached for a witness; and then the end comes. Much has been fulfilled; and much in this chapter has yet to be fulfilled. Hear in mind, that all these words of Jesus were spoken to His Jewish disciples, and have special reference to what shall befall that nation. In the fifteenth verse He says to them, "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains," &c. This evidently proves that the temple at Jerusalem has to be rebuilt; for the abomination of desolation is to stand in the holy place. And if you read Daniel 12:11-13, and compare it with 9: 27, you see the fearful act of the head of the Roman power, who causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease in the midst of the week — then mark when the abomination stands in the holy place. Then the words of Jesus will be most valuable to the godly Jews, who believe His testimony in that day. The moment they see this take place, they take it as the signal to escape. They have not even time to go into the house to fetch their clothes.

Then takes place "the great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time — no, nor ever shall be." The remnant who have escaped may count the days that are shortened, 1290 to 1260, or half a week of years. The angel, speaking to Daniel of these days, says, "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 (that is, the Jews) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (12: 1, 2.) Clearly,

then, the setting up of the abomination of desolation, and the time of tribulation, are both future. And in proof of this, our blessed Lord says, what will take place immediately after, the tribulation: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: 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.” (Ver. 29, 30.) Most certainly, then, all tribes of the earth are not converted; or why do they mourn when Jesus comes? Jesus says, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” How remarkably this is so before our very eyes! Though scattered among all nations, the generation or race of the Jews still exists, and waits the fulfilment of all these things. The Lord then goes on to state, “As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.” Oh, what a solemn thought, that this world is to go on eating and drinking — rejecting Christ, just as the world despised the preaching of Noah, “and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be!” The most solemn warnings to watch and be ready are then given: “for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Terrible will be the doom of that servant who shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming. Yes, he calls Him, “My Lord;” but his portion will be with the hypocrites, “where there in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Such are the solemn words of the Son of God. Oh! that my reader may be awakened to the solemn enquiry, Am I ready, and waiting for the Lord?

Matthew 25:1-46. The whole of this chapter also is upon the same subject. The illustration of the ten virgins each most plainly, that instead of all being converted when He comes, half of those who profess to be His are shut out. All slumbered and slept. Oh, professor! if you should hear those words, “I know you not;” “Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

Another illustration is then given of this period, during which Jesus is away in heaven: “As a man travelling into a far country.” And again, the whole of his servants do not improve their talents. Then “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory.” Then to the end of the chapter the Lord most plainly describes the judgment of the living nations at his coming. You will notice, if you read carefully, that there is nothing said in this place about the judgment of the dead: that is quite a distinct event, as we shall find as we go on in the word.

Even when standing before the high priest, on the solemn night of his betrayal, Jesus said, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Alas, man always refused this testimony. The high priest declared it blasphemy, and pronounced Him worthy of death. (26: 64, 65.)

I would now turn to Mark 13:1-37. The solemn warnings of Matthew 24:1-51 are repeated: “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory.” Not only the porter of the house is to watch, but to mark the uncertainty of the hour when Jesus shall come, all are to watch. Some will say, “Ah, you do not need to think about the coming of the Lord; it will not take place in your day.” Jesus says, “Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

Oh, how near, then, the Lord’s coming must be. The present night of His absence is thus divided into four parts: — “even,” “midnight,” “cockcrowing,” and “morning.” Where are we? The evening of

the dispensation is already past; yea, the midnight of the dark ages is past, or middle ages, as they are called. The awakening of the Reformation is past. Ah, the morning breaks. Watch! watch! the day will surely break. Oh, blessed are they who shall be found ready! But perhaps my reader will ask, if Jesus does not teach that the world would be converted by the preaching of the gospel? Does He plainly say the contrary? Let us turn now and carefully examine the Gospel of Luke, and there we shall get a decided answer to the above question. Luke 12:35-48. In these verses there are two classes of servants. I would observe, a man may be a servant and not a son, as Balaam, and many others. Those servants are greatly blessed who are found watching when the Son of man cometh. But the evil servant who said in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming — and especially that servant "who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, Shall be beaten with many stripes." Oh! is not this highly favoured England? Does any nation know the will of God as she does? Surely, then, as it was with Judea, so will it be with this land. The heaviest judgments of God's wrath will be poured out on this now highly favoured land. Her doom will be infinitely worse than the dark lands of paganism, where the will of the Lord has not been known. Surely, then, this warning is not a light matter; and who knows how near. But if you now turn to Luke 17:24-37, the Lord says here most decidedly, that he must be rejected. And this rejection goes right on to the coming of the Son of man. A rejection which He likens to the days of Noah and of Lot, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Yea, so far from the world being converted, He says, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" — 18: 8.

Luke 19:11-27. In these verses the parable of the nobleman going into a far country is repeated, with the plain prophecy that great mass of citizens hate him, and say right out, that they will not have him to reign over them. And instead of these being converted, at the return of Christ, they are slain before him.

Luke 21:1-38. This chapter is in many respects parallel with Matthew 24:1-51. and Mark 13:1-37. We must bear in mind that the listeners to this discourse expected that the long-expected kingdom of God on earth should immediately appear. Instead of which, the Lord makes known a period of great suffering and persecution. What a contrast to all their thoughts. Instead of reigning over the nations, they should be hated of all men for His name's sake. Then, in the 20th verse, a subject is named that is omitted in both Matthew and Mark: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Strange as this might appear, so utterly opposed to the hopes of the nation, yet we know it actually came to pass. The Roman armies did compass Jerusalem, and the Jewish disciples did flee to the mountains. A Jew might have said, oh, it is impossible; God has promised that this city shall be the metropolis of the whole earth.* Isaiah 2:1-4. Truly every promise of God shall be fulfilled, when the time of the kingdom comes on earth. In like manner some will say, It is impossible that these great destructions should take place, because God hath said, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9. This shall certainly be the case in the days of the kingdom. But before those days come, let us closely observe these words of Jesus. The days of vengeance came on Judea; there was great distress in the land, and wrath upon that people. This prophecy, from verse 20 to 24, may be said to be condensed history — prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes. They (the Jews) fell by the sword; they were led away captive into all nations. Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles. For 1800

years this prophecy has been, and still is fulfilled. Though at the time Jesus uttered these words, His own disciples neither understood or believed what He said, for we find them afterwards asking Him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel.” But does the Lord say how long Jerusalem is thus to be trodden down? Yes, distinctly: He says, “Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” And what then? Will the world be converted then? The Lord says no such thing. But then takes place, as in Matthew and Mark, the great tribulation, “Distress of nations with perplexity.” “Men’s hearts failing them for fear.” “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

{*Now what was the cause of the Jews’ darkness and mistake? They knew not the doctrine of the cross, man’s need of the death of Christ and a new resurrection-existence in Him. And I often think it is the same now. Men do not understand the cross. They think, just as the Jew thought, Judaism would become the kingdom. So men now utterly mistake the gospel by thinking Christianity is destined to improve humanity. If this were the case, there would be no need for the coming of Christ. But the cross is death to humanity. The cross says humanity cannot be improved. Death to it. The resurrection unfold God’s only principle of blessing, the new creation.}

Now, my reader, from all these words of Jesus, can we come to any other conclusion than this — that the millennium cannot possibly take place, before the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; until then, wars, tumults, on Judah days of vengeance; on all nations distress. Read, then, carefully the solemn warning, 34-36, “Take heed to yourselves.” Oh, do not be deceived by the cry of peace and safety. “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth.” Ah, you see that professor going to the world’s concert, or to the world’s feast, to eat and to drink with the drunkard. There goes another with anxious brow and keen piercing eye, grasping at the world’s deceitful wealth. Ah, these, and thousands more, are saying in their hearts, “My lord delayeth his coming.” “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (36.)

You may have observed, that all the words of Jesus so far, have reference to this earth, or His coming again to this earth. Jerusalem in Judea has been the centre of his instruction. This was suited to the nation in the midst of which these prophecies were delivered.

We now turn to an entirely new subject. (John 14:1-3.) I say new subject, for I am not aware of a single verse, from Genesis to this very passage, where this wondrous fact had ever been fully revealed. We forget this when reading these divine words of comfort. Every hope in the disciples around the blessed Lord, in this night of sorrow, was centred in Jerusalem, as the place of His reign. But now, His last words having been spoken to the nation in John 13:1-38, He unbosoms the secrets of His heart, for the comfort of His chosen few, during this time, or period, when He should have left them in the world alone. Chap. 13 unfolds the tender grace of our High Priest on high. In the east it is customary for one servant to hold the basin, and for another to pour the water. But Jesus did not ask Peter to hold the basin, and John to pour the water. No, the precious Jesus did it all: He took the towel, He took the basin, He poured the water, He washed their feet. Oh! that we better knew that tender heart. Cheer up, my drooping brother Christian; it was Jesus’ work alone to atone for sins on Calvary. It is Jesus’ work alone, as thy Great High Priest, to keep thy feet clean. Worthy alone art thou, O Lamb of God. Thou art the author and the finisher of my salvation. My reader, art thou a believer? Then thou art justified from all things — through the

precious blood of Christ, clean every whit. Then do not forget He lives to keep thee clean.

Then, in this chapter 14 the precious Jesus can hide from His loved ones no longer the amazing secret — “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Of course, this was so new, they could not make out either whither He went, or the way. They had heard of the future glory of Jerusalem; but mansions in the Father’s house on high, and a place prepared for them! What, poor sinful fishermen to have a place with God the Father! Oh, amazing grace! Man, through sin, lost the garden of God; but Jesus was about to give His heart’s blood, that He might bring us to God Himself in heavenly glory. And mark the certainty. As surely as He has died and risen again, and gone to the Father’s house to prepare a place for us, even so sure is it, that He will come again and receive us to Himself. Ah! what would the soldier give, in the midst of the battle’s roar, to have the certainty of reaching the home he loves — or the mariner in the midst of the raging storm? What comfort, then, these words of Jesus give! However fierce the conflict — however dark and loud the roaring tempest, the blest home of His presence is sure. Oh, think of this, ye tried and desolate ones — ye fellow-believers, who are widows, or orphans, in a cold world! Oh, cheer up, ye afflicted ones! A little while: your home is certain. Is Christ your portion now? Then your home, sweet home in His presence, is most blessedly certain. “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Think not when ye see him, to meet an angry Judge. He comes to receive you to Himself, who hath loved you, and washed you in His own blood. He says, “That where I am, there ye may be also.” Perhaps you say, That may be true to them who deserve it. Did those who sat and heard these new words of wondrous grace deserve it? Ah! full well did He know. Yea, this wondrous disclosure of eternal love, was reserved to the very night on which they all forsook Him and fled. The Lord deepen in our souls the sense of this untold grace!

Perhaps my reader may ask, Does not the Lord mean death, when He thus speaks of His coming again? If we turn now to John 12:18-21, we here find the distinct answer to the question. The Lord plainly did not mean death; for after speaking of the death, whereby Peter should glorify God, He speaks of another disciple and says, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” “Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” Now does not this passage prove that Jesus did not mean death, when He spake of His coming again? Indeed, I do not know of a single passage in the Scriptures where the coming of Christ means death. It is indeed very blessed that when the believer falls asleep, it is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Far better to depart from a body of sin and death; but this is quite a different thing from the coming of the Lord.

I would observe, the Lord did not in this precious promise, in John 14:1-31, explain how this receiving them to Himself, would take place. The explanation how, we shall find in the Epistles.

Having found by the words of Jesus that the coming of the Lord does not mean death, it may be asked, Is it as clearly proved, whether the coming of the Lord will be spiritual or personal? Let us for this purpose turn now to

Acts 1:9-11. “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went

up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

How could words be more plain than these? Did Jesus go into heaven in real person, the very body that hung on the cross; or did He leave that body in the grave and go to heaven in Spirit only? If so, our preaching is vain, and ye have believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1-58.) All depends on this, if He who died on the cross as our substitute, is not raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven, a real man, as our surety man in resurrection, — then if He is not thus risen, there is no gospel for us. How can I possibly know that I am justified from all things, if my surety is not raised from the death due to me, and as my surety, justified? I fear there is a sort of indistinct notion abroad that Jesus is only a spirit. This notion undermines the very foundation of the whole gospel. Hence what pains Jesus took to convince His disciples, that He was not a spirit; for, says He, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Now does not the idea of a spiritual coming of Christ spring from that deadly error, that He is now only a spirit? He went to heaven and is there, a real, risen man. And in like manner will He come again, as real a person surely as he was on the cross. Will not the Jews say, What are those wounds on thy hands? And oh, my fellow-believer, what will it be to look at those hands that were pierced for you? He is risen. He will come again in person. But it might be asked, Can you point out a passage that distinctly proves whether the Lord will come at the beginning, or after the Millennium, or the times of blessing promised in the Old Testament? Let us turn and see as to this.

Acts 3:19-21. The Jews through blindness had crucified the Lord. Peter tells them to change their minds, and their sins shall be blotted out; and God shall send Jesus again, "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken, by the mouth of all His holy prophets, since the world began." Now, if the prime minister of England was said to be gone to France, and would remain there until the time of assembling Parliament, would not that simply mean that he would return before or at the commencement of Parliament? Then does not the word "until" in the above passage distinctly prove that Christ will be in heaven until the beginning of the millennium, or times of restitution of all things? Then He will surely come before, or at the commencement of the kingdom of God on earth. Indeed, how can it be the kingdom if the king is not there? Surely Scripture explains itself. This one passage removes every difficulty from the teachings of Christ in the gospel. It might have been asked, How can the wicked and the righteous live together until the harvest or coming of Christ? And how can it be, in that day, as it was in the days of Noah and Lot — the earth full of wickedness — seeing that so many scriptures of the prophets have to be fulfilled, which describe the righteousness and blessing of the earth — when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest? Well, I say, this one word "until" explains it all. That time of the earth's blessedness cannot take place before, but after, the Lord comes.

Let us now, in the second place, hear the words of the Holy Ghost in the Epistles. the first passage I turn to is Romans 8:19-23. We must mark well the change; it is not now Jesus speaking to Jewish disciples, in the midst of the Jewish nation; but the Spirit of God speaking to us believers, members of the redeemed church of God, so that now every word concerns us. Hence, in this passage, creation in waiting, with earnest expectation, "for the manifestation of the sons (not the nation) of God." "The glorious liberty of the children of God." Creation groans and travails in pain

together. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” We do not wait for the spiritual reign of Christ, or for Christ in spirit; we have that now. “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” (Ver. 9.) But having this, according to this passage, we wait, not for the death of the body, but for the redemption of the body — being justified — having peace with God. (Romans 5:1.) Enjoying the certainty of no condemnation. (Romans 8:1.) Yes, being thus everlastingly saved, still, whilst in this body of sin and death, we hope and long for, and wait for, the “manifestation” — “the glorious liberty” that will take place, both for us and creation, at the redemption of the body.

When, then, will this glorious redemption of the body take place?

1 Corinthians 15:23-25. “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end,” &c. Most clearly, then, the Spirit of God teaches that the resurrection of the sons of God, they who are Christ’s, will take place at His coming. And for this event all believers waited at Corinth, as well as at Rome. “Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:7.) Mark, it does not says, all shall rise together; but “every man in his own order.” Christ has risen — the first-fruits. Blessed pledge of certainty! Then “afterward.” Who would have thought 1800 years were in that word “afterward?” Now, if there have been 1800 years, at least, betwixt the resurrection of Christ, the Head, and the body — they that are His, may there not, as assuredly there will be, 1000 years betwixt the resurrection of the saved, the first resurrection, and the rest of the dead, who live not again until the 1000 years are fulfilled? (Revelation 20:1-15.)

It may be asked, But how does the resurrection of the dead in Christ at His coming, affect the question of the redemption of our poor groaning bodies, who are alive in them, seeing we are not yet fallen asleep? How can we and all believers be waiting for the redemption of the body at the coming of Christ? As to that, “Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” &c. (Ver. 51, 52.) To this agree the words of the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, on which I hope to speak shortly. Now, as we go through the epistles, we shall find, it was for this very event that all believers, in all places, in the days of the apostles waited. Not for the unclothed state of the soul, blessed as that is. The apostle says, “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” (2 Corinthians 5:4.) The epistle to the Galatians, being the defence of the blessed truth of justification, this subject is not dwelt upon. Also, as the Ephesians presents that aspect of the Church, as already raised and seated in Christ in heavenly places, of course, the subject of the Church’s hope is not introduced. But in the Philippians, where the Church is looked at more in the service of the Gospel, and pressing forward through a weary world, then this blessed hope, and no other, is distinctly presented, “for our conversation (or citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Php 3:20-21. Those who know the Greek tell us, that this passage should be, “We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour,” &c. Oh! what a contrast this blessed hope of primitive days, to the modern dread of Jesus as a terrible judge. How sweet it is to a mother’s heart, when she returns from a journey, to see her little child’s longed-for face at the window; it claps its little hands, and would fly through the window to meet her. Surely, no mother would have

her child dread her return as a terrible tyrant. When Jesus left His chosen ones on Olivet, He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and as He blessed them He was parted from them. In like manner will He return; whilst to the rejecting world He comes as a terrible judge. Yet, oh, sinner saved by grace, the first sight thou shalt have of Him who loved thee, and washed thee in His own blood, will be with uplifted hands of blessing. Oh! view Him coming as Saviour, to claim thee as His prize, bought with His own blood. In one moment, thy body of humiliation, sorrow, and sin, shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body. What a moment! Thy last tear shall be gone. Thou shalt grieve Him no more. Thou shalt sin no more. Oh, what will it be to see His very face — to hear His voice; that face once wrung with deepest anguish, bearing thy sins on the tree! And, as thou risest in the air, by thy side, the glorious form of one (once thy prodigal wayward child) for whom thou wept and prayed, but saved at last; and loved ones, parting with whom once crushed thy heart with earth's keenest sorrow. Oh! ye believing widows and orphans, who feel the world's cold blast, oh, then! oh, then! "for ever with the Lord." Ah! affliction is but for a moment, but joy in His presence shall never end.

Surely the certainty of all this is very precious. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:4.) Is it not strange, that the Church of God should have so sadly forgotten her blessed hope? whilst in the apostles' days, it was the immediate hope of the youngest converts, as we find in the 1 These. 1: 9, 10, "How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God: and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead." Thus we see these young converts (for the Church of God at Thessalonica was not more than about a year old) were not waiting either for the conversion of the world, or death and departure to be with the Lord; but for the Son of God from heaven. Indeed, the apostles had no other hope. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thessalonians 2:19.) Great appearances on earth — swelling the numbers of a society on earth, raising funds, and building elegant (so-called) Christian temples; for these things the apostle had not a thought, much more a hope. His eye was fixed on the appearing of Christ. For this he laboured night and day, that he might win souls to Christ; that they might be the crown of his rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet men say the coming of Christ is not a practical truth. The Lord give us more of this practical waiting for Christ.

If there be one thing more powerful for practical holiness than another set before us in the word, it is the constant expectation of Christ. This was the prayer of the apostle, for these young converts, night and day. "To the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thessalonians 3:13.) This is the desire of every minister of Christ, who longs himself for the coming of the Lord; whilst others forget the connexion there is betwixt conversion and the coming of Christ. He will think of it night and day, and pray night and day, that every convert may be found unblameable in holiness in that moment.

Some have a very great difficulty as to waiting for Christ. They would say, How can I wait for or expect Christ this very day, seeing so many things have yet to be fulfilled? I am told the Roman Empire has to he reconstructed. The Jews have to be restored to Judea. The man of sin has to be manifested, reigning at Jerusalem — and all this before Christ comes to this earth again. Must I not, then, of necessity, say in my heart, "my lord delayeth his coming;" at least, until after all these

events. I cannot make it out how I am to be waiting for Christ to-day, since all these things have to take place.

There is no doubt the Roman Empire has to be reconstructed — (I shall have to speak of these things shortly). The Jews have to be restored: the wicked man of sin has to be revealed. Europe has to sink in grossest darkness — to become worshippers of devils or idolaters again. But let us look at the next chapter, and every difficulty will vanish.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. “For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Now, observe, in the gradual unfolding of prophetic truth, up to this passage, the coming of the Lord, in a general sense only, has been presented. But in this place there is a point of detail never noticed before. The special object of the apostle was evidently to comfort the hearts of these young converts, who were sorrowing because some of their number had fallen asleep. Bear in mind, they had only had three weeks’ preaching. (Acts 17:2.) Paul’s manner was always to set forth the passing away of all things of the old creation, in the death of Jesus; and Jesus the beginning and head of the new creation, as raised from the dead. Thus these young converts were filled with joy — being raised from the dead, and in God the Father (See chap. 1.) As we may imagine, these newly converted heathen were sorely perplexed at the death of the body. Well, this passage is evidently written to show them the resurrection of the saints who sleep in Jesus — that they will lose nothing, but be raised first; then we who are alive and remain — changed in a moment, as noticed in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. And then a new fact is revealed — we shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air. Now this may take place before any of the events which have to be fulfilled: yea, we shall find this event is the very first that will take place; and therefore the last elect soul being brought to God, may take place whilst you read this paper. No person can quote me a single verse, which has to be fulfilled, before the sleeping and living saints, shall be caught up to meet Christ.

Let me give a plain illustration. Suppose Rotherham were in rebellion against Her Majesty, just as the world is in rebellion against Christ. Her Majesty makes known that she is coming in judgment, with her whole army, to destroy Rotherham. But there are a hundred royalists in the town. She sends word to them that the shall meet her at Derby — shall be taken by the Midland Rail, to meet her, and be with her at Derby; and then shall take place the day of vengeance on Rotherham. That, as the hour is uncertain when Her Majesty shall come by express from Euston Square to Derby, the royalists are to be waiting for a telegraphic message, at any moment, to meet her. Now many things might have to take place at Rotherham before Her Majesty actually entered the town — digging of trenches, cannonading the place, &c. In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is really coming in judgment to this earth, which once murdered, and still rebels against, him. Every child of God on earth is a royalist, and every royalist of Christ shall be caught up to meet Christ in the air when He comes. Then begins the day of vengeance on this doomed age. Now if this be so, we should expect the Spirit of God, having made known this new fact, of believers being caught up to meet Christ; then to speak of this day of the Lord, which shall follow that event, the taking of the Church to be ever with the Lord. And this is exactly what He does do. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-28.) As

the believer's hope is to be caught up to meet Christ, there is no need of writing on times and seasons. In fact there are no dates of Scripture that refer to this event (the moment of taking the saints) at all. All dates refer to Israel. "For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and ye shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief," &c. Thus this day of destruction and vengeance is introduced in dark contrast with the bright and blessed hope of the Church. The Church may be taken at any moment, then sets in the day of vengeance. The acceptable year of the Lord shall close; the day of vengeance begin. (Isaiah 61:1-11.) Seeing this, bow earnest the apostle was in prayer: "And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (5: 23.) We find persecution and tribulations soon overtaking these dear young converts, and to add to their deep distress, deceivers come, as though sent by the apostle, to tell them the day of the Lord was come. Their trouble and sorrow seemed to favour the report. They seemed to have been greatly shaken by this stratagem of Satan. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written to deliver them from this mistake and sorrow. Instead of the coming of the Lord being a day of trouble to them, the apostle says, "And to you who are troubled, rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels." (Chap. 1: 7.) So far from the world persecuting you in the day of vengeance, you shall rest with us, caught up; as he had taught them. Flaming "vengeance shall be taken on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Punished with everlasting destruction from his presence, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, (because our testimony was believed,) in that day." (Ver. 10.) Still further to assure them, he says, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by Spirit, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." (Chap. 2: 1-2.) To return to the illustration. Suppose, before the royalists were called out of Rotherham to meet Her Majesty at Derby, a panic were to take place amongst them, by a report that the day of vengeance was come on Rotherham, and the cannonade about to open — an officer of Her Majesty were to write and say, I beseech you, all ye friends of the Queen, by the certainty of her coming first, and your being gathered together to her, do not be afraid. Cannot you depend on Her Majesty's word? Not a cannon-ball shall be shot, before you are happy with her at Derby. Just in this manner did Paul comfort and assure the panic-stricken converts at Thessalonica. Two things were certain before the great and terrible day of the Lord — His coming for them, and their gathering to Him, as taught them in the first epistle.

Oh! could one think it possible, as we walk the streets, and watch the busy crowd, that destinies so vastly opposite await that crowd — the believer to be caught up to meet the Lord, (perhaps this very day,) the unbeliever to be left to the fierceness of that day of vengeance. In verses 3-12 we have some of the terrible features of the end of this age. "The falling away first." However sadly the professing church has departed, yet what will it be when the real Church of God is taken up! The full character of this falling away is described in Revelation 17:1-18. One terrible feature is the revelation of the wicked one, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that be, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (Ver. 4.) Some, not observing that this fearful character appears on the closing scene of human wickedness, after the true Church is taken up to be with the Lord, have thought this man of

sin is Popery, or the Pope. But do not you see this passage says, the man of sin shall sit in the temple of God. Now God never has, and never will have, a temple built on earth in any place except Mount Zion, or Mount Moriah — the place in which he appeared to Abraham. But that temple is now destroyed. It must, then, be rebuilt, as many scriptures show it will. And the terrible man of sin is evidently one of Daniel's people, that is, a Jew — who shall come in his own name whom the Jews shall receive. (John 5:43.) As Satan entered into Judas, so will he enter into this son of perdition. I cannot, then, allow St. Peter's at Rome to be the temple of God; neither can the Pope be this man of sin. Daniel plainly describes him as the wicked Jewish king at the time of the end: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." We all know the Pope is not the King of the Jews. It is quite clear that all this is Jewish, and cannot take place whilst the Spirit and the Church are here. As Paul had well taught these converts, he reminds them how he had told them, "And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time."

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work" — the leaven foretold in Matthew 13:1-58. "Only he who now letteth (or hindereth) will let until he is taken away." But, oh! what will it be when the Spirit of God is taken, and the Church caught up to meet the Lord? "And then shall that wicked one be revealed." And, now, how clearly this proves this wicked one is not Popery, for it is he "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Popery, and the whole of the ecclesiastical apostasy, will be destroyed by the ten kings. (Revelation 17:16.) But this wicked one "is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders." The present work of Satan, in leading men to have to do with devils, and familiar spirits, by table-turning and the like, may be preparing the way. But these terrible events cannot possibly take place during this day of gospel grace. For in those days of darkness, God will send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, that they may all be damned. This will be assuredly the case when this day of mercy closes. God will arise and shake terribly the earth. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion;" that is, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Man is damned because he receives not the truth. These are God's words as to the end of the present age. Fellow-believers, we are saved "because God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (Ver. 13.) Oh! it is this that makes the coming of the Lord so precious — God's eternal love. The apostle closes the subject in this epistle with these words, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thessalonians 3:5.)

Still, whether writing to an assembly, or to an individual saint, with the apostle it is the great practical truth. In fact, just as opposite to modern thoughts of men as possible. With men, the appearing of Christ in the least practical, their most distant thought. With the apostle, it is the great practical truth — the ever-present theme of hope. He says to his son Timothy, after telling him of the sad departure and iniquity of the professing church in the last days, his concern for him was, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. (1 Timothy 6:14-16.) And again, though misjudged and forsaken, and fully aware of the terrible character of these last days, yet what was the stay of his heart — "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not unto me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8.)

And again, writing to Titus, be says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” Ah! this is very precious. God does not expect to find anything, except sin and misery, in a poor sinner. But grace bringeth. Christ has died, Salvation is all of grace: that gives all and asks for nothing. Then the effect of this grace is to teach us holiness of life in every way, “Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13.) Men now look for death; and so “it is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment.” But how blessed the contrast, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:27-28.) Have you, my reader, this unspeakable consolation, that Christ has once borne your sins on the cross, and consequently, that He having borne the full judgment due to you once, there can be no more condemnation to you? And that He has made full atonement is proved, in that God hath raised Him from the dead. Then you are justified in Him, the risen Christ, from all things; yea, so justified that God says He will remember your sins and iniquities no more. Then how can you be judged for your sins again! Impossible, unless Christ has died in vain. Oh, what blessed, settled peace this gives to the long-perplexed soul! But you ask, Shall we not all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? We shall do so. Yes, it is most happy for us who live in a world where the nearer a man lives to God the more is he misjudged and hated. Yes, I say, it is most blessed that we shall soon stand before the Beemah or seat of Him who will reward every man according to his works. Yes, whilst the whole question of sin, and judgment due to sin, has been eternally settled by the blood of the Lamb; yet He who gave His blood for us, has promised that the gift of a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward. “To them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin” — no question of sin then, but — “unto Salvation.” What encouragement to confidence and patience this gives. “For yet a little while and he that shall come will come and will not tarry.” (Hebrews 10:37.)

Indeed nothing gives the soul more quiet patience, in the midst of sore trial and temptation, than this blessed hope; “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Be ye also patient; stablish your heart; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” (James 5:7-8.) “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:7.) “Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (13.) “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (v. 4.)

Now, is it not strange that, with Scripture so full of this precious subject, men should say it is a dark, mysterious, bewildering subject, and that those do well who never look into it? What God says is this, “We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” Men would say our reasoning on the future is light. God says it is all darkness. Men say prophecy is all darkness. God says it is a light. But, alas! men will even go so far as to say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Peter 3:1-15.) In this chapter we have a glorious view of the whole future in a general way, right onward to the creation of new heavens and a new earth — more in reference to the world, than the Church.

One thing is very manifest in all these words of the Spirit of God — the coming of the Lord is not looked at as a mere doctrine. It is either a blessed hope — that is, Jesus Himself is presented as

the object of the hearts utmost desire; or a terrible fact, fast approaching to a doomed world. Of the former, we have a sweet example in the next words before us, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3.) Ah! it is not he that believeth this doctrine — our precious Lord claims the heart. Oh! is this the one desire and hope of my reader’s heart, — to be like Him, to see Him as He is? Then sure it is sweet “to abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” (1 John 2:28.) Surely nothing can have a more purifying effect upon the believer, than his constant looking, longing, desiring, the coming of his precious Lord. And as to the fact of judgment on an ungodly world, even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all,” &c. (Jude 1:14.) And how solemn are those words, “Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” (Revelation 1:7.) In the seven addresses to the churches, these are searching words in the midst of much outward profession — “Hold fast till I come.” (Revelation 2:25.) And again, “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” (Revelation 3:3.) And again, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Revelation 3:11.) Woe be to the carnal worldly professor, who sets light by these solemn warnings, so suited to the state of the Church, during its sevenfold history, of the things that are now. In Revelation 4:1-11, things are revealed that will take place after these — “I will show thee things that must be hereafter,” or after these. (Revelation 4:1.) And then, in blissful vision, in chap. 4 and 5, the redeemed are seen gone from the earth, and seated around the glorified Lamb.

Chapters 6 to 19 contain the words of the Spirit of God as to the end of the present age, the Church being at that time taken to be with the Lord. Then sets in the great and terrible day of the Lord God Almighty. Peace is taken from the earth “that they should kill one another.” (Revelation 6:4.) Who can describe the terrors of that fearful day!

I do not go into the detail of the woes and judgments of this day of vengeance, answering to all the prophets have said, and all the passages we have read, in the words of Jesus, as to this time of great tribulation, such as never was — no, and never will be again. More gifted servants of the Lord have written on these things. I would refer the reader to the Bible Treasury and other tracts by the same publisher.

I may just remark, in perfect keeping with every other part of Scripture, the whole scene becomes Jewish in character during this day of wrath. Satan is cast down to the earth in chap. 12 and persecutes the Jewish remnant. In chap. 13 Satan is worshipped, and the head of the Roman Empire, to whom Satan gives his power, is worshipped. (3-8.) In chap. 17 the ecclesiastical apostasy, having lost her temporalities in the empire, now in her last most blasphemous character, sits upon the beast; that is, guides the imperial head in its last acts of wickedness. The Roman Empire which was, and is not, shall again appear in its most terrible character. Ten kings are seen confederate with the imperial head; and as England was one part of the empire, when it was, so assuredly shall it be again. It would seem, however, not by conquest; for the ten kings or kingdoms give their power to the beast. The reconstructed empire for a time carries the whore; but being

infidel at heart, throws her off, and the ten kingdoms which will exist in that day “hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” (16.) Chap. 18 is occupied with a description of her burning. The Church having been with the Lord from chap. 6 now returns with the Lord in chap. 19. The full number of the first resurrection being completed in the beginning of chap. 20, then takes place the millennium, or thousand years’ rest, with Christ. The rest of the dead live not until this thousand years’ rest is completed. During this thousand years, every promise of blessing to this earth will be fulfilled — Satan bound — sin not allowed, but immediately judged. Then comes the end. Satan is loosed a little while; and then the great judgment of the dead takes place. (Chap. 20: 11-15.) And this over, the eternal state of inexpressible blessedness sets in — new heavens and new earth, Where God shall shine in light divine, In glory everlasting.

I will conclude with the last closing sounds of the words of God on this solemn subject: — “Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” (Chap. 22: 7.) “And behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be!” (Ver. 12.) “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.” (Ver. 20.) C. S.

063. The Millennial Reign of Christ.

The Millennial Reign of Christ.

Sequel to the above Tract, What God hath said on the Millennial Reign of Christ. A sequel to a tract:

“What God hath said on the Second Coming of Christ and the End of the Present Age.” In the former tract, we found, from the uniform teaching of Christ in the Gospels, that the conversion of the world, or millennium, could not possibly take place during this present time. The wicked and the righteous live together until the end, or coming of Christ in judgment on the nations.

After looking at what God hath spoken to the Jews by His Son in the Gospels, we then examined carefully what He hath spoken to us, the Church of God, by the Holy Ghost, in the Epistles. One great distinction betwixt the hope of the Jewish disciple, and the Christian, we found to be this: many signs were given to the former, and he was bid to watch for the Lord coming in the clouds to this earth; whilst no signs, or times, or dates are given to the Christian, but he is bid to wait; not, however, to see the Lord coming in the clouds to this earth, but to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.)

We found, also, that whilst very many prophecies have to be fulfilled before Christ comes to the Jews on earth, not one single prophecy has to be fulfilled before Christ may come to call the saints, or Church of God, to meet Him in the clouds. Indeed, we found if the Scriptures are seen in their distinctness as to what really belongs to the Jews, and what belongs to the Church, then all is perfectly clear. On the other hand, only confound the earthly hopes of the Jews with the heavenly hopes of the Church, and all is confusion together. This confusing of scriptures referring to the Jews with scriptures addressed to the Church, is, no doubt, the cause of all the contradiction and uncertainty said and written on prophecy. Suppose you were at this moment in Canton. A lecture is announced to be delivered by a Chinese Mandarin on English History. You go to hear it, and find the lecturer entirely ignorant of the distinction betwixt the French and the English nations. He quotes a little from one, and then from the other — now labouring to prove that the Tuileries means Westminster, again trying to prove Philip next in succession to Henry VIII. He might state many facts of history which would be clear and instructive if applied to the right nation; but if he did not know this distinction, could there be anything but confusion in his lecture? Now the kings, the places, and the principles of these two nations, are not so distinct as are the hopes, destinies, and principles of the Jews, and the Church of God, in the Holy Scriptures. Just so, then, where this distinction is not known, can there be anything but confusion? Is it not exactly like the Chinaman, when any writer attempts to explain prophecy who does not know which Scripture belongs to the Jew and which to the Church of God — now labouring to prove that Palestine or Jerusalem means the Church, at another time trying to explain the dates of Jewish future history, as though they referred to the present time of the Church? We know the sad result. Many of the godly have been utterly discouraged by this confusion from studying the very word of God. This is about as wise as if the schoolmasters of England were to discontinue the use and study of Alison’s History of

Europe, because some Chinese lecturer did not know the difference betwixt the nations of England and France. I need not say the distinction is clear enough in Alison. But surely the writings of a fallible man are not more distinct and clear than the inspiration of God. No; the words of God to each, and respecting each, the Jew and Church, could not be more distinct and clear.

Perhaps no part of Scripture has this confused teaching so darkened and made of none effect, as the Book of Revelation. It has made that Book, the understanding of which is declared to be specially blessed, of no practical use, except to bewilder by the fancies and imaginations of men.

Now, when the Book of Revelation is seen in its distinctive character, it becomes altogether a new book; its value as great, its warnings as clear and solemn, as its utter confusion was before. How deeply interesting the sevenfold history of the Church in chapters 2, 3! How glorious the sight of the crowned church above, in chapters 4, 5. And how unspeakable the comfort in seeing that this takes place before the pouring out of the judgments on the earth, just as in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18! Then how clear the revelation of what will take place on earth, after the Church is taken up to meet and be with the Lord, crowned and throned in glory. In chap. 6., how fearful the beginning of “the great day of his wrath!” And whilst those who have rejected His truth and loved unrighteousness, shall perish by the delusions of Satan, (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17,) yet how blessed to see abounding mercy sealing the 144,000 of Israel, and extending to the vast multitude of the nations! (Chap. 7.) Though not like the Church in chap. 4, yet wearing palms of victory! And then how terrible the thunderings of divine judgments on earth in chapters 9, 10, 11. Oh! my fellow-believer, what a dark contrast, this world will present to our happy place above. The Church is no longer seen on earth, but the dragon persecutes the remnant of the Jews in chap. 12. The Roman Empire restored sinks into the most fearful idolatry in chaps. 13, 18. Indeed, all this is the sure testimony of God as to what will befall this earth after the Church is taken, as seen in chaps. 4, 5. Chapter 18 presents the fearful end of the world’s religious system in its last blasphemous character.

Again the eye is directed upward in chap. 19. Oh! what a scene! The Church still in heavenly glory, so bright and fair — the wife of the Lamb — joy of those, the “blessed, they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” It is at this point the Lord comes to the earth, the Church having been with him during all the judgments of this day of wrath. Chap. 19: 11-21 describes His coming to reign.

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” (Revelation 19:15.) Now, we shall find that this very event, described in almost the words of this verse, is exactly what introduces the millennial reign, of Christ in the Old Testament prophets. Let us, then, now turn and see what God hath spoken to Israel and the world by His prophets respecting the reign of Christ on earth. In the Prophet Isaiah (chap. 11) the reign of Christ begins with the event described, as we have read, in Revelation 19:15. “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.” (Is. 11: 4.) Now, we must bear in mind we have seen in the Book of Revelation, the Church glorified with Christ above, long before this event; and, indeed, at this event, coming with Christ, not on earth to be reigned over, but coming with Christ to reign over the earth, as they had been, told they should do in

Revelation 5:1-14.

But, then, if the Church does not form the kingdom on earth in this chapter, (Is. 11.) who does? Could words be plainer? “And shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (Ver. 12.) Observe, there is not one word in this chapter about the Church. How should there, when, as we have seen, long before this chapter is fulfilled, the Church is taken from the earth. The outcasts of Israel, then, and the dispersed of Judah, will be the happy subjects of the kingdom of Christ on earth. “And to it shall the Gentiles seek.” (Ver. 10.)

Thus if we read this beautiful chapter as a description of Israel, the future kingdom of God, after Christ comes, as their Messiah, in judgment, as described in Revelation 19:1-21, all is clear; but what utter confusion if we apply it to the present time, or the Church of God. Does the wolf dwell with the lamb now? The calf with the lion? Is that passage fulfilled now, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea?” (Ver. 9.) To apply this passage to the present dispensation is to make it contradict the plainest teaching of Christ, where He foretells the abounding of iniquity unto the very end, so that at His coming it should be as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot. How many have often ignorantly perverted this passage, as though God had said, the world should be converted by the preaching of the Gospel, until all should know Him from the least to the greatest. This blessed time will surely come; but when and how? Most clearly when the Lord comes and gathers the kingdom of Israel. Let this be seen in its distinctness, and then every prophecy to that nation respecting the millennial kingdom of Christ becomes perfectly plain. Where in the epistles to the Church, is Christ spoken of an coming to reign over it? But, when speaking of Israel, nothing could be more certain and definite.

“The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33.) Why should we not expect this word of the Lord, by His angel, to be fulfilled? I cannot see any reason why I should doubt this, or any other portion of God’s word. The subjects, then, of His Kingdom will be the house of Jacob, not the Church of God.

It may be fairly asked, “Is there any passage of Scripture that gives us an idea of the character in which Christ will appear when reigning in his kingdom?” Is not the transfiguration a picture, so to speak, of what the kingdom will be? How glorious, Jesus, Messiah, King!! “ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” (Matthew 17:1-2.) Oh! what a change will take place, to be sure, on this earth, when the six thousand years of sin and misery shall have run their course. What a glorious object to behold — the glorified Son of man. What will it be for the millennial saints to look at that face, bright as the sun? The few that did see this foreshadowing of His glory, seem to prefigure the different classes of those who shall compose the kingdom; some who have been beheaded in the time of trouble, as James; and others like John, who shall be hid and pass through the tribulation. “And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with them.” Matthew 17:3. These also seem to represent the two classes of heavenly saints who shall appear with him. Elias represents the saints translated without death, whilst Moses represents those who have fallen asleep, and shall

be raised. Satan could dispute about the body of Moses before Christ was raised; but since Christ, the firstfruits, is risen, he cannot dispute about ours. No! in a moment, Christ shall claim the bodies of all that are His, at His coming. (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51.) Thus the holy Mount of Transfiguration gives us a very blessed picture of the future glory and majesty of Christ. The heavenly saints, whether translated or raised from the dead, both changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body, will be seen with Christ, and like Him. Then, on earth, the spared remnant of Israel, having passed through the great tribulation, or having been slain during the tribulation, will fill up the complement of the first resurrection, and will most certainly live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4.)

I feel it necessary to make these general remarks before turning to the Old Testament prophets, on account of the almost universal confusion that exists as to the reign of Christ. Only this day I met a man I have known as a Christian for many years, and happening to say, “what a mercy it is, in this weary journey of life, to have the hope of such a bright end — the coming of the Lord.” He replied, “Do you expect the Lord to come to this earth to reign?” “Yes, indeed,” said I, “but not to reign over us the Church of God; but, according to the scriptures, to reign over the kingdom of Israel. Very many things have to be fulfilled before Christ can come to this earth to the Jews; but I do not know of one single text which has to be fulfilled before Christ may take the Church to meet Him in the air.” Really, it was astonishing how strange all this seemed to be to this Christian, although the Scriptures speak so plainly about it.

I do not wonder that those who are ignorant of the distinction betwixt the kingdom, and the Church, should feel a shock at the thought of Christ coming to reign as a king over the Church, or saved persons, during this dispensation. The thought is so entirely below our heavenly inheritance, and glory with our exalted Lord. But if we would not be robbed of our heavenly glory with Him, why should we seek to rob the Jew of his earthly glory with Him? No. Whilst we receive, with all gladness, the teachings of the Holy Ghost to us in the Epistles, and the beginning and end of Revelation, let us also now turn and examine the words of the Holy Spirit to them, the Jews and Israel, in all their prophets. To dwell at length on these would fill many volumes: in a small paper like this we can but glance at a few, but these may afford a key to the prayerful reader to lead him to search the word with new delight.

I would turn first, then, to the precious book of inspired Jewish Psalms. The very opening seems to bring before us the kingly reign of Christ, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Psalms 2:6.) We know that Zion is at Jerusalem. Then there will God certainly set up the kingdom, for there will He set up His king, and that king His beloved Son, begotten from the dead. And, mark, He does not then ask for souls by the preaching of the gospel out of all nations; but He asks, and God gives Him, the heathen for inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for possession; and this not for conversion, but, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter’s vessel.” (Psalms 2:8-9.) Now, during this present day of grace, God is bearing with man’s utmost wickedness in longsuffering and tender mercy; but then the proud rebel must be dashed to pieces. Now, Satan reigns and iniquity triumphs; then Christ shall reign in righteousness, and sin must be put down. And does not this exactly agree with Revelation 19:1-21 and Isaiah 11:1-16? Yes, and I ask you to notice the harmony of all prophecy as to this terrible judgment on the wicked living nations when Christ comes to reign. Psalms 8:1-9; Psalms 9:1-20 show very strikingly the joy of the kingdom in that day when the Lord shall dwell in Zion.

The apostle applies Psalms 8:1-9 very distinctly to Christ in Hebrews 2:6-9, and says, “But now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.” Oh! what a change will take place on this earth when all things are thus brought into subjection to Christ. And that this will be the case, I do not see how we can possibly doubt. God having raised Christ from the dead, and given Him the highest glory, makes it so certain that He will fulfil every promise to Israel in Him.

Now, do not for one moment suppose that the glory of this earthly kingdom will interfere with our association with Him in heavenly glory. Even the earthly saints, in this millennial song of praise, fully acknowledge it: “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.” (Psalms 8:1.) Oh, think of this, ye despised ones, who love the name of Jesus, what will it be to look down upon this earth when, in every land, that name shall be as ointment poured forth. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom, and knowledge of God.” To think of that nation, which once set Him at nought, and cried out, “crucify him.” now hymning His praises with unspeakable joy, for ever safe in the refuge of His presence. Oh, ye desolate hills of Palestine, who can describe your future scenes of blessedness? Lord, haste the day when thy now-rejected name shall be excellent in all the earth. Then shall it be said, “The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.” Oh, “then shall the man of the earth no more oppress.” (Psalms 10:16; Psalms 10:18.) It is very touching to hear the cry of the remnant in many of the psalms, when passing through the great tribulation, but this is not our subject at present.

It may be asked, “What effect will it have on the nations when the kingdom is set up in Israel?” In Psalms 22:1-31 we have a very blessed answer to that enquiry. And it is most important to see that all blessing, whether to an individual, the Church now, the Jews, or the world hereafter, all flows from the death and resurrection of our precious Lord. If His soul had not been made an offering for sin, if God had not forsaken Him — oh, wondrous mystery of redeeming love! — there could never have been either a saved sinner or a blest nation. Dear, dying Lamb, we owe it all to thee! In this psalm, when the death and sufferings of our precious Lord has been described, and the seed of Jacob glorify Him, then, “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s: and be is the governor among the nations.” Now, since half of this psalm has been literally fulfilled on the cross, why should we doubt the other will be also fulfilled on the throne? Could anything be more clearly revealed than the future reign of Christ is in this psalm? What a contrast, in every particular, to this present time of His rejection! You might take up every statement. “The meek shall eat and be satisfied.” Now the meek are as sheep in the midst of wolves — cheated, robbed, pining in garrets or cellars; yes, and often exposed to cruel deaths. Now, all the nations groan under the cruel yoke of Satan. Then shall they turn unto the Lord; “and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” Mark, this is not a description of the elect Church out of all nations, but of the kingdom. “For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and he is the governor among the nations.” “Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.” (Psalms 24:10.)

I pass over the many psalms in which the godly Jew is seen waiting patiently for the time when the wicked oppressor shall be destroyed, and the time shall come for the meek to inherit the earth. And whilst the godly Jew can and does do this, the godly Christian of this present period could not possibly either pray for, or wait for, the destruction of his enemies. This is a period of grace — that

of which I now write a period of judgment. This makes all the difference. Yea, and in many places the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms, after speaking of His shameful death and rejection, prays for this righteous destruction and judgment, as in Psalms 69:1-36. “Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take bold of them.” (Ver. 24-28.) it will surely be a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But how quickly his thoughts turn to God’s future purpose to Israel. “For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah; that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it; and they that love his name shall dwell therein.” (Ver. 35, 36.) To apply these words to the Church seems to me to be mere wanton perversion of Scripture. Does the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Churches anywhere tell us that we shall have to go to inhabit the cities of Judah? No, no! Heavenly mansions are our happy home above, whilst the restored cities of Judah shall be the happy home of the seed of Jacob. And if we would desire to know the detail of the blessed reign of Christ on earth, we only need turn to Psalms 72:1-20. Do turn and read this inspired description of the reign of Christ. Yea, lest any should read this tract who have not the Scriptures in their hand, I will give the whole of it. “Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. 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 an 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 for ever: 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 the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” Yes; when the Lord God of Israel doeth these wondrous things, then shall the whole earth be filled with His glory. Then shall be fulfilled the angels’ blessed song, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” (Luke 2:14.) It is difficult, during this present time of darkness and rejection, to conceive what it will be when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. Truly the change is not greater, when, after a time of burning drought, the showers water the earth. “Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.” What abundance of peace under His happy reign!

Many of these precious psalms express the praise of millennial worship, and, no doubt, will be sung during the reign of Christ; such as 93, 94, and onwards. God will then fulfil every promise to the fathers. Yea, no doubt, when the Lord reigneth, the fathers, raised from the dead, will appear

in the kingdom; as it says, “Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name.” (Psalms 99:2-6.) Does not this answer to the vision of the transfiguration — Jesus the exalted One, and the risen saints glorified with Him? And to this agree those words of Jesus, “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom (that is, the unbelieving Jews) shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:11.) To apply this text to the Church would utterly overthrow the present gospel of the grace of God. But speaking, as the Lord does, about the kingdom, this text throws great light upon the reign. For thus we are left without doubt that the fathers of the Jews will be raised and connected with the kingdom of Christ.

What a view, then, all this gives us of the millennial reign! Christ the King in bright glory and majesty — Israel filled with joy and praise — all nations coming up to worship at Zion — abundance of peace — the fathers alive again from the dead in glorified bodies. Can we wonder, then, at these bursts of Jewish praise in the Psalms? Well may the children of Zion be joyful in their King. The song swells louder and louder until the last Psalms are one hallelujah — praise ye the Lord. Such is the joy and praise of the kingdom in millennial days.

But, it may be asked, do the prophets foretell all this as clearly, as these things are spoken of in the Psalms?

Let us now turn and hear the Prophet Isaiah. And, mark, he did not see or prophecy concerning the Church; but these are his words, “The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,” &c. (Is. 2: 1-4.) Now, when God says this is all about Zion and Jerusalem, why should men say it is about the Church? No; it plainly teaches what will take place during the days of the kingdom — the very opposite of what is taking place now. For, during the whole of this present time, this same Jerusalem is trampled under foot. And instead of all nations now flowing to Jerusalem, its inhabitants are scattered among all nations. Now the world is preparing for universal war and bloodshed: then “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks (or scythes); nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Is. 2: 4.)

Thus we see there will then be no need for war. Every question among the nations will be referred to the King of kings and Lord of lords. We have already looked at that millennial chapter, the 11th. There the reign is literally described, coming in with the judgments on the wicked one. The blessings of the reign are seen to extend even to creation, which now groans. The earth shall then be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. The outcast of Israel, and dispersed of Judah are then gathered from the four winds of heaven. How glorious the millennial rest of the earth! In that day the Song of the 12th chapter will be sung — “Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One in the midst of thee.” The 60th chapter also describes

the glory of Zion when the Redeemer shall come. Yes, the change from night to day is not greater than will be when the glory of the Lord shall thus shine upon his city. “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Read the whole of this deeply-interesting description of the millennial reign. What beauty! what glory! what praise!

But, it may be asked, if all this applies to the kingdom, is the present period entirely overlooked — I mean the time during which the Church of God is being gathered out of the world? Entirely so. The mystery of the Church was hid. (Ephesians 3:1-21.) And, note how strikingly this is the case in chapter 61. There is, first, the personal ministry, of our precious Lord on earth, as He Himself proved when He took the book, and read from this very chapter: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-20.) And as they looked at Him with wonder as he closed the book in the middle of a sentence, He said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” But what is the remainder of the sentence? “And the day of vengeance of our God.” That day of vengeance which does not take place until after, or at the close of, this period of the grace of God. Thus, in the middle of a sentence, is the gap in which the whole of this present time is entirely overlooked. And the Spirit of God, without saying one word about the Church or its period, goes on to describe the future time of comfort to Zion; and to the end of chapter 62 the millennial kingdom is again minutely described. Oh, what a change awaits the desolate Zion! and it could not more clearly speak of the reign of Christ over Israel. Then shall “they build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.” All this is deeply interesting. We know that the cities of Israel have long been a desolation, for at least eighteen centuries; and as surely, when the reign comes, they will all be rebuilt. Of course this can have no connexion either with the church, or the times of the Gentiles; as even Jerusalem itself is, and must be, trampled under foot, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. As surely, then, as this time of ashes, and heaviness, and mourning has come, so surely will the time of beauty, and joy, and praise come. Yes, this very Zion shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God. Isaiah 62:3. The moment we see that these prophecies speak of the future reign of Christ in His kingdom, and that Zion really means Zion, and Jerusalem means that very city, now so trampled under foot, then all becomes perfectly plain. I cannot say one word to make it more clear. My only object is to point the reader to those precious words of God, which so plainly set forth the future reign of Christ. We might multiply passages which describe the exceeding great joy of the millennial earth. Indeed, God would have us glad in the prospect of such intense happiness, taking the place of the present misery and wretchedness that abounds on every band, during the present usurped reign of Satan. And yet how guarded the scripture is, to show that all this blessing flows from Jerusalem as the centre, being the place of His throne. “But be ye glad and rejoice for ever 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 no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.” (Isaiah 65:18-19.) And to the end of this chapter we find many additional particulars of the millennial reign. We learn the age of man will be greatly lengthened “as the days of a tree.” Yet there will be both sin and death. A person dying a hundred years old shall only be considered a child. But the sinner, though a hundred years old, shall be accursed. Now the wicked spreads himself out, as a green bay tree: then he shall be smitten with the curse of God. That is,

the sinner will be immediately judged during the blessed reign of righteousness.

I have often found persons at a loss to understand who shall people the earth during the millennium, seeing that the Lord comes with such terrible judgment on the wicked. If we examine Isaiah 66:1-24, this difficulty will be found to be entirely removed. “For, behold, the Lord 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 the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.” (Ver. 15, 16.) Though this is perfectly true, as fully described in many parts of Scripture, yet “It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory.” (Ver. 18.) And the manner in which this shall be done is also described: “And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them into the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.” (Ver. 19.) So that, whilst they who have heard and rejected the gospel shall be destroyed; such as have not heard, and in like manner rejected, will then hear and be saved. At the deluge, a very small remnant were saved through the judgment; but that small remnant soon repeopled the earth: so the remnant of Israel, brought through the judgments, will be the means of taking, as we see in this passage, the good news of the kingdom to the heathen, who have not heard, and consequently have not been judged like the nations who knew the will of God and did it not. One of the firstfruits of this testimony will be, the bringing of all the children of Israel to their own glorious land: “And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.” (Ver. 20.) To be sure, however could men apply this to the Church? Are sinners brought on mules into the Church? Does it not clearly speak of the children of Israel being, brought to their own happy land in the beginning of millennial days?

If we compare all this with Jeremiah, we shall find the same clear testimony: let one passage suffice. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, 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, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (Jeremiah 33:5-6.) If this does not speak of the future reign of Christ as the king of Israel, what does it speak of? Oh! will not that blessed state of things be the very opposite of the present! There can be no question that this passage refers to literal Israel, for the next few verses describe their being gathered from every land, to dwell in their own land.

Also in the prophet Ezekiel, the same promises are given to Israel respecting the time of the reign. In chapter 36 immense fertility and blessing is foretold. If the predictions of the desolations have been so wondrously fulfilled, why may we not also expect the promises of blessing to be as literally fulfilled, until “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?” “I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.” (Ezekiel 36:35.) Just think of the glory of Christ filling the heavens above, and the earth beneath like the garden of Eden. Oh! happy, happy scenes of future bliss. Yea, during the reign of the true David, the promises are most cheering. The people will delight to do his will. God says, “And I will place them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the

midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Ezekiel 37:26.)

It is perfectly astonishing what light a knowledge of God's future purpose to Israel throws on the politics of the world. Whilst, as we shall see shortly, the prophet Daniel describes the end of the great drama of the western nations, these next two chapters, Ezekiel 38:1-23; Ezekiel 39:1-29, show as clearly the certain doom of the vast empire of the north. And how remarkable, that, for 1900 years after this prophecy was delivered, there was no such empire embracing the nations here described. But now, we may say, every year witnesses the steady growth of Russia, covering the exact territory described. There can be no mistake who is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal — the ancient names of Moscow and Tobolsk. No doubt, this empire will go on increasing until Persia, Ethiopia, and Lybia, with all the northern nations, peopled by Gomer, and the house of Togarmah, shall compose its united power. And when the children of Israel have been gathered again as a nation, this vast multitude will come up against the mountains of Israel. Then, chapter 39, as a parallel with Revelation 19:1-21, describes the destruction of this immense host. It is thus the Lord appears for His ancient people: "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward." (Ver. 22.) The remaining chapters of Ezekiel are occupied with the details of the future temple and service of the Lord. The description of the magnificent entrance of Christ into the temple is truly grand. "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like a noise of many waters; and the earth shined with his glory." "And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the east. So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and; behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house." (43: 2, 4, 5.)

Thus Ezekiel conducts us to the millennial reign and glory of Christ in His kingdom on earth, in His temple at Jerusalem.

Let us now look at the testimony of God by his prophet Daniel. We are carried back to the scene of Judah's captivity in Babylon. God's people are thus under the power of the Gentiles; and this prophecy describes the course of Gentile rule to the end. This rule is divided into four distinct empires. The vision of the great image, in chapter 2, is explained to mean four kingdoms or empires. We all know how literally this has been fulfilled up to a certain point. The fourth empire, which was the Roman empire, has never yet existed in the form described, by ten toes, explained to mean ten kings or kingdoms. And yet this empire has ceased to exist. At first sight this would seem as if God's word had failed to be fulfilled. This is impossible. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit." (Revelation 17:8; Revelation 17:11.) This passage foretells exactly what has taken and will take place. The Roman empire, or last empire, was, but has ceased to exist; but it will again come into existence; in its most blasphemous, horrible character, and in its future state it will be divided into ten kingdoms. There is also another peculiarity in its last development. It is divided, yet mixed — "iron mixed with miry clay." (Daniel 2:41.) The iron of fierce royalty mixing with the children of men, the miry principle of what is called popular government. Victor Emanuel (strange name) and the Garibaldians exactly illustrate this; and, strange to say, Garibaldi's dream of the future embraces ten nationalities under one imperial head! Surely everything seems waiting until the Church is taken out of the way to meet the Lord; and then immediately these terrible scenes of the last days will surely come. This much, however, is clear, the Roman empire will exist again, composed of ten kingdoms; and as

England was part of it once, so it must be again. And it is further certain that, “In the days of these kings (or kingdoms) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom that 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 for ever,” (Ver. 44.) Just as in this vision, the stone cut out of the mountains smote the foot of the image; so shall Christ, the now-rejected stone, smite the empire of the west, at His coming to set up His kingdom, exactly as described in the end of Revelation 19:1-21. Who shall be able to stand when the day of His wrath is come?

Chapter 7. Daniel’s vision of the four beasts represents the fearful character of this fourth empire. And this awful description is not that of its past history, but of its future ten-horn or ten-kingdom condition. And in this there is the most perfect agreement with Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18. What immense comfort, then, it gives the believer now to learn from that book, as we have seen, that before these terrible destructions take place, we, the Church, are with the Lamb above. But mark how clear it is, that, whilst this fearful empire is trampling, and stamping, and destroying, the Son of man comes with the clouds of heaven. “And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed.” And again this terrible character is described, (verses 23, 26), and we always find, when anything is thus repeated, that it is something which men are most unwilling to believe. It is so in this case. Though nothing could be more clearly revealed, yet the wise of this world seem to have no idea of the fearful destruction close at hand. But it must come, and then, “And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” (Verses 27, 28.)

Thus these prophecies in Daniel, are an exact parallel to that part of Revelation which describes the earth in reference to Jewish history in the future. The reconstruction of the Roman empire; its fearful character; its judgment at the coming of Christ; and then the millennial reign. The reader may now read for himself all that the prophets have spoken respecting these things. The prophet Joel describes the gathering of the armies of the nations, the judgment on them, and then his reign in Jerusalem. (Joel 3:9; Joel 3:21.) “So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters,” &c. The Spirit also says, in Amos, “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof,” &c. (Amos 9:11.) And then the exceeding blessedness and fertility of the land is described in millennial days.

Obadiah says, “But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness.” (Ver. 17.)

Micah represents the bright vision of Isaiah, and vividly describes the millennial reign. (Chapter 4: 1-8.) “And the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth even for ever.” He does not say this of the Church, He says, “The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.”

Zephaniah gives a fearful account of the judgments that precede, and then the brightest possible picture of the millennial reign that shall follow. The day of wrath is described in chapter 1: 2. “Therefore wait ye upon me (that is the escaped remnant of Jews), saith the Lord, until the day

that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them my indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." Then follows the Lord's tender care of the poor persecuted remnant, until this moment of deliverance; then, "Sing, O daughter of Zion! shout, O Israel! be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!" And again, what exceeding precious words of comfort, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." (Read chap. 3: 8-20.) Oh, could words more finely describe the glory and joys of the millennial reign! Does it not make us cry, Lord, haste the day?

What will be the surprise of the Jews, who have so long rejected Him, when they shall look upon Him whom they, as a nation, have pierced. (Zechariah 12:10.) Oh, what brokenness of heart and moving of love this will give, when they say, "What are these wounds in thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." (Chap. 13: 6.) This will be the grand moment of discovery to Israel, that their glorious Messiah is the very Jesus who died for their sins. Oh, think of the hour of his sufferings, and then of these words of love "Those I received in the house of my friends." These burning words of love will melt every heart. Oh, my reader, it is through this same precious Jesus that forgiveness of sins is preached to us. The same precious blood cleanseth us from all sin.

Zechariah 14:1-21. This chapter demands a most careful study. In it we see the nations gathered against Jerusalem. The Lord comes and stands on the Mount of Olives. Living waters flow out of Jerusalem. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." (Ver. 9.) During the blessed reign of Christ, His authority is absolute. All nations must come up to Jerusalem to worship Him. "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, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Now this cannot in any way be applied to the present time, or to the Church of God. No; even the false church or Christendom, so called, has been prevented from even imitating this. She has not been able to set up the papacy at Jerusalem. She has imitated the future kingdom in every way she could. In this she could not. It is not improbable that, when the true Church of God is taken to meet Christ, then the confederacy of apostate Judaism, and apostate Christianity, may attempt something like this at Jerusalem. But the prophecy plainly describes the real personal reign of Christ, in His kingdom at Jerusalem. The distinction in the judgments on Egypt and the nations, if they refuse to come to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, is still further evidence that it refers to the future kingdom. The following verses (20, 21) foretell the prevalence of universal holiness in Jerusalem and Judah. Every form of misery has flown from sin, the one common source, for six thousand years. How great, then, will be the abundance of peace and bliss in those days of holiness yet to come.

If we now turn again to Revelation 20:1-15, we find that, during this thousand years' reign of Christ, the great tempter of man is bound and cast into the bottomless pit. The way in which Revelation opens up the closing scenes of the present age is perfectly appalling. Just mark the end of the Roman Empire in the last verses of chap. 19. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles

before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Foolish men may ask, How can this be? — And where is the lake of fire? For aught we know, it may be under our very feet, the whole centre of this globe. Even learned men are convinced by reason that this world is, as to its great bulk, liquid fire. It was but yesterday that we heard of an earthquake slaying 8000 persons. And cannot God, who caused the earth to open and receive Korah and his company alive into the pit, again, in one instant, open the earth to receive these sons of wickedness alive into the lake of fire? If men will reject the mercy of God, they will not escape the reality of His terrible wrath. Year after year God's longsuffering tarries, not willing that any should perish. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Yes, when least expected. Yes, when men are saying, Peace and safety, then this sudden destruction cometh. When God ariseth to shake terribly the earth, then who shall be able to stand? And thus, having closed this age of human pride and wickedness, Satan, being bound for a thousand years, the first resurrection being now complete, they live and reign with Christ a thousand years. "The heavens must receive him until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21.) So that, during this thousand years' reign of Christ, every promise of blessing to this earth shall be most certainly fulfilled. "Who, in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." (1 Timothy 6:15.)

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and or Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:5-6.)

It may be felt by many who read this tract how little is said about the Church during the reign of Christ. The reason is simply this, because the Church does not form any part of the earthly subjects of the kingdom, but are the heavenly associates of the king. What Eve was to Adam — what a bride is to a husband, this all who are saved during this period, and formed into one body by the Holy Ghost, yea, made the bride, of Christ: they shall thus reign with Him. Others also, doubtless, all the redeemed, both before the Church existed and after it is taken; during the judgments; even those who have during that period refused the mark of the beast; all these will plainly live and reign with Christ a thousand years. But even in heavenly glory the bride will have the most distinguished place. (Revelation 5:9.) Yes; the very angels stand round about them in ver. 11. And in Revelation 19:1-9, the glorified bride forms an object of wonder to the multitude called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

It is very humiliating to see that at the close of this thousand years' reign of Christ, and blessedness on earth; on Satan being lot loose for a little season, man is found as ready as ever to be led by him in rebellion against God. Surely this is enough to teach us to have no confidence in self. And now the "devil shall be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," (Chap. 20: 10.) Fearful thought! These very persons may be alive at this moment: their names may be well known in Europe. We may have seen those very bodies which shall not die, but be cast alive into the lake of fire, and there remain in torment during the long thousand years of the happy reign of Christ on earth. But that is not all. The thousand years being ended, the judgment of the dead takes place — not the

judgment of the nations on earth, as in Matthew 25:1-46. No; read the description of the judgment of the dead, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book, according to their works.” “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-12; Revelation 20:15.)

I ask my reader, can God lie? Has He spoken, and will He not do it? Man may deride these solemn, sure warnings; Satan may try to persuade you not to believe what God hath spoken. But, oh! if you should find these statements of God true to you! Nay, if not in Christ, you will as surely be cast into the lake of fire, and there tormented for ever: yes, as sure as ever you have rejected Christ. Do ponder this certainty; remember, it is God who speaks.

Oh, how truly blessed to be brought to Christ now, as he says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; (or, as it should be translated, judgment;) but is passed from death unto life.” Now, this positive assurance of Christ’s is most blessed, but very little either understood or enjoyed. The confusion as to the judgment, and reign of Christ, and the parties constituting the Church, and the kingdom, has thrown confusion on the plainest Gospel passages.

After showing in a lecture, the other evening, the impossibility of the justified believer ever standing in judgment as a sinner, a christian lady came up to me, and tremblingly asked, “But does not the word say, that we shall have to give account, in the day of judgment, for every idle word?” Yes; and I doubt not, many a person who reads this, and who has believed on God — who raised Jesus, the substitute, from the dead, and who is justified from all things — still, like this lady, will say: “and does not the word say, that we shall have to give account of every idle word in the day of judgment?” I turned to the passage the following night, and showed this lady that the word said a very different thing. These are the words of Jesus, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” (Matthew 12:36.) This is exactly what is said in another place, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment; so (now mark the contrast) Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:27-28.) As the Lord enabled this lady to see the immense contrast betwixt men who, having rejected mercy, must give account in the day of judgment, and those who have heard now the word of Christ, and believe on God, who sent Him, and therefore have everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment. So may my reader know the reality of that testimony that assures the believer, that Christ having borne his sins, God will remember them no more for ever. (Hebrews 10:1-39.)

Indeed, my fellow-believer, how can we stand in the judgment, since we shall have lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, before the great judgment of God is set, and before whom the rest of the dead must stand, who lived not during the thousand years. No; the question has been once, and for ever, divinely settled on the cross. If any one could possibly be judged for our sins again, it would be Christ, our surety. But this is impossible. He dieth no more. He hath been raised again for our justification. It is God who justifieth; who can condemn? No, there is neither judgment nor condemnation to them that are in Christ. All this is fully proved in Romans 5:1-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25; Romans 8:1-39.

Still, many are troubled at that word: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” And, indeed, it is well, if not walking as the redeemed of the Lord, that we should be troubled; but, surely, to meet the eye of our precious Lord at His coming, yea, made like Him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, is a very different thing from standing in the day of judgment to be tried for our sins. As to works, no doubt, many will be greatly surprised to find that what they thought good, He will pronounce bad — wood, bay, and stubble, all to be burned up, just like Lot’s property in Sodom, he himself saved so as by fire. Just take one thing, In the path of our blessed Lord, we see Him making Himself of no reputation. How will the believer meet the Lord as to this? Have we trod in His steps? He made Himself poor. I may be a believer — my sins put away for ever — but shall my ways as a Christian be found accepted of the Lord? It is not the question of the day of judgment, but when we meet Christ shall we have His approval? Think of this, my fellow-traveller, and it will often cheek thee when tempted, and often cheer thee when despised. Constantly ask, “Is this what I should like to be doing when the Lord comes?” It may be highly esteemed among men, yea, applauded; but will it stand before the eye of Christ? Often we find the real children of God, acting the very opposite of the ways of Christ — self-seeking — worldly popularity — bitterness against one another. Surely this will not bear the light of His eye. Perhaps nothing gives more pain than this want of sympathy amongst the same children of God. Even in the apostle’s time, he could say, “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” (Php 2:21.) Indeed, whatever we build in the old creation — wealth, reputation, or the like — all will be loss when we stand before the “beema” or decision of Christ. And all we build in the new creation will be gain.

Thus we have directed the enquirer to the word of God. First, as to what he hath spoken by His Son to the Jews, in the four gospels; then, to what He hath spoken by the Holy Ghost to the Church, in the epistles; and, lastly, to what He spake by the prophets in olden times respecting the judgment of the nations, during the great day of His wrath; and then the setting up of His kingdom on earth. We have taken the Scriptures just as we have found them, without using them craftily or corrupting them, to fit any human theory. From the whole then, briefly: it appears plain, that the Lord may come at any moment to take His bride — the body — all believers joined by one Spirit during this day of grace — up to meet Him in the air. This may take place at any moment. Then the man of sin is revealed. The Roman empire reconstructed, forming ten kingdoms under one terrible head. The Jews gathered to Palestine in great wickedness, under the man of sin. Idolatry or abomination placed in their temple. Then the time of the great tribulation. The Church with the Lord during this day of wrath. Then Christ comes with flaming fire, taking vengeance on the rebellious nations. Then takes place the blessed thousand years’ reign; after which, takes place the judgment of the dead. The old creation having entirely passed away, a new heaven and a new earth appear. The eternal state then exists. The order of these events is not founded on the interpretation of any one scripture, but shown from the simple teaching and harmony of all scripture. The reader is entreated to search the scriptures. This tract is but a feeble glance, as it were, at the surface; search them closely, prayerfully, and in simple dependence on the Spirit’s teaching. Do not try to make them square with any human theory. If the word of God should cross your long cherished opinion, let go your opinion, bow to God’s word.

“Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.” (Revelation 22:10.) Yes, though the Church needs no sign, for we may be caught up before I finish this sentence; yet surely the state of the world seems to say, “The time is at hand!” The time of its judgment, the great day of the wrath of Almighty God — the time when the King must reign in righteousness. But hark! Still the voice of mercy softly sounds — “And the Spirit and the Bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17.) Oh! awakened sinner, dost thou hear? Has thine ear been opened to bear the words of Christ? Dost thou thirst? then the water of life is thine, as freely as it was that poor sinner’s at Samaria’s well. Oh! she had no merit; she was a sinner at that very moment. But, through divine grace, she found a welcome in the presence of that blessed One, who came to seek and to save the lost. To-day is the good news of God proclaimed, “Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things.” But to-morrow the despisers may wonder and perish. Oh! how will those wonder who have long sat under the sound of the gospel, when the Church is taken tip, and the preacher’s voice is no more heard. Think, then, what it may cost you to despise one more day. To God’s own children how applicable the words of Peter, “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” (2 Peter 3:1-18.) Iniquity abounds: the love of many waxeth cold. Some are mocking and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? Perilous times are come. What selfishness! What worldliness! Yet God is working, and quickly gathering in His own. Some are awaking to the deep solemnity of the moment we have arrived at. Events so vast and so near. The very world arming and preparing for its own desolating destructions. Are you, my reader, pardoned, justified, and ready to meet the Lord in the air? Can you say, I am waiting for the Lord from heaven? Is there anything you are allowing of which you would be ashamed if He comes to take you this day? Is the real cry of your heart, “Come, Lord Jesus?” Is your heart set on attaining some object? What will it profit if Jesus comes to call you up this day?

Blessed Lord, come; this groaning earth cries for thy peaceful reign. We, too, who are thine, we groan. Oh! come quickly. We long to see thy face; to be “for ever with the Lord.” C. S.

Chapter 62

064. Vol 03 - Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects:

Vol ume 03 Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects

Chapter 63

065. What is the Gospel of God?

What is the Gospel of God?

Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects, for this Present Time.

No. 1.

Mr. Hope-to-be-saved. Good morning, Christian, I am glad to have the pleasure of your company. There, are several things I wish to talk over with you. We seem to live in strange times. A sort of feeling of uncertainty as to what is coming next.

Christian. There certainly is all that you say, and more; only if our minds were truly subject to God's word, we need not be in any doubt as to what is about to take place. But before we look at the future, suppose we ask the question, What has taken place? What is the present state of Christendom?

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, I must say, though I have been told over and over again, that things are getting better, I am compelled to say, the very things I look to — I mean man's churches — are crumbling to pieces. What do you think about it?

Christian. Looking at this matter in the light of scripture, the present scene presents a sad picture. But to begin at the foundation; every observant Christian must have felt that a remarkable darkness, has fallen upon the people of protestant countries during these last few years. Not but that the path of the Just One, Christ, shines brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day. And the increase of light, and blessing, is as remarkable as the darkness around. And we may say, even as to the gospel itself, if you will only visit the mass of professors, talk with them, as you travel by rail or boat, you will find that, as to man's state, and God's righteous salvation, protestant countries are fast sinking into the darkness of the middle ages, as men call them.

Hope-to-be-saved. You surprise me. I thought everybody, at least in England, knew what the gospel is!

Christian. Well, my dear friend, will you tell me what you think the gospel is?

Hope-to-be-saved. Why in a few words the gospel is this: we must believe in Christ, and do the best we can, you know. A man must have faith and good works too, or he never can be saved, that's clear, is it not? The best illustration I ever heard of the way to be saved, as I understand it was this. There was a very celebrated preacher, who thought that faith in Christ was enough for salvation; and this preacher, John, was in a boat on a river, with another old preacher. "Now," says the old preacher, "John, take that oar, and pull as hard as you can." John did pull, and lo, the boat began going round and round, in a circle. "Now John," says the old preacher, "lay that oar down;" and John did so. "Now, John, take this other oar, and pull at this other side," when behold, the boat began to go round and round at the other side. "The first oar," says the old preacher, "is faith, and this second oar is works. Don't you see, John? if you have only faith in Christ, you can never be

saved. And if you have only good works, you can never be saved. But if you have both faith and good works, then you pull, and sail gloriously up the river of salvation." From that day, Preacher John preached faith and good works, for salvation; and so do thousands of his followers; and that is what I understand to be the gospel; and that is how I hope to be saved. Don't you think this is the gospel?

Christian. No doubt it may be the gospel of Preacher John. It is a fair picture of the gospel of many; of the great mass now. And it would be most difficult to show the shade of difference betwixt it, and the gospel of Romanists. But it would be almost impossible to find anything more unlike the gospel of God.

Hope-to-be-saved. How? in what way?

Christian. In every way. Don't you see that if you could be saved in that way, then when you arrive in heaven, you could shout "Worthy am I, and Christ!" or, "Worthy the Lamb, and worthy am I." Which would you put first? At all events, one oar had as much to do with it as the other — therefore this gospel would just exalt man one half, and rob Christ one half; only, as many say, "We must do our part, and then He will do His. The more we love God, the more He will love us." Does not this say, "I must be first, and Christ second?"

Hope-to-be-saved. I never thought of it in that way. I don't like the thought of robbing Christ, to exalt myself; but certainly if I pull one oar, that is, if salvation is just half my own work, it does look as if a half Saviour would do for me. But, must there not be good works?

Christian. Certainly; only let us look at that in its proper place. Don't you know that God has sent us a letter on this very subject — The Gospel of God?

Hope-to-be-saved. You speak so strangely — at least it seems so to me; I don't exactly know what you mean.

Christian. What I mean is this. Paul's letter, or Epistle to the Romans, is so distinctly the Gospel of God, written so entirely by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that we may read it as god speaking to us Himself. Surely I do not doubt the inspiration of all scripture, and all scripture is equally God's message to man. But if you ask what is the gospel; the Romans answers, and unfolds, that special question.

Now in this letter you will not find man a puller — able to pull either one oar or the other. But man is described as lost, under three aspects or characters.

Man is:

1. A sinner under judgment — Romans 3:1-31.

2. Without strength — Romans 5:1-21.

3. Shut up in unbelief — Romans 11:1-36.

God has met man's need:

1. In righteousness through redemption.

2. In love: for when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

3. In mercy. To us Gentiles, to Saul of Tarsus, and in the future, to Israel, when sunk in unbelief. As he says to Timothy, "But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Timothy 1:13.) And the same mercy will be shewn to Israel in days to come; "For God hath concluded all [or shut all up together] in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." (Romans 11:32.) Now, if we take up these three aspects of man's condition, and the way of God in His gospel in meeting each, we shall find man's gospel, of doing his best and rowing with both hands, a simple denial of God's gospel.

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, do make it as plain as you can find words, for I can assure you it is a matter of all importance to me. I confess, my gospel never gives me real comfort; for I may just tell you, I never feel quite sure that I do do my best. Nay, I may say, I feel I don't do my best; and so, how can I be sure I am saved? But where is the difference betwixt my gospel and God's gospel?

Christian. You say, "I must believe in Christ, and do my best." God begins with you on the ground that you are lost — under sin and under judgment. But if you are able to do your best, or if you can row with both hands, you are not lost at all. Look at a man gliding through the waters, rowing so gracefully; do you call that a lost man? Is it not a very little saviour a man needs that can row with both hands to heaven? No wonder so very little is heard of the Saviour where man's gospel is preached. Preacher John could row on the river with one hand, or with both; but the fact is, man is shut up under sin, (Galatians 3:22) and without strength to be better. (Romans 5:6; Romans 7:14.) Yes, in this epistle, God tells you plainly, that there is no best in you — that there is no good in you; that there is no strength in you to be better; and fully describes the experience of a rower under law, utterly without strength, fairly sold under sin — under the judgment of God as guilty.

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, I don't know whether all this is in scripture, for I mostly take for granted what the preacher says. One thing I do say, it is uncommonly like what I have found to be true in my experience.

Christian. No doubt, for God says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" there is no difference. But let us now note very carefully how man denies the gospel of God.

God says, all the world is guilty before Him; or, as in the margin, Romans 3:19, "subject to the judgment of God" — and the judgment, or wages of sin, is death. If a person told you that such a man was in prison, found guilty, under sentence of death — and you said, "Oh no, he is only on probation, and if he does his best he will never be executed" — would not this be a denial of the prisoner's true condition? Now, if man is thus found guilty before God, and under judgment, to say, "No, he is still under probation, and if he does best he will be saved" — is not this denying, at outset, man's true condition; and denying what God says about it? And does not God say man is without strength? Yea, in due time, that is, when fifteen centuries had fully proved, in the history of the Jews, that man was without strength; then Christ died for the ungodly. Does not man deny all this, when he speaks of faith as a thing of his own; and as if he had strength to use it in one hand, and good works in the other? Is it not dreadful, thus to deny God's truth, and deceive man about his real condition? Think of eternal perdition; think that you are not sure of another breath and to be deceived about a matter of such moment!

Hope-to-be-saved. How do you say God has met man’s lost condition, shut up under sin and judgment?

Christian. Nay, my dear sir, what I say is nothing — the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed in His gospel. Justification is free, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24.) But, again, this redemption is flatly denied in man’s gospel. Let me try to illustrate this. Suppose you were a slave, shut up in slavery, as man is shut up in sin, and a real friend, though an unknown one, paid the price of your redemption — say £1,000 — he sends me to tell you, and as soon as you hear the news, you say, "Well, I must do my best to get him to redeem me;" or, "I must do my part towards it. I must row with both hands to get redemption from slavery." Would not all this be simply a denial that the redemption was actually accomplished?

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, but must I not pray for God to shew mercy to me?

Christian. Can the slave, I ask, pray for redemption, if the money has been paid? And has not God shewn mercy? Has not Jesus died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God? The plain question is this, Has redemption been accomplished? If we pray for it to be done, we then deny that Jesus has come in the flesh. Has Jesus finished the blessed work of redemption on the cross? Has God been glorified for ever about sin, by the death of the cross; so that He has also glorified Jesus, in raising Him from the dead, and receiving Him up to glory? Can you look up to heaven, and see Jesus crowned with glory by this very death of the cross, and then say, "No, He is only worthy of half a crown, and if I do my best, the other half will be due to me?"

Hope-to-be-saved. I think you forget that I said we must believe in Christ, and do — dear, I am almost ashamed to say — do our best, after all I have heard: but we do believe in Christ.

Christian. Don’t you know a cup of vinegar would spoil a pailful of milk? The work of Christ is absolute perfection. Is not all our doing mixed with sin? Nay, is not doing for salvation, the damning sin of unbelief; the very rejection of free pardon, through the once finished work of Christ? If you attempt to mix your sinful, imperfect works with Christ’s, is it not worse than vinegar mixed with milk? Redemption is accomplished. God has raised Jesus from the dead. "Therefore, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38.) This is the very message of God to every lost sinner. Before ever the sinner can offer one prayer, this is God’s pardon, freely proclaimed through Jesus.

Hope-to-be-saved. And have I only to believe it? have I positively nothing to do?

Christian. Would you speak or reason or cavil thus, if as a poor condemned criminal, Her Majesty, the beloved Queen of these realms, were to send her free pardon? Would you cavil about only believing, or would you question her truthfulness, by saying, "Have I nothing to do?" Surely if a Queen’s word is her word, God’s word is His word. And if you could rest on the bare word of the Queen, you must admit, that faith can rest on the word of God.

Hope-to-be-saved. Oh! sir, if you knew how I have been schooled in the doctrine, that it is not enough to believe, but that man must fulfil certain conditions — that Christ did come and die for the whole world, but yet we must love God with all our hearts, and must keep His holy law, or we never can be saved. I am sure I want to be right; but what you call the gospel of God seems so

free, and is all grace, and yet you say, righteousness too; I cannot tell you how different it is from all I have heard from a child; why if I really believed what you say, I should be filled with thankfulness.

Christian. Nay, don't say, if you believed what I say — it is simply if you believed God. It is God who speaks, who proclaims pardon, through Jesus alone. It is Satan who seeks to destroy, or at least neutralize, the gospel, by adding conditions, which man cannot fulfil. Let me give you a simple illustration — suppose a poor man, who has a garden, say a rood of land. Thomas, for so we will call him, has been long ill of spinal complaint. He leans one fine day over his garden gate, looking very sad; he has no seed to set in his garden, and he is completely without strength. Just a picture of man's spiritual condition. A farmer, driving past, pulls up his gig, and says, "Thomas, I see you have not set your garden." "No indeed, sir," says Thomas, "I have not a single potato seed left to plant it with." "Oh indeed," says the farmer. "Well, I say, Thomas, you come up to my house to-morrow, and bring a sack, and you shall have it full, and welcome." Kind-hearted farmer! what good is such a promise as this to a man who has neither a sack, nor a back that can carry a sack? The condition completely neutralizes the promise. But now another farmer comes by. "Well, Thomas," says be, "I see you have not set your garden yet." Thomas acknowledges the fact, with a downcast look. "Which is the lowest place in your hedge, Thomas?" says the farmer, "for I have plenty of potatoes to set your garden, and to spare, and I am just thinking I will put a sack in my light cart, and bring it down, and shoot it over your garden hedge." And the farmer was as good as his word. The next day his promise was fulfilled.

Hope-to-be-saved. Oh, I think I begin to see; does it not say something about the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and something about the promise being sure?

Christian. That is just what the faith of Abraham looked at. The promise was sure. It was God who promised in pure grace. That is, unconditional favour. Yes, the apostle shews the promise made sure in Christ, more than 400 years before the system of conditions was made known. (Galatians 3:1-29.) The promise of a sack of seed was a good thing. But who could doubt the farmer's kindness when they saw him bring the sack? The promise of God was very sure to faith. But what shall we say now that God has fulfilled the promise? Redemption is an accomplished fact. But the thought of condition must deny this; or at least leave the soul in doubt of it.

Hope-to-be-saved. Then have I nothing to do but to believe?

Christian. Why, now, what else can you do, if the work of redemption was done eighteen centuries before you were born — the whole question of sin settled and put away for ever for all who believe?

Hope-to-be-saved. Have I not to come to Christ?

Christian. Well, if you please, but would it not be more correct to say, Christ came down from heaven for you; yes, to the cross for you? and even now, by the Spirit, comes to you, bringing salvation? If you mean by coming to Christ, letting go every false hope, and finding full, everlasting rest in Christ by simple faith alone; then, God grant that you may come this moment!

Hope-to-be-saved. But, surely, must I not repent?

Christian. Oh, certainly; but you will never repent by looking at yourself. While Job looked at himself, he thought he was the best man in the gate of his city. But in Job's last chapter he says, "but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Look at Jesus on the cross; see there what sin is, and what it cost. Behold the Holy, Holy One, until like Job you judge and abhor yourself. Our blessed Jesus tells us the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. And don't you read, that they believed God; and then proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even unto the least? The more simply you believe God, the more deep and real will be your repentance.

Hope-to-be-saved. Why, Christian, I thought you did not believe in repentance. Is it true, then, that repentance must go before salvation?

Christian. Ah, that is the point. Let us put it thus: Must I repent, and give up my sins, in order that I may find salvation, or that God may save me?

Hope-to-be-saved. Yes, just so.

Christian. Now, my dear Hope-to-be-saved, have you a little more time to spare? as I should like to tell you a little story, that happened to me, a few years ago, that will illustrate this point.

Hope-to-be-saved. I shall be delighted to hear it; indeed this repentance gives me great perplexity.

Christian. Very well then, I must tell you, I went a few years ago to my native village after a long absence. I remembered there was a man of the name of Frankey, who, when I was a boy, was always talking about repentance. I called to see the (now) old man, upwards of eighty. And after a little conversation about olden times, I said, "Well, Frankey, what is your prospect of eternity?" "Well, my lad," said he, "we must begin in good earnest" (the same as his words forty years ago). "What must we begin to do? said I." "Why," said he, "we must repent deeply, for our sins, and weep over them." "Let us see, Frankey," said I, "how much rent do you pay for your bit of land?" "Forty pund, lad." "You seem rather bad of rheumatics, Frankey?" "Aye, lad, I can't walk across t' floor." "Well, Frankey, how much crying, and tears, would pay your rent?" "Oh lad, I might cry me een up, but crying would ne'er pay forty pund rent." "That is true," said I. "But now, Frankey, if that gentleman who lives at the top of the hill were to pay your rent, and just lift up the door sneck, and say, 'Frankey, it's done, I have paid your rent — I knew you were without strength — I have done it, and here is the receipt:' now, Frankey, what would you do then?" You should have seen how the old face brightened up. "Why, lad," said he, "I should cry for joy, to think he had done such a thing," "Yes, Frankey, and that is true repentance. It is the kindness of God, in the gift of His Son that leads to true repentance. Oh! to think that He has done such a thing! I don't repent to get Him to do it; but because He has done it." Poor old Frankey! there was darkness of long years of false teaching upon him. Never before had he seen that the work of redemption had all been done first. And the belief of this produces repentance.

Hope-to-be-saved. It is plain that Jesus did not die for our sins because we repented, but because God so loved us.

Christian. Yes, and so loved us when we were shut up under sin, without strength to be better. "He spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all." Can our sins be washed away with tears? Can tears add to the value of the blood of Jesus? Do you believe Jesus to be the Son of God?

Then was not His atoning death infinite in value for all who believe? Oh, for a vile sinner to think of adding anything, in any way, to its value before God. Is it not an insult to the Holy One, the Just One, who died for the unjust, to bring us to God?

Hope-to-be-saved. You make me feel as if I had never believed God.

Christian. I am thankful to hear you say so. The moment you really do believe God, your name will be changed. For the present, I must leave you to ponder this question — Do I believe God?

C.S.

Chapter 64

066. Do you believe God?

Do you believe God?

No. 2 takes up the question, "Do you believe God?"

Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects, for this Present Time.

No. 2.

Anxious Enquirer. The last question you put to me his filled me with anxiety — Do I believe God? All that I can say is this, I am anxious to know God's truth; and so to believe it that I may have the certainty of my salvation.

Christian. I am truly glad to hear you say so; I trust this anxiety is the work of the Spirit of God. I have been reading lately of an anxious soul, and if you will turn to Acts 8:26-39 we will read it together. "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Anxious Enquirer. How strange that the eunuch should find salvation so soon, and go on his way rejoicing; whilst I have made a profession so long, and yet seem as far off as ever.

Christian. The eunuch also may have made a profession; had he not been to Jerusalem to worship, and yet a stranger to Jesus and a stranger to himself? This conversion is carefully marked in scripture. The angel of the Lord directed Philip to the place, and the Spirit directed him to this very person.

Anxious Enquirer. I had not noticed that. Do you think it is to fix our attention on this remarkable instance?

Christian. I have no doubt of it. Have you noticed there are two things in this scripture — the death of the Lord Jesus for our sins, as the Lamb of God; and the death of the eunuch with the Lord Jesus? These are two most important truths of God.

Anxious Enquirer. I had only thought of the former.

Christian. Well, let us carefully look at both; and then I would ask you, Do you believe God as to these two things? Philip preached unto him Jesus. That suffering One, bearing our iniquities, in Isaiah 53:1-12, was thus set before him, just as I would now set Him before you. Look at that holy, bleeding Jesus on the cross, and remember this is all of God! "God so loved," &c. Do you believe God as thus revealed in the cross of Christ? He gave His beloved Son thus to die. Do you believe your sins were so great in His sight, that no less a ransom could redeem you to Himself? This is the truth of God. On this earth this wondrous work has actually been accomplished. There was one word especially arrested the eunuch — "For his life is taken from the earth." (Ver. 33) This is the full expression of the love of God to the guilty. God commends and expresses His love in this very way. There is the word and the act of God — all of God. What did it cost Him to forsake the Holy One? Do you believe God as thus revealed on the cross? If a friend sent you a gift, as the expression of his love, would you not believe him? Surely, love must be equal to the gift. Then, I ask, Is not God this friend? Do you, then, believe this unmerited love? Oh! such was His love to us, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." Such was my sin in the sight of God, that nothing could put it away but the atoning death of my Lord. All this revealed God in a new light to the eunuch. But when he found that His life was taken from the earth, then did he say, as it were, Let my life too be taken away from the earth. "See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?" He died for me, let me die with Him.

Anxious Enquirer. What is baptism? What do you mean by dying with Jesus?

Christian. Baptism is the justification of God. When the believer is thus buried in baptism, he owns by faith the righteousness of God: the righteous sentence of God upon himself as a lost son of Adam.

Anxious Enquirer. Could you give me an illustration? I should so like to understand this.

Christian. I will try to give you a plain one. Suppose you call to see a sick friend, but on arrival you find he is dead. You try to comfort the late friends of the corpse; and then you advise them to send for the undertaker. Oh dear no, say they, he is not dead; we must send for the doctor. Mark, the point at issue is the Grave or a Doctor! After a few hours, the friends are convinced he is really dead; they justify your word, and, instead of the doctor, the grave receives the poor decomposing corpse.

Anxious Enquirer. Oh! I see; the point at issue between God’s truth and man’s error — is this, Does man need the doctor, or is he only fit for the grave? Is he ill with sin, and does he need the help of religion? or is he dead in sins, and does he need redemption and a new life?

Christian. Exactly so. The epistles prove most distinctly, yea, God's word declares, man to be dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1-8.) All have also sinned, and are under the just judgment of God. (Row. 3:19. See margin.) As the eunuch judged, so says the apostle, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Corinthians 5:14.) Therefore, says the eunuch, Here is water, why not let me own the judgment of God? let me be buried here at once, on the spot. Thus he justified God. He owned the full redemption in the precious death of Jesus for him; and then he gave himself up as entirely dead with Him. All that he was as an Ethiopian, all that he was as a religious man (for he had been to Jerusalem to worship); yes, all he was as a child of the first Adam, he committed to the grave, buried with Christ. Thus his sins had been put away by the atoning death of Jesus: himself had been put away by burial with Jesus. Baptism was a beautiful figure of this, and hence, when he came up out of the water, a Christian in all the power of the life of the risen Christ, what could he do but go on his way rejoicing?

Anxious Enquirer. Did you say the epistles bear out this double view; the death of Christ for us, and the believer's death with Him?

Christian. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans, you will find both these truths equally developed; yea, in these two things the righteousness of God is revealed. If you read carefully, you will find the death of Jesus for our sins is the theme up to chapter 5:11. Then, from verse 12, sin is the subject; and our justification from sin is by being dead with Christ. This is most plainly proved in chapter 6. Believing God — who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification — we are thus reckoned righteous before God. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now let us take this part first. Do you really believe God raised Jesus from the dead, having died for your sins? Did He thus declare your sins had been borne by His Son, and could He thus announce to you, through Jesus, the full and everlasting forgiveness of your sins? Do you believe God in this? Did He do this to give you peace, or to deceive you? Will He thus forgive you, and then on some dreadful day judge you for those sins again? Does not His very righteousness make this impossible?

Anxious Enquirer. Oh, I am sure God is true.

Christian. Very well, then; He announces to you, through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins; and it is true, that all who believe Him are forgiven. And it is true, "their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." And whilst it is quite true that all this is proved to the believer, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Jesus risen and ascended to heaven is the believer's evidence, that his sins are put away for ever. But He was also raised from the dead for the special purpose of being our ever-subsisting righteousness: in this sense He was raised for our justification.

Anxious Enquirer. That is deeply interesting: it does seem as if God had so completely met our case. I seem as if I did really believe the forgiveness of sins, my sins, through the death of Jesus. But I have still a sinful mature, and the more I try to be religious, the more troubled I am about sin.

Christian. Well, I am glad you have had this trouble; but do not you remember how the eunuch was delivered from this trouble?

Anxious Enquirer. I do not think I understand that part of it yet.

Christian. Then will you look over Romans 6:1-23 and just read it as a comment on the burial of the Ethiopian? He was delivered from himself, so to speak, by owning he was dead, and taking the place of death, with Christ. And in this chapter the true ground for the Christian is to know himself dead, crucified, buried. No question of religious medicine, but burial with Christ. He, and he only, who is dead, is justified from sin.

Anxious Enquirer. Do you mean the sin of my nature?

Christian. Undoubtedly that is what this chapter means throughout — dead with Christ. This is what we are to reckon ourselves to be. For this is just what God reckons. Our sins blotted out by His precious blood, and our old selves blotted out as dead with Him.

Anxious Enquirer. If I, as a sinful man, am thus blotted out, or crucified, how can I live at all?

Christian. My dear sir, hear the apostle. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This is most plain — if we have been crucified with Christ, we are also raised up from the dead in Him. (Ephesians 2:6.) Do you thus justify God? Do you believe that if one died for all, then were all dead? Nothing could be a more complete deliverance than this, from sin, self, and law: for the law neither says, Thou shalt, or thou shalt not, to a dead man.

Anxious Enquirer. Stop a moment. Do you mean by this that I may break the law?

Christian. Break the law! my dear sir? Dead men do not break law. The moment I try to be alive under it, I shall break it. The apostle declares he found it so. If I am dead, I am not under it, and therefore sin shall not have dominion over me. The utmost curse of the law had been fulfilled in the death of Jesus for them that were under law. And now, as reckoned dead with Him, I repeat, dead men are neither under law nor they break it. Nay, this very argument is used by the Holy Ghost, our being reckoned dead and risen with Christ as the reason why sin shall not have the dominion over us. All this was strikingly illustrated in the eunuch. Christ had died for his sins. He was now dead and buried with him; and as a new creature in the risen Christ he went on his way rejoicing. Old things had passed away — both his sins and himself — and all had become new, a new life, a new self, so to speak, a new creation, and all of God. Do you believe we are so bad? Do you believe God is so good? Can you say, In me, that is, in my flesh, my old self, there dwelleth no good thing. Let me be buried as a vile sinner. I have not a little finger fit to live. Vile, dead, corrupt, bury me out of sight. Oh never to look at myself again! All bad. "Here is water; what doth hinder?" Now henceforth let Christ be all. Can you say, My all? Job said, I am vile. The eunuch said, Let me be buried.

Anxious Enquirer. Well, I never saw such a complete riddance of self.

Christian. It is God’s riddance, and the only one. The eunuch saw it at once. Now it takes (through false teaching) many a long year fairly to give up old, vile, black self, and then go on rejoicing. Whilst I am seeking righteousness by keeping the law, I do not believe God a bit. I am saying, I am not bad enough for the coffin, let me have the doctor. Had the rabble shouted at me, "Away with him! Crucify him! he is not fit to live," they would have judged rightly. And they shouted at my holy Substitute. In Him I will rejoice. He died for me. I die with Him.

Anxious Enquirer. Do you mean, then, that if I am dead to sin, and no longer looked at as alive in the flesh, or old vile nature, that therefore there is no sin in me, or no evil nature left in me?

Christian. Oh dear, no! far from that. Such a thought, such confusion, would destroy if possible the very gospel. The fact is, that though I am not in the flesh, or under the dominion of sin, yet it is true that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:1-36.) And "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye might not do the things that ye would" [as it should be translated]. (Galatians 5:1-26.) All this is solemnly true, that vile nature is never mended: that old heart is never changed. But this does not alter the blessed fact, that God hath given the believer a new nature and a new heart. Oh is not the thought of sin terrible! It makes the oldest Christian groan to look at it, as we see in the type of Hezekiah, after long years of patient, prayerful victory; yet at last, when he looked at a boil, picture of what the flesh is spiritually, he says, "O Lord, i am oppressed; undertake for me." And then what words — "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it." (Isaiah 38:1-22.) Yes, dear anxious enquirer, if you put yourself under law with a hope to be better, you will sink in despair. But God hath spoken to you, and. He hath done it. Our blessed Jesus has undertaken for us, and He hath done it. Do you believe this? Then cannot you, with Paul? say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?" I do again ask, Do you believe God, both as to the announcement of forgiveness of sins through the death of the Lord Jesus; and justification from sin, as passing through death with Him into resurrection? He having been judged for your sin as well as sins — made a sacrifice for sin? (Romans 8:3.)

Anxious Enquirer. I never felt so stripped before — I see I am nothing but sin. It must be all Christ, or I am everlastingly lost.

Christian. That is most true. But has He not undertaken the whole thing for you, sins and sin? Has He not done it? Does He not show you His hands and His feet? What does He say? "Peace unto you."

Anxious Enquirer. He is just the complete Saviour for me.

Christian. Thank God, He is; and there is a completeness in Him. I have not yet spoken of. If there is nothing but sin in you, that is, in your flesh; and you, as a sinful man, are judged and condemned to death, how are you to stand in everlasting righteousness before God?

Anxious Enquirer. That is a point indeed. Do tell me how God has met it.

Christian. God has raised Jesus from the dead for our justification. Jesus is our subsisting righteousness. For God hath made Him to be this to us, even "Wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Oh, the gift of God! oh, the riches of His grace! Look up by faith to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens: the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus our righteousness. Do you want another?

Anxious Enquirer. Enough! Enough for God, enough for me. Let me now think of Jesus, my all. He is God’s gift for me and to me. I do believe God.

Reader, a word with you. I was travelling lately in France. One of my fellow-passengers to Paris was an intelligent Roman Catholic. The subject of our conversation was the case of Miss Saurin. I said to him, "What is your thought, or what is the thought of Roman Catholics, as to all the

degradation and misery endured in a monastery or nunnery?" "Well, sir," said he, "we are all sinners." "That is most true," said I.Then said he, "We believe sin must have its punishment." "I believe the same in my very heart," said I. "Very well, then, we believe the more suffering for sin we have in this world, the less we shall have in the next." I thought this was very fairly put. I then said, "You Roman Catholics, then, do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" "Oh dear! yes sir," said he; "we certainly believe that Jesus is the Son of God." "Impossible," said I. "Let me explain. Do you believe that Jesus is the infinite person of the Son of God? Then the sacrifice that He offered once for sins must be, like Himself, infinite. Let me illustrate what I mean. Suppose I speak of an infinite line passing through all space. Now, if you said you could add a yard to that line, would not that be a frank denial of the fact that the line is infinite? If you spoke of adding a foot, or an inch, or the breadth of a hair of your head to it, would not that deny that it was infinite? Can anything be clearer than this, that you cannot add to that which is infinite? Now, the infinite Son of God gave Himself an infinite sacrifice for sins to God; for if He be infinite, then His work on the cross must be infinite. But if you talk of adding to this infinite death of the cross, you must by this really deny that the sacrifice was infinite; and if the sacrifice was not infinite, then He who offered it, even Himself, could not be infinite. And thus every act of suffering for sin; every mass, as a sacrifice for sin; every thought of purgatory, as a future state of suffering for sin, as an addition to the atoning death of Jesus for our sins who believe, is a distinct denial that Jesus is infinite in his person and work, and therefore a denial that Jesus is the Son of God." My friend did not feel the full force of all this at the moment, and wanted to fall into discussion as to which was the right church. "Oh, no," said I, "let you and me have no angry discussion at all. It is the question of your soul’s salvation that is on my heart. You are a finite creature, a man, a fallen sinful man. God knows you, and knows how often you have tried to be righteous, and how very dreadful you have found sin to be. You have heard mass, you have determined to be better; but, after all, how terrible is death and judgment to you, when you really think of it! You, I say, are a finite man. God has given His infinite Son. Now, the infinite must cover the finite. Can you think of this — that God gave, in pure love, His own Son to bear the believer’s sins? Infinite sacrifice, for ever perfecting all who believe God in this infinite gift. Has the infinite Son of God thus died for us? And dare you deny it, and seek to add a mass, or suffering here or hereafter, to this work of Jesus on the cross?"

All desire for angry discussion was now gone. My friend began to see how God had met the need of the poor finite by the death of the Infinite, and that the Infinite must cover the finite. Very sweet to his soul was the announcement of God by Paul in Acts 13:38 : "Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." It is God that speaks to you, my reader, in these words; Do you believe God?

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now if we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God — infinite in His own person — then in this scripture we must see the infinite love of God to us and the infinite sacrifice for our sins. Do you believe this? What perfect peace this gives. If the love of God be infinite to us, then do we need the intercession of saints or angels? Can anything add to the infinite love of God? Is not every prayer to Mary, the mother of Jesus, a denial that Jesus is the Son if God? Jesus Himself is the infinite expression of that love — the very

manifestation of the love of God to its. Oh yes, I know all this is denied by man. But do you believe God? And if God sent his Son to be the propitiation to our sin, is not that propitiation infinite? Can any mass, sacrament, or work add to that which is infinite? Impossible! for Jesus is the Son of God. But God sent His Son to be this. Will you deny this? Will you doubt this? Mark, the mass is a direct denial of this. It pretends to add to, or to prolong, that which was once — for ever — accomplished, and is infinite. And mark, every doubt of the human heart is also, in its very essence, a denial of the infinite propitiation for our sins. Oh how suited to each other, the darkness of Rome, and the darkness of the human heart. If I owed twenty shillings, and a friend, without asking, sent twenty pounds to pay it, could I beg of some one to go and intercede for me with that friend and beg of him to send me a few shillings towards the twenty shillings? or could I think of adding a shilling of my own, to make twenty pounds pay twenty shillings? And yet it is thus we treat God. We go to Mary, or the saints, to entreat God to save us, and thus deny that He has sent Jesus the Son of God to be the infinite propitiation for our sins, or, which is quite as bad, we try to add a little feeling, or repenting, or doing, or a little faith, or love, or supposed holiness, or something else, to the one infinite sacrifice for sins. I say this is as bad. It is the same thing in principle as the mass, purgatory, or human intercession. All this reasoning, doubts the sincerity of the infinite love of God, in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God, in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, has done that to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. This is what we testify, "That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." This perfect love casteth out all fear. I am not aware that there can be any middle place, betwixt receiving this witness of God, or making Him a liar. If I doubted my friend, who had paid his twenty pounds, to meet my debt of twenty shillings — if I said There is one short and I must make it up, what would you call this? Would it not be making him a liar? "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Is it not a momentous question — do you believe God? Surely this is the first question to settle. Let me put the question slowly. Do you believe that God gave His Son to die the infinite sacrifice for your sins? Do you believe that God raised Him from among the dead, to be your righteousness? Do you believe that God hath given to you eternal life, and this life is in His Son? "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Have you on the testimony of God this eternal life? Are your sins put away by an infinite propitiation for sins? Can you look up by faith to heaven, and say, That glorious, infinite Son of God is my everlasting righteousness? Salvation is wholly of God. "Sent his Son!" Could He love you more? could anything add to, or increase that love? Then it is not infinite. And "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Do you say, Must I not serve God? How can you serve God until you believe Him? For "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Did Israel serve God before they were redeemed from Egypt?

Look at the beautiful order, in the case of the man whose eyes Jesus had opened. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (John 9:35-38.)

If you, my reader, now see Jesus, the infinite Son of God, once offered the infinite sacrifice for your sins, now your righteousness and eternal life, your happy place is now a worshipper for ever cleansed. For ever sanctified, you need no priest on earth; no mass or intercessor. An infinite Saviour can leave nothing incomplete. Rest on Him, your great High Priest, passed into the heavens. You will find His present, tender, gracious, loving, priestly care, as perfect as His one offering on the cross. Yes, He is crowned with glory, having tasted death; and perfect through sufferings, as the Captain of our salvation. The more we see our need, the more do we also see how God has met all, in the gift of His own Son. Do you say, Well, I do believe God. Then can you say, I am saved with an everlasting salvation? If one be true the other must; for all who believe God are justified from all things. It must be so; the Infinite must cover the finite. Oh! give up the thought of adding a rag to the infinite robe. Let Christ be all.

What! has some one taken up this little paper who despises and rejects this infinite love? Do you know that God is about to give all such up to "strong delusion, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?" I warn you, if you reject Christ, there is no folly you may not at once fall into. What a spectacle of late in London even — five hundred poor deceived souls, having rejected Christ, and the complete salvation through Him, have openly declared their faith in a farthing candle to light them through the dark valley of the shadow of death. What a sign of the times! Gross darkness, and open infidelity, fast settling upon the lace of the people! May God awake you, and reveal His love to you as manifested in Jesus the Son of God! Let me beg of you, take the word of God, as it is indeed the word of God; human tradition has made it of none effect to multitudes; but only those who really regard it as God speaking to them in Christ the Son, can form any idea of its divine preciousness and comfort. Take this one verse, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Could anything give more absolute certainty to the believer than this? Believing God, who sent Jesus, we have passed from death unto life; have everlasting life; shall not come into condemnation. Did it ever occur to you, that if you are a believer all this is true to you?

One word more. Do not misunderstand the illustration of the twenty pounds paying with certainty the debt of twenty shillings, as though something short of the infinite sacrifice could have met the sins of the finite creature. No: such is sin in the sight of God, that nothing short of the death of His Son could atone for it. But He has atoned for it by His death on the cross, forsaken of God, and the announcement of forgiveness through that infinite sacrifice is a fact and a certainty.

"It is finished." "Peace unto you."

C.S.

Chapter 65

067. The Oaks Explosion

The Oaks Explosion near Barnsley; with Some Account of the Lord's Dealings with one of the late volunteers.

Many indeed are the lessons taught by this sad event; lessons which have been dwelt upon by others. But on each of my visits to the pit, one lesson has been deeply impressed on my own mind. As I stood over the dying and the dead buried deep in the sulphureous pit, I felt how forcibly the condition of these poor men illustrated the condition of this whole world, buried in darkness and sin; and as I thought of those below, I felt that nothing short of raising them out from among the dead, could possibly be good news. The living were as helpless as the dead to save themselves from that terrible deep. I looked at and talked with the men who were brought up in the last cage. In fifteen minutes later, each of those men would have been a burnt and blackened corpse. The rope that was let down with its cage to the bottom, had brought them up to the top. Faith is God's rope — His gift, and it never breaks. But I desire to keep to the one lesson so impressed on my heart, that it can never be forgotten, and it is this, that just as raising these poor miners out of the pit was the only remedy; so through Jesus, resurrection from among the dead is God's only salvation.

I had been reading the word of God with some of these miners only a few days before the explosion (one of them little thought that he would so soon barely escape from so terrible a death). He was one of the last batch drawn out. I was very much struck with a question one of these miners put to me. He said, "Will you tell me, If man is really so bad that he cannot get out of the pit of sin; how is he to be judged for not doing what he can't do?" Well, I certainly should have been surprised, as I walked about the Oaks pit bank only a few days after, if I had heard any person casting a shadow of blame on those poor men, because they did not get out of the pit. Clearly they could not. How could they climb up 300 yards of that dark pit shaft? Nay, could they stand? No one would believe me, that there was a person in the pit alive, though I begged to be allowed to go and give a signal down the pit. Many hours after, one man was got out alive; but he had to be fetched out. Oh! how my heart beat, during those terrible hours, for one dear to me in Christ, down so deep below; and I felt how utterly useless it would be, even if a message could have been heard below, to have told them to do their utmost to get out of the pit. You see this, my reader, do you not? Could an engineer in his senses have proposed any such plan of deliverance? No. Again I repeat, If there be no raising them up out of the pit, then there is no remedy. Now I fully admit man's moral condition to be as bad. His case as helpless and desperate. Nay, I wish to show that Scripture views him exactly in this position. "Every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God," or subject to the judgment of God. (Romans 3:19.) "The scripture hath concluded all under sin." (Galatians 3:22.) For 1500 years man had had the fullest opportunity of getting out of the pit of sin if he could, and especially had one nation been tried. They had the oracles of God, they had the law of God; but the law was a ladder far too short to reach the top of the shaft. If man could have climbed to the topmost commandment, this could not have raised him out of that depth of sin, and death, into which he was fallen. It could never give him sweet life out at the top. No; man's utmost

effort only proved this — that there was no remedy, no salvation, but by being raised out of the pit.

Let us now look at 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, and I think you will say with me, that nothing could more strikingly illustrate God's way of salvation, than this awful explosion. This chapter, you notice, from verse 1, is the gospel that Paul preached, and the gospel by which they were saved in those days. But have you ever noticed that in this gospel, as stated here, there is not one word about what the sinner is to do to get out of the pit of sin? No; Paul has a better gospel than telling man to do what he cannot do, as the old man said at the reading meeting. Do you not see that, my reader? It is not man being judged for not doing what he cannot do. But this gospel is altogether about what another has done, in coming down into this pit of sin, that He might seek and save that which is lost.

You could not blame one of those miners in the pit for not climbing out when they could not; but what would you say when the cage was let down, and the noble volunteer going down at the price of his own life, and then the lost miner says, "I won't be saved." Ah! this is the question: Does Jesus stand on the pit bank, asking man to climb out, and then judge him to everlasting perdition, because he does not do what he cannot do? or, has He come down to the bottom, in infinite love? And thus, my reader, if you perish everlastingly, it is because you refuse to be saved. But let us look a little more closely at the chapter. How simple and how glorious the gospel of God. The very first foundation-truth of the gospel is this, "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." Is this anything I have done for Him? Oh! how deep, has He descended for me, down to the very place in the pit where I was! "Made sin for us" — "Died for our sins." Do look at the cross. This is not your climbing out of the pit! It is Jesus coming into the pit to save you by His very death. Have you got fast hold of this first fact? Paul does not begin with what you are to do for Jesus, but with what He has done for us. He does not say that Christ kept the law, and left us an example how we might climb up the law, and get out of the shaft. He was perfect holiness itself, or He would not have been a fit volunteer to die for our sins. (Leviticus 1:1-17, Hebrews 10:1-39.) And the next fact Paul states is that "he was buried." Forsaken of God on the cross, now dead and buried. He could not do more than this, but He did it, and by doing it He is now crowned with glory. "He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." This is the last fact stated, on which the whole question of salvation rests. And still not a word about man's doings or efforts. No mixture of doing and believing. It is a work done that true faith believes. And now as everything hangs on the fact of the resurrection of Christ, how carefully the apostle states and proves that event. He tells who saw the risen Lord from among the dead: "above five hundred brethren at once," and most of these alive at the time this epistle was written. I do not think I can tell you with this pen how forcibly I felt these words, as I preached on the Lord's day after the explosion at the pit bank from this very chapter. As I looked at the smoking pit, I felt if there be no resurrection of these poor men out of this awful pit, then indeed is there no hope. Now this is precisely what the apostle is teaching here. If there be no resurrection, no raising man out of the pit of sin and death; if Christ be not risen, the firstfruit, the pledge of this, then there is no remedy for man whatever. And the gospel is false, and faith is vain. Yes, the apostle states this frankly and fully. Read carefully 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. This is plain enough, is it not? He has no more thought of a gospel that gradually improves man's nature in sin, than I had a thought of the barest possibility of the improvement of the condition of those poor sufferers in the pit, with all its old works full of gas. Oh! if you had stood with, me and seen and heard the thud and roar of that explosion on Lord's day at five p.m., and such a belching out of

black smoke, you would indeed have said, There is no help but out at the top. And the Scripture presents no other hope, no other gospel, than through Jesus the resurrection from among the dead, in the deep pit of sin. It was thus the apostles preached. I fully grant it is very difficult to believe this in these days. Most of what we hear, and read, is so different from this gospel of resurrection, that the word of God seems to be made of none effect by the traditions of men. Some are going back to that system of rites and foolish ceremonies, and repetition sacrifices or masses, which deny the everlasting value of the one sacrifice of Christ; some occupied with fine music, some with mere human eloquence and intellect; others say they are going to get out of the pit of sin, by sorrow and forsaking, as if a man could forsake it when three hundred yards deep. Now where is the use of all this, when the pit is on fire, and explosion follows explosion? And there is no denying that this is the case. Take down the page of history and explore the old works of the pit, and tell me, Is not sin-damp everywhere? Whether we look at the history of nations or of individuals, this terrible sin, like fire-damp in the pit, is ever exploding. Just think of the miner walking in the midst of gas in the pit, perhaps within a few feet of a natural gasometer, and in his hand the flame that may fire the mine. Is not man like this in the midst of a world of sin, carrying in his own nature the sin that at any moment may explode in terrible iniquity? When once the miner is dead in the pit, all human aid is at an end. But it is just at this point where God in His gospel begins. Man in his activities is seen in the Epistle to the Romans to be utterly powerless for good or to get out of the pit. And in the Ephesians man is looked at as dead in trespasses and sins. There also we have the same gospel of resurrection. The exceeding greatness of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead as Head and representative of His body, the Church, is shown in the first chapter. Then the riches of God's mercy and greatness of His grace in saving us, by raising us up from among the dead in Christ, and making us sit together in Him in heavenly places. Thus you see it is all resurrection out of the pit. The Christian knows well God's purpose was not to bless us in earthly places, in this smoking pit. But He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. This was clearly God's thought from eternity, that Christ should not only be the firstborn from among the dead, the first raised out of the pit of death; but that He should be the firstborn among many brethren. I repeat, it was not God's thought to improve man's nature in the pit; but to give him an entirely new place with Christ out of the pit. And the beginning and the securing of all this, was the raising up of Christ from the dead. And hence the apostle shows that if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in the pit, in your sins, and there is no hope. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, become the firstfruits of them that slept." And thus, just as certainly as all are dead in Adam, so surely shall all that are in Christ be made alive. Thus the believer is reckoned, even now, dead with Christ and raised from the dead with Christ. For since Christ, who died for his sins, is raised from the dead for his justification and life, he is really now one with this risen Christ. Thus his sins are forgiven. The very sin of his nature not reckoned, but reckoned righteous in Christ. He is thus so really justified from all things, that he has peace with God. As I asked the men drawn last out of the pit, "Are you not really out? you cannot hope to be drawn up — you are up;" even so the believer is raised out with Christ and is justified. "By grace ye are saved" is as true, as it was true, that by the drawing up of the cage those ten men were drawn out.

There is another aspect of the resurrection out of the pit. The Christian may say, But am I not, as a matter of fact, yet in this world of sin and death; or, as you say, this pit? And is not sin still in the pit and still in me? No doubt this is the case. And the Scripture distinctly recognizes this also; whilst on the principle of faith, we are reckoned dead with Christ and risen with Him, and thus justified

from our sins by His blood, and justified from sin because dead with Him, and for ever justified in Him, because risen with Him. And whilst there can be no condemnation to them who are thus in Christ; yet as to our experience in the body, we still wait for redemption. And what is this redemption but the resurrection of this body? Concerning this very thing the apostle says, “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Thus when a man is converted to God, as to his complete justification in the risen Christ, why he is clean out at the top. But as to his experience, for a little while he is like a miner, waiting for the moment when the cage shall be drawn out at the coming of the Lord. When the last cage was drawn out at the Oaks, it came up like a shot, and only just in time to escape the blast. O what a moment that will be when the whole Church of God, like the last cage, shall be caught up from this pit of darkness and sin to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord! Ah! then, no more rude fiery blasts, for though, if in Christ, sin shall not have the dominion, yet the Christian, whilst sure of victory, gets some sore bumps in this dreary pit at times. No, then no more dust, and smoke, and choke-damp. Now the Christian, like the miner below, only breathes the air of heaven, let down to him from above. And it is well for good works to have its upcast, while faith draws its downcast. I have always found that as the fire of love to Jesus and His flock has got low, the stream of fresh communion from my precious Lord has been interrupted and become weak. Indeed both go together. And what care is required in a pit to keep the works in order! and true, if saved, we cannot be too careful to maintain good works. But if I speak of salvation, when a man is seated in the cage, what has he to do, but to rest in the cage until he is drawn out at the top? Even so faith rests in Christ. Now, my reader, if you will just carefully read over 1 Thessalonians, you will find that in those days, the Christian had no other hope than the coming of the Lord to take the Church out of this pit of sin. Let us then, in that sense, look up the shaft and wait for the Lord. It is no use building wood, hay, and stubble, in the pit. What is a Gothic building worth in a pit on fire? What is all the outward show of Christendom worth, when thus tested? Are you thus saying, My Lord delayeth His coming? or are you waiting for the Lord Jesus from heaven? And when the last soul is put in the cage, that is the blood-washed Church of God, and He calls it up with a shout, “For the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Blessed, for ever blessed, to those thus taken up! But what will it be to be left in the pit? Then will take place the last explosion of human wickedness and sin. Yes, if it were not for the certainty of this blessed hope, the knowledge of the judgments that are about to be poured upon the earth would be terrible. The poor miner might have said, If in this Oaks pit we only have hope, then of all colliers we are most miserable. And so the apostle says, If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. Yes, as the fiery blast writes death on all below in the pit, even so has sin written death on all below in this world. But Christ is risen; and if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

I now turn to the Lord’s dealings with one of the late volunteers, the greatly esteemed underground steward of a neighbouring pit. For some eight years I had felt led to preach the gospel to the surrounding colliers in an old romantic quarry, in a small wood; but it was not until a few months before this sad explosion, that the opportunity occurred to do so. In fact, this summer I felt the

Lord's time had come. Many came to hear the word, and amongst others the volunteer, J. S. Well do I remember the grave and solemn attention with which he listened to the gospel. This led to preaching at other places during the evenings amongst the colliers, and one of these places was the pit where J. S. was underground steward. The preaching of a finished work, the security of the believer in the ever lasting love of Christ, and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, gave great offence and caused much opposition and persecution, so much so that the preaching room had to be closed to satisfy the opponents of the gospel. But one man stood up in the crowd and opened his house for the preaching of the word: that man was J. S., the lamented volunteer. I have good reason to believe that the Lord blessed him, and all that were in his house. And from that time he and two others, his beloved wife, and a deputy of the same pit, whom the Lord had blessed by the preached word and tracts, spent many of their evenings in meditating over the word of God. And often when they were struck with different portions of the word, he would say, "Yes, but that word, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life,' that is the grand word for my soul." It was the sweet certainty "hath everlasting life" gave to his soul. I am told this incorruptible seed of the word, having entered, was ever present to his mind. His wife, and others from the neighbourhood, who had found peace in believing, took their happy places at the table of the Lord, gathered only in His name. Dear J. S. was deeply convinced that nothing else was right on earth, and often said so; but he had not as yet obeyed the Lord in that word "This do in remembrance of me." But nothing could satisfy him but that preaching that exalted Jesus risen from the dead. A marked change had been observed in his manner and conduct: evidence of the life he had in Christ. Only a few nights before the fatal explosion, he had spent two hours at a neighbour's, speaking of the precious truth he had learnt. In short, he had, through the riches of the grace of God, heard the word of Jesus, and believed God who sent Him. He therefore surely had everlasting life. Have you, my reader, thus heard, and thus believed? The last time the deputy and he read the word together, only a few nights before the explosion, J. S. turned to Psalms 88:1-18, and seemed deeply impressed with the solemnity of the case of the poor boy who some years ago wrote this Psalm on a tin box when shut up to perish in a pit which had fired. In a few more hours these solemn words were true of him, "Counted with them that go down into the pit . . . In the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps . . . I am shut up and cannot come forth." Oh! my heart was smitten as I stood over the pit, and could not believe he was dead. It is a remarkable fact, that those who knew him since he was saved, as one said, seemed to live with him in that dreadful tomb of death, until a certain hour of a certain day, when at one time (though we were apart), we each realized that he was now absent from the pit, present with the Lord. It is true, the triumph of Christ shall not be complete until his body is raised in glory. But, hush! while you contemplate the fact — absent from that dreadful pit, "present with the Lord." Yes, we can even, because we loved him, rejoice that he is gone before. Now, yes, now with the Lord.

It was my painful duty to break the tidings to his beloved wife that there was no more human hope. Ah! then, that same One who went to Bethany was there. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus was there to sustain. Oh! that every widow of this sad explosion did but know this same Jesus! Yes, the same as when He said to them He loved, "I am the resurrection and the life." Yes, that voice that said, "Lazarus, come forth," shall soon call all who sleep in Him from the grave, wherever that grave may be. Oh! then, how complete the victory of Christ. May our hearts yearn for that fast approaching victory! We shall soon see the departed ones again. Can you say, "Even

so, come, Lord Jesus?” I do bless God, that in the midst of so much rejection, the Lord did thus bring J. S. to himself. And I do ask the prayers of God’s people for the colliers of this dangerous district. Many are exposed to great danger — liable to the same terrible death. Surely they have a great claim on all who love the Lord Jesus, and especially on any whom the Lord may use in spreading the gospel amongst them. I could give some touching incidents of God’s preserving care, especially to one who, as I have said, has been brought to the table of the Lord. But I must conclude, with one more word to the reader. You may have felt this paper sets before you a very different gospel from the one you have heard, which is not another gospel; for it is no gospel at all to tell you to do what you find you cannot do. And it would not be gospel if you were only drawn half way up. I look up to heaven and I see Jesus crowned with glory, having died for my sins. Amazing grace! a glory that He could never have had, had we not been sinners sunk deep in the pit of sin. As was the depth into which He descended for us, such is the height to which He is exalted in glory. But, oh! my fellow believer, He as Jesus could not be there if the whole question of our sins were not settled for ever. On the cross, He said It is finished. Now He shows His hands and His side and says, “Peace unto you.” May God open your eyes to see, and break your heart in self-judgment to own the dreadfulness of sin, of which I have attempted to use this awful pit as a picture! But do not be deceived. Your sense of sin, however deep, cannot save you, any more than the terrible pain of the poor miner can help him out of the pit. Neither can your resolutions to amend help you out. It must be, as Paul puts it in the chapter we have looked at, Jesus alone, to whom be all honour and glory. Amen. C. S.

Mount Ararat; or, Noah raised up in the Ark from among the Dead.

"And the Lord said unto Noah. Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." — Genesis 7:1.

There are two ways in which the New Testament speaks of the deluge; one by the Lord in the gospels, as an illustration of prophecy; and the other, as a figure of salvation, in 1 Peter 3:1-22. It is in the latter sense I desire to ask my reader’s attention. Before doing so, however, it will be well to ponder the solemn statement of our Lord in Matthew 24:37-39, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Thus, then, we learn from the lips of Christ, that the present state of this evil, careless world will go on until the very coming of Christ; and that what God saw and said about man then is true now. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually." "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." This is what God sees this present world to be still. No doubt, man boasted then of his great progress as he boasts now, but the deluge came. And the Lord shall come in terrible judgment on this age, though as little expected as was the flood.

It was true then, that a time should come when the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. But did that hinder the flood? neither will it hinder the coming of the Son of man to judge the living wicked nations of this age. Until He comes, a few years at most, the earth’s wickedness ripens for harvest. Blessed are they who shall be first caught up to meet the

Lord in the air. It is a solemn thought to feel assured that that event is very, very near. This, however, is not the theme of my present paper, though I can scarcely take my pen and thoughts from it, and may refer to it again.

I desire then to look at the deluge as a figure of salvation. The end of all flesh was come before God; and is not this the first solemn fact, as to man's present state, declared in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans? whether Jews or Gentiles, all are guilty before God, or subject to the judgment of God. The end of man's probation has come before God. It is too late for man to talk of being tried again; he is guilty and under condemnation. It is too late for that poor young man, condemned to death, to talk of being tried again. He must be pardoned or executed. Such is man's condition. Man has been tried and found guilty. The end of all flesh is come before God. The poor prisoner may dream he is at large, and hope to commit no more crimes, — but he wakes for execution. Oh! how blind this world is as to its true state before God: and such was the state of the world in the days of Noah. The end of all flesh had come before God. The whole world stood under the sentence of death. No further probation or trial of man. God proposed no remedy for man in the flesh. Death and judgment were determined on the whole scene; and all this a figure of man in his present state. Death is passed upon all men — "for all have sinned." No remedy is proposed for man in the flesh in the gospel. Death and judgment is passed upon the whole race of Adam.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Noah is thus presented as a representative man — the head of all his house. The striking type of Christ, the Head of the Church, the First-begotten from the dead. In his own person, as a man, it was true of Noah as of every child of Adam: "there is none righteous, no, not one." But he believed God, condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Like as in the case of Abraham, faith was reckoned to Noah for righteousness. But, surely, as a picture of Christ, nothing could be more striking. Just as God took Noah out from among the dead, and raised him up above the billows of judgment, and placed him on the high places of Ararat; so has God taken Jesus out from among the dead, and placed Him above heaven's highest Ararat. And as a new world was to begin in Noah's family from mount Ararat, so in Christ, raised from the dead, God has begun a new creation. Let us, then, examine these words more closely, as setting forth God's thoughts of Christ, and the true figure of our salvation.

It is deeply interesting to see how creation is made to share in this great deliverance. But who can fathom the depth of those words, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." If Shem, Ham, and Japheth were welcome, as sons of Noah, how welcome is every child of God in Christ? "Behold me, and the children whom thou hast given me." Yes, in this touching figure, I hear God saying to Jesus, "Come thou and all thy house." Oh! the glad welcome that awaits every child of God into his Father's house above! Welcome as Christ is welcome. No stranger God shall greet us there.

Now notice, most closely, the peculiar reason God assigns for the welcome. "For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Weigh every word. "For thee," He does not say for them, "have I seen righteous." It was not what God saw in Shem, Ham, and Japheth. It is not what He sees in us. God can only look in the face of His adorable Son and say, "For thee have I seen righteous before me." "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Blessed Jesus, thou only couldest say, "I do always those things that please Him." Every thought of His heart most

holy; every act, every word, perfect righteousness before God. Oh, how false is that accusation, that we deny the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! We regard every doubt, every slight cast on His spotless Person, as from the father of lies, with which we can have no fellowship whatever. And for this we are hated of men.

It may be asked, Then what is the difference betwixt our thoughts of the righteousness of Christ, and the thoughts of those who oppose our writings so bitterly? I will try to explain the difference. We hold the righteousness of Christ in a far stronger, higher sense than our mistaken friends. They hold that man, under law, in the flesh, is not so bad, and that the righteousness of Christ's person, is not so ineffably different from man in the flesh, but that both may be mingled together. The one imputed to the other, so as to make man righteous, under law, before God. To use the Lord's figure, the old garment is not so rotten but that the new piece may be sewed on to fill it up. Now, we believe the Holy Scriptures teach the very opposite of this — that the end of all flesh is come before God; that man in the flesh is like an old garment, so rotten that it can neither be mended nor worn again; and more, yes, indeed, and more; that though our blessed Lord, when on earth, was in the likeness of sinful flesh, truly and really man, yet so absolutely without sin, so ineffably perfect, that there could be no assimilation between sinless humanity and sinful humanity. No taking of or from one to mingle with or mend the other. This is that solemn truth taught in those words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:24.) This was that truth that Jesus ever taught, but which His disciples were most slow to understand, That He could be of no use to man in the flesh; He must die and rise again; and if they must live they must first die. If they loved and kept the life they had, they could not have the life He had to give in resurrection. We are as slow now to learn this lesson as they were then; but until it is learnt, we must remain as dark now as they were then. When Jesus taught this truth, Peter dared to rebuke the Lord. Surely, then, we may patiently bear the same rebuke in this day. (See Mark 8:31-35.)

This, then, is the great difference of our day. Some do not see man so bad in the flesh, or Christ so infinitely righteous that He could not be assimilated to man in sinful flesh, Others see man so utterly lost in sin, and that Christ was so infinitely, holy, and perfectly righteous, that He could not become one with man in sinful flesh, except as an expiatory substitute. But man must die: yea, that He must die the atoning death of the cross, that through that death and resurrection man might be made one with Him in that resurrection state, where sin and death are known no more. In plain words, Christ could not be made one with us in sinful humanity, but we, after His death and resurrection, by the Spirit, are made one with Him who was in sinless humanity. Oh! the depths of the riches and wisdom of God. How much better are God's ways than man's poor thoughts!

Now, if we look at the figure, we shall see how beautifully all this truth is shadowed forth. God did not impute the righteousness of Noah to the old world, to men in the flesh. The end of all flesh was come. God had no purpose of saving it, but of destroying it. The terrible waters of judgment roared over the earth, But those very waters of death that destroyed all beneath them, bore in safety on their bosom this representative man, and those that were saved with him; only we must bear in mind that this is a figure of death and resurrection. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter

3:21-22.) In this scripture, the deluge and baptism are put side by side, as like figures; both showing that true salvation is on the principle of death to the flesh, and new position and life, in resurrection. Noah was taken from among the dead and placed on Ararat: Christ was taken from among the dead and is gone into heaven. All perished outside the ark: all must perish outside Christ. It did not matter how near a person was to the ark, he was either shut in or shut out.

He might have helped to fell the trees or even build the ark, but when once the door was shut he was shut out. It was in vain to cry, Noah! Noah! open unto us. We know it will shortly be so again. The door will soon be shut. No matter how near you may be, "almost in" will not do. Do not say, I am almost a Christian, and therefore I hope to be saved. You may be a Sunday-school teacher, ah, a preacher, but has God shut you in the only ark of safety? It says, "And the Lord shut him in." The Lord never needs to do His work twice. When Noah was once shut in, he was as safe as at the moment when he stepped out on Mount Ararat. If in Christ you cannot be lost; if out of Him when the door is shut you cannot be saved. There was no salvation outside this resurrection ark. There is no salvation outside the risen Christ. If Christ be not risen, our preaching is utterly false and vain. If the ark had not risen and floated above the waters, it would have been of no use whatever — it would (if it had remained under the waters) have been a huge coffin. Now, our blessed Jesus did sink down to the lowest depths, He died the Just for the unjust. The dark waters of judgment passed over His soul. He died for our sins and was buried. But if He had remained under death, then all would have died with Him and perished for ever; His death would have been in vain, of no use, like the ark sunk beneath the waters of the deluge. But He rose again for our justification; and thus the ark floating in safety to Ararat is a true figure of the risen Christ.

Now we find, I repeat, God did not propose to save man in the flesh. All that breathed in the old world were destroyed, and Noah only remained, and those who were with him in the ark. Is not this exactly what baptism teaches? Why is the believer baptized? Is it not to show, that as a man in the flesh he is now dead, and therefore buried in water; and henceforth not to reckon himself any more alive in the flesh, but dead. True, if this were all there would be no use in it; but he is also risen with Christ. The believer’s old world has perished beneath the waters of judgment, and his new world has begun on his heavenly Ararat. Nothing could be more clear than the harmony of the two figures — baptism and the deluge. The old world perished. The new world began where the ark rested, upon the mountains of Ararat. God did not save the old world by Noah; old things passed away and all became new. It is so in Christ, old things passed away, and all things became new; and all things of God. Only let us not overlook one divine contrast. Failure soon came in with Noah, the head of his new world. There can be no failure in Christ, the Head of the new-creation.

Now as to these questions of resurrection, righteousness, and life. Looking at the ark as a figure, when may we say that the new world commenced? And where would you say was the fountain head, so to speak, of the Noahic new world? Plainly, the new world did not commence until judgment was executed on the old, and the spring head or starting place was Ararat. This is the great question, I repeat: When did the new creation commence, and where is the fountain-head of righteousness and life? The New Testament makes it as clear to my soul that this was and could only be when God raised Christ from the dead, as the Old Testament makes it clear that Noah’s world began when God raised him, from the dead above the waters of the flood. I do not doubt the sons of Noah, were safe, resting in the word of God, before this. But they were saved when the ark rested on Ararat. Neither can I doubt for a moment, that all believers before the death and

resurrection of Christ were safe, resting in the promise of God. But I could not say they were saved until Christ arose from the dead. Though Elijah had long been safe in heaven, yet he was as really saved on the cross as the dying thief, and Christ as truly rose for his justification as mine. All God's salvation, past, present, and to come, is through the death and resurrection of Christ. The Holy Ghost could not be given, and could not say to any, before the death of Christ, "By grace ye are saved." Is it not through the exceeding greatness of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead — Head over all to the Church — and having now raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? I say, is it not on this very account that the Holy Ghost can now say, "By grace ye are saved?" (Ephesians 1:2.) All this is now said of every believer, of all in Christ Jesus. But could it have been said of one single believer before? Impossible! It is of little avail, for those who are ignorant, to ridicule or oppose these things as new and dangerous notions. Let such be ignorant still. But if the reader is a child of God and bows to the word of God, let him search it, and be will find that this is the very truth once delivered to the saints.

Surely the type is not more clear than the antitype. If Noah's world began when the old world was destroyed, so the new creation began when God raised Christ from the dead. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Colossians 1:18.) I say, it is of the first importance to see that Christ is the beginning of the new creation, as raised from the dead. If we suppose that the new creation began by the incarnation or life of Christ in human flesh, or the righteousness of Christ under law — if this is our Christianity, it then presumes that the end of all flesh is not come. That man is still under probation or trial. If under law in the flesh, he must be still on trial. But all this is utterly contrary both to our figure and the plainest teaching of the Epistles. Indeed if this were true, it would be no new creation at all, but simply man perfected in Judaism. As we have seen, Christ ever taught His disciples that He must die and rise again; that nothing else was of the least use. The apostle tells us that all are dead, that the trial of man in the flesh by law is utterly abolished, that all are guilty and under judgment, that we now know no man after the flesh — no, not even Christ after the flesh. No doubt we had known Him perfect in the flesh. But it is not after that manner we know Him as the salvation of God, but in resurrection; so that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. "Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new, and all of God." In proof of all this read, as a little child, Romans 1:1-32; Romans 2:1-29; Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25; Romans 8:1-39 and 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. In Noah then, as a figure, we see resurrection from among the dead. And thus through Jesus is preached the resurrection from [among] the dead. The Jews could have done with Jesus as a king to adorn their system. Men now can do with Him to improve or make up for man in the flesh. But to see the world, and to see man as God sees him in the flesh; to see that man is just what he was in the days of Noah; and to say what God says about all this, that all is about to be destroyed, that God is now taking out as He did with Noah, an elect family in Christ from among this dead world; and linking them with that Christ in heaven, and that all else, however religious, and fair, and mighty in the world will be destroyed — ah! there is no wonder that this truth is so distasteful and stirs up so much wrath and enmity what good would all the man-mending religion of this day have done in the days of Noah? And what will it do in this? The end of all flesh is come.

Nothing, then, can be more certain than this, that the new creation began when God raised Christ from among the dead — "the firstborn among many brethren" — that thus Christianity is altogether of resurrection. Our next inquiry then is, Where is the fountain-head of righteousness and of life? In the figure, the fountain-head of this new race was certainly in the person of Noah, on Ararat. In like manner, the fountain-head of the new creation is in the person of Christ, gone into the heavens. We thus, in this figure, hear, as it were, these words addressed by our God and Father to the adorable Son in the highest heavens, "Come thou and all thy house;" not, surely, into an ark of gopher wood, but into the highest, heavens of glory; "for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Yes, all believers are thus made accepted in the Beloved — meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, the blessed welcome! Come thou and all thy house. Gaze up into the highest heavens and see the glory of God in the face of our true Noah, the man Christ Jesus — the righteous One. There He is, the fountain-head of righteousness and life.

If we turn to Romans 5:1-21 we there find two fountains — the fountain-head of sin and death in Adam, the fountain-head of righteousness and life in Christ. As by one offence the stream of sin, and death, and condemnation flowed forth toward all men; so by one righteousness, the stream of righteousness and life flowed forth toward all. The whole of Adam’s race thus are under death and condemnation; the whole of the new race have righteousness and life. But it may be asked, Is not that the righteousness of Christ under the law, imputed to us who are still under law? The very word used in verse 18 makes this impossible. The Greek word translated "righteousness" in this instance, means, "righteousness accomplished." Now, righteousness could never be said to be accomplished, completed, until the righteous One had died on the cross and risen again. Then the one righteousness was accomplished, and the righteous One seated in the heavens became the fountain-head of righteousness and life; so that just as Noah’s sons were accepted with righteous Noah, so are we accepted in the righteous One on high. The righteousness of Noah was not imputed to men under any of the institutions of the old world; neither is the righteousness of Christ imputed to men under the ordinances or institutions of the flesh under law. The institutions of the old world were buried beneath the flood. The ordinances of the flesh under law were nailed to the cross. Before righteousness was accomplished it was imputed. Faith believed the promise of God, and this was reckoned for righteousness. The apostle cites David and Abraham in proof. This is true of believers now, but much more than this is also true; and hence to speak of the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us as righteousness was imputed to Abraham, is far short of the whole truth. "For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous." We shall be as wholly constituted, or made righteous, as we have been, by Adam’s sin, made or constituted sinners. Nay, the very purpose of God in the death of Jesus, was that we might be "made the righteousness of God in him." In one sense, righteousness is imputed to us; that is, we are reckoned righteous, because our resurrection is not yet actually accomplished. But, then, it is not the unfinished righteousness of Christ on earth, in the flesh; but righteousness as now finished, accomplished, and subsisting in the Person of our representative in the heavens. We are reckoned dead with Him, risen with Him, one with Him, like the sons of Noah in the ark. In a little while we shall be made righteous, for we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him and with Him for ever.

He was ever the righteous One, but He had to die the death of the cross to accomplish that one righteousness in which we stand justified from all things. And now He has accomplished that

righteousness, even so as to manifest the righteousness of God in saving lost sinners. God has now said, "Come thou and all thy house (into the highest heavens), for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

If He is thus, in resurrection, the fountain-head of righteousness, He is also the fount of risen life. In the ark was life: under the ark all was death. Christ is our life: out of Christ all is death. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Now, why had Jesus remained away from this much-loved family until Lazarus was dead? and why does He connect resurrection with life in these striking words? He was the eternal life. In Him was life. But He had not that life to infuse into man in the flesh, to cure man, so to speak. This would have been to set aside the righteous sentence of God on sin. He could not become one with man in that state. He must die, or remain alone. But if He die, He must then bring forth much fruit in resurrection. Therefore He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." In resurrection, those taken from among the dead are made one with Him. He can give them a new life, new to them, and that after, yea, on the very ground of the righteousness of God having been accomplished. The whole question of man's guilt, and judgment, and God's righteousness was divinely and for ever settled, so that the believer can look upon himself, as to the sinful flesh, with all its lusts and sins, as truly judged on the cross, as the old world was judged beneath the flood. But now, as really one with Him who is the "I am, the resurrection and the life," and as passed from the old world of sin and death, as the sons of Noah had passed from the old to the new in the ark with Noah. Yes, I look at that risen One in glory and say — there is the fount; yea, there is my righteousness and life. He is my life, He is my righteousness. Now, I ask, Is this denying the righteousness of Christ? Ah, I fear that some of those who thus charge us, know that they are bearing false witness. As a lady said the other day to a christian friend of mine, "Ah, you all deny the righteousness of Christ." "Stay, stay," said my friend, "if you really think so, how is it that you can shake hands with us; is this all you care for your Lord?" No, if we denied the spotless righteousness of our adorable Jesus, we could not be Christians. We, as I said at first, hold the spotless and perfect righteousness of His holy person to be so pure, that he could not be assimilated or become one with man in sinful flesh; but that he must first as our substitute, in the likeness of sinful flesh, by a sacrifice for sin, condemn sin in the flesh. And we hold, that righteousness had to be accomplished by the death of the cross, before man could be identified with Him, and thus made righteous in Him and partaker of His risen life.

Blessed be God, all this has been done. It is finished. And now let me ask the reader, have you this life? Are you in this ark? All that have not this life, must perish beneath the everlasting wrath of God. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And if you have this life, it is eternal life. All the waters of the flood could not wash away one sin. The sentence on sin is death, and nothing can avert that sentence. Every other refuge but the ark, was swept away. It will be so again; every costly refuge that man is now building, will be burnt up. What a picture of man's folly does the deluge present. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world, and missed a place in the ark? And is it not precisely the same in this day? What are the world's honours, riches, or pleasures; its politics and ambition? Now what fools we are to be occupied with these things; what can they profit in that hour, when it shall be as it was in the days of Noah? Do not turn a deaf ear to the words of Christ. It shall surely be as it was in the days of Noah? Blessed

be God the door is not yet shut, you are not yet shut out; may God bring you, my beloved reader, and shut you in; and if shut in once, all is safe. Even in this there is a beautiful parallel in the two figures: the door was only shut once, and there is one baptism. Under law there were many baptisms, because its sacrifices could never take away sins, and its washings could never make perfectly clean. But now all is perfect. A perfect Saviour, a perfect sacrifice. All who are once sanctified by it, are for ever made perfect. One sacrifice, one baptism, once dead and risen with Christ, for ever risen. The new nature can never die, can never perish. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" The one baptism is therefore a figure of perfect and everlasting salvation. If once passed from death unto life, like the sons of Noah; once dead with Christ, once alive with Him in resurrection, then saved for ever. It is not the washings of the flesh, like the many baptisms of the law. We are not saved by the mere water in any form. But "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter 3:21.)

Now whilst it could not be that His righteousness should be imputed to us in sinful flesh, He could not be one with us in this sinful nature, yet it is most certain, if we have passed from death unto life, we are now made one with Him in resurrection, like Noah on Ararat. "And he (Christ) is the head of the body the church who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," &c. (Ephesians 2:4; Ephesians 2:6.) Nothing could be more strikingly a figure of all this, than the raising up of Noah and his sons from among the dead old world. Let us not, then, think of taking Christ back with us into that old nature of sin and death, but reckon ourselves dead and risen with Him; and thus by the Spirit united to Christ, the Head, we form the spiritual or mystic body of the Christ. Now, if we are thus one with Him in the heavens, "There is one body." "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "There can, therefore, be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." What a blessed place of perfect safety. Now as one with Him on the heavenly Ararat, we are in that new state, and have that new life derived from Him our head. Really have that new-creation existence before our God and Father, which He must in faithfulness to Christ justify, and cannot possibly condemn.

I do not merely hint at a positive state of righteousness: but I most fully declare it. We shall as really be righteous throughout a bright, everlasting day, as risen in and one with Christ, as we have been really sinners, during the little moment we were the children of Adam. We have this righteous standing now in Christ our risen head. He is now our righteousness, and as our glorified representative, the pledge and certainty that we shall be raised from the dead, even as to the body, and made like Him. All this is not imputed to us on the principle of promise merely, but now made ours, because all has been accomplished in his death and resurrection. And surely nothing could be more practical than this our calling — as dead and risen with Christ. We are called to give up the old world with its lusts, its pride, and its false pleasures, as the sons of Noah gave up the old world at the flood, and like them with Noah in the new world, so "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with

Christ in God." Oh "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Thus the Scriptures teem with proofs that as there was no salvation in the days of Noah, but by being raised from among the dead in the ark, so there is no salvation now, but by being made one with Christ raised from among the dead. And thus are we saved, justified, and glorified. And thus are we called to walk as those who are alive from among the dead.

C.S.

Chapter 66

068. Ritualism: and what will be the end of it?

Ritualism: and what will be the end of it?

“And as Jesus entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.” Luke 22:1-71.

There has been much said of late on the subject of Ritualism, but I have not yet seen it brought to, and fairly examined by, the word of God, in the presence of Him who is the light. This I desire to do; and so far as God by His Spirit shall guide me in His word, I hope to declare, unflinchingly, the counsel of God on this subject. The Scripture before us throws great light on Ritualism. Let us examine it. In a certain village there were ten lepers. And into that village Jesus enters. Here is man suffering from that loathsome disease which, above all others, is a picture of his horrible state through sin. Into this scene Jesus enters. And man, the leper, stands face to face before Jesus, the Saviour. Have you, my reader, ever thus stood face to face before this same Jesus? I say, Jesus comes into this scene. Jesus thus meets man in his wretchedness. What a strange cry the presence of Jesus called forth from these poor lepers! “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Surely this is the proper language of man as a sinner. And He who alone could heal the leper, can meet and cleanse the sinner. These ten lepers knew their need. May I ask, Have you ever known your deep need of the cleansing blood of Jesus? But what a strange answer Jesus gives them: “Go show yourselves unto the priests.” Marvellous words! As though He had said, Go to the Levitical ritualism. I suppose you remember, my reader, that that ritualism was not yet abolished — the work was not yet finished — the one sacrifice was not yet offered — the veil was not yet rent. If you turn to the Levitical ritualism (Leviticus 14:1-57), the first thing you learn is, that it was of no use for the leper to show himself to the priest except he was healed. Very beautifully is the principle of faith brought out here then: “Go show yourselves to the priests.” Unbelief might have said, nay, would have said, “But we do not feel any better.” To look at themselves, how could they go? They heard and believed the words of Jesus. Have you thus heard and thus believed? Or are you saying, I must feel better first? “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.”

“And it came to pass, as they went they were cleansed.” Yes, they felt better, not before, but after they believed: they were cleansed. This was a reality, a certainty. This is the simple, naked principle of faith. In Jesus they had found the substance of which the ritualism of Leviticus 14:1-57 was but a series of shadows. Very striking were these ancient shadows. Viewing the poor leper as a type of the sinner, then these shadows, set forth the varied aspects of the offering and

resurrection of Christ. Indeed it is full of Christ. It was then God's ritualism. Each rite pointing to Christ. The law of the leper could not heal the leper. Oh! no, when compared with our precious Christ, these were mere beggarly elements. But when he was healed, then the priest took two birds alive and clean. And by these two birds was shadowed forth the only way by which a sinner can be cleansed.

One bird was killed. Yes, for Jesus must needs suffer atoning death. "He was delivered for our offences." But for this death, faith would have nothing to rest in. Then the other bird was dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed. Seven times is this blood sprinkled on him that is to be cleansed. The priest pronounces him clean; and then lets the living bird fly into the open air. This living bird was God's pronunciation that the leper was clean.

"And was raised again for our justification." if the poor leper believed God's pronunciation, he knew for certain, that as sure as the live bird was let loose, so surely he was clean. And if you, my reader, believe God, who raised up Jesus from among the dead, who was thus delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, then, like the cleansed leper, you know with certainty that as surely as Jesus is raised from the dead, so surely are you justified. And in Him you are clean every whit. This you may find fully proved in Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is God's pronunciation that the believer is justified. And believing God, his sins are forgiven; sin is not reckoned; righteousness is reckoned. Oh! what peace toward God this gives! The apostle says, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now if the leper knew he was clean when the priest said so, may not the believer know that he is justified when God says so? Surely the resurrection of Jesus is a brighter proof than the letting loose of the little bird. Just think these three things over again. Sins forgiven — sin not reckoned — righteousness reckoned. Justified from sins by the blood of Jesus; justified from sin; reckoned dead with Him. Reckoned righteous, or justified in Him risen: all of Adam passed away, all now accomplished righteousness in the risen Christ. And to the believer this is most true on the principle of naked faith in the word of God.

Deeply interesting are the truths shadowed forth in Leviticus 14:1-57. Everything of mere nature cut off — the hair and the beard. The washings and the offerings, all of which point to Christ, and all tell out in softest harmonies the perfection of His one offering. I do love to think, that, as the once wretched leper and "those things" were presented before the Lord, so I, by nature a sinful leper, am now presented in all the perfections of Christ, through the value of His blood, in all the sweet savour of His holy person. Oh! my God and Father, am I thus for ever presented, for ever perfected in Him? I bow, I own the riches of thy grace, the depths of thy mercy. And now, if we trace this wondrous lesson a little farther, we find the once wretched leper anointed with oil. The blood of the trespass-offering is put upon the tip of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, the great toe of his right foot, and the oil, sprinkled seven times before the Lord, is put upon the blood, "and poured upon his head." Oh! how blessedly this tells out the perfect value of the blood of Jesus! It makes the once guilty sinner a perfected worshipper. And where the blood is seen, the Holy Ghost is given as an ever abiding witness of the value of that precious blood. Very fully is this seen in Hebrews 10:1-39. But let us return to our ten lepers. They believed the word of Jesus; and as they went they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back. Just now there were ten faces on ritualism, and ten backs on Christ; now one turns his back on ritualism and his face on Christ. And whilst these nine are ritualists, this one becomes a

worshipper. I am not speaking of man's ritualism, towards which nine out of every ten faces seem turned in this day; but of God's own ritualism, given expressly by Himself until Christ the Substance came. And this I learn, that when this poor leper knew Jesus to be the living God, he could not have his face to Jesus without turning his back on ritualism. Which way do you stand, my reader? Is your face toward ritualism? — then your back is on Christ. If your face is toward Christ, then your back is on ritualism. But this one knew he was healed. He did not hope so. If he had, he had better have gone with the nine to see the bird let loose. "With a loud voice he glorified God, and fell down on his face, giving thanks."

It was quite right for a leper in his wretchedness to cry, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon me." Would it be right now that Jesus had had mercy? Would this have been worship, to have kept saying, "Jesus, have, mercy upon me, a miserable leper?" You know it would have been insult, and mockery, and unbelief. And let us carefully note how welcome this worshipper was to Jesus. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath Made thee whole."

Now I believe the root of ritualism is that unbelief which doubts the reality of the grace of God, in the work of Christ; and the certain remedy against it is that simple faith that, knowing I am cleansed, gives glory to God. The Samaritan leper knew he was cleansed, then why should he go to ritualism to be cleansed? He knew that Jesus had in richest mercy healed him, then why should he cry any more, Jesus, Master, have mercy upon me? Then what gives glory to God from one who is cleansed? Adoring thanksgiving!

Let us, then, apply this to the sinner's salvation; and the real source of ritualism will be as clear as noon-day.

Let us take a believer, who knows that Jesus has met all his need as a sinner on the cross; that God has thus shown him the deepest mercy; that he is sanctified by the offering of Christ: not only cleansed, but for ever perfected. And if he believes Hebrews 10:1-39 he must know all this. Now does it become him to approach God as a miserable sinner, ever crying for mercy to God; as if he doubted every word that God has spoken? Yea, it is a very solemn thing to say, but it does seem to me that to act in this way of unbelief, is really to deny that Jesus has come in the flesh, and finished the work of redemption. It is quite true if you do not believe God, and if you are not therefore cleansed; if you do not believe that God has shown mercy, love, and righteousness, in the gift of Jesus; if you can deliberately say that God's testimony to the blood of Jesus is not enough to give the certainty of peace. Very well, then you are quite consistent in still crying for mercy, and in turning your back on Christ, and your face on ritualism. But I think I hear my reader say, "My dear sir, you are forgetting that thousands of real Christians are taught to express their humble doubts, by taking the position of the sinner, ever crying for mercy." I beg your pardon, I do not forget this: but I believe that this very thing is the reason why so many are taken up with ritualism. Let me ask you: If you are cleansed, can anything be more dishonouring to Christ than to doubt it? And can anything be more pleasing to Him, than to fall at His feet a happy worshipper, giving Him thanks? I will grow a little bolder, and say, that no person who knows, on the testimony of God's word, that he has redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Jesus, can possibly be taken up with ritualism.

Surely this must be a solemn question, for all who love the truth of the believer's complete justification in the risen Christ. Many have thus been blest: were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? May our blessed God turn your face to Christ, and your back on everything else. The nine lepers had their backs on Jesus, and their faces toward the ritualism of Jerusalem. The ritualist now stands with his back on Christ and his face, where? Is it not on the ritualism of Rome? And what is the ritualism of Rome? Is it not a system of rites and ordinances of men, all based on the supposition, that the believer is not cleansed from all sins? that the one sacrifice of Christ once offered is not perfect, and is not everlasting in its efficacy? that there needs repetition of sacrifice, like the imperfect sacrifices of the law? that all believers have not boldness to enter into the presence of God, as holy worshippers? nay, that the blood of Jesus is of so little value, that those who do believe will have to be burnt in purgatory, &c.? I am no controversialist, but can any one show me that this unbelief, and turning the back on Christ, is not the very foundation of Romish ritualism? If by one sacrifice I am for ever perfected, what need have I of either the sacrifice of the mass or purgatory?

If you look in Colossians 2:1-23, you will find that this completeness in Christ is the grand reason why we are forbidden to have anything to say to ritualism. The ritualist is very consistent; he does not believe in this completeness in Christ; and therefore he turns his face to ritualism. The believer is shown to be complete in Him. Buried with Him; risen with Him. All trespasses forgiven. And it is this being dead and risen with Him that constitutes our completeness in Him. "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

Now just as faith produces obedience, so unbelief always leads to disobedience. The ritualist does not believe in this completeness in Christ risen; he therefore disobeys with all his heart these plain commands of scripture. He says, I will be subject to ordinances — I will touch, I will taste, I will handle — I will walk after the commandments and doctrines of men. His whole system is will-worship. Thus unbelief produces a harvest of disobedience to God. Thus is his back on Christ and his face on ritualism. O how sweet the contrast to the Christian! "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," &c. The one leper knew he was cleansed, then why still pray for mercy and cleansing? Much more, why should he go back to the rites of Leviticus to get cleansing when now he knew that he was cleansed? The believer can give thanks, like the one leper, with a loud voice, as it is written, "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:1-29.) Is this the thanksgiving of your soul, my reader? Do you thus believe that the redemption you have, is absolutely perfect, and makes you fit for the inheritance in light? I say again, the whole question turns on faith or unbelief. Perhaps you say, "If this is the case, turning the back on Christ in unbelief, and going back to ritualism is a very serious matter: what will be the end of it?" Yes, that is just what I want to enquire into:

What will be the End of it? That question will be answered if we examine a parallel case in Hebrews 10:1-39. The whole of this epistle is occupied with the ritualism of the law: each part is

contrasted with the person and work of Christ. And we are distinctly told in chapter 9, the Holy Ghost signified by that ritualism, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest: that these were only carnal rites or ordinances imposed until Christ. Then in chapter 10 the sacrifices of that ritual are shown to make nothing perfect or complete. But the one sacrifice of Christ makes all who are sanctified by it for ever perfect or complete. Now God bears witness to this perfection in two ways.

There is one who bears witness in heaven: Jesus Himself, “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for over sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Then there is another on earth: the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us. Do you believe this double witness of God? He has taken up the Holy One who died for our sins. Raised for our righteousness or justification, He sits in peaceful proof that the atoning work is done. The Holy Ghost too has been sent down, abiding witness of the perfect place into which we are brought by the blood of Jesus. God says to every believer, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” If I am not a believer, I say; if I have not faith; then I can only stand at a distance, crying for mercy, and hoping to be saved. Sad, sad it is, if the Christian is put by man into that false place. This is the true place which the Holy Ghost gives to every believer: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” This is Christianity, as of God, in contrast with the shadows of ritualism, which could not remove the veil that shut out man from God. Very simple this, but do you believe it? Can you say, By the blood of Jesus I have now boldness within the veil? Can you say, that having such a high priest, as a purged worshipper I need no other? If you cannot, you do not believe in the blood of Jesus, and you do not believe in the priesthood of Christ. All turns, you observe, on this point; if you believe God, the blood of Jesus gives you boldness in the holiest, for His word says so, and you need no other intercessor, for He ever liveth to make intercession for you.

Oh! where are you? Can you fall like the one leper at the feet of this holy Jesus, giving Him thanks for thus cleansing and fitting you for the holiest? Or is your back on Him, and your face on ritualism? If so, this brings us to the solemn question, What will be the end of it? Will you read verse 26? “For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.” But, you say, you surely would not apply that to the ritualist? Where is the difference? The Holy Ghost plainly applies this to the Jew who had heard and professed Christianity. To go back to the ritualism of the law, was to sin wilfully. God speaks of such, as having trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Now I do believe that this is also the truest possible description of the ritualist of this day — yes, every line of it. The sinning wilfully is what marks its contrast with dark Rome. For the poor Romanist is brought up in total ignorance of Christianity, as described in this chapter of Hebrews. And in the midst of his intercessors and masses and purgatory, he knows no present way into the holiest, but sighs in uncertainty, and, unless God in His mercy prevent, dies in despair. Not so our ritualist of the Reformation. The glorious sound of justification by faith has rung in his ears. And it is not a little remarkable that at the very time that the gospel of God’s righteousness is being proclaimed far and near, the ritualist wilfully rejects it all, and acts over again the Jew of old who draws back to perdition.

I think this paper is being read by a young person, who is attracted by the outward show of ritualism. Mark well, all this is of man's will, will-worship. It is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof is judgment and fiery indignation. In the midst of so much light, and to go back to rites, and shadows; if this is not shining wilfully, what possibly can be?

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy." And will you despise the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the blood of Jesus? Will you deny that the just One has died for the unjust to bring us to God? Christianity is the blessed fact that by this death, this one sacrifice, the believer's sins are forgiven, never to be remembered against him; that he is now, like the leper, a cleansed worshipper in the presence of God, needing no rites or ceremonies, to bring him there. O my reader, is this now your happy position? or do you doubt it, and in practice deny it? If you cling to shadows, your back is on Christ the substance; and you deny the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The Samaritan leper alone gave glory to God. The happy believer who takes this place, as a cleansed worshipper, alone gives glory to God. But it may be said, are there not crowds drawing back to ritualism and to Rome? Is there not less and less of worship in spirit; and more and more of outward show; each of the so-called reformed churches, pleasing the world, with gothic buildings, and what attracts the natural taste of man? I own the full sad truth of this. And let me ask you; If the despising of the finished work of Christ, and the blessed place of a cleansed worshipper by His blood, brought down the judgments of God on the Jews of old, what may we expect, now England is doing the very same thing? I do solemnly believe that England and Christendom are on the eve of being given up to the strong delusions foretold in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. Yes, the multitude, who are rejecting the truth of God wilfully, and going back to ritualism, may with certainty look for the judgment, and fiery indignation of God. There is much more hope of a dark Romanist who has never known the truth, than of those who have known it and now deny it, and go back to ritualism. It is the most dreadful position that a soul can be found in. Allured to perdition, by sacred song, and everything that can fascinate the natural mind. Such is Satan's great success of the day. Do you say, I speak strongly, where is my proof? The proof is plain enough. If you reject the efficacy of the one sacrifice that is for ever perfect, then there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins. You must be eternally lost. But if you believe and rest in the efficacy of that blood, and thus know that you are for ever perfected, then you cannot be a ritualist. The two things are as opposite as light and darkness. In a word, you cannot have your face on Christ, with the certainty that you are cleansed, without turning your back on ritualism.

I confess I have little hope for those who have thus deliberately trodden under foot the Son of God. But to the wavering, the perplexed, the tempted; may God in His mercy stop you, awaken, and save you. Oh! to meet God now as the lepers met Jesus: to hear His word — to believe it! Are you yet a sinner? Then "Be it known unto you . . . that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." O the mighty principle of this simple, naked faith! God sets before you the death of Jesus for sins; the resurrection, or Jesus risen, for justification. All, all the sinner needs is thus set forth in Jesus. God proclaims sweet pardon to you through this same Jesus. Do you believe God? The leper did not say, That is too easy — I must do, do, DO, first. No. And he did not say, I must feel, feel better. Do you say so? He did not say, No man can tell whether he is cleansed or not did he? Do you say so? He knew it, he turned his back on ritualism. Do you, as a believer, know that you are justified? If you do believe God, then you must know you are justified, because He says so — does He not?

Would you say, No man knows whether God speaks truth or not? May God give you that faith in Him that will enable you just now to turn your back on ritualism and your face on Christ — knowing that you are cleansed in His precious blood. May you thus give glory to God with a loud voice! And to the God of all grace be everlasting praise. C.S.

Chapter 67

069. Solomon■s Temple; or the Altar Equal to the Holiest.

Solomon’s Temple; or the Altar Equal to the Holiest.

(Read 2 Chronicles 3:1-17; 2 Chronicles 4:1-5.)

It would require a large volume to trace fully the glory of Christ as shadowed in this portion of the word. My desire, in this short paper, is to help you with a few thoughts to the closer study of the word of God.

I hope you will not think that I am about to give any supposed authority, from Solomon’s temple, for the building of so-called christian places of worship. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost should come, and guide the disciples into all truth. The Holy Ghost did come, and did guide the apostles and the early Church into all truth: and is it not most clear, from the Acts and the Epistles, that the Holy Ghost did not, after He came, guide the Church to build any places of worship on earth? No, not one. The christian worship, is purely spiritual. Wherever believers were found on earth, in spirit they entered heaven itself with their great High Priest, and worshipped in the holiest. The New Testament scriptures, however, clearly recognize a spiritual building — and of which Solomon’s temple, I do not doubt, will be found to be in some interesting particulars a type. The Epistle to the Ephesians especially describes this risen, heavenly, spiritual building. Believers “are 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 all holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:20-22.) What a building! and what a builder! “Ye are God’s building.” (See 1 Corinthians 2:8-11.) With these, and many other passages of the word describing the spiritual building, let us now turn to Solomon’s temple for instruction. And first, the materials of which the temple was built. Great stones and lofty trees. God is pleased thus to picture the two conditions of those whom He brings, and builds, in Christ the heavenly temple. Man is a great sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, and yet he is a lofty pharisee. In a former tract, “Great Stones and Costly,” I have dwelt a little on the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward, in the raising from the dead the Lord Jesus — the chief corner-stone — and in raising us up, though dead sinners, in Him. Let us now see the way in which the lofty trees of Lebanon were brought to the temple at Jerusalem.

Solomon sent to Huram, saying, “Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon: (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great.” (Chap. 2: 8, 9.) Huram replied, “We will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in flotes by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.” (Chap. 2: 16.)

Thus there was only one way for every tree used in building the temple. The axe, the axe; stroke after stroke, until the lofty tree lies flat and dead, severed from every root of nature. And then

down, down, down the slopes of Lebanon, right down into the water. It must go into the water at the foot of Lebanon before it call be taken out of the water at Joppa — and it must be put into the water, and taken out of the water, before it can be carried up to Jerusalem's temple. There was no overland route for a single tree. The axe, the fall, down into the water, symbol of death: out of death into the temple. Could there be a more concise, or striking picture of God's way of bringing man to Himself?

Let us compare it with one or two examples. Now Saul of Tarsus was not only a great sinner he says, "the chief of sinners" — but he was also the most lofty pharisee that ever waved his head on the moral Lebanon of man. He was a cedar tree of the cedar trees; a fir tree of the fir trees; "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" — never was there a straighter moral fir tree, or more lofty religious cedar. But when the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, entered his soul, yes, when Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" the lofty cedar fell flat on the ground. Then did he find that oven his religious zeal was his greatest wickedness. What a felling! What a severing from every fancied root of goodness, from every trust in himself, as a natural man! All had to become dross and dung. Down, down, down, until he is nothing, and Christ is all. Yes, for three days in darkness it was down, down to the water, symbol of death, and the lofty pharisee was buried by baptism into the likeness of the death of Christ. And as the trees were put in the water at the foot of Lebanon, and raised out at Joppa, so Saul was buried with Christ in death, and the new man Paul was raised out of death, possessed of the new life, even one with the risen Christ.

It was so with the Eunuch. The scripture which he read was opened, and stroke after stroke was given; Jesus, the holy one, must needs die for his sins; He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. "His life is taken away from the earth." Where is man's religiousness? Where his lofty pride — if he is so utterly lost in sin that the Son of God must thus come and suffer for his sins? And He has thus come, and has thus suffered even unto death, forsaken of God. The fine straight worshipper from Jerusalem bows his head; he falls down, down; he justifies God. He says, Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And again, like our trees of Lebanon, they went down into the water, and came up again out of the water. Now if you will read carefully the Acts, you will find this was the only way to the spiritual temple of the Holy Ghost: "Hearing, they believed and were baptized." (Acts 18:8.) Do not forget the only way the trees travelled to Jerusalem. Do not mistake; God's only way of bringing you to Himself is through the death and resurrection of Christ. Read very carefully on this Romans 6:3-11. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I grant you it is a hard struggle to give up all pretensions to righteousness; to be crucified with Christ, dead with Him, buried with Him, into His very death. Many Christians struggle desperately to keep a little footing on Lebanon. What a mistake! Now is it not most blessed to see, not only my sins judged on the cross, but all that I am condemned once for all on the cross, and buried with the holy Sin-bearer in the grave of His death. Do not you see that all that can be condemned has been, and is thus, condemned, so that there is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

We shall have to notice shortly where and how these materials were placed in the temple, but having thus seen the route of the trees of the building, let us next notice the building itself with its wondrous lessons of instruction. When Solomon began to build, God gave him very exact measurements. “The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits and the breadth twenty cubits. And the porch that was in the front, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height an hundred and twenty, and he overlaid it within with pure gold.” In verse 8, “He made the most holy house: the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits; and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents.” That is about £3,285,000 {before 1890}. The first point of measurement I notice is this: The length of the porch, or way into the temple, is according to the breadth of the holiest — twenty cubits. The holy house symbolized the presence of God; and the porch, or way into that presence was according to the divine presence itself. Do you see this? A few of the words of the Lord Jesus will make it plain: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him.” And again, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” These few words of the Lord Jesus make the matter most clear. The way, or porch, is according to or equal to the holiest. Jesus is the way, and He is equal to the divine presence; for He is God. And he that has seen Jesus, has seen the Father also. God could not have opened a more glorious way to Himself for lost sinners; for the Son of God has died, and risen again, that He may be the way; as it is written, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” (Hebrews 10:19.) Not only was the length of the porch equal to the breadth of the holiest; but what a height! what boldness we have in Jesus to enter! Do you not now see the glory of Jesus shadowed forth as the way to God in this porch? Do you need any other way but Jesus?

Before we go on to the next interesting point in the measurement, we will return, and see where the stones and trees were placed in the temple, and thus learn a little more of the counsels of God as to those that are in the spiritual building

All, whether stones or trees, were overlaid with pure gold. Jesus alone, the righteous one, the righteousness of God, can be set forth or symbolized by “pure gold;” as Jesus says, “I counsel thee to buy of me pure gold.” And not only was every tree and stone overlaid with pure gold, completely covered out of sight — not a notch of the fir being seen — but also there were “graved cherubim on the walls.” Believing God, who “raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification,” it (that is, righteousness) is reckoned unto us. As the pure gold overlaid or covered the trees and stones, so Jesus has been raised from the dead, to be our ever subsisting righteousness. Not a notch of the old tree was to

be seen. God could make no mistake; He raised up the Holy One, who had died for our sins, to be in resurrection our everlasting and subsisting righteousness. As God looked in the temple He saw only the pure gold. Even so in the heavenly building in Christ: “he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” And more: do you ask, But where are the cherubim graved on the pure gold that covers the wall? Look up by faith at Jesus our subsisting righteousness in the presence of God: what are those wounds on that pure and glorified body? do they not answer to the cherubim graved on the wall? Cherubim in scripture set forth the consuming judgment of God (Ezekiel 10:1-22), as seraphim are the burning purification of God (Isaiah 6:1-13), but both taking action from the fire of the altar: the consuming judgment of God against sin as endured by Jesus, Son of God, on the cross. By this is all the believer’s sin put away; or by this, according to this, must the rejecter of Christ be for ever under the judgment and wrath of God. The ways of God are equal. He has shown what His wrath against sin is once on Calvary, and can He show less wrath to the lost soul, after rejecting pardon, than He showed His beloved Son when hanging on the accursed tree, the Sin-bearer?

God is just, and the justifier. He who is our everlasting righteousness bears in His own body the marks of the consuming cherubim judgments, once endured for us, on Calvary. This is an all important subject; for the better we know the righteousness of God, the more solid will be our peace.

Just notice, how this truth of cherubim is repeated, and enforced. There is the cherubim graved on the fine gold. He who is our righteousness did first endure the consuming judgment due to sin.

Then “In the most holy house he made two cherubim of image work and overlaid them with gold;” and the utmost care is taken to show that the span of the cherubim’s wings was the exact breadth of the holiest. “The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty cubits; and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward.” Not one cubit short of the breadth of the holiest. Can anything give more solid peace than this: that the consuming judgment of God on sin was according to God’s own measure of sin? Not our thought of sin, not our measure: but according to the divine presence — the twenty cubits of the holiest: twenty cubits, the length of the porch: twenty cubits, the breadth of the holiest: and twenty cubits the span of the cherubim’s wings. He who was with God, and was God, He is the way; and He bore the divine judgment, according to what God is.

More: not only were cherubim graved on the wall, and cherubim stretching their wings the full width of the most holy house; but on that veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen were wrought cherubim. Nothing short of the divine judgment on sin could open the new way into the holiest; but since Jesus has borne that wrath due to us, sin is now put away, and the veil rent from top to bottom — where man could not by any means be brought, we now have “boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” What a contrast to the Jews’ religion of old! No veil with wrought cherubim now, to hide God from man, and keep sinful man from God. The blood has been shed; sin is put away. Divine judgment has been executed; the veil is rent, and by one offering everlasting in its efficacy. How loud those types of old spake out the fact that Jesus must needs suffer the atoning death! And our happy place now, in the presence of God, as loudly proclaims the work is done.

Next, we consider the altar of brass. “Twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof.” (Chap. 4: 1.) Is not this most remarkable? the square of the altar is the exact square of the holiest. Here are two symbols: the one, the holiest — the presence of God; the other, the altar — the cross of Christ. And the one is equal to the other. The altar is equal to the holiest: the cross of Christ is equal to all the claims of God. Twenty cubits, by twenty, was the measure of the holiest; and twenty cubits, by twenty, the measure of the altar. And did not every victim that was ever offered on that altar point on to Jesus the Lamb of God? Yes, as the body of the beast was consumed on that altar, and the blood poured out at the foot of that altar, even so on the cross the Son of God bore the divine consuming wrath, in that holy body prepared for Him; His own blood too was poured out at the foot of that cross. But the measurement of the altar being equal to the holiest, does not this give us a marvellous knowledge both of what the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, really was; and also what it must be to meet the claims of God as to sin and righteousness? I say, must be; for note these measurements were given by instruction. “Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed.” The altar must not be one cubit less or more than the holiest. Does not this direct our thoughts at once to the person of Christ? Could any other being be found equal to God? For the sacrifice can only be what the person is, or the victim offered. If a bullock or a goat be offered, the sacrifice can only be finite, and makes nothing perfect as to sin before God, for God is infinite. In other words, a finite offering cannot meet the claims of the infinite God. If a finite offering could have put away sin, then the altar would not need to have been equal to the holiest. We are short-sighted, we are blind, as men: but is God short-sighted? is God blind? Call He either under or over estimate anything? How dreadful then is sin, since nothing could put it away from His sight but a sacrifice equal to Himself! The altar must be equal to the holiest.

Let us now solemnly approach this tremendous question, Who is that Holy One, made sin for us, hanging on the forsaken cross, in the midst of that awful darkness? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man; crucified by men, forsaken by God, His soul made an offering for sin. Is He only man? Then His offering can only be finite. Unbelief says, it is so; and hence the need of repeated sacrifices, or continued masses, being offered to God, for the sins, and the souls, of the living and the dead. And all sadly true if He were only man. For if He were only man, then the claims of God have not yet been fully met; and who can tell how much has yet to be added to the one offering of Jesus, before the altar is equal to the holiest? If Jesus is only a man, then work on ye priests — add your thousands of masses — burn fiercely, ye fires of purgatory — and strive hard, ye children of unbelief, to add your merits and attainments to the work of Jesus: for the altar must be equal to the holiest. But, oh, enough!

God did not spare His own Son. (Romans 8:32) “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: . . . unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” (Hebrews 1:1-14.) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth . . . No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John 1:1-18.) “He loved

us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins . . . and we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God . . . for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself . . . he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life . . . The Son of God . . . This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 4:1-21; 1 John 5:1-21.) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9.)

Now if any man says he does not own the coequality of the Eternal Son with the Father, let him honestly say he does not believe the scriptures of truth.

Blessed Jesus, I own thee, though truly man, yet as truly God, over all, blessed for evermore. He that hath seen thee, hath seen the Father also.

Again, I say, How dreadful is sin, when no one in heaven or earth could be found to offer the atoning sacrifice for sin but He, the Son, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who was with God, and was God.

Let us now again look back at the cross. Who is that Holy One bearing the wrath and consuming judgment due to sin? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man. Is He only a finite man? The Son of God! who, though equal with God, has humbled Himself in untold love, love to us; humbled Himself to the shameful death of the cross. Is He truly God? Truly God. He who was with God, the real distinct person of the Son, but yet truly the self-existent, was God. Though thus emptying Himself and humbling Himself unto death, yet the glory of His person is the glory of the cross. The infinite Son of God can only offer an infinite sacrifice. The altar is equal to the holiest. The claims of God against the sinner must be fully met, by the death of the Son of God, for the sinner. Now do you not see great value in this type, the altar being the exact measure of the holiest? Nothing short of the sacrifice of an infinite Person could meet the claims of the Holy Infinite God — more than such an offering could not be. And now ponder this well; faith links us with this perfect and infinite Saviour. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is not merely our own thoughts of what we are, but God, who knows all we are from first to last; surely He saw all that could be condemned in us. Now if His claims are met on the cross, then most surely our need is met. What has met the infinite must meet and cover the poor finite. A close study of Hebrews 10:1-39 will show all this to be most true. There we learn that by the will of God all believers are sanctified "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." We also learn that this sacrifice can neither be repeated nor continued. For Jesus, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." And, then, how infinite its efficacy for all believers: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The Holy Ghost is a witness of all this. God in righteousness says, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." There can be no more offering for sin. Nothing can possibly be added to the infinite. Every mass, or pretended sacrifice, is an insult to God — and every doubt is a dishonour cast on Christ. O let us no longer keep at such an unbelieving distance, but let us enter, let us draw near with the boldness that corresponds to the offering of the body, the blood, the atoning death of Jesus. O! the glory of the cross! The altar is equal to the holiest — the righteousness of God is exalted by the one propitiatory sacrifice, equal to Himself. Can anything, then, destroy the

peace which He hath made by His death on the cross?

If we are, then, thus for ever perfected worshippers by the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, what about our failures? What is the provision for these? Does not failure in a believer interrupt his communion with God? Certainly! Then how is this to be met? This brings us to the “molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.” (Chap. 4: 2.) It might be well here to notice, that these chapters show us more of the counsels of God, as to the glory of Christ, than man’s side of the question; or man’s approach to God. Indeed, this had been given in the types of Exodus and Leviticus. A little remembrance of these things is, however, necessary. In man’s approach to God, the first thing was the altar, setting forth the cross of Christ — atonement having been made on the altar. Then the next thing was the laver, in which the feet of the priests were to be washed. Then the entrance into the tabernacle. This is the way now; first, the altar, the cross of Christ — the blood of Jesus which cleanseth us from all sin. And when the soldier with a spear pierced His side, forthwith came there out blood and water. There is the blood of atonement. And the water, the washing by the word. There is the death of the Just One, by which we have been brought to God. And there is the living priesthood that maintains us in living communion with God.

We have seen the square of the altar, equal to the square of the holiest. The death of the cross has met all the claims of God to the utmost measure. But, then, why was the washing laver, or molten sea, round? You will see if you turn to John 13:1-38. In this chapter the Lord Jesus reveals to us His present priestly service. The atoning work is done. “It is finished.” This priestly work for us is going on. “He took a towel and girded himself, after that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” The molten sea was round, that is, it had neither beginning nor end, so to speak — everlasting as an emblem. And such is the love of our Great High Priest. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Love that never ceases to wash our feet, to restore our souls. But why was the molten sea so much less than the altar? Nothing through eternal ages can compare with the cross of Christ. God only can measure it. He, the infinite, can only fully know that which is infinite; equal to Himself. There is an axiom that holds good here: the greater includes the less; or, as the apostle expresses it, “Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, Much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:9-10.) Surely this is unspeakably comforting. If we have been reconciled to God by the greatness, yea, the infinite sacrifice, typified by the altar equal to the holiest, how much more certain that we shall be washed from all daily failure and defilement, as typified by the molten sea. Is it not also true that if he wash us not, we have no part or lot with Him? For if we are His, He cannot fail to wash our feet, to restore the defiled conscience. Everlasting love cannot fail.

Now are we willing to take this low place, and thus give to Jesus all the glory? Do not say, I am perfect in the flesh; He shall never thus wash me from daily failures. And do not say, If I am saved by the infinite death of Christ, I will practise sin, and will not look to Jesus for holiness of life, for cleanness of feet in my daily walk. O remember that he that practises sin is of the devil. Do you ask, Is this true, that if we are really saved by the death of the cross, it is much more certain that we shall be saved from all defilement to the end? That is exactly what the Holy Ghost is saying to us in these types, and plain scriptures. Why should you doubt God? And now look again at this

molten sea. Do you see the little oxen cast with the sea, ten in a cubit? And then of course you see those twelve large oxen on which the sea stood. “Three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east.” Do you not see patience and strength typified in the ox? We scarcely know this in England. I remember watching with much interest the patient tread of four large oxen, a little way from Paris, drawing a vessel on a canal. Nothing could illustrate more strikingly patient endurance. And have we not found the most amazing patience in our Great High Priest, mighty to save to the uttermost? And oh how he bears with us! — so unlike our bearing with one another. Surely not to overlook our defilements (suffer not such a thought for a moment); but in mercy and faithfulness to wash our feet.

Why did three of the oxen look every way? North, east, west, south? Ah, not a temptation can come against us but the eye of our patient and mighty watching Jesus sees it and knows it before it comes. As I write these lines, or as you read them, Satan may be plotting, or men may be taking counsel against us; but the eye of Jesus sees it all, whether it may be from north, cast, west, or south. He who is gone up on high, still watches His little flock in the desert, His few loved ones in the wind-tossed boat. How comforting this is! however great the trial it cannot surprise our patient deliverer. He saw the temptation coming against Peter, and He saw his fall; yet He says to him, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Now what love this is, is it not? Do you thus know the patient loving heart and watchful eye of Jesus — watching for us every way? We may indeed say, I will not fear what man can do unto me. Do you say, Well, I mostly look to Him in great trials, to help me in great temptations; but what hinder my soul, and vex it most, are the little worrying trials of life? “The little foxes that spoil the vines.” Have you not noticed also those little oxen? not only the great oxen, looking every way; but the patient, watchful care of our tender High Priest, in His preserving, restoring service, over all or in all the little trials of our wilderness path? yes, even though it be ten in every cubit. And they were cast, when the molten sea was cast. It is the inseparable part of His blessed work, as He says so sweetly, “I am among you as he that serveth.” (Luke 22:27.) But let not this precious word be used as a cover for indifference about evil; as if He lovingly allowed the least evil or defilement. Nothing can be more false or dangerous. He does not allow it; but lovingly takes the towel and girds Himself to serve. He pours the water into the basin, not to allow or overlook evil; but to wash it away, to restore our consciences. The Lord grant that we may do the same to one another in the fear and love of the Lord! We thus need, and we thus have, Jesus, in the smallest secret failure, as in the strongest temptation, or gross and open sin. The smallest dot of leprosy must be brought to the priest. It cannot be overlooked, without the gravest danger of public dishonour to Christ. Satan is seeking to set this aside: “Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing: the Lord overlooks our faults.” And thus the Holy Spirit is grieved. Let us give Jesus His true place in washing our feet. Let us be more real in confessing our sins to Him. God is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

Now do you see why there were large oxen looking every way and little oxen, even “ten in a cubit?” Even thus was the Son of God “made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God.” “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15.) The captain of our salvation has trodden the road before us in every step; He is made perfect as our captain through sufferings. “In every point.” Therefore He is able to

save us from all temptations: be they great, from north, east, west, or south; or be they small, even ten in every cubit of our path. Do you notice the brim of the molten sea? What are those flowers? Flowers of lilies. It is said in the song of songs, “as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.” And again, “he feedeth among the lilies.” Does not all this say then, “I must wash your feet, according to what you are in my sight; what I have made you.”

There are three things said of Christ. 1st, “Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.” 2nd, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” 3rd, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:25-27.)

How fair, how spotless white the lilies of Christ! How sweet the perfume of Christ! Surely if we look at our old, condemned, crucified nature, we may well say, Black as the tents of Kedar. And little washing do these black Arab tents get. But it is just as we know ourselves as the lilies of Christ; as we know our acceptance and completeness in Him, that we can say, “without spot,” “no condemnation.”

If He feedeth amongst His lilies, our feet must be washed; all defilement must be confessed to Him, and put away, washed by the water of the word — our feet must be washed as becometh His presence; washed according to His thoughts of us, not our thoughts of one another — oh! how little we have of the mind of Christ as to one another! Think of those words, “For ever perfected.” “As he is, so are we in this world.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God.” “He hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

Now seriously, do you believe that all these statements of God’s word are true of every Christian on earth? that every Christian is a lily of Christ? Are you a believer? Have you passed from death unto life? Then I ask, Are these statements of God to you true or false? Do you say, I thought that such scriptures as these pointed to a higher christian life; a state of perfection to which few, very few, attain? “Attain,” did you say? oh! fearful mistake! Is there one thought of attainment either in these types of the temple or in these plain statements of scripture? The great stones, that were lifted out of the pit with such strength and power, and were made ready before being brought, and built in the temple; was this their own work? and is it the work of great sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, to raise themselves from the dead? or is this the wondrous work of God? (see Ephesians 2:1-22) or did the lofty trees of Lebanon attain to be cut down, to be rolled down the sides of Lebanon into the sea, and again floated to Joppa, and lifted out of the water, and built in the temple? Was not all this done to them? and the gold that covered them, was this attainment? Did they cover themselves with it? Oh no, the very opposite; the gold was put over them! And when the proud religious pharisee is cut down, and buried in the death of Christ, and raised out of death with Christ, completely and for ever justified in Christ risen; is this attainment? Did not God give His Son to die for our sins? did not He raise Him from the dead, to be our everlasting subsisting righteousness? Now if we believe God, if we believe that all this was of God, and is of God, then where is our foolish notion of attaining to a state of higher perfection than God hath given every believer in Christ?* This does not call in question, but surely demands our entire consecration to God — our practical sanctification, body, soul, and spirit to Him.

{*In Php 3:1-21 the word “attain” is not exactly correct. Resurrection from among the dead is the one thing aimed at and desired, any way, or at any cost. O for grace to walk according to what we are made to be in Christ!}

Take any one of the above divine statements of the God of all truth. Take this, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: ” surely that well describes a lily of Christ; so heavenly white and pure from sin that there is nothing that the eye of God can detect and condemn. I do not know that I can state the case stronger or clearer: Nothing to condemn in them that are in Christ Jesus. Can this state be a matter of attainment, when our best righteousness is only filthy rags? Yes, and if we say we have no sin we only deceive ourselves and are liars. Did you ever attain, for one hour, to such a state of love to God and man? — to such holiness of heart, that there was nothing that the eye of God could detect and condemn? Oh! if man could thus attain to sinless holiness, what need was there that the altar should be equal to the holiest? What need was there for the infinite sacrifice of the cross?

I grant you there is something passing wonderful in this declaration of God: there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” How can this be? How? Blessed be God scripture answers very simply, the altar must be, and was, equal to the holiest. The cross of Christ met all God’s claims against me, the sinner. All that the eye of God could detect in me, my sins, and my sin — all, all that I am, as a fallen sinner — was condemned, as God saw me; so God gave His Son to be condemned for me. Then if all that could be condemned — sins and self — has been condemned, judged to the uttermost, in Christ, how can there be anything left to condemn? All has been condemned, judged to the death, on the cross! And more, not only if the old I has been thus crucified, beneath the wrath of God — not only has the old man, I say, thus passed away under the divine judgment on sin, in the sin-bearer, whose one sacrifice met all the claims of God — but the new man is wholly of God — the new life is the justified life of the risen Christ — the new nature is the new creation of God; yea, as we have seen, all things have become new, and all of God. New, and of God: can this be condemned? The old has been condemned: the new cannot be condemned. And “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And since all this is of God, how can it be one’s attainments? And now, before we part, do remember this blessed fact, that every Christian is a spotless lily of Christ. If not, how could every Christian give thanks, that he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? (See Colossians 1:12-14.)

Let us not say, Unto Him that loved us, and half-washed us from our sins. Shall we not, O reader, can you, say — “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood?” (Revelation 1:5.) Yes, once a mass of moral corruption, dead in sins (and death is corruption), now washed in the blood of the Lamb, a heaven-white lily, having the life and perfume of the risen Christ. A lily of Christ! what a starting point this is! And what an end, when He who thus loved the Church and gave Himself for it, and has thus sanctified it, in holy separation to God, shall present it to Himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The new nature in every believer must and will long to be holy, even as He is holy. The desire will be, that the walk may be in keeping with what we are in His sight. And if we fail, may we go to our Great High Priest, remembering the flowers of lilies in the molten sea. And when tempted and harassed by the enemy of souls, may we remember that the molten sea was not half the size of the brazen altar. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we

shall be saved by his life." If thus reconciled by the death of the infinite Son of God offered on the cross, the sacrifice for sins, remember that, on the authority of God's word, your final salvation is thus much more certain. Christ is for you in the heavens mighty to save, and the Holy Ghost is dwelling in you consequent on His work being finished to the glory of God.

Solomon's temple, with its types and shadows, has passed away; but the Church, as the dwelling-place of God, shall not pass away. In those coming bright millennial days, it is seen "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Not one of the great stones, or lofty trees, brought by the Spirit of God, and built into the heavenly temple, can be lost. Are you saved? Have you been brought to God? Have you passed from death unto life? Has all your religious pride been felled and laid in the dust? Have you been crucified with Christ? Have you been buried with Christ in death? Are you risen with Christ? Is the risen Christ your righteousness, redemption, sanctification, and all? What is the death of Jesus to your soul? Has it glorified God, even about your sins? Do you believe Him to be the Son of God? that His one sacrifice was equal to all the claims of God? Do you believe He is your Great High Priest? Do you need another sacrifice? Do you need another priest?

Oh no! the square of the altar was equal to the square of the holiest! and His priestly loving care knows no end. The brazen sea was round. Unto Jesus, Son of God, be everlasting praise. C. S.

Chapter 68

070. Jonathan; or one thing lacking.

Jonathan; or one thing lacking. My attention was called at a reading meeting in Gloucestershire, some time ago, to the sad circumstances of the death of Jonathan on Mount Gilboa. Israel fled from before the enemy, and fell. Saul was slain, and his three sons were slain with him. It was the total overthrow of the kingdom of Saul. What a sad picture — the body of Saul and the bodies of his three sons fastened to the walls of Bethshan! Was not this a sad, sad end for any man to come to? But for such a man as Jonathan to come to such a shameful end! How was this? why was this? and what is the lesson that God would have us learn for these last days, in this inspired history?

Perhaps my reader is not very familiar with the inspired record of the life and times of Jonathan. I shall be happy to go over the leading points of this wonderful history; and I may tell you at the outset, that I believe we shall find the story contain some very valuable typical instruction for the present time. The turning-point in Jonathan's history is in 1 Samuel 18:1-30, and this also illustrates the turning-point in the history of every soul born from above.

True, we find him before this a mighty man of the house of Saul. "He smote the garrison of the Philistines that were in Geba." "And Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear." (1 Samuel 13:3.) And again, we find him a valiant man at the pass of Michmash. Ten centuries after these events, another could say, "I was alive without the law once." "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more . . . an Hebrew of the Hebrews."

Now the turning-point in the life of Jonathan was, in type, very much like the turning-point in the life of Paul on his way to Damascus. The subject opens. What a study! Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah. On the other side of the valley stood the adversary of the house of Saul — the defier of the armies of Israel. And there was no deliverer in the house of Saul. God sent a saviour king that day — that despised shepherd — a stripling. Ah that despised one is God's anointed king of Israel. The mighty foe was slain that day by the youngest son of Jesse. "And Saul said unto him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David said, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." "And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." (Chap. 18: 1.) Ah! Jonathan had looked across that valley of Elah, and beheld that terrible adversary, Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span; and Saul and all Israel were dismayed and greatly afraid. Not one day merely, or two, but for forty days, he thus presented himself, and with him all the armies of Philistia. How gracious of God to send to the camp that saviour David, the unknown king. There he stood, having finished the work God gave him to do. Complete was that victory — the champion was dead, and the Philistines fled. Look at David now. Is not this a figure of that greater victory of David's greater son? As Jonathan looked across the valley of Elah, so a soul is sometimes brought to look across the valley of death. And, oh how terrible the dismay, if the great adversary is there, and all the sins of a past life there, all

standing in dread array, like the hosts of the Philistines. May I ask you to look across the narrow deep valley, and tell me, has the Saviour Jesus been revealed to your soul, as the saviour David stood revealed to Jonathan? Surely the one is only a picture of the other. But there was reality and certainty to Jonathan, and this for ever won his heart to David. This matter is so momentous — the valley that separates us from eternity so narrow — another, nay, perhaps not another breath, and then, after death, is it to you the judgment? If so, surely you have greater cause for dismay than Israel had in that day. You may have been as mighty a prince in your day as Jonathan. Saul's trumpet may have often sounded your praise. But has God revealed Jesus to your soul — the sent one of God — the despised and rejected sent one of God? Do you see Him? Then tell me, What are those wounds in His hands and His side? Sweetly do they speak to the heart, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do." Look at the mighty Conqueror, the sent one of God. "Behold the Lamb of God!" Oh, how wonderful the effect of simple faith in Jesus, as the one who has finished the work of redemption! Forty days had this adversary defied Israel: but for forty centuries had Satan defied man and dishonoured God. Who but the holy Substitute could meet the adversary and maintain the glory of God? Yes, as David smote Goliath in the valley of Elah, so has Jesus met the whole power of Satan in the valley of Death. Oh, my soul, well doest thou to meditate on this: every sin that the accuser could bring against thee, has been borne by Jesus.

There were two things produced in Jonathan by this first revelation, so to speak, of David: he loved him as his own soul; and be stripped himself. Surely this was very simple and natural. How did he look in the face of that shepherd youth, who, taking his own life in his band, with his sling and his stone had wrought such a great deliverance! And can you look at Jesus who gave His precious life, who bore the wrath due to your sins, who shows you His hands and His side, who sweetly says, Peace be unto you — when you know this? Can you not love Him because He thus first loved you?

Thus you see faith must produce love. How beautifully simple is all this! But the stripping — Why did Jonathan strip himself? Well that other Hebrew of the Hebrews tells us why he did. And I think the one just explains why the other did it. I take these two because each of them was the finest Hebrew of his day. He was a noble Jew — that Jonathan of our type; and Saul of Tarsus was one of the finest Pharisees that ever stood up in his own righteousness. Turn to Php 3:1-21 and read the honest account he gives of himself. He says, "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless." This was what this Hebrew of the Hebrews could say; and, oh! how many a poor pharisee in our time sighs to say it! But tow let us put Jonathan's question to Paul. Why did Paul strip himself? How clear and simple his answer: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith." (Php 3:7-9.)

Very beautiful and very becoming, surely, this stripping is! The despised Jesus, who had died on the cross for his sins, now appearing to this Hebrew of the Hebrews, this pharisee of the Pharisees, in glory above the brightness of the sun. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." What a change those words produced! A new heart was given, and a heart for ever linked with that Jesus in glory. In after years how could this Paul write of the glorious One that had been delivered for our offences, and raised from the dead for our justification, to be our subsisting righteousness yea,

that God had raised Him from among the dead, the holy righteous one, our perfect and everlasting righteousness before God and the whole universe.* And, oh! the peace of God that fills the soul that thus knows Him and the power of His resurrection.

{*Romans 4:25; Romans 5:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Php 3:9-10.}

Now we must see that all which had exalted Saul the Hebrew of the Hebrews was a discount against Christ; and, hence, oh! how gladly he strips himself that Christ may be all. Is your heart thus knit to Jesus? and are you thus stripped? As Paul stripped off all, so “Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” What a sense of the worthiness of David the saviour king! As a military prince, this giving up of the sword is very significant — what a surrender! It is written of the enthroned four and twenty elders that they “cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power.”

I take these, then, to be two very blessed marks of a Christian as illustrated in our Jonathan. Such a sense of the value of redemption through the blood of Jesus that the heart is knit to Him in love; and such a sense of what He is as our righteousness or justification, risen from the dead, as at once to strip us of the old robe of self-righteousness — yea, every rag, and sword, and girdle — all, all that is of self, its righteousness, its, effort, fighting, and walk; all given up to Jesus the righteousness of God — Christ in resurrection. And sure I am, dear reader, if Christ has not thus been revealed to you, as David stood revealed to Jonathan, nothing could induce you to give up your old robe, garment, sword, and girdle. If you cannot feel quite sure that your old robe is fit for the presence of God, the devil bids you hope that you may yet fight a better fight, and walk a better walk: it may be mass-making, law-keeping, rites and ceremonies — anything, if Satan can only keep you out of Jonathan’s stripping-room, where you are nothing and Christ is all.

We will now look a little further at this instructive history. (1 Samuel 19:1-24.) Where Christ is truly known, there is not a mere momentary excitement, but abiding love to Jesus and increasing faith in His finished work — such faith as must confess him before men, at whatever cost. Surely we see this in Paul and in all the members of the early Church; and so I read in our chapter, “But Jonathan, Saul’s son, delighted much in David.” “Delighted much!” We should notice at this point of the history a striking parallel. At this time the kingdom of Israel was outwardly governed by the house of Saul. But God had rejected him and his house, and Samuel had anointed David. And faith knew him as the anointed and coming king. In like manner faith now knows from the record of God’s word that the glory of this world, with its kingdoms and its god, is all judged and about to be swept away at the coming of the King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace. Well, so it was, I say, in Israel at this time. The hatred that is now manifested to Christ and His true followers was in a like manner shown by Saul to David and his true little band of men. Do not forget this — will you? for you will find the world’s hatred to Christ a true test of your own heart. Thus was Jonathan tested. “Saul spake to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David.” And what does the loving Jonathan do? He told David. Is not this beautiful? O that you and I may go and do likewise! Have you not at times been greatly surprised to find hatred to Jesus where you least expected it? You may have been invited to meet a few friends, nearly all professors. (Saul was a professor, by the by.) Very soon you find that any subject or person may be introduced for conversation, except your much-loved Jesus, in whom you greatly delight. And as to the thought

that He is the glorious coming King, you must not name such a thing. Oh rise up from among these hypocrites! Go first and tell Jesus, and then speak for Jesus as Jonathan spake for David; or remember, if you do not, you, silently at least, deny your Lord, by even sitting with them who practically welcome Barabbas and say, Away with the returning Lord.

“Jonathan spake good of David to Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?”

Now was not this a good confession? We find Paul in the same track: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” And Jesus says, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38.) And as Jonathan spake good of David, O cannot we speak good of Jesus? Has he not wrought a great salvation? Apart from Jesus, is there anything truly great or good! Has any other one glorified God about sin, as He has on the cross? Does any other thing or person give eternal life but the risen Jesus? Nay, does any other thing give peace even to a guilty conscience but the blood of Jesus? I am not aware of anything in the history of this world, of all nations, that enables man to stand on the brink of the grave, that valley of Elah, and look steadfastly into eternity, and say, We are always confident. “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” And far more, tell me, Has not Jesus brought life and incorruptibility to light? Yea, though the self-existing One, by whom all created things began to exist; yet has he not through death taken a new place for man, beyond sin and death? And, as the beginning of that new creation, is he not what we in resurrection shall for ever be, “when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality?” And is He so soon to be manifested who is indeed God manifest — ineffable centre of universal worship, whose smile shall fill a universe with joy? Oh in these few remaining days of His rejection here below, shall we be ashamed of Jesus? As our Jonathan confessed David in the doomed house of Saul, so, and more, may we confess Jesus before this doomed world!

Come, let us now pursue our Jonathan a little further in 1 Samuel 20:1-42. Saul still seeks the life of David. “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him (that was born) after the Spirit, even so it is now.” But persecution marks out the true followers of Jesus: “Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations.” This was very tenderly expressed, but it showed how the heart of Jesus valued the faithful fellowship of His disciples, however dull, when the outward house sought His life and took counsel to put Him to death. Surely this was beautifully foreshadowed in our chapter. Precious to David was the sympathy of devoted Jonathan. How it sweetened the bitter cup! Those words, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?” tell out fully how the heart of Jesus beats for all the members here below. And do they not also show how dear to Him is sympathy with the hated and persecuted ones? Oh what a strange thing man’s hatred of Jesus was, and still is! Have you not noticed from that day to this, man’s hatred is in proportion to the Christian’s faithfulness to Christ? Is it not so? Who are really hated by the great outward house of our day, but the despised few who desire to really tread in His blessed footsteps? Are any others slandered and hated as these? But, from the days of Paul to this moment, the worst lie

against Christ is this, that if we give to Him the honour of complete and everlasting salvation, without works of our own as a make-weight, that this doctrine is immoral, or at least will lead to disobedience, and carelessness of walk. How fully this lie is rebuked in our Jonathan. “Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.” Precious obedience, heart obedience, fruit of faith! I might point everywhere in the New Testament and find the same fruit. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” is the first impulse of the new-born Paul. Is this the language of your heart to your precious Lord? “Whatsoever thy soul desireth I will even do it for thee.” This goes very far beyond the law, good and holy and just as it was. It is the heaven-implanted desire to do the will of the Lord, even whatsoever He desireth me to do. And there was this readiness in Jonathan to serve David in the house of his father, and to show David the disposition of his father, be it kindness or hatred. I think we may say he was truly David’s man in the house of Saul.

Judging from outward appearance, David was the rejected outcast; and yet how beautifully faith knew him as the chosen of Jehovah. “And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.” And when the new moon was come, and the king sat in his seat, David’s place was empty; yet how fully did Jonathan confess David, though this confession brought down, upon him the severe anger of his father, Saul. “And he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse and rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.” Still Jonathan speaks good for David. “Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?” “If they have hated me, they will hate you also.”

“And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him.” Well did he now know the determined hatred of his father to David. How much his heart felt as the arrow of warning was shot, we may gather from this: “As soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times; and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city.” The sorrows of God’s anointed David were but shadows of the deeper sorrows of God’s only begotten Son, whether we look at the manifold sufferings by which He was perfected as the Captain of our salvation, or at the suffering of death, by which He is now glorified at the right hand of God. No doubt, the pressure on the heart of David was used in giving utterance to those then future sorrows of our Jesus. But at this point of Jonathan’s history — and it is a solemn point — we must remember that David was now an outcast from the house of Saul, and that the Lord Jesus is at this moment an outcast from this world. That as Saul hated David, so, and more so, has this world hated, rejected, cast out, yea murdered, the anointed Christ of God. And that He is still the hated and rejected Jesus. But there was another side of the picture. God had rejected the house of Saul, though He long bore with it; yea, during all the time of David’s rejection. And He had chosen and anointed David. And the Lord was with David, even as He was not with Saul. Surely Samuel knew this, and David knew this, though faith was sorely tried. And Jonathan knew this, as we shall see in his next and last interview with David. But I must now tell you of the one thing

lacking in our Jonathan. It is very painful to do so; shall I tell you why? Ah, there are so many Jonathans in our day. Is it not sad to know Jesus, and to love Jesus, to confess Him, to delight much in Jesus, to desire to serve Him in this evil world, and yet to stop short of the one thing lacking? What can this one thing be? My reader may say, through the grace of God, All that you have said of this typical Jonathan as yet, is true of me. You can then remember the time when God brought your sins before you, and the adversary was permitted to harass your soul, as Goliath defied the armies of Israel at the valley of Elah, and you found no deliverance, no peace, until the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus to your soul, the sent one of God, and told you how He had finished the great work of redemption, and that through His precious blood your sins were for ever gone, as the Philistines fled from the valley of Elah. And did this win your heart to Jesus, as Jonathan was knit to David? You may have had many a crushing of human pride since then. But can you say, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee? And have you been stripped of all self-righteousness? Are you fairly shut up to Jesus? Is He all and you nothing? Is He precious to your soul? Can you say, I delight much in Him? For sure I am He is much delighted in, even as we learn the emptiness of all else, and the worthlessness of all that is of man. And have you confessed Jesus in your own society, in, it may be, your own house? Have you held on, speaking well of Jesus in the face of all hatred and opposition! As Jonathan was David's witness, David's man, have you been the witness of Jesus? Has it been your delight to hold communion with and serve Jesus, as Jonathan delighted to tell David and serve him? If so, is it not painful that there should be all this, and yet come short of the one thing lacking? Did you notice the last few words as to our Jonathan? (chap. 20: 42), "And David arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city." And where did David depart to? In chapter 22 we find him in the cave of Adullam. "And when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men." But there was one that was not with him, and that one was even our Jonathan. But perhaps you ask, Is it possible that Jonathan knew of the coming reign of David, and not be with him? Well, let us read Jonathan's last interview with David, and we shall see there can be no mistake about that.

"And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the Lord. And David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house" — and that house the house of the rejected Saul. Yes, it is quite clear he well knew the coming reign of his beloved David; and as well did he know the rejection of Saul's house: and yet he failed to go outside and take his place, the true place of faith, with God's chosen and coming king. Do you know, my reader, the end of the present age? Do you know that when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh? — that judgment must begin at the house of God? — that as the apostate house of Saul was cut off, so shall apostate Christendom be spited out of His mouth? Now do you not see much around you bearing this character of soul? What a day of blowing of trumpets! Let the Hebrews hear what we are doing! Never was there such a day of man's doing and trumpeting. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is our Lord's own description of the last state of the great outward doomed house. (Revelation 3:1-22.) Great in the world, indeed, was Saul when compared with the outcast

David, but how wretched and miserable his end! But do you know, my reader, that the earth-rejected Jesus is even now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that He will quickly come, and with an assembling shout call up His saints to meet Him in the air? (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.) And that afterwards He will come in judgment on them that have not obeyed the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.); and that then the glorious reign of the now rejected Jesus will surely take place? Do you say, Yes, I know all these things will surely come to pass. And do you know that God has by His Spirit gathered a few of the Lord's redeemed ones to the now despised Jesus, as David's four hundred were gathered to him in the cave of Adullam? True, they were a sorry company, those four hundred, but they were gathered to such a David. Ah! if Jonathan had been one of them, would his body have ever been fastened to the walls of Bethshan? But it is high time to put the question to you: Where are you? Are you building wood, hay, and stubble in the great house of Saul — the outward, showy Christendom — that which professes to be the Church of God, but which has indeed become the church of the world? Or have you taken your place outside the camp with the rejected but coming Jesus? Ah! I think I hear you say, Oh! those separated Christians, they are such dreadful people! So our Jonathan might have said of David's four hundred. But what of Jesus? Is He not worthy that you should forsake everything, and identify yourself alone with Him? You will find a few others, through mercy, in the same blessed place; though indeed the religious world tries hard to make them a sect, and, as they were in the days of Paul, a sect everywhere spoken against. I do not mince the matter. There is the great outward house like the house of Saul; and there is separation from it, and identification with Jesus in His rejection, like the four hundred with David; and if you are a Christian, you are certainly in one place or the other. Perhaps you say, "I get my bread in this great worldly system." Well, that is, I grant, a very serious matter. But so did Jonathan, and you see the end of it in his case — walls of Bethshan. But, says another, Do you not see the influence I have by staying where I am? what a congregation! what opportunities to speak for Jesus? Do you think I should have the same, or anything like the same opportunities, if I took my place outside in the name of Jesus? And think how much my own relations would be against it! And to leave all the splendour and comfort of all that is admired in the world, where one can truly speak for Jesus. Ah, my friend, Jonathan could have said all this. But why did he lose his reward for his love and service to David? and why did he come to the shameful walls of Bethshan? Was it not because he acted on the very same principle that so many act upon now? He clung to the outward, which God had rejected, and failed to take his place with the poor and despised followers of God's anointed one. You know, my reader, that God is not with the bazaars and worldliness and tolerated evil of the professing church. If you delight much in Jesus; if you desire to do whatsoever He desireth you; then surely His own voice will be heard in these precious scriptures concerning Himself. Oh, is it not sad to be spending your time in and for that which is to be destroyed at the coming of the Lord? Occasional visits and communion, and then back to the outward house of Saul! Ah, this will not do. You may have Jonathan's four marks of true conversion to Christ, and yet lose your reward. Like Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1.) — 1. You may have been filled with love to Jesus. Beholding Him the Lamb of God that has put away your sins. 2. Stripped of self for Jesus. (Ver. 4.) 3. Make full confession of Jesus, delighting much in Him. (Chap. 19: 1-5.) 4. You may have desired to do whatsoever Jesus desireth. (Chap. 20: 4.) But, as Rebecca left all for her coming Isaac, are you willing to leave all and take your place of devoted identification with Jesus?

We hear no more of our Jonathan from the sad, sad moment he left David in the wood of Ziph! (O beware of doing the same!) until we come to the last chapter (31) of his history. And there will be a last chapter in your history and mine. It is not here a question of salvation: some shall be saved so as by fire, and all their works burned up. (1 Corinthians 3:1-23.) And did not Jonathan lose all the reward of his early devoted love and service? Slain on Gilboa with his wretched father, and his body nailed with his to the walls of Bethshan.

David's lament shows how much Jonathan lost. (2 Samuel 1:1-27.) These are but a few feeble thoughts on this wondrous lesson. Do ponder it well. The dark cloud of judgment on the outward house of Christendom is gathering. Like the house of Saul, its days are numbered; and the glory of our Jesus is about to burst forth. Would you have an abundant entrance into His kingdom and glory? Then do not leave Him in the wood and return to the house. Blessed companionship with Jesus! Oh! "let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp [of the religious world] bearing his reproach."

Saul's javelin was allowed to miss David: but the world was allowed to nail Jesus to the cross. And "know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Can we be outside Saul's house, and yet alive in it? Are you, my reader, dead with Christ? are you risen with Him? Then surely you are called to be, as it were, one of David's four hundred — a witness of the dead and risen Christ. Oh, if you have been washed in His blood, saved by His finished work, then may He give you, and give me, grace to cleave to Himself, with full purpose of heart. C. S.

Perfection; where is it, and what is it?

"Let us go on to perfection." In many souls, there is an earnest desire after increased holiness in these last days; and in the midst of so much declension and coldness of heart, that desire, and longing of heart for holiness and consecration to God, should be encouraged in every possible way according to God. With this object I now write a few thoughts on this subject. To help every anxious soul is my desire, and to hinder none. As I know this will be read by those deeply interested in this subject, with them I can speak freely. I feel one question pressing upon my heart, and I know it has pressed on many of your hearts. How is it that so many of those professing holiness of heart, and many sincerely seeking it, have been so sadly discouraged? so many disappointed? so many almost giving up the pursuit in despair? And have you not heard precious souls, who have, and do, profess holiness, ask this question also — How is it there is so little growth? We attend holiness conferences, meetings, and preachings, and it is painfully felt there is little or no growth: how is this? The Lord, I believe, will enable me to answer these solemn inquiries. And I am sure He alone can.

It is then of all importance, that we rightly understand this portion of scripture, and all others which speak on this subject. Our blessed Lord says "He that receiveth seed into the good ground, is no that heareth the word and understandeth it; which bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." There is no uncertainty as to this, then, that all real growth and fruit-bearing must flow from a right reception and right understanding of the word of God.

Now have we been sufficiently careful in this matter. Take these few words, "Let us go on unto perfection." Who are the persons thus addressed? What are they to go on from, and what is the

perfection the are to go on to? We may have carelessly quoted and used this text, as though it were addressed to all Christians; and as if it meant we were to go on, as some say, crucifying the flesh or mortifying it, either progressively or by one sudden act of faith, until we attain to purity within. Any way perfect purity within is the perfection suppose by many to be spoken of here. For the present I will leave the inquiry as to crucifying or mortifying the flesh, and speak on that later on. May I ask you now to go with me to this epistle to the Hebrews, and calmly yet closely inquire what is meant in these words we have before us. One thing is very clear, the whole epistle, and therefore these words, wore addressed to professedly believing Hebrews. And we must not forget that great numbers of them were very zealous of the law. (Acts 21:20.) And that they were very dull of hearing, as it is written, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age," or perfect, see margin. (Hebrews 5:12.) Surely we need to study these words carefully, and then bear in mind that the persons specially addressed were Jewish professors, and were babes as to the full doctrine of Christ.

You may have noticed that divisions, or sects, have the same sad tendency, or worse; so as to keep us carnal and babes; and that the apostle could not speak unto the Corinthians as perfect or of full growth; but only as unto babes. This is most clearly put in 1 Corinthians 2:6-7; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. And if we would rightly understand this subject, we must bow to these solemn admonitions. But was this word only addressed to believing Jews, who were in great danger of going back to Judaism? are not the great mass of Christians in division? Yes. And are not great multitudes of professing Christians gone, or going back to judaism, to forms and ceremonies? It is too true. Then surely there is a voice to us now, as well as to them then — "Let us go on to perfection." This whole epistle to the Hebrews is on this subject. The going on from that which made nothing perfect, to that which for ever perfects.

God’s ways are not as our ways; we may, yea, we often do, look within to find perfection. But this is not God’s way in this epistle. Granted to come to perfection is the purpose and object of the epistle; to lead these babes on to that. But what is the way or course pursued? The perfect One is first set before us. Yes, God’s way is very simple. The law made nothing perfect; all perfection is found in Christ, the perfect one. Thus God begins. In chapter 1 the glories of the perfect One, the Son of God, shine forth. God had borne with the church at Jerusalem in tender grace. He knew how hard it was for them to give up all that was visible. The glorious temple in which they still worshipped: its sacrifices and ritual; its ancient priesthood; what a power all this had; and then the reign of their Messiah postponed (Acts 3:19-21) — I say, all that glorious reign postponed; for a time every earthly promise set aside. And then we should remember, the worship of the early church was purely spiritual. No place of worship on earth; no separate priesthood; positively nothing for the natural eye to rest upon: even Jesus was gone up to heaven. And more, the Roman armies were now soon to come, and utterly destroy the temple, trample under foot the city of Jerusalem, and after fearful slaughter of the rejecting Jews, the remnant were to be scattered amongst all nations. All this was present to the mind of God. Now was it not most tender and gracious of our God to give them this very epistle, to draw them from the shadows to Christ? The destruction of Jerusalem was near, they knew it not; but God knew it. The destruction of the great

apostate Babylon is near; men know it not but God knows it. (1 Thessalonians 5:3; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24.) God, in tender love, would now draw us from the present Judaised Christianity, that makes nothing perfect; to that adorable perfect One, and His over perfect work.

Even the writer of this epistle is purposely kept out of sight. God speaks, and the writer identifies himself with the believing remnant of Israel. God who had spoken by prophets, now speaks, or hath spoken, unto us by or in His Son. God was manifest, God spake in Him, who is the appointed heir, not merely of Palestine, but of all things. "By whom he made the universe." Glory after glory shines forth. He was not made, but "beingthe brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," or exact expression of His substance, "upholding all things by the word of his power."

Now follows a marvellous glory of the Son of God. "When he had by himself purged our sins, [or made purgation for our sins] sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." In Ephesians 1:1-23 we see Jesus raised from the dead and ascended up above all principalities and powers, as the head of the body his church. But here in His right and title as Son, having finished that amazing work, the propitiation for sins, in the glory of His own person, He entered the highest heavens, and sat down. How far this exceeded the utmost expectation of the Jews! Their Messiah is sat down, not in the temple, but in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But do you ask what have these glories to do with our perfection, or with going on to perfection? They have all to do with it. Truly it is not man’s way; He would be constantly occupied with himself: but God thus unfolds the varied glories of the Son — the perfect One; and "we all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Then let me ask you to take this chapter (Hebrews 1:1-14), and look to God to enable you by the Spirit to behold the open face, the unveiled glories of the Son. Do not take a passing glance; but behold the Lamb of God; meditate on each distinct sentence. The Jews had justly boasted of angelic visits and ministries, to their fathers, and they had great veneration for those heavenly beings; but now trace the lofty contrasts of the Son, with all created beings, all angels shall worship Him: all are His servants. He is truly God: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Truly man: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Marvellous grace to be linked with this glorious One, He who is Jehovah’s fellow. He takes the feeble little flock, and owns them in resurrection as His fellows. Perfect humanity! Precious grace! And this is so real that the angels which are His servants minister to us also, so we read "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall inherit salvation?" Oh think of this! as we pass along this weary journey, those holy beings, who do His pleasure, attend our path; and His pleasure is our service.

Read on in chapter 2 and you will find solemn warnings, lest the professing Hebrew Christians should slip away from so great salvation. There you will have the authority of His word. We have seen the glories of the person of the Son, now the authority of His word. It was confirmed by the apostles who heard, God bearing witness. Again He is contrasted with angels; the world to come is put in subjection to Him as Son of man, not to them. We do not see all things yet put under Him. "But we see Jesus." Oh meditate! behold this wondrous sight! the suffering of His death! the sufferings of His life here below! now crowned with glory — perfected as the captain of our

salvation. And in bringing sons to glory, He takes them into oneness with Himself before God. How precious every sentence! "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." What joy this gives our blessed Jesus, saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." "And again," Jesus says, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." And this introduces Him as our merciful and faithful high priest. He did not thus take angels by the hand, but He took the seed of Abraham. All this is specially addressed to the believing seed of Abraham, and is full of deepest instruction to us, in these last days. Do you say, "But what has this to do with christian perfection? It is so different from all I have read on the subject."

Well, it is God's epistle on perfection. Truly His ways are not as our ways, neither His thoughts as our thoughts. Our thoughts on perfection would load us to the most unprofitable task of considering ourselves. Not so this epistle; not so the thoughts of God. No, He sets before us His glorious Son; and then says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest or our profession, Christ Jesus."

If you want leanness and spiritual poverty consider yourself; be occupied with yourself. If you want to he unwise, compare yourselves amongst yourselves. If you would grow in grace, in holiness, in conformity to Christ, then consider Jesus as thus set before us. There must be more prayerful study of the precious word. And now read the solemn warnings against unbelief — and this done, then the glories of our great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. This brings us to the condition of these Hebrew professors of Christ. They had not gone on to perfection. They were only babes in divine truth, having a tendency to go back to the law, and was not their condition too sad a picture of Christianity in this day? We shall see. In chapter 6 the persons spoken of are the professing Hebrew believers. And the writer identified himself with them. Then keeping before his mind the glories of the Son of God, he says, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ [or the word of the beginning of Christ], let us go on unto perfection." Now mark, this could not have been said to those who were of full growth, or perfect. To those who had fully given up, or gone on from, Judaism, to Christ, where could they go on unto beyond Christ?

Judaism was a system of repetitions, because it made nothing perfect. In Christ all is divinely perfect, and therefore cannot be repeated.

Hence we read "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God." With the Jew of old, it was sinning and repenting, over and over again, and with the repentance, the blood of bulls, and goats. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" The repentance of the Jew of old never brought him into the presence of God. The way into the holiest was not opened, he, so to speak, stood without, afar off.

Before the death of Christ that was the true place. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13.) Is there not a striking contrast in this? And so "of faith toward God." However bright might be the faith of the Jew of old in a coming Messiah — yet how widely different is now the faith in God, which knows that He has sent His Son; that we have redemption through His blood, and the forgiveness of our sins? Yea, to go back from this, to faith toward God, as the Jew had it, before Jesus died, and rose again, would

be to deny that Jesus had come in the flesh. And so "of the doctrine of baptisms [washings] and laying on of hands." These washings of the body, in case of leprosy, or defilements, were once the appointed ordinances of God. And as types and shadows most precious. Look at that sinning Jew: see him lay his hand on the head of that goat, and confess his sin on its head. This was identification, and the sin is imputed to the goat. It is killed, and the Jew is forgiven. This was most precious, in its true place, as the word of the beginning of Christ. But now, since He has died, the one sacrifice for sins, to go back to these offerings, or laying on of hands, would be to trample underfoot the blood of Christ. Oh yes, this is all very clear. But what would you say "of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgments?" This is a very important point of truth. I gather from Josephus and the words of Martha (John 11:24), "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," and the doctrine held by all Jews, to this time, is, that all mankind must die. That there will be a general resurrection of all the dead together; that all must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works; and that the sentence of judgment will be eternal. I know that this is the doctrine of Jews, Mahometans, and Roman, Greek, and Protestant churches. But this is not the complete truth or full truth. It was the beginning of the truth. Death is a reality, and resurrection of the dead is a reality. These are facts and compared with human philosophy great truths. But the resurrection from amongst the dead is the perfect truth or complete truth. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." Many other scriptures confirm this statement. There shall intervene at least a thousand years betwixt the completion of the first resurrection and the second. Revelation 20:1-15. But now as to judgment, the fundamental truth involved is of all-importance. If all have to come into judgment, then must all be condemned, for all are guilty, and hence the great value of the full, perfect truth as to this.

If I have to stand before God to be judged I should be lost; Christ was offered to bear my sins. He has been judged on the cross as my substitute. My sins, all my sins, have been laid on Him. Why it is just this that makes the difference. My substitute has thus been judged on the cross. The rejecters of Christ must be judged before the great white throne. Do you not see that? Judgment on sin, there must be! Which is it? Is your judgment past, or future? It cannot be both, thank God. "Hath everlasting life and shall not come unto judgment (Greek), but is passed from death unto life." These are the believer’s three divine certainties from the lips of Jesus. John 5:24.

Thus the doctrine of death to all men, resurrection of the dead, and judgment, contains the beginning of truth but is not the full truth of Christianity. Christ coming for those that wait for Him (without sin unto salvation, having borne their sins), a thousand years at least before the judgment of the great white throne, is the more complete truth — in other words, perfection. It is this blessed hope, for which all believers waited, before the professing church went back to Judaism. On this subject let me ask you to go on unto perfection; do look to the Lord to give you the Spirit’s thoughts on the following scriptures in reference to this. See John 14:1-3; Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Php 3:20-21; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Titus 2:12-13; Revelation 20:5-12.

Now this wondrous privilege, of being raised from among the dead at the coming of Christ, or of being changed if living until that event, and in one moment as He is, in contrast with the rest of

mankind, being left a thousand years, and rising to judgment; I say it is this that marks the infinite value of the atonement, as applied to those who believe in Him. And therefore now to go back to the doctrine of a general resurrection of the dead, and a general judgment, is, though ignorantly, to undervalue the death of Christ.

Now do not suppose that scripture contradicts itself; oh never. "Well certainly I thought," some, will say, "that Matthew 25:1-46 taught the general resurrection of all the dead; and that all would stand before the judgment seat, both sheep and goats." How carelessly we read scripture! I cannot tell you how surprised I was to find that not only does this solemn chapter not bring all the dead before this judgment, but if you read it you will not find any of the dead in this scene at all. They are living nations who shall be dealt with according to their reception of the testimony and treatment of the Jewish remnant, when Jesus comes to reign. But shall not we stand before the judgment (beema) of Christ, and be rewarded according to our labour or service? Ah, most blessedly true; but is that the same thing as standing to be judged for our sins? Surely not. Let us search the scriptures, and leave behind all that hinders our going on to perfection. Christians have no conception how far they have gone back, or, rather, they have never gone forward to perfection.

We must not overlook that some of these professors were in great danger of relapsing to Judaism. The class here spoken of, "once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." These are described by the Lord as "he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself." (Matthew 13:20; Matthew 13:23.) Let us rejoice with trembling to see how far a person may go, and yet be deceived! such was the light and sense of Christ as the heavenly gift, and power of the Holy Ghost, and authority of the word of God. And so near did the world to come appear to the early church, that a person could not possibly leave Judaism and take a place, if only in profession, in such a scene, without being greatly altered outwardly. And great joy anon within. But the testing time came, and if there was no root, there would be no fruit.

Now to give up Christ, and go back to Judaism, was to crucify Him — such an apostate from Christ would have to deny and curse Him, before he could be restored back to Judaism. This brings out the force of the argument. Let not such an one be deceived. There was once the renewal of repentance, in the law, but now that kind of renewal is impossible. The ritual is set aside, and was about to be utterly destroyed. No doubt the returning Jew would again take his sin-offering, and laying on his hands expect to be renewed afresh. Impossible! It was terrible. It was putting the Son of God to open shame. The sad mistake, however, that many have made as to this, is that it referred to a Christian; that if he fell into sin it would make it impossible to restore him to repentance. This would be worse than Judaism of old; for there was repentance and restoration then to him. Nothing can be more certain than this, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If we see what is spoken of here, the giving up Christ, and going back to Judaism, all is clear. Of true Christians He says, "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

It is now high time we went on to perfection; therefore "let us go on to perfection." I do not see, however, how we could have gone on until all these points were cleared up; do you? As this is God’s epistle on perfection, we cannot do better than follow the order God has laid down in it.

First, then, as to priesthood. The principle of a human priesthood had been tried for fifteen hundred years; an ordained priesthood, separated from the people, consecrated to the service and worship of God. All nations bear witness that this is a principle that man esteems. It is remarkable how this principle, sometimes called the clergy and laity, was adopted by every idolatrous worship on earth. The rude Briton, the polished Greek, or the ancient Egyptians, and Chaldeans. All had their priesthood. But in Israel "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." So that the Jewish priesthood, had not only antiquity, but divine authority.

All this is fully admitted, and stated in this epistle. Was there not then perfection in this ordained priesthood? No; for "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec?" Then, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity — a change also of the law." "For the law made nothing perfect."

Now think what a change is here spoken of. The gorgeous solemn service of the priesthood — yea the whole system, and ministration of the law is set aside, and why? because these made nothing perfect. No perfection by the law. The Jew had the temple, the priesthood, the law, with all its beautiful ritual. What had the Christian? a material temple on earth? not one, except the Christians themselves, which temple are ye. A priesthood? not one, if even Christ were on earth he should not be a priest. A ritual service? no, he must beware of going back to such beggarly elements. If the Jew had all that the eye could rest upon, with delight: what has the Christian? Let it be reckoned up. It is this, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens!"

I would give a very simple illustration. It is a bright clear morning, how very far you can see; but stay, how is it all the lamps of the city are put out? They were very useful in the dark. True, but they would be of no use in the light. The sun shines in all his brightness in the heavens. This is perfect creation-light, and the lamps and the darkness have passed away. The priests were the lamps, useful in the time of darkness. But now the true light shineth brighter than the noon-day sun. This one great high priest, after the order of Melchisedec, the royal priest, had been clearly foretold, in their own psalms and prophets. But there are again, in the professing church, priests and candles. Yes, it is sadly true, and why? Because the mass are not going on to perfection, but back to the darkness of Judaism.

If you light the lamps of a city in the full blaze of noon-day light, it is saying the light of the sun is not enough. If you ordain a human priesthood on earth, you deny the all-sufficiency of Christ, our one great high priest, set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. Let the sun arise and the lamps disappear. Let Christ have His own blessed place before the soul, and a separate priesthood must vanish like a dissolving view. He hath an unchanging priesthood; He is able to save to the uttermost. Having loved His He loveth them to the end. He never fails to wash our feet; to restore our souls. Truly God, really man, infinite power, tenderest sympathy. Let me beg of you again, to study the high priesthood of Jesus, as revealed in this epistle, and thus go on, for in Him you will find perfection. The second point I name, as to perfection, is access to God. You will read a description of the first tabernacle and service in Hebrews 9:1-7. Then "the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest, whilst as the first tabernacle was yet standing." And that all these services and sacrifices "could not make him that

did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." We will notice the conscience when we come to chapter 10. And now as to access to God. The law and its priesthood could not bring the worshipper into the presence of God. It fell short of this, could not finish or perfect it. But we, that is all believers, have boldness to enter into the holiest "by the blood of Jesus." Now this is perfection. I cannot say to a well instructed Christian, as to access, Let us go on. He is there, he knows it is the place of every child of God by the blood of Jesus — in contrast with the Jew under law, who could never enter. The priesthood could not bring him there. Christ has, and thus again in Christ, we have found perfection. There are no distinctions of priests and people, clergy and laity in the holiest. How can there be, since all are alike brought there, as purged worshippers? The very principle of priest and laity is, I am in, and you are out; or I am near to God, and you far off — so far that I will be your mouthpiece to God, and God's mouthpiece to you. This is terrible wickedness. If every believer has boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and yet the pretended priest says of the laity, I am nearer to God than you, then he either does not believe in the blood of Jesus, or he believes in something of greater value than the blood of Jesus, which brings him nearer to God than the believer who has only the blood of Jesus.

If the term Clergyman is only used to convey the thought that he is a servant of Christ, to minister the word of God to Christ's sheep, I have little to say, except, that I judge it better not to use such unscriptural and dangerous distinctions as clergy and laity; and I am sure, if Christ has His true place before the soul, all such distinctions will be distasteful. I love the scriptural terms of evangelist, pastor, &c. The third point I ask you to notice is perfection as to redemption. The Christian can say, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." O blessed fact! who can tell its value? Now what could the Jew of old say? Certainly he had been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt; but as to sins? Well, the most he could say was the sins of the nation have been confessed on the head of the scape goat. The sins of three hundred and sixty days — the Jewish year. But when? On the day of atonement. Yes, and the goat has been sent far away, to return no more. And the blood of atonement has been shed, and sprinkled on the mercy seat. But blessed as all this was as pointing forward; yet it could not give the Jew complete redemption from sins for one year of three hundred and sixty days. And if it could? If he could have said, I have redemption for one year, would that have been perfect redemption? Certainly not! far from it. If you were to give £10 for the redemption of a poor slave you greatly pitied for one year, would that be perfect redemption? Why, it would only make the poor man's case worse, as he lapsed again to slavery, and cruel bondage. No, if it is perfect redemption, you must pay down a sum that shall set him free for ever. Now it is written of our precious Jesus that "by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

He did not redeem us for three hundred and sixty days: that would not have been perfect. My reader, if you have redemption, remember, it is, it must be, eternal redemption. Oh how few grasp this blessed fact! How few believe it! Have you eternal redemption by the blood of Jesus, infinite in value? How can it be less than eternal in efficacy? This is the value the blood of Jesus has before God, for all the washed, redeemed on earth and in heaven; and it is always the same. Is it before your soul as it is before God? I can tell you — who have never yet given it this place; all who speak of oft-recurring masses or sacrifices for sins; and all who speak of a fresh application of the blood of Jesus — that if you have redemption at all, you have eternal redemption. You will see this, if look again at the illustration of the slave. If his redemption is not perfect, or complete, and for ever;

if only for one, two, or ten years, then there will need a fresh application of money, to purchase a further redemption. But if redeemed for ever, there can be no such fresh application. Now if you have not gone on to the perfection, in the blood of Jesus once offered, for eternal redemption, then sure, as you have imperfect knowledge or views of that redemption so surely you will be uneasy, and inconsistent, and talk about fresh applications of the blood of Christ. The scripture never thus speaks. But you say many professing holiness do thus speak, as though they constantly needed fresh application of the blood of Jesus. Then it is evident they have not gone on to perfection, as to redemption. For they ought to know, and all God's dear children ought to know, that every Christian has eternal redemption in Christ; and eternal redemption is perfect redemption. Therefore we have now gone on until we have again found perfection in Christ. The fourth point I notice is perfection as to the conscience. We are distinctly assured, the law could never give this perfection. "For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then they would have ceased to be offered." (Hebrews 10:1-2.) Do take this chapter and weigh every sentence. The blood of bulls and goats could not possibly take away sins. And now we hear the eternal Son, in the counsels of the past, engaging to come, and accomplish this vast work, cost what it may. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." This is twice repeated. "He taketh away the first" (the law, that which made nothing perfect) "that he may establish the second." "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus once." This is a marvellous depth, perfect consecration, separation to God! But this is not by an act of our own. He said it, He did it. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Oh, let this one offering of the body of Jesus Christ once, have its full place before your soul. Mark well, that all our sins — I speak to those who are saved — were there laid on Him — all our sins were then future. No finite sacrifice could have thus met us, nor could have met God. These could never take away sins. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand or God." Was ever glory like this! And as everlasting is its efficacy to us, as its glory to Him. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Oh, do you believe this? can we go on any farther? can there be any perfection beyond "for over perfected?" That which is infinite cannot be repeated. No, one infinite act for ever perfects all the sanctified, by this offering of the body of Jesus once.

If we have gone on to this perfection, by this one offering, then the worshipper, once purged, has no more conscience of sins. He may be conscious of sin and failure, and there will surely be repentance and confession. For this is God's way of restoring the soul in interrupted communion. This is the washing of water by the word. But as to the conscience, all sins have been judged, and borne by Jesus; and so put away, that they can be remembered no more. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." God says it, and there are two witnesses. The Son of God, having finished this very work, sat down on the right hand of God; and the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us. May God give unto us more exalted thoughts of this perfection we have in Christ! "For ever perfected." No man that understands this can talk of fresh applications of the blood of Christ, or of repeated or continued sacrifices for sins. The whole system of repetitions, and fresh applications, is taken away; and this one sacrifice stands alone, and for ever perfects. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Oh, let us take our happy place within the veil; "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

What I would press is this, that in all this that has come before us, there is no attainment. This is the perfection of every child of God. He may he only a babe, and not know it. But it is his all the same. For all this was addressed to those who were only babes; and written to lead them on to perfection. And note also, this perfection is not in themselves, it is in Christ Jesus. Were you aware, my reader, there was so much on perfection in this epistle? "I did not even know it was upon the subject at all," some will say. Well, do you now see that perfection in Christ is put in direct contrast with the law, which made nothing perfect? The human priesthood made nothing perfect! Our great high priest has perfected the work of atonement, and is perfect now, set down on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, able to save to the uttermost, and will save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him.

Under law the veil hid God from man. The veil is now rent, and the only true place of every child of God is within, not without, that veil. And as to redemption, the death of Jesus, infinite in value, could not obtain an imperfect redemption; so it cannot be a temporary redemption from sin; it is, it must be, perfect, eternal redemption. Oh precious, oh priceless gift! Bless the Lord, O my soul. I have not redemption for a week or a year; but eternal redemption, praise the Lord for ever!

And, as we have seen as to the conscience, the sacrifices of the law could never make the comers thereto perfect, as regards the conscience; but the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ, by which we are sanctified, also for ever perfects. Now this is grace beyond all human thought! This truth can only be received by faith; faith that bows to the word of God.

You say, perhaps, "Well, but if I should in an hour of temptation fail, and sin, do I not lose all this perfection in Christ at once?" Now this was just where the law failed, and a repetition of sacrifice was needed. And this is just where the one sacrifice of Christ does not fail. No single point in the whole range of truth tests the soul like this, as to whether I am on Jewish or christian ground. If I want a fresh sprinkling of blood, am on Jewish ground; and not on the for-ever-perfected ground of the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ. So that all who seek relief by masses, or repetitions of any kind, reduce the death of the Son of God to the level of the sacrifice of bulls and goats. Nothing can be more certain than this. But you say, "How then are the believer’s sins dealt with?" Ah, that is just the very marrow of the question. They have been dealt with on the cross. "What, my future sins?" I never ought to say or think of committing future sins, but to follow holiness. "True, but if I should sin again, would not that he a future sin?" Well, as to that, do not you see that all our sins were future when Christ died for them on the cross? Did He die for some of our sins only, or for all of them? He has been the substitute for all our sins first; and then all were future. They have all of them been dealt with in the glorious person of our substitute, Jesus Christ the Son of God — perfectly dealt with, so dealt with, that we are for ever perfected as to the conscience. That precious blood, once shed, for ever cleanseth us from all sin. And if you are walking in His light, you will know this. Oh how few give this one sacrifice its true place before the soul. I do bless God it has its true place before Him. He sees the blood, and He says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." And if this were not so, if all our sins had not been laid on Him, then would He have often to have suffered since the foundation of the world. Do you say, But when the believer sins, is not the Holy Spirit grieved? and does the believer not feel distress of soul and interruption of communion; then what is he to do? If he is not to go to mass, or seek fresh applications of the blood of Jesus, what is he to do? He must assuredly go to his Father in confession: confession to God our Father is the only

means of receiving forgiveness of sins. "If we confess our sins, he is, faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And for one who has given up Judaism, and taken his place in professed faith in this one offering of Jesus Christ, and commits the fearful wilful sin of going back to the many sacrifices of the law for sin, he will find there are no longer such many sacrifices; and there can on that ground be no more mercy, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Read the solemn warnings to the end of chapter 10.

If all this be true, and it is true, how deeply important it is, to have faith, unshaken faith, in the everlasting efficacy of this one sacrifice for sins, once offered. Surely it is; and is not this the very reason why the Spirit of God brings before us the cloud of witnesses who believed God? Read chapter 11. But what is this in chapter 12 — the race? The race, that which man puts at the beginning of his books on perfection, God puts at the end. This is very striking. In all the books I have read on perfection, there is the race, sometimes long, and sometimes short, but the race first, and perfection at the end of the race, the race to get it. Just so. Now mark this contrast: we have ten chapters, to shew out the perfections of Christ; and how we are for ever perfected by His work; then another chapter to shew the immense importance of believing this — then comes the practical race. God’s way is right; all other ways are wrong. Now if you have been after holiness the wrong way, backwards, is there any wonder you should have been so disappointed?

Now for the race. This must be run with patience — not an impatient leap of faith. Israel not leap into Canaan. No, there must be, mind, not the eye on one another; but the eye on Jesus. Oh what patient endurance! Consider Him — looking off everything else, to Jesus. I see persons professing holiness, clinging to all kinds of systems of men, where evil reigns. There is no laying aside, no coming out from among them, no separation from iniquity. Ah, this is not the race. Be in earnest; let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. You will find the path of Christ a thorny path, but it shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

"There is one thing I am not yet clear about," my reader may say, "and before we go any farther I should like to tell you." What is it? "If God accepts us within the veil, for ever perfected worshippers, by the one offering of Christ, it seems as if He made light of our sins and failures. I do not mean that He made light of them on the cross; but in His dealings with us here."

Thank you for that thought. It just prepares us for what follows, in this chapter 12. Mark this, God is not dealing with us as sinners again; but as sons; "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Now study this whole subject of fatherly chastening. Is not this chastening really perfect in its place, and lied to every son? I thank my Father for all the chastening I have known, for these forty years. This is a large subject and very precious. Our for-ever-perfect standing in Christ, through His one offering, must not be confounded with practical holiness. A Christian cannot pray at all that he may be for ever perfected. This he is, this has been done, never to be repeated. How can it? There cannot be two perfected-for-evers. This our great high priest hath done. But the Christian cannot pray too much and seek too diligently for practical holiness. This is the very object our Father has in all our chastening. It is all "four our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness:" "and it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." And now having learnt, or having gone on to perfection in Christ, and having learnt the object of God in all our afflictions and chastening, how beautifully the

exhortations come, in their true place. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," &c. It will not do to reverse this divine order, We must not begin to follow holiness, in order to attain to perfection in Christ. No, we must first know our happy place within the veil, for ever perfected, and then God must be before the soul; no less a standard of holiness must we diligently follow. Thank God for the clearness of His word; and if God is thus before the soul, you will not follow men, except any who are wading in the light of His presence. What is it to follow holiness? It is not only victory over our own lust, blessed be God it is this; but it is real separation from all evil. This will cost (if it can be called cost) much. Can you not say, Lord, deliver me from everything that hinders holy communion with thee? The believing remnant of the Hebrews, then, were called to go outside the camp of Judaism, to Christ Jesus, bearing His reproach. The person of the rejected Christ outside the religious world was then, and may I not say now is, the test of perfect faithfulness?

If on will turn to the seven addresses to the Churches, which describe the seven successive stages of the history of Christendom (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22), you will find Thyatira describes exactly the state of the Romish church [See "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Studies & Commentaries page.] Sardis describes as exactly the state of the protestant churches; but Philadelphia describes a feeble remnant, gathered outside the camp, to the person of Jesus, "He that is holy, he that is true." Is there not a voice in this to you? Do you not know that Christendom, both Roman and protestant, is in a state of shameful departure and apostasy from God? The precious Jesus, "the holy and the true," is set before you by the Spirit of God? And if you are seeking to follow holiness, you must follow Him. "Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Far be it from me to write one word, to weaken the earnest desire after holiness. I desire in my inmost soul, to press on with diligent haste, God is my witness; but the right object must be before us. And that object is Christ, outside the camp. If I heard you say, I have just come out of the bath, and I desire to walk in clean paths, and at the very time I saw you walking in a place of mud and filth, how could I believe you? Now what is that awful worldly Christianity around? Mystery, Babylon. Oh let us not merely talk of holiness, but come out of her, cost what it may. "Come out of her, my people," is the word of the Lord. Surely this is intensely practical. Well, let us have Jesus before us, the holy and the true.

Having thus very briefly gone over this epistle on christian perfection — and I trust this paper will serve as an introduction only, for you, to this epistle — I now call your attention to other scriptures, on this deeply important subject. In the second part of this little tract, I would meditate a little with you on two things: our standing before God in Christ; and our state — Christ in us.

These two things certainly go together in scripture. If you are in Christ, Christ is in you; yet these two things are never confounded, but always kept distinct. Where would you like to turn first?

Well, I have heard much said about the Epistle to the Romans on this subject.

Very good. It is most precious to my own soul.

First, then, the standing. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," whether Gentiles without the law, or Jews under the law. And thus, being sinners, on the ground of law none can have a standing before God. Man is guilty, and therefore by works of law cannot be righteous. "But

now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested." The righteousness of God must be perfect righteousness, for whatever is of God is perfect. And how has this righteousness of God, in dealing with man, been manifested, since man is guilty, and under judgment? The answer is very clear — it is the propitiation of the blood of Jesus, borne witness to by law and prophets. Thus the same blessed Jesus is brought before us. Behold the cross of our adorable Lord. Infinite person, infinite sacrifice. Oh, this explains, unfolds, the perfect righteousness of God in passing over the sins of the saints of old, and displays the perfect righteousness of God now, in justifying him who believeth in Jesus. Yes, on this principle God was righteous in reckoning righteousness to the Davids and Abrahams of old. They believed God, and righteousness was reckoned to them. (See chap. 4.) And not only so, "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed (or reckoned), believing on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Here are two things, on the value of which depends our standing before God as to sins.

"He was delivered for our offences." Was this a perfect sacrifice, or an imperfect one? Mark, this is not a work done by us, but a work done for us, by the perfect, infinite Son of God, and must be perfect, as God is perfect. Nay, God has shewn this, declared this, for He has raised Him from the dead. "Was raised again for our justification." Is this perfect? We are for ever perfectly justified from our sins, once laid to His charge, laid on Him! Look up in the face of that glorified Man set at the right hand of God. Could He be more perfect? Oh, certainly not. But He was raised for our justification who believe on God that raised Him from the dead. God says so, and I believe it. What He is up there, we are reckoned to be.

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." is this peace perfect, or imperfect? The whole thing its of God, and cannot he imperfect. He gave His Son for our offences. He raised Him from the dead for our justification. The peace, then, that He has, who once bore our sins, as the holy substitute, is and must be our peace. Could His peace be more perfect? then can ours? I cannot pray for justification; I have it. I cannot pray for peace with God; I have it. I may pray for the peace of God to keep my heart; but to pray for peace with God, or to pray for it to be more perfect, would be to doubt the testimony of God. Such is the value of that precious blood, there is not one offence betwixt the believer and God. Apart from this, the work of Christ, to be thus before God, would utterly consume us. But now all is perfect peace with God, in the fullest discovery of all that He is.

All this must be understood, and the soul have perfect peace with God, before there is one word in the epistle on practical holiness. And what perfect access by faith, not by human intercessors, or by feelings, but by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

If we know this blessed, perfect truth, and through grace have received it, we glory in tribulations, and we are sealed by the Holy Ghost. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. O reader, are you standing afar of, as a Jew of old might, praying for these things? or have you been brought nigh, and can you give thanks for all this? All this is of God.

Just dwell on that thought, the love of God. I am looking at some beautiful flowers but I never think of flowers, without my thoughts rising to heaven. The rain of heaven descends on them, and the dew of heaven pervades every leaf. That rain of heaven descends to the very roots, and pervades

the whole plant, and see how each flower opens so gently to the morning sun, and how the sweet perfume ascends to heaven. All this is of God. And so the Holy Ghost distils the love of God into the heart from heaven, until the whole person is pervaded with the love of God. And now the eye opens gently on Christ, the sun of righteousness, and the sweet perfume of praise ascends to God. Oh, blessed God, how perfect are all thy ways! Yes, it is not my love, but God's love, and that love He has commended to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Now, the subject of christian perfection is so fall here, that words can scarce be found to express it. The words, "much more," are found five times from verse 9 to the end of Romans 5:1-21. Just mark them in your Testament, look them out for yourself. Now, these verses, 9 and 10. Is not this perfect love of God to us? "Much more, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." Is not this perfect love? If we had been once saved by an imperfect love, and an imperfect sacrifice, for some of our sins — not all — and then left to perish, of course, this would have been sad; but there is no such imperfection here. Do you believe this perfect love of God? If so, this will lead you to perfect joy in God. "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." This closes the first part of the epistle. We have perfect justification from all our sins. We have perfect peace with God, perfect access, sealed with the Holy Ghost; the perfect love of God not only revealed to us, but shed abroad in our hearts, perfectly certain that He who has thus saved us, will save us to the end; so that we joy in God. And mark, in all this there is no attainment; but the common blessed standing of every Christian. As to sins, all is thus perfectly settled.

Now, as to sin?

What do you mean? I never thought of any difference betwixt sins and sin.

What, not betwixt the sins we commit, and that sinful, fallen nature, the carnal mind, that commits or leads us to commit, them? Well, you will find it is now not sins, but sin; that which entered this world by one man, Adam, and thus death passed upon all men. Read the argument: do you notice that though much has come in by Adam the first much more has come in for those in Christ, by Christ, the second Head?

If sin and death come in by Adam, life eternal and ever-subsisting righteousness have come in by Christ. Now, let the eye again rest on Christ, but Christ raised from amongst the dead. The Eternal One passed through death for us, to be the beginning of the new creation of God. Thus we are justified and have eternal life; and the life communicated to us is beyond death, in ever-subsisting, accomplished righteousness. Now then, all here is divine perfection again. Can there be a more perfect, or a higher, christian life than this risen life — a resurrection and eternal life? And this is the life of every true Christian passed from death unto life. Look up at the highest and the Holy One, the risen Christ, at God's right hand; the life there is your life. Can there be a higher life than the highest? Then He was raised from the dead to be our righteousness; "upon them that believe" — and always upon them — always their righteousness — always the same. I challenge the answer: can there be a more perfect righteousness? Can there be a better robe, can there, I ask, be a better than the best? What an unfolding of divine perfection there is in all this!

Hold a minute, I am a little alarmed. If one sacrifice, because perfect, has perfectly put away all our sins; and if we are for ever righteous, in Christ; would not this lead to carelessness, to antinomianism, in fact? Let us continue in sin.

Now, if you read chapter 6, this is the very question taken up.

I am glad you will look at that chapter. I have heard so much about it, and I do not exactly understand what is said. It seems as if some had attained to something like this, the death of the old man. That is the complete destruction of sin in them, so that the old man is somehow made pure by faith. Does it describe a state of attained purity? and is it true of some Christians, and not true of others?

Let us look at it. The object is to shew the great folly of supposing that grace teaches that we may continue in sin. God forbid, or far be the thought; not only the act, but far be the thought, of continuing in sin. One thing we ought to know — that so many of us as were baptized into, or unto, Christ, were baptized unto His death. But do we all know this now? That as many as were Christians then, took the very place of death, to sin, with Christ, as symbolized by burial in baptism? Do dead persons continue in sin? But that is the very place we have taken. Dead with Christ; risen with Christ. In death old things passed away; in Christ risen all are new. All Christians ought to know this — "That our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might he destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Now, who crucified the old man? and have some crucified the old man, and others have not? And when was the old man crucified? Clearly this is not an act of faith; it was God who thus judged my sin, my old carnal man, in the person of the adorable substitute. "He was made sin for us." Now, when we believe, faith identifies us with all this. We accept the judgment of God, not only on our sins, but on ourselves, and we shew this by the outward act of baptism. But beware of setting aside the cross, and making the whole thing some act of our own. On the cross we see the just judgment of God on our proud, sinful self. There "I am crucified with Christ;" and thus accepting the crucifixion, we justify God. And if we have thus accepted this place of death to sin, we have in that sense crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Shall we, then, walk in them? Far be the thought.

It is a precious chapter — do not read it lightly or carelessly, and do not forget it is the standing of every Christian. He may not understand it; but it is of all importance for a holy walk that we should understand it. Ponder over each sentence. But is it our actual state that is my question? Oh, certainly not, or why should we read, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?" When we see the Lord, and are, as to our glorified state, actually like Him, in sinless humanity, we shall not then reckon ourselves, but we shall really be so.

Then you cannot say that the believer is pure within, and has no sin as to his state?

How can I, when I read immediately, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in our mortal body," &c. (Ver. 12-14.) If the believer were pure, without sin, there would just be no meaning in these exhortations. It is a sad modern mistake to suppose that our old carnal nature is over purified from sin, by any means. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," The doctrine of the two natures is a truth of great importance. The old is never changed or improved; before God it is judged on the cross, and buried in the sepulchre of Christ. And thus our

standing is wholly as risen in Christ.

Then I suppose you would say that the hopeless struggles ofRomans 7:1-25 is true christian experience?

Indeed I should not.

What is it, then; the experience of an unregenerate person?

No; for in that case it would make an unregenerate person delight in the law of God.

What is it, then?

It is the hopeless struggles of a quickened soul under the law, and a sense of responsibility to keep it; yea, earnestly desiring to keep it; but having no power. I have often been struck with the fact, that it is placed so far on in the epistle. Forgiveness and justification may be known before its solemn lessons are learnt. But if it is not christian experience, why are so many Christians in it?

Because so many Christians are under law, as if in the flesh, vainly hoping to be able to keep it. Where the experience is deep and real, it is of great use to the soul when deliverance comes. But we must learn our utter helplessness. It is the claims of the law on one powerless. It is doing the things I hate. There is no help for the wretched man that I am. But there is deliverance when I know and own the deliverance from the law by the body of Christ, being dead to that wherein I was held. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But then, when full deliverance comes in Christ, is the flesh any better? The old "I," my old nature? Not in the least; for after deliverance these words are given: "So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Now, why do these words come after deliverance? Lest we should suppose there is any inward purity of the old nature. I can reckon it dead; but I must ever walk in the fear of the Lord; for if the flesh acts, even in the most delivered saint, it is sin; and if it does not act, it is still flesh. But, alas! we all fail, though we should not; so that, if we who are delivered say we are without sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Well, then, there must be condemnation!

No; that is just what there is not, to them that are in Christ Jesus. Let us read the words very slowly: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is the standing of every Christian; could it be more perfect? But stop; how can this be, if the old nature is sin?

Well, it is; is it not? or how could it lust? It must be sin, for the moment it acts there are sins.

How, then, can there be no condemnation?

I know under law this simply could not be. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (or by a sacrifice for sin) condemned sin in the flesh."

I now see clearly how there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus; for all has been condemned on the cross; both sins and sin. And if all has been condemned in Him, there is

nothing to condemn that has not been so already.

Oh, the deliverance this gives to the soul. As to the standing of the man in Christ it is absolutely perfect, there is nothing to condemn.

What, not my sins?

No, they have been perfectly judged, on the holy substitute, the Son of God.

What, not sin in the flesh?

No, it is judged too. Dead with Christ; risen with Christ; no condemnation in Christ. This is christian perfection. But what then as to the state of a believer; what is the provision, or power for a holy life or walk?

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." One thing is thus certain, if you are in Christ, Christ is in you. In the flesh you have no power, but in Christ; and Christ in us, gives all power. It does not say free from sin, but free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin led me captive, I was powerless. But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus gives me infinite power. Yea, it is the very law of this Spirit to give victory.

Read verses 8-14. Is not this most important? The certainty that the Holy Ghost dwells in us gives not only present power for holiness, but though the body is still under the sentence of death, because of sin, yet the resurrection of the body is sure. And mark, all this is not the attainment of some, but true of all the children of God. "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." But if I have still a sinful old nature, can the Spirit of Christ dwell in me? I thought the Holy Spirit could not dwell in me unless there was absolute purity from sin.

If this were the case, how could He dwell in any except the holy Son of God, who is sinless? But we are told, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and, these are contrary, the one to the other; so that ye may not do the things that ye would." You could not apply these words as to the state of Christ. But they are applied to believers. These contrary things are found in the same person, and in every child of God; so that as to our state, we are not like Christ, in sinless purity. We shall be when we see Him. Then we shall be like Him. Oh blessed hope! "And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It does not say, "ispure as he is pure," but "purifiethhimself." All scripture is consistent with itself. But error is never consistent with scripture. There is no scripture for the thought, that some believers have attained to a state of purity, as Christ is pure.

I feel great difficulty in seeing that the Holy Ghost can dwell where there is a sinful nature. I thought that nature had to be gradually or suddenly changed into a holy nature, before the Holy Spirit could have anything to say to us.

Then am I to gradually change my sinful nature, and make a fit abode for the Spirit? I have heard something like this. I must make a vacuum, and He will come and fill it; but where is that in scripture?

You will find if you turn once more to Hebrews 10:14-15, that the Holy Ghost is not a witness of the purity of our old nature, but of the infinite value of the blood of Jesus. In the cleansing of the leper

there was a striking type of this in Leviticus 13:12-17. The blood was put upon the leper, and the oil was put upon the blood. So our sins and sin having been judged in Christ, God does not impute them to us. He does not see in that sense our sins. He sees the blood, and when He sees the blood, the Holy Spirit can and does dwell in us, and shall abide with us unto the end. I know this is a serious truth, but it is the truth, the only truth. For if it be possible for you not to have the Spirit of Christ, at any time, then you would be none of His.

I fear this would lead to great carelessness and unholiness.

It is the opposite of this; it is the great power of and for a holy life. The apostle so uses it when the saints at Corinth were in danger of falling into dreadful sin. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?" This leaves us without excuse. We have no need ever to be overcome of sin, for we have the command of infinite power, the Holy Ghost evermore dwelling in us. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Oh child of God, your vows, and promises, and efforts, are all vain. If on this ground, trusting to poor flesh, I know sin will have the victory over you, sooner or later. Now let Christ have the full glory of deliverance. The difference is so great, you will never conquer until you find you cannot fight. Lay hold of these two facts; all your sins, and sin, have been judged on the cross. God sees the value of that blood. And now at all times, and in all places, the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Walk in this consciousness, believe them, as blessed facts; for facts they are, if you are His.

Now what becomes you as a temple of the Holy Ghost? How often have you felt disturbed, and miserable, and you could not tell why. Ah, you have grieved "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This is very often the case, when least suspected in these degenerate days of worldliness. You will know practical holiness just in proportion as you are led by the Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14.) The Holy Spirit will not lead you into the circles of that world, which has rejected, and hates, the Son of God. All, all, of that world must be given up. Oh, let it not be in talk, but let us now, in simple dependence on the Holy Ghost, seek only to do the will of God. And if you thus walk in the Spirit, there maybe much that is of the fleshly will of man to give up. But is not the Spirit putting it into your hearts, as you read this paper, to long for more entire consecration to God, or to be men of God, walking in the power of the Holy Ghost! What do you see around, but hollow profession? The house of God turned into shameful merchandise; the form of godliness but the power denied. Oh, awake, awake.

Before I close, will you bear with me a little longer? I want you to see how distinct the standing and the state are kept in Ephesians. In chapters 1 and 2 we have the absolute perfect standing of the believer in Christ. In chapter 3, the prayer for the state of the Christian. Now read these verses; you cannot pray for the things that are yours.

Chapter 1, oh how we are blest in verse 3, "in Christ;" with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. Chosen in Him, to be holy, and without blame before Him in love — adopted children — He hath made us accepted "inthe beloved," "inwhom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Oh, my soul, what food for holy meditation! Oh, let us go on unto perfection, even to Christ raised from among the dead, set at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Oh, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints: and all this is ours. For God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We cannot go further as

to christian standing; it is the same as Christ, our Head in heaven. It is christian perfection. We cannot pray for this: we may pray for one another that we may know this perfection in Christ in the heavens. All is ours. Oh, praise the Lord. But this the apostle does pray for as to the state of these believers, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," &c. Oh, is not this a blessed state? Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. And then mark the great variety of exhortations that follow, all of which have to do with our state, and must not be set aside.

Thus in Ephesians it is first our standing in Christ, then Christ in us. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." But does this prove perfection in ourselves; or any change or improvement of the old nature? Indeed not, for every exhortation in the remaining chapters shews the greatest need of watchfulness, against our old carnal nature. Thus I find a perfect standing in Christ, but no intimation of perfection or purity of state. What! then am I to sink down into a careless continuing in sin, or to practise sin? If I have still an evil old nature, am I to be a slave to its lusts? By no means. If I know the power that worketh in us to be infinite — even the power of God, then surely I may count on deliverance. if we were in a state of purity, we should not need these precepts and exhortations. God knows we need them every one. When we shall for ever be in the same state of purity as our blessed Lord, do you think we shall need then to be told to "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths;" "and be not drunk with wine?" Can we then be told to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption?" Can these things be said to Christ? Then if we were now pure as He is pure, they could not be said to us. No corrupt communication can proceed from Him. He is purity itself. I am waiting for the blessed change: when we see Him we shall be like Him, and "he that hath this hope purifieth himself as he is pure." He is the standard. But can we say in this state now that nothing impure can proceed from us? If we did, our own mouths would condemn us. Oh, let us be watchful, and ever seek to abide in lowly dependence on God.

We will now briefly notice these two points in Philippians. Here the apostle lays aside everything that he may be found in Christ. All that he was as a pious, devoted Jew must be counted dung, and he did count it loss, just to be found in Christ, not leaning on his own righteousness. And true christian experience is shewn to be this, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, an the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death." Now I ask you, is this our experience. To talk about ourselves. To write about ourselves. This is not to know Him. If you would grow in practical holiness, this will never be by being occupied with yourself. You must read the word more, forget yourself, in being occupied with Him. Are we walking, and seeking more and more to walk as dead persons, but risen with Christ? Do we know anything of the power of His resurrection? Not an atom of worldly place or distinction is consistent with this true Christian experience. Yet if our walk in this day was like the experience here described, then surely we could not pretend to perfection as to our state. For the apostle, looking forward to that blessed moment when he shall he actually raised, or changed, into the full resurrection state of purity, says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (or from among the dead.) Anyhow I only look for that, by whatever path of suffering, or loss, that is my only desire and object. Not that he had attained to this state, or, as to his state of purity, was already perfect. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." The idea of present perfection and

purity destroys the whole force of this scripture. Not that the apostle could possibly question his perfection in Christ as to standing. Indeed he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

What has pained me, in trying to read recent writings on holiness, is the almost entire absence of shewing all believers their absolutely perfect standing in Christ, and the putting in its place a supposed kind of purity, or perfection of state, attainable here; and thus setting aside the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, and also the full value of the one offering of Christ. If you take up any work on this subject, you will detect these two things. I am grieved it is so, and I am sure it will work great harm to souls. For if we do not know our perfect standing, how can we have peace? And if we are not waiting for the Lord, as Saviour, from heaven, in the blessed certainty that when we see Him we shall be like Him, we thus lose the sanctifying power of that blessed hope.

I rejoice with all my heart in the awakening and wide-spread desire after more devoted holiness of life and walk, and I earnestly entreat my readers again to remember the power we have in Christ, and Christ in us. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," or, "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power." (Php 4:13.) So that he could say, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." Php 1:20.

I merely point out the same perfect standing in Christ in Colossians, and then also exhortations for the same holy walk. Have you ever thought these words are true of, not some, but all the children of God? "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14.) And again, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." (Chap. 2:9.) Have you weighed every word that thus describes the perfect standing of every believer? Yes, of you, if you have passed from death unto life. Read John 5:24, and you will find every exhortation to a holy walk in keeping with this your perfect standing in Christ. "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above." And oh the certainty that "When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth," &c. Now shall we have any such members to mortify when we are pure as He is pure? Plainly not. Then we are not here on earth pure as He is pure. If you vainly think you are, the result will be, you will fail to mortify your members; and in the end fall into sins again; and then Satan will get great advantage over you — if he has not already.

If this should meet the eye of any, who, whilst professing holiness, have been overcome, oh, let me beg of you to go to your Father, and confess our sin. Beware of going on one step farther in hypocrisy. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and in cleansing us from all unrighteousness."

Then may we not look for purity of heart, entire purification from a sinful nature?

Oh yes, and earnestly long for it, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thought I had heard such words as these "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, body, soul, and spirit."

You may have so heard; but you have not so read. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and now let us read carefully. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and, I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now you observe here is entire sanctification to God; and yet we need entire preservation. If spirit, and soul, and body were sanctified in the sense of being made pure as Christ is pure, then there would be no need of being preserved blameless. Does Christ thus need to be preserved? If He were on earth would He thus need it?

Then what do these words mean? The very God of peace is so to fill the mind, so to command us, that we shall be wholly separated from the very appearance of evil; wholly sanctified to God. But if there be still an old evil nature, called the flesh, how can we be truly consecrated to God in holiness? That evil nature, sin in the flesh, has been condemned, not sanctified; and we have the prayer that spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most clearly implying, that until He comes for whom we wait, we shall need preserving, spirit and soul and body. But what is the difference from the way I had heard this text quoted?

All the difference possible. You had heard it as if it meant that spirit, and soul, and body might be made pure; whereas it is that they might be preserved blameless.

Thus may we be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. And thus may deliverance and victory be our portion now, even as purity in all its above perfection shall be then; and oh, how soon! If we so long for it here, what will it be to be there? To hear that sweet voice; to gaze on that lovely face; the smile of His welcome; the glory of God shining in that face! and no fear; for we shall be like Him. "The glory that thou hast given me I have given them."

Oh, go ye out to meet Him. As Rebecca left her mother’s home of idolatry to go to Isaac, so may we leave an ungodly world to meet our precious Lord. Wilt thou go?

C.S.

Chapter 69

071. Nehemiah; or the building of the wall.

Nehemiah; or the building of the wall.

“Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God?” (Nehemiah 5:9.) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Psalms 111:10.) In that fear, desiring to know and do the will of God; let us look at the lessons in Nehemiah, written for our instruction. If we study this book in the presence of the Lord, we shall hear Him speaking to us in it, as to present events. In Nehemiah 1:1-11 we see a man before God. He learns the state of the remnant of the Jews, and that the wall of Jerusalem is broken down. He bows in confession and prayer. Deeply earnest is this man of God, as he pleads with Jehovah for the state of the fallen, yet the redeemed by power. Thus he pleads: “O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.” (Nehemiah 1:11.)

Thus we see him before the Lord, feeling acutely the state of Israel and the city of the Great King. He owns fully their deep sin in departing from the Lord: “We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which thou commandest thy servant Moses.”

Now, as these things were written as types for us, may I ask, Have we been thus before the Lord, in deep confession, as to the present state of the church of God? Have we thus wept, and mourned, and prayed, for the blood-bought people of the Lord in this day?

Let us seek no mere controversy, but sit down before the Lord, and compare the present captivity of the church in the world with what it was in the beginning. Has not the wall been broken down? When God by the Holy Ghost first built the church, there was the wall of separation. All believers were together, and formed one body, as all the houses in the ancient city formed the one Jerusalem, with its wall strong and high. Even so we read of the one church of God, “and of the rest durst no man join himself to them.” (Acts 5:13.) Have you sat down before the Lord? Look, then, back along the dark ages, the centuries of captivity, wherein this wall of separation has been broken down. As God prepared Nehemiah, by this deep exercise of heart in His own presence, for his future work, so has God been pleased in like manner to raise up servants, prepared by Himself, for special work. But there must be this process of heart preparation. I would not write another word for controversy, but there are many souls bowed down at the thought of what calls itself the church; God will use these thoughts for their help, and, I trust, for His own glory.

After deep prostration and exercise before God, in Nehemiah 1:1-11, we find as the result, divine yearnings and activities of love for the welfare of the people of God in Nehemiah 2:1-20.

All this brings before us for the first time Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite. Now, as these and their companions are brought before us throughout this book as the enemies and opposers of Nehemiah, and his work for God in building the wall, it is important to know who they were, and whom they represent. They were, then, Horonites, Ammonites, and Arabians. But they were dwelling in the land of Israel in Nehemiah 4:2 : Sanballat spake, before

his brethren and the army of Samaria; and Samaria in the beginning formed part of the land of Israel — they were active, boastful, subtle, men of authority in the land, but not of it. Do they not, then, represent the active, boastful, subtle men of authority who are in the professing church, but who are really strangers to God, and not of the church at all, but are the enemies and opposers of those desirous of carrying on the work of God, in caring for the saints, and in building the wall of separation to God?

If we now turn to the history of these men, we shall find seven forms or aspects of enmity to God's work. "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, heard, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." (Nehemiah 2:10.) And when has God raised up a man in like manner, to seek the real welfare of the church of God, but those have been found — and not a few of them — who have been grieved exceedingly? How great was the grief of the clergy when God raised up a Wiclif, a Huss, or a Luther! But especially do we find these seven marks of opposition to the work of God during this last half century {before 1890}. What a grief it has been to many, that God should have raised up men to seek the real welfare of the church of God, apart from all sectarianism. Some years ago men wore brought, like Nehemiah, on their faces before the Lord. Amazed at the departure of the church from the commandments of her Lord, they were bowed in confession and prayer. And the Holy Ghost put earnest yearnings in their hearts for the one church of God.

Philadelphia (Revelation 3:1-22) answers to Nehemiah, as antitype answers to type. One must be alone a good deal with God to understand this. There were but few men with Nehemiah when he arose in the night, and no man knew what God had put into his heart. Just take a ride with him around Jerusalem. Dragon wall and dung port wall broken down, &c. Such are the things you will find in and around the church in ruins. That is the church as seen in the hands of men.

Very clearly have the scriptures foretold all this. The present state of Christendom is most accurately described in the word (see 2 Timothy 3:1-17; 2 Peter 2:1-9; culminating in Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24). Its progress is marked in detail in its seven stages in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. Neither is there one intimation that it would be restored to its primitive glory as the bright witness of a rejected Christ. A feeble remnant is found in Philadelphia, clinging to the person and word of Christ, and keeping His patience. As Nehemiah, then, rode round Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:11-16), so ride around Christendom. Oh, I ask you to reflect, what are God's thoughts about Romanism and Protestantism? View the whole scene in the presence of God and in His fear. Did Nehemiah hang down his hands in despair? No! he said, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem." Thus he encourages them, and the hand of God was good upon him. They reply, "Let us rise up and build." This brings us to the second form of opposition. "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" The first form of opposition was grief; the second is laughter. Compared with the whole nation, they were indeed a feeble remnant.

They longed to see the sacred city enclosed within the wall of separation. And shall that city of the king be more dear to them than the sacred enclosure of the saints of God, around the person of Christ, be to us? As Nehemiah stirred up the remnant to build the wall, so has the Holy Ghost

stirred up a few, each in his place, to build this wall, so long cast down. Oh, how the modern Sanballats have laughed and despised! What is this thing that you feeble, silly, Christians will do? Yes, there has been a time to grief, and a time of laughter. In Nehemiah 3:1-32 the wall is being built. Each little company is in its place building the wall. Is not this a striking picture of what has taken place in these last days? Wherever the truth of the one body of Christ — the one church of God — has been accepted in the fear of the Lord, each little company has acted upon it, in building the wall of separation; and the divine Architect has made each piece fit, like the well-worked courses of masonry. The work is of God; His good hand is with the feeble remnant.

It may be called “exclusive” — it must be so. You cannot build a wall, but it must be an exclusive wall. Why set up its doors and bars, if not to preserve and exclude? We cannot sincerely receive the blessed truth of the one body, but this must exclude all sectarianism. Can we accept the truth of one God, and then tolerate the other gods of the heathen? No more can we accept the truth of the one body of Christ, and accept the many bodies of Christians! This brings us to the third form of opposition, Nehemiah 4:1-23.

“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.” Thus we have had grief, then laughter — now the building of the wall is a fact, there is wrath. Is not this picture also sadly fulfilled before our very eyes? Sanballat’s wrath against the builders of this wall was not more bitter, than the bitter hatred against the sacred enclosure of souls being really gathered to Christ, the true centre. What! say they, not tolerate our denominations? What, exclude all that does not seek uncompromising conformity to Christ?

Sanballat spake to his brethren and the army of Samaria, “What do these feeble Jews?” And indeed what were they, compared with the army of Samaria? “What do these feeble Christians?” Ah, indeed, what are they, compared to the armies of Christendom around? Are they going to remove the heaps of rubbish? Are they going to level sectarianism in a day? This wrath is succeeded by the fourth form of opposition. Sanballat mocked the Jews. “Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.” Thus the enemy, whilst hating with bitter hatred the work of God, outwardly appears to make light of and mock at it. Is not this exactly so in our day? Well, there may be grief, laughter, wrath, and mocking; but the work goes on. The wall is growing fast — piece is joined to piece. The work of God spreads. In Ireland, England, the Continent, America, India, Syria, souls are hearing the voice of the Shepherd, and leaving every fold of man — are being gathered within the sacred enclosure, around the precious person of the Great Shepherd, Christ Himself. Christ is exalted, and all that does not exalt Him is excluded. Man is nothing.

Now, what will Sanballat and his company do? This brings us to the fifth form of opposition. “But it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.” (Nehemiah 4:7-8.) We have had grief, laughter, wrath, mocking; now there is to be fighting — determined, uncompromising opposition to the work of God. Is it not even so? Has not every sect in Christendom agreed in this, to fight against, to oppose, the building any further of the wall of separation to Christ? And as these companies

consulted to come upon the Jews unawares, so often, when God has been blessing His word in a given place, has the enemy come unawares, sowing evil reports, and sought to stop the work. Behind the scene are wicked spirits in the heavenlies. Surely we need the whole armour of God, and “our God shall fight for us.” The work at Jerusalem still went on; so it is now; the more opposition, the more it drives to God, and the more the work goes on. The trumpet of truth is heard to give a certain sound, and the saints resort thither unto it.

Nehemiah 5:1-19 is very solemn. There was failure amongst the remnant. As Peter said, and well he knew it, “We are men of like passions with yourselves: ” and surely we also know it. Are we better than others in ourselves? Far be the thought. But, oh, the grace that has gathered to that blessed One, to whom no man can come except the Father draw him. As our Lord said: “It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” (John 6:44.) The Father is not gathering souls to poor failing man, but to His own Son.

Men have formed themselves into the churches of Rome, England, Scotland, and innumerable bodies; but God by His Spirit has restored the long-lost truth of the one body of Christ — Christ the only true centre. It is now an accomplished fact, that the wall of separation from every human society is being built. Souls are gathered on the same basis as at Pentecost, though in themselves but a feeble remnant out of the camp of Christendom. There is the camp of a leavened Christendom, and there is the sacred enclosure outside that camp, gathered to Christ, and bearing His reproach. This just brings us to the sixth form of opposition — what Sanballat and his companions did when they heard that Nehemiah had built the wall. “Then Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.”

Then Nehemiah “sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down unto you?” (Nehemiah 6:3.)

We have had five forms of opposition — grief, laughter, wrath, mocking, and fighting; now we have subtlety without. It is as if they said, Do not be so narrow and exclusive. Do come down from your sacred enclosure to “one of the villages in the plain of Ono.” “Let us meet together.” Do come down, and sanction us in the plain of Ono. Do you ask, what was this plain of Ono? Turn to Nehemiah 11:35, “Zod and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.” Do leave the only centre of worship within those walls of Jerusalem, and come down to any one of the villages of “the craftsmen.” Well did they know that if the true worship of God was set up within that divine enclosure, they would feel like the Ephesians in after times, that their craft was in danger. “Sirs said the men of Ephesus, ye know by this craft we have our wealth.” (Acts 19:23-41.)

Thus we have the camp of Samaria, with its villages of craftsmen, on the one side — open, compromising, liberal — willing to meet all, and take counsel with all together; on the other side a few feeble Jews, gathered in separation on God’s ground, within the hated exclusive walls. And through the help of God they stand firm, and act as those who know they are just where God would have them to be, and doing that which is pleasing in His sight.

It was not one effort, or two, but four times did Sanballat send messengers after this sort, to induce, if possible, the servants of God to give up their exclusiveness, and come down from their excellency to the low level of the plain of Ono, the villages of the craftsmen. Still God preserved him — “I answered them after the same manner.” (Ver. 4.) To Nehemiah it was a great work to be uncompromisingly for God.

Sanballat, judging after his own heart, now sends the fifth time his servant, with an open letter in his hand: “therein was written, it is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu [or Geshem] saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel, for which cause thou thinkest to build the wall, that thou thinkest to be their king, according to these words . . . Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.” Very firm was the reply, so like a man that walks in peace with God: “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.” If Nehemiah had been acting in the pride of a self-seeking heart, then nothing could be more narrow, close, yea, contemptible; but he was acting in the fear of Jehovah, and nothing could be more beautiful and faithful. Is not all this a picture of the movements around us in this very day? Nothing could be more strikingly so. There is the sacred enclosure of a few feeble saints, gathered to Christ, and there is the great camp of the Greek, Roman, and Protestant churches. And as there were many Jews still in captivity, so are there many Christians in this great camp of Babylon. But is it not written, “There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you?” (2 Peter 2:1.) Is not this terrible picture fulfilled before our very eyes? and is not this merchandise wicked in God’s sight, though one of the most respectable professions of this day? So fashionable is it that many of God’s own children are entangled in it, and follow its pernicious ways. If you would read a further description of this modern camp of Samaria, read 2 Timothy 3:1-17.

God in His sovereign grace has been working, in this camp, and many souls, we trust, have been saved. He can work in Greece, in Babylon, or Rome. Satan has used this circumstance, like Sanballat of old, and repeated have been the temptations to come down to some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. Only give up your narrow, illiberal exclusiveness, and come down to the level of the craftsmen; only acknowledge the clergy, and you may hold what you like. Do only come down from that hateful wall around the true ground of God; or, if you will not come down and acknowledge us, then you are but a sect in Jerusalem, as much as we are. You are the exclusives. Come down now; come, let us take counsel together.

Those who are separated to Christ can say, All this is feigned out of your own hearts. You know we are no sect. You know that we do not exclude any one that God has gathered to Christ, and who only seeks His honour and glory. Is it not a solemn thing to oppose the present work of God, as Sanballat did of old?

But, says an eminent evangelist, who remains in and approves the camp of Samaria, “will you not go with us to the preachings?”

“I don’t know that I will,” said a young Scotch Christian.

“What, will you not go where God is working?”

“No, I do not know that I will.”

“How is that?”

“Why, God is a sovereign; but I am a subject.” The same evangelist said to another (the servant of the Lord with whom he had first laboured in England), “I am sorry you are not with us.”

“Indeed, I am more happy to be with the Lord.”

“Why, is He not with us?”

“That may be in His grace, and I pray He may use you much; but you know you are not with Him outside the camp.”

No, we cannot be with the army of Samaria, and at the same time with the few within the sacred enclosure of the rebuilt wall. “Let us go forth therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” (Hebrews 13:13.)

There is the sacred enclosure of the feeble ones in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:1-22.), those who have gone forth from Sardis (Protestantism), unto Him, the holy and the true. And there is the boasting camp of Laodicea, outside of which the precious Lord knocks at the door. Are you, my reader, in the camp of Laodicea, that which is rich, with its thousands and its clergy? Then you have never yet gone forth unto Him, bearing His reproach. May God by His Holy Spirit make this clear to you. How could the gathered saints to Christ, outside the camp, come down and sanction the craftsmen in the valley of Ono? No; surely twenty thousand on the plain of Ono should not attract my soul from Christ.

It is a great work that God is doing by the Holy Ghost, greater far than the work He did by Nehemiah. And the enclosed remnant in Jerusalem were not more distinct from the camp of Samaria than the souls gathered to Christ are distinct from the camp of Christendom. Oh, that they who have been thus gathered were more true to Christ. They have failed, but they cannot give up the only true ground of gathering around Him. They own their failure, but they cannot give up Christ. This brings us to the seventh form of opposition to the work of God — danger within. This will illustrate the cunning subtlety of Satan. In the last case it was the temptation from without to go down to the platform of Ono — to compromise all that God has taught us, and sanction the craftsmen and merchandise of Christendom. Now the mischief is within. We shall do well carefully to consider it.

Sanballat does not appear on the surface. “Afterwards I came unto the house of Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple: and let us shut the doors of the temple, for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.” Does not this look very plausible? Surely it is right to meet together in the house of God. But to shut the doors of the temple would be with us to put the light under a bushel. The temptation is to give up the testimony. If we will not join the religious activities of the camp, then let us seek in shut-up selfishness, and fear of man, to enjoy that sacred place of blessing and communion among ourselves, and take care of ourselves. The opposition may indeed become more grave. But shall we give up the testimony, if it be even to

save our lives? or shall we flee? Shall we through fear shut ourselves up? Is this the mind of God? “And lo I perceived,” said Nehemiah, “that God had not sent him . . . Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.” Let us also, then, having this certainty that the work is of God, not be weary, or shrink from it.

It seems to me the greatest trial and danger was from false brethren. The enemy knew that the wall was built: “They were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.” (Nehemiah 6:16.) But the false brethren, even “nobles of Judah, sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him,” &c. This is indeed sad, and a great trial, when those who outwardly take the place of being gathered to Christ, yet like these mixed marriages of Judah, we find some dear brethren in the Lord seeking to mingle the principles of the camp with those of God. Nor should this surprise us, remembering the words of the apostle, “Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things.” (Read Acts 20:29-35.) No doubt these half-and-half brethren are the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of inquiring souls. Let those gathered to Christ beware or evil associations — the greatest present danger.

Thus we have very briefly examined the seven stages of opposition to God’s own work. The grief of the enemy (Nehemiah 2:10); the laughter of the enemy (Nehemiah 2:19); his wrath (Nehemiah 4:1); mocking (Nehemiah 4:3); fighting (Nehemiah 4:8); subtlety without (Nehemiah 5:1-9); subtlety and danger within (Nehemiah 6:10). And many a reader of this tract will say, “I have seen all seven in the opposition to God’s work in our own day.” So the wall was finished. No amount of opposition could stay the work of God. It is so again — saints are gathered to Christ, the wall is built; the doors are set up, and God has raised up faithful men to keep the watch. The position has been assailed in sevenfold opposition; but God has preserved the sacred principle of being gathered to Christ. To Him be all praise! Surely we need to put on the whole armour of God. Our Sanballat is not dead, though his power is destroyed. These seven aspects, that is complete opposition, will continue until the coming of our Lord.

Some one now may say, If God has gathered souls to Christ as at the beginning, and if they find that the truth of the church of God being one, excludes every sect of men — yet, if this basis was large enough at the first to receive every obedient child of God — surely, then, it must be as broad, and be large enough now. Is it not a wonderful truth, that all believers form the one body of Christ — all are one? “There is one body.” And then if Christ has His place in the administration of the church, its gifts, and its worship in spirit, as at first, surely this is a large place to dwell in! Is it not large enough for every Christian on earth who desires to walk in the fear of the Lord, and according to His, word? When this truth is known, what need for all the sects that men have made? Surely no need. Then tell me, if the place is so large and so blessed, how is it that there are so few in it? Why, in some towns, there are none gathered thus to Christ, and in others, those thus gathered are in no reputation. This was the case also at Jerusalem. “Now the city was large and great; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.” Yes, this is the very question of Nehemiah 7:1-73. Compared with the largeness of the city, there were but few in it; but the number was known, and left on record, of those who had come up out of the captivity (vers. 6-60). But there were a great number which went up “from Telmelah, Telharesha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not show their father’s house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel.” Many others also are named: “These sought their register among those that were

reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they as polluted put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha (or governor) said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim." (Vers. 61-65.)

All this is exceedingly instructive. If mingling with the Gentile world had caused the Israelites to lose the certainty of their nationality, is there any wonder that the effect of the church being mixed with the world should have caused so many to be uncertain, whether they are the saved children of God or not? Even with the most evangelical there is much darkness and perplexity as to this. And this is one cause, if not the chief one, why so few take the happy place of the children of God gathered to Christ. Evidently there were many Israelites who could not show their genealogy; and there are many Christians who cannot show it; they are so confused with the false position they are in, that they cannot tell whether their names are written in heaven or not. Indeed, in human churches this is not an essential point. Until lately, many denied the possibility of any knowing with certainty that they are the children of God. Is it not also most true, that if we do not know this, we cannot eat of the most holy things? We must know Jesus, the Great High Priest in the presence of God — He who once bore our sins on the cross, but who is now crowned with glory. As our righteousness, raised from the dead, we now see Him, with Urim and Thummim. In His face shine the lights [Urim] and perfections [Thummim] of God. How can you enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus if you are uncertain whether you are saved? Oh, search the register; never rest, my reader, until this first question is solved.

Reader, ask yourself, Is my name written in heaven? How do I know that my very sins are all for ever blotted out? Is it true that God in very deed is my Justifier? What, shall nothing ever separate me from His love in Christ? If I die, am I quite sure it will be to depart and be with Christ? If I live until the Lord comes, am I quite certain that He will take me to be for ever with Himself? Reader, you will never answer these solemn questions by looking within, at self, at feelings, or experiences. No, it must be the look of faith at the One who has been lifted up, and is now at the right hand of God. And, mark, I rarely ever met a soul yet that enjoyed this blessed certainty — that truly had peace with God — that could comfortably remain in the camp of Christendom away from Christ in rejection. Now is it not so? Do you not feel it far more consistent, if in uncertainty, to remain in the systems of men, rather than take a place outside the camp, bearing the present reproach of Christ? I have no doubt this will soon be the real condition of the recent converts. Left in the camp, the uncertainty of the camp will fall upon them. The remnant were few in number, and feeble indeed; and so of those gathered to Christ in this day. But the one was the work of God, and so is the other.

We now come to another very interesting inquiry. And again, as of them, so it is of us. If they were neither to come down from the enclosure of those exclusive walls, and mingle with the craftsmen, nor yet to shut themselves up, what were they to do? If we are not to come down from that blessed place our God has restored to us — the ground of the one body, and the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost — if we are not to compromise God's blessed truth by a truce with the clergy, and what is of man in the movements of the act; and, on the other hand, if we are not to shut ourselves up — then pray what are we to do?

Nehemiah 8:1-18 is an answer to this inquiry. The people are gathered together as one man. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation. Oh, what reading of the book before, both

men and women, and those that could understand; and what attention to the book! The book, God's book. And Ezra opened the book. And now what blessing and worship! and what causing the people to understand the book! "So they read the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (Ver. 8)

This, my brethren, is the work of those separated to Christ, and this is what they have to do. Remember how little real regard there is in the camp for the word of God. It must be far otherwise with them. They must be men of "the book." They must open the book; read the book distinctly make the people understand the book. It is God speaking to us. Then there will be lifting up of hands, and bowing of heads, and worshipping the Lord with faces to the ground. Yes, as the Tirshatha, which is the Holy Ghost, gives us understanding of the precious word, there will be intelligent delight in the Lord; we joy in God. But is it to be all for ourselves? Oh no. "Then he said, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Ver. 10.) And all the people did so, because they had understood the words.

It is a great mistake merely to seek our own personal blessing and edification. It is spiritual selfishness. We must be personal; we must feed on all the sweet perfections of Christ, that which the fat of the burnt-offering pointed to — the inmost thoughts and affections of our own precious Jesus; the loveliness of His walk here below; and His present unchanging love. Does not the sweet perfume of His adorable person fill the heaven of heavens? Oh, let us drink the sweet; let us be full of Christ! and then our happy work is to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. O child of God, this is to be thy constant work, even to those who do not understand thee, and who slander thee, who misrepresent thee, and who speak all manner of evil of thee ignorantly. Do not return evil for evil, railing for railing, but contrariwise, seek the spiritual good of all; "send portions" to the whole church of God. Remember how the Lord met the mad persecutor, Saul of Tarsus. And not a few in our day who were bitter opponents, have been taught of the Father to come out of the camp to the Lord Jesus Christ, the true centre. Let what is pleasing to Him be pleasing to us. "For the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Now we will notice one striking effect of reading the book, and understanding the words that were declared unto them. On the second day gathering (Nehemiah 8:13-18), they found what was written concerning the feast of tabernacles — "That the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month." "And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." Is not this very remarkable? they were only a handful of people compared with Israel in the days of Solomon; yet this feast had never been so kept. This feast, Israel in booths, was a beautiful symbol of the people waiting for the millennial reign of their long-expected Messiah and Lord. And for a thousand years Israel had never so waited in booths, as this feeble remnant now waited with "very great gladness."

It is no less remarkable that the church had never kept the feast of tabernacles since the days of Paul, until God has in these our days gathered a feeble remnant outside the camp to Christ. This was the attitude of the church in the early days of Paul: "Turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven," &c. (1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1

Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. Read prayerfully these scriptures.) Must we not confess that for eighteen centuries we look in vain in what is called church history to find the church in this tabernacle feast again? No doubt there was a little of it during the sad days of persecution. But no sooner did the world cease to persecute, than the church immediately became worldly — in the world, and of the world. And whilst the Bridegroom tarried for so many centuries, the church slept.

Now what has taken place during these last years, since God has gathered a feeble remnant to Christ? Have not the scriptures had a similar place and effect to that described in our chapter? Has not the effect been the same? The blessed long-lost hope of the church has been restored, and an attitude answering to the feast of tabernacles has been once more taken. The gathered remnant have been led, by the Spirit of God, to wait for the Son from heaven; and there is very great gladness. The blessed certainty, that as it is appointed to men to die, and after death the judgment, so Christ was once offered for our sins; and we are now looking for Him without sin unto salvation. Yea, “we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (see Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 John 3:2), contrasted with the awful gloom of looking for a day of judgment, and the bar of God, about our sins. There is very great gladness; because we know that He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and it is our happy privilege now to be waiting for Him from heaven: O the untold joy of that triumphant moment! “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” And as Israel were to publish and proclaim in all their cities what they found written; so surely would the Lord have us make known, with holy boldness, what we have found written. Intelligent communion with God and with one another, understanding the words of God which are written, making all this known to the blood-bought church of God, and waiting for His Son from heaven what could we have more?

Thus the wall was built. And all this great gladness more than made up for the hatred of men, and charges of exclusivism. I do not pursue this study much beyond the wall, but there is one thing I must notice.

Some of my readers may say, “Surely the result of all this would be self-complacency, conceit, pride. What, you, the only handful of people on the face of the earth on true ground — within God’s sacred enclosure — around the only true centre? This must produce narrow-minded, self-satisfaction.”

You are wrong; it does not. Read Nehemiah 9:1-38. What a contrast to all human thought! “Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them.” It might be thought that separation from others would produce a feeling of self-superiority. But no; it did not. The seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, “and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.” And then there is reading, confession, and worship. Ah, this is of God: it is the divine order. Separation from evil brings us into self-abhorrence before God. And the more we read His word, the more we have to confess; and, wondrous to tell, the more we confess, the more we worship. And then you find the Levites cry to God. Self-judgment produces dependence on God, and faith in God. “Stand up, and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name; which is exalted above all blessing and praise.” Thus the Lord Jehovah is before their souls; whilst owning their utter failure, and the failure of their fathers, yet throughout this chapter, God, in all that He had done and was to them, shines out in every verse.

All this is so true in every case where a soul is truly gathered to Christ. “Mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” I am sure the nearer we are to God, the more the flesh will be crushed, whether as individuals, or as saints gathered to the Lord. It is not what we are — no, we have sinned; but it is what God is, and what He has done for us. Surely deep, real humility becomes those who can say there is nothing betwixt our souls and the lake of fire but the blood of Christ. To Him be all glory and praise. He is worthy to bring His redeemed, without spot or wrinkle, to His own place prepared for them. “Let us,” then, “go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

All this is surely truth for present guidance, and for testing. Where are you, reader? in the religious Babylon, afar off from God’s true ground of gathering? or have you, like the remnant, been brought back to the ground of what the church was in the beginning? Have you been exercised before the Lord about the present condition of Christendom, as Nehemiah was about the holy city? Have you found any seeking alone the good of the church of God? Do you know anything of that sevenfold opposition to the present work of God? The grief, the laughter, wrath, mocking, fighting, subtlety without and within, of those who are in the professing church? Have you the certainty that your name is written in heaven? or have you searched, and cannot find your register? Do you know whether you are a child of God, or not? This being settled, have you been led to search the book — to understand the book — to eat the fat, and drink the sweet? Is it your joy to send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared? Has the searching the word led you to wait for Christ from heaven? Are you charged with exclusivism because of that hated wall of separation? And has all this brought you lowly before the Lord in confession, and then worship? And, finally, is God before your soul, as He was before the remnant in Nehemiah 9:1-38? Has your soul found the sabbath of rest within the sacred wall, even Christ Himself?

Then beware of the men of Tyre, who will offer their tempting wares before the wall. Keep the gates shut — oh, keep the gates closed. Let nothing come in to break your rest in Christ — your joy in God. We need much the lesson of the last chapter to keep the gates shut; it will be most offensive to men of Tyre, but most pleasing to our God. He alone could have given us such a picture of the day in which we live, and He alone could give us such a light for our feet. May He sanctify us by His word — His word is truth! C. S. Will you read, in the fear of the Lord, Romans 12:4-5; Romans 16:17?

Chapter 70

072. The Church of God as Found in the Scriptures.

The Church of God as Found in the Scriptures.

What is the Church? What is its Ministry? What is its Destiny?

What is the Church? The first distinct intimation of the church we find in scripture is Matthew 16:18. Peter having confessed, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God and Jesus having owned this as the revelation of the Father to him, He further said, “And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter [a stone]; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Christ the Son of God, revealed of the Father, was the Rock, on which the church was to be built. Peter should be a stone in that then future building. That this is the clear meaning many other scriptures prove. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11.) “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner.” (Ephesians 2:20.) Is it not also quite clear that the church was then a future then? “I will build my church” — Jesus did not say, “I have built” or “I am building;” but “I will build.” The next reference to the church is in Matthew 18:17. This also is evidently future; otherwise surely whilst the Lord was with His disciples, the case of an offending brother would have been laid before Himself. “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

There are no other scriptures whatever that speak of the church until we come to the church’s birthday — Pentecost.

We may have to point out many types of the church, as the body and bride of Christ, in the Old Testament, but these could not be understood until it pleased God to reveal the joint body by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. (Ephesians 3:1-21.) No doubt my reader would like to ask many questions as we go through the scriptures on this deeply interesting subject: I will anticipate those questions.

What then is the meaning, of the word ekkleesia which we translate church? By carefully examining every place in scripture where this word occurs, its plain meaning is “assembly.” I will point out one or two instances in which it is even so translated, and cannot mean anything else. Turn to Acts 19:32; Acts 19:39; Acts 19:41. In each of these verses, the word translated “assembly” is ekkleesia, and evidently means, a gathering of people together. In verse 37, “neither robbers of churches.” This word “churches” evidently means heathen temples, or buildings. Is it the same word?

Oh no, this is quite another word altogether. There is no authority in scripture for calling a building a church. We should therefore never do so.

You said Pentecost was the church’s birthday. Is this clear in scripture? This is a point of such importance that nothing could be made more clear in scripture. The disciples were to remain in Jerusalem, until they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5.) It was on the day

of Pentecost: “They were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:1-47 gives a full account of the first day of the church of God. It was the first announcement of the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ ascended up to God’s right hand. And God used this day’s preaching in the conversion of three thousand souls. These were all added: “and they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common,” &c. What a wondrous new thing this was, the like of which had never taken place before. “And the Lord added to the church [or assembly] daily, such as should be saved.” All this was entirely of God. The Holy Ghost came down from heaven. The Lord added together. Thus this assembly on the very first day of its existence, was God’s assembly. It could not be thus baptized by the Holy Ghost until the Holy Ghost was given; and He could not be given until Jesus was glorified. (John 7:39.) And Jesus could not as our Substitute and representative be glorified until He had glorified God on the cross; then the Father must straightway glorify Him, by raising Him not only from the dead but by receiving Him to glory. When all this was done, the church was built. We shall see shortly in the Epistles, how the church is linked with the glory of God. But were none saved, then, before Christ arose from the dead, and the Holy Ghost was thus sent down? And if they did not belong to the church of God, what were they then?

Certainly, all who believed the promise of God were saved, or justified by faith, but they were and remained, saved individuals; saved Jews, or saved Gentiles. But now “There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28.)

Then if Pentecost was the first day of the church, and it was formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, what is the subsequent history of the Acts of the Apostles? The Acts are really the acts of the Holy Ghost, how He acted in gathering the predestined church out of the world. He used a variety of instruments; but you will find, as you read the history of this wondrous assembly that wherever the Holy Ghost acted, it was to form the one assembly of God. Power, the power of God, not of man, is seen everywhere. In chapter 3 there is a man who could say, “Silver and gold have I none;” but such was the power displayed in the name of Jesus, that all Jerusalem is stirred to its centre. And though all combined against the holy One of God, yet none could deny the power of God. The church was the display of the power of God. Let us listen to the voice of prayer, at the church’s first prayer meeting recorded in the Acts: . . . “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child [or servant] Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitudes of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4:24-33.)

What a scene this was! one assembly, one heart, one purpose, the glory of Jesus! The Holy Ghost present. Surely it makes one sigh to compare this with the present state of Christendom. How could this assembly withstand the hatred and opposition of the whole world? God was with them

— the divine person of the Holy Ghost.

It is of all importance to notice this in the history of the assembly of God in the Acts. The Holy Ghost is always present to guide the assembly — this fact is the foundation of the church's constitution as seen on earth.

Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Stephen said, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The Spirit said unto Peter, "Behold three men seek thee, arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." (Acts 10:19.) And after the conversion of the Gentiles, and the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost on them, Peter says, "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting." In chapter 11 the believing Gentile were baptized by the Holy Ghost into the assembly of God at Antioch. In chapter 13 the Holy Ghost takes the same place of divine guidance in the assembly at Antioch. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." When a question of great moment had to be settled by the assembly at Jerusalem, the presence of the Holy Ghost was again distinctly recognized — "for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." &c. (Acts 15:28.) Even the apostles were guided by this divine person, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not."

Thus we see the assembly of God, throughout its history in the Acts, under the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. Sad failure as to this was distinctly foretold. (Chap. 20: 28-30.) Yea, the apostle himself failed. (Chap. 21: 4.) But the failure of man does not alter the truth of God. Christ is glorified; the Holy Ghost is sent down; and He remains with the church. Oh, how has Christendom utterly failed to own the divine presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost! I beg of you, my reader, to compare your own condition and associations with the Acts as to this. The church, or assembly, of God is one, as gathered together by the Lord. Sects or divisions are not of God, but carnal and of man. Is that clearly revealed in the word of God?

Nothing can be more so; read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:1-5 : "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions [or sects], are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Oh let us own the exceeding wickedness of sectarianism; and let us return unto our God with confession and humiliation. How fearfully has Christendom departed from that beautiful scene when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul!" One object — the glory of Christ; and all filled with the Holy Ghost. Compare this, say, with a so-called Liberation meeting!! But enough — can God approve of this wicked strife?

What do the Epistles teach as to the church?

They address the children of God now, as the one assembly of God: "Unto the church [or assembly] of God which is at Corinth," &c. "Unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father," &c. This wondrous assembly we find was chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world, and blest of God with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." All this

is more fully unfolded, the eye being fixed on Christ, in Ephesians 1:1-23. There we see Him raised from among the dead, and placed as the risen man, “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; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things, to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” But had He not always this glory? Doubtless He had in His own eternal Godhead. As the eternal Son He had glory with the Father before the world began. But now as man, the second Adam — the man who died for our sins, according to the scriptures — the Substitute forsaken of God on the cross — having glorified God there, having finished the work given Him to do; God has given Him, as man, this highest place above all things. The universe under His feet. But all this “to usward who believe;” all this as head of the church, His body.

We have seen the person of the Holy Ghost in the Acts, in His own divine sovereignty, as the foundation of all church constitution on earth, we now look up and see the Lord of glory, the head of the church, far above all, in heaven.

Surely, then, the most worthy of mankind alone can form the church of God?

If you read Ephesians 2:1-22 you will be amazed to find the opposite of this to be the case. “And you who were dead in trespasses and sins” — “children of wrath, even as others.” These are the very persons whom God hath quickened together with Christ; and hath given to them the wondrous place of oneness with Him, in all that exalted glory. This is altogether of God — God’s new creation. Yes, the assembly of God is God’s new creation. And the once rejected Jesus, now Lord of all glory, “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:18.) Mark, He is head of the body, not the different bodies, not the different regiments of Christendom, nor religious bodies of the so-called church. No all this is not in scripture, not of God; it is entirely of man, or Satan, who never ceases to deface the assembly of God, the one body of Christ. Do not help him a bit in this work. This wondrous display of richest grace is far beyond all human thought. Just think of these words, if you have the discernment of the Spirit, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being, many, are one body; so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12.) Is not this wondrous? Just as all the members of the human body are joined to the head, and form one man, or one body; so also all who believe are joined to Christ, raised from the dead far above all, and form the one Christ! But do you say that all who are saved now on earth, form the one body, of Christ, and every case of true conversion to God — is it possible that all the saved belong to this one body? What, we all?

Let scripture speak: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13.) This is the church of God as found in scripture. And this is the church of God, because it is entirely of God. Read the next verses, 14-27. “God hath set the members every one in the body, as it hath pleased him.” “That there should be no schism in the body.” “God hath tempered the body together.” “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

Let us with all lowliness of mind own all this. “There is one body and one Spirit,” “one Lord,” one faith, one baptism: “one God and Father of all.” Carefully study the context of these words, Ephesians 4:1-6. The effect is marvellous when the soul gets hold of this great fact (long lost, but

true), that there is one body, even as there is one Lord and one God; and that in scripture two or more bodies cannot be found. And above all that, this one body is of God; God's workmanship. Then it is found, that all sectarianism is direct opposition to God.

I grant this is a tremendous discovery; that so much that we have been proud of, is sin and rebellion against God. But evidently it is so. In deep humiliation let us own it. The one assembly of God is also presented in scripture as the bride of Christ, the wife of the Lamb. Grace beyond all human thought. Here we find the outflow of the affections of Christ as man. And though this mystery of divine love was kept hid until revealed to the apostles and prophets of the church, fully stated in Ephesians 3:1-21, yet many were the precious figures of this that went before. So early as in paradise, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." God in His own love would give Adam an object on which his love might be placed. And thus, in this figure of Him that was to come, God sets forth His own eternal purpose; to build the church, the one body, the bride; that the Man up there in the glory shall not be alone but shall have an object in which the infinite love of His own heart shall have its eternal delight. And was not the way in which God formed the woman most significant? Adam was laid in deep sleep — type of the depths of death to which Jesus must descend to redeem His bride. Of that dead rib, in figure, the living woman was built. It was to that awakened or risen Adam, the woman, one with himself, was presented. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." There were many beautiful creatures in paradise; but only one made meet for the affections of Adam. God only built one Eve, God only builds one bride for Christ.

Oh what a thought, what a fact, that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." "Christ is the head of the church." "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Ephesians 5:1-33.)

It is blessed to gaze on Christ, the object of the believer's love, but that is not the thought here. The assembly of God, the bride of Christ, is the object of His love, of His delight. Have you passed from death unto life? then you form part of that one body, one assembly of God, bride of Christ, object of His love. Think; object of the love of Christ! In the call of Rebecca also we have a striking illustration of the bride of Christ. Isaac must first be offered up, and received in figure from the dead; Sarah, the Jewish economy, be set aside. Then the father Abraham, sends Eliezer from Canaan to the far country to fetch a bride for Isaac, the risen son from the dead, in figure. Jewels first are given to Rebecca, and raiment, then she gladly leaves all to go to meet the bridegroom whom not having seen she loves. Then the meeting. And then is she the possessed object of Isaac's love. Again there is one bride. Just so when God had actually received His beloved Son from the dead; offered up for us, and could not be spared; then received to the heavenly Canaan; then God the Father sent the Holy Ghost, to this far country, to fetch a bride for Christ. Jewels first, the righteousness of God established by the death of the cross; and then raiment — Christ raised from the dead our righteousness; and all given to, and put upon the believer: and then farewell; separation from all below. And, like Eliezer, the Holy Ghost leads the bride along to meet the heavenly Bridegroom. The church of the scriptures is found waiting and looking for Christ, the second time unto salvation. And, oh, the meeting! As Isaac lifted up his eyes, so the loving eyes of Jesus are looking for us, His bride. And we shall soon, like Rebecca, lift up our eyes. We shall see

Him as He is and be like Him. This joyful theme I leave until we arrive at the third part of our subject — the destiny of the church.

One more interesting figure in the Old Testament — Ruth. God is pleased by these His own figures, to give us understanding of this great reality, the church, the bride of Christ. Here is one who by nature was a stranger to the covenant and promise; death also was written upon her house. A Moabitess, and her own husband dead. Most touchingly does her history illustrate the grace of Christ in bringing a soul to Himself. She is brought by Naomi in bitterness of soul to the fields of Boaz. My reader may remember the bitterness of those days in which he was led by the Spirit to Christ. But oh, how welcome in the fields of Boaz! Is she thirsty? let her drink. Is she hungry? let her eat. Does she glean? let fall handfuls on purpose for her. Such is the grace of our precious Jesus. Are you but a gleaner lately bowed in bitterness at the sense of your own lost condition? Ah, how welcome to Christ! Are you thirsty? welcome to the water of life. Are you hungry? welcome to the bread of life. Has He not let handfuls fall on your path on purpose? But far more than this was to follow, “My daughter shall I not seek rest for thee?” And now she is identified with Boaz in the figure of death — she lay at his feet; and what the other kinsman could not do, Boaz did. He redeemed her to be his bride. And all the elders bare witness. Once the object of the gleaning kindness of Boaz, now the object of his bridal love. A welcome stranger, now the most honoured place on earth, the loved bride of Boaz, and the mother of David. Has not God thus dealt with us? He would not have us be merely welcome gleaners in the fields of Christ; but one with Him, bride of the Lamb. There was but one Ruth; there is but one church, one body, one bride. May I ask, then, have all Christians to leave the different churches of men; such as Romanism, Anglicanism, Wesleyanism, &c., and to form one church, and so make one body, one assembly?

Many have thought so, but it is a most unscriptural mistake. As we have already seen, the church of God is not a thing of man’s making. It is wholly of God. Eve did not make herself. it is remarkable that at Corinth, where there was most failure and division, in that very epistle we learn that all believers are baptized into one body. Let this great truth be only received in faith that all believers now are baptized into one body; and that this is of God; and the effect is sure to be that instead of fleshly boast shall be deeply ashamed of sectarianism. And the believer who receives this truth can no longer belong to a sect, cost what it may. Only let the word of God have its authority, then how can I deliberately do that which is in direct opposition to God? In the Acts of the Holy Ghost then, we have the history, how God set up the church in the beginning of its days. Then in the Epistles we have the wondrous revelation what the church is.

Before we look at its ministry. There are two things found in scripture I desire to call your attention to — the Lord’s supper is one of them. 1 Corinthians 10:16, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Is not this the perfect communion of the one body of Christ — each believer introduced into the same fellowship of divine blessing? And does not this separate us from the world? “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils.” This communion is further explained, as received from the Lord by Paul, in chapter 11. What impress me in this distinct full explanation of remembering Jesus, and showing forth His death until He comes is this; that it is the act of the whole one assembly of God. There is neither a priest with his mass, nor a minister with his sacrament. Either

the one or the other would entirely set aside the very act of communion. The Romish priest, the ritualist, with all his imitations of Rome, or the presiding minister at his sacrament; all this is not in scripture, and we must admit that it is all of human origin. Not one bit of scripture can I find for a shred of it. Oh what sad human interference; yea, what assumption for any man thus to act without the word of the Lord! The second thing I would notice is this — Does the scripture foretell the failure of the Church of God on earth in outward testimony? There are sad and abundant proofs that failure did set in even during the lives of the apostles. (See 1 Corinthians 11:18-21.) Shameful evils, divisions, and drunkenness, and the Lord's hand in judgments, because they had not humbled themselves. In Titus, unruly vain talkers, &c., are found and rebuked. Terrible failures in 2 Peter 2:1-22, and in Jude, are spoken of. But this is not all; the Spirit accurately describes the fearful apostasy of the last days of this church-time or period. (2 Timothy 3:1-17.) "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Read the description of these days. We may say those days unto the end of the chapter.

It may be asked, If God set up the one assembly of God, one church, one body, then is not the Church of Rome that one church, and ought we not all to belong to her?

If the church of Rome is the church of God as found in the scriptures, then undoubtedly we ought to belong to her. But is this the case? I am not aware of one single particular in which the church of Rome is the same, or like the church of God as found in scripture. At a future time, if the Lord will, I may compare the church of God with the church of Rome. Professing Christendom, as was foretold by the Lord, has become a great tree, and evil men lodge in its branches. It has become the great house of 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

If this is so, what instructions has the child of God for his path in these last days? Is he to remain in fellowship with all this evil, or is he to separate himself from the evil?

Hear the answer of God: "The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge [or separate] himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use," &c. (2 Timothy 2:19-21.) And again, "From such turn away." (Chap. 3: 1-5.) The path of the obedient christian need not be more plain. Hatred and persecution it must bring (ver. 12), all have found it who have obeyed these divine instructions for our days.

I now return to the church of God as found in the scriptures.

What is its Ministry?

I just remind my reader that in looking carefully at the history of the church in the Acts, we found one all-important fact as to Ministry — the divine presence of the person of the Holy Ghost. Bearing that fact well in mind I ask your attention to the three chapters on ministry, that God has been pleased to give us, with other scriptures. (1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40.) Will you read these chapters, before we proceed? Observe this is the very subject. Chapter 12 contains the great principles of the christian ministry; chapter 13 the spirit in which that ministry should be exercised; and chapter 14 those ministries in exercise. The Spirit of God will not lower or degrade the person of Jesus — a most important test in these days. And again, no one can truly maintain the Lordship of Jesus but by the Holy Ghost. Great care is then

taken to show that the various gifts of ministry are not held by one man! There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; different ministries, but the same Lord; diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. And then, after enumerating different gifts the divine sovereignty and guidance of the holy Ghost is maintained. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” Thus we have the constitution of the church as to ministry — Jesus, Lord on high; the Holy Ghost using the gifts as He will on earth. It may be said, Some of those gifts are no longer manifested now. True; He divideth severally as He will, then and now. This then is the principle of ministry as set up of God, the ministry that is of God. “And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers,” &c., &c. I do not however find such a thought, that God set up one man to be the minister or priest of the assembly.

Now that is important, as we wish to learn all that scripture brings as before us on this subject.

Then we have the lace that love, charity, has in christian ministry. (Chap. 13.) May it have its place in every line of this paper! The principle then before us is plainly this, that the Holy Ghost is in the church, using the different gifts severally as He will. All of God, but on earth the order of the Holy Ghost. There was confusion: alas, what will man not spoil? (See chap. 14: 26.) But still the same order of God by the Holy Ghost is enforced. God did not say, My order has failed, now set one man to be the minister. No; but, “Let the prophets speak, two or three, and let the others judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the other hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted,” &c. And these are the commandments of the Lord. (Ver. 37.)

Now this is God’s only order of ministry, and He is not the author of confusion; compare this with Ephesians 4:7-16. Here the ascended Christ, far above all heavens, “gave some apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” And these were to continue. These are the gifts of Christ, and the Holy Ghost divideth severally to every man as He will. Do not forget the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. But do we not read in the Acts that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every city? (Acts 14:23.) And that Titus was to do the same; was in fact delegated to do so. (Titus 1:5.)

I have read all this, but I have never read of Paul, Barnabas, or Titus, ordaining a pastor, or an evangelist, or a teacher. These are the gifts of the ascended Christ. And even when the apostles were here, we have not the slightest hint of the ordination of any of these. The only thing at all like it was when Paul and Barnabas themselves, who had long been most eminent gifts of Christ, were commended to a special evangelical tour, separated and sent by the Holy Ghost. (Acts 13:2.) But do you mean that there is no authority in the scriptures for the ordination of a pastor over a church?

Most certainly. There is not such a thought in scripture. It is entirely human invention. Elders, or bishops, were ordained. For an elder and a bishop is the same thing, that is clear from Titus 1:5-7. The same person is an elder in verse 5 and bishop in verse 7.

Eldership was an office; pastors, and teachers, evangelists, are gifts. I speak of scripture — I know nothing else. Again, in scripture an elder is never the same as teacher, pastor, or evangelist. The

elders of the church at Ephesus were bishops (episkopos), and as such, overseers, and were to feed the church of God. But does not the word “feed” imply that they were teachers? This word poimaino, translated feed, is used by the Spirit eleven times in the New Testament: Matthew 2:6; Luke 17:7; John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Peter 5:2; Jude 1:12; Revelation 2:27; Revelation 7:17; Revelation 12:5; Revelation 19:15. A careful examination of these and their contexts will show that it is not the imparting of spiritual food so much, if at all, that is meant, but shepherding, more in the sense of ruling.

Elders, then, were brethren gifted with wisdom to shepherd or rule the church of God. An elder thus gifted and qualified to rule, must rule well his own house. And one thing they were needed for, was to stop the mouths of vain talkers. This being the sense of the word, then in Jude 1:12 “feeding themselves” would rather be ruling themselves — democracy. One of the dark signs of the last day. The very opposite of knowing or discerning them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. In short, the “unruly” are to be rebuked. And might not the same person be an elder and also a teacher?

Certainly, just as the same person may be a draper and a grocer. But that does not prove, that a grocer is a draper? Peter was both elder and teacher. (1 Peter 5:1.) Thus whilst qualified persons were ordained or appointed to shepherd or rule the assembly in every city by the apostles or their delegates (and it is true that such persons might or might not be also gifted of Christ to evangelize or teach) yet in scripture we never find the shadow of an interference either to ordain or to hinder any such gifts of the ascended Christ; as teachers, evangelists, pastors, &c. Is there such an instance to be found? Not one. To do so, two things must be interfered with; the administration of the Lord in glory, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly.

Well, this is very solemn; are you quite sure there is no scripture authority for the modern ordination of a priest, clergyman, or minister? Not a single text. Does not Acts 6:1-15 give such authority?

No, not the least. These men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, were simply appointed to serve tables, or take care of the poor. Not a thought of ordaining them as modern pastors over churches. As with the elders, these servants of the assembly might be also gifted of Christ to preach the word. Some were so, but these were never ordained to preach; not such a thought. The thing is monstrous; if we see a teacher, pastor or evangelist gifted of Christ, empowered by the Holy Ghost to preach and teach Christ, for the church or any man to ordain or appoint such a person, would be to set aside as insufficient the act of Christ. Surely to recognize, becomes the whole church of God. For recognition of Christ’s gifts to His church is obedience to Him. And not to recognize a gift of Christ is disobedience to Christ. But does not Acts 13:1-52 afford some authority for ordaining a minister or pastor over a church? Is it not often quoted for that purpose?

Read the whole passage: now is there such a thought in it as ordaining a clergyman or minister over a church, or parish? These dear devoted men were already fully recognized teachers — Barnabas and Saul. And these were appointed by the Holy Ghost to a special work, or journey; and as such solemnly commended by the church at Antioch. It is very strange that so many take this matter for granted, without ever searching the word of God. Is there no other scripture that seems to favour the practice of ordaining one person, to be the minister over a church?

There cannot be one. It is impossible for God to contradict Himself, and if we own the constitution of the church which is of God; that is, the Lordship of Jesus and guidance of the Holy Ghost, as we have seen, and the distributing severally as He will; those gifted to speak to the edification of the assembly, to speak two or three, the rest to judge, &c.; the moment you introduce the clergyman, or a minister, having the Reverend pre-eminence over the assembly, you immediately set aside both the presence of the Holy Ghost and the godly liberty of the gifts of Christ to speak two or three. In fact it is utterly impossible for God's order, according to His word, and man's order set up since, to stand together. One man cannot have the pre-eminence, and the Holy Ghost be free to use whom He will.

Well, all this is amazing; but do the upholders of the clerical or episcopal system really know that it has no authority in the word of God?

Strange to say, they do; and the best and latest writer on episcopacy fully admits that it is nowhere found in scripture.

Then where is it found? In tradition; the traditional history. Some say it must have begun just at the close of apostolic times; some, later. But if there be no evidence of it in apostolic times, then what of apostolic episcopal succession?

All vanishes. How can there be a succession of what did not begin? But some say it began before the death of the Apostle John, in Asia Minor; and that he must have approved of it. But does the scripture say this system of one man having the pre-eminence over the assembly, began in the days of John? that is the question.

It does, it does. John wrote an inspired epistle, on account of this, and on the very subject. We shall therefore soon see whether he approved or not of the first person that assumed the position taken by the clergyman or minister over a church. (3 John.) Truly John approves of the well-beloved Gaius, found walking in the truth. He has no greater joy than that the children of God should walk in the truth. He says, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren." These brethren were such as went forth for Christ's name sake, taking nothing of the Gentiles, and they had borne witness of the charity of Gaius before the assembly or church. Now if you bear in mind the truth, and the constitution of the church, the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost in sending those brethren, gifts of Christ, in His name, in keeping with the truth as to this, Gaius had gladly received the visit of these ministering brethren, in the charity inculcated, as to this Very thing in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Walking in the truth, he owned the order of God. And John says, "We therefore ought to receive such that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." Oh, how sweet is this fellowship in the ministry of the truth! "Let the prophets speak two or three" had long been the command of Christ, and so we ought to receive these dear gifted brethren who come in the name of Christ, and have fellowship in the truth. This was christian ministry as instituted of God: "We therefore ought to receive such."

Now we have another character, and John says, "I wrote unto the assembly: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them receiveth us not." Now study these words; here is a man who takes the place of pre-eminence over the church, or assembly. But to do this, he must resist the Holy Ghost; he must refuse liberty of ministry, yes, even if it be the aged and beloved Apostle John, and brethren with him. The very first development of clericalism proves,

unanswerably, that it must resist and set aside the order of God. Did the inspired John approve of this first appearance of clericalism? He says, “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us, with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the assembly.” Thank God we have the strongest possible disapproval of clericalism in these inspired words. And I ask, Do not these words faithfully describe the proud spirit of clerical pretensions to this very day?

It is too true; but surely you would not say that every ordained minister over a church has the spirit of Diotrephes, the first to assume this place?

Far from it; many a dear humble servant of the Lord groans in that false position. But what we learn from this scripture is, that every one that takes this position of ministerial pre-eminence is in direct opposition to the mind and word of God. Diotrephes could not maintain that position and receive the brethren, neither can any clergyman or minister maintain his position and receive the brethren as the gifts of Christ, to be used by the holy Ghost in the church. But are not clergymen and ministers receiving eminent evangelists? and is not God using these in conversions? That is so, and God is using them in proportion as they lay aside the sectarian and clerical position. Nay, is not the Lord even by all this rebuking clerical assumption? A noticeable fact must here be named: God has been pleased to restore to the church the knowledge of His own order of church constitution and ministry — the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, and the liberty of christian ministry, to serve alone the Lord Christ. And though like the remnant in the days of Nehemiah, this feeble remnant whom the Lord has been pleased thus to bless, are conscious of much failure, yet God has been pleased to be with them. And this feeble remnant have proved the all sufficiency of God; and to this feeble and unworthy little flock God has restored the full gospel of His grace. And what is the result, at this present moment? The whole mass of the clergy of every sect under the sun are arrayed in determined hostility. Pamphlet, and book, and tract, teems from the press! full of gross misrepresentation. Yes, and nothing more common than for the clergy to be preaching the very truth God has restored by these weak dependent brethren, whilst they denounce with prating words, like Diotrephes, the brethren whom they cannot receive, and maintain their clerical position. The third epistle of John exactly describes the whole struggle of to-day. On the one side, there are a few like Gaius, who have learnt to obey the commands of Christ as to ministry; on the other hand, there is the whole body of the clergy determined to resist the order of God’s word and maintain that human order of ministry begun by Diotrephes: in many cases, doubtless, ignorantly. The word of God calls one of these principles good; the other He calls evil. Surely it must be good to obey God, and no less certain is it evil to follow man. But you allow elders were ordained, if pastors, teachers or evangelists never were?

Yes, just so.

Then why does not the assembly ordain them now?

Simply because the assembly did not do so then; but the apostles or those they delegated to do so. We nowhere read that the church ordained elders. How plain would be our path it we really were subject to the word of God! Never were human pretensions found more utterly wanting, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, than the claims of the ordained ministry when thus tested by the word of God. And equally so as to this, whether we apply the word to Romanism, or

Protestantism — what utter departure from the order of God! Not only so, but men have the audacity to ridicule God's order, nay, to call it confusion and discord; and to pride themselves with this humanly ordained ministry as if it were the church itself; and to talk of it just as though it could be traced in succession from the apostles; when not only did the apostles not practise it, but the very last of them, the beloved John, we have heard denouncing it in the strongest possible terms. But if the episcopal establishment has no authority in the word of God for the ordination of their clergy, and it is clear they have not the least, then where do they get their authority from?

Clearly not from God; but from the world — from the State — indeed it is the world. And to call it the church is to use words calculated to deceive. It is the world divided into parishes, over which a clergyman is ordained. Is this the church of God? Compare it with the church of God as found in the scriptures; and compare its ministry with the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. I ask, is there any safety in such a system of the world, unfairly called the church? Oh, is there any wonder that its members are going so fast to Rome, having never known the presence of the Holy Ghost? and never allowed Christ to give, and the Spirit to use, His gifts, as He will? But having adopted the Diotrephes ministry, as handed down from Rome, there is no remedy, there is no hope, but to withdraw yourselves from that form of godliness without the power. The clerical order has been, from its first development, the greatest lever of Satan for evil in Christendom. Oh, my brethren in Christ, come out of her. Let us return to the Lord. It is yet true that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is present. We can testify to the truth of this promise. We have been now, some of us, gathered together in His blessed name some thirty, some forty, and some, more years; and, blessed be the name of the Lord, we have found His presence more than all the ordained ministry in the world. He is enough, the mind and heart to fill. Ebenezer, Hallelujah. Oh how we long that you should share the deep joy of His presence with us. We assure you one hour in His dear presence makes more than up for all the misrepresentations heaped upon us.

If you return to the truth of the scriptures no doubt you will suffer persecution, but no pen can tell the blessedness, and deliverance, and deep enjoyment, of communion with Christ that is the portion of every child of God gathered together truly to Christ, in His precious name. Do you think it is a light matter to refuse the gifts of Christ and the guidance of the Spirit in the assembly; and to set up in its place an ordained man — be that man who he may? Can you thus grieve and quench the Spirit, and not suffer in soul? Impossible.

Oh, fellow Christians, awake, awake, to these solemn truths. Search the scriptures. Will you? Will you obey them? Do you own their authority? God give you decision and purpose of heart. I write to you thus in the love of Christ. I long for your deliverance, and am not ignorant or Satan's devices to keep you where you are. I write strongly, but there is power in truth to the children of God.

Just think, if all the believers in your town were gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, truly owning Him as Lord, and all filled with the Holy Ghost, all of one mind and soul, each having one object — the glory of Christ — no clerical hindrance to the gifts of Christ, the Spirit using all the gifts in divine power, sectarianism not received — abhorred; tell me now, what would be the effect on the world of all this? The gifts are so rejected and disallowed, that we can form no idea how many are laid aside now. I heard of one minister in Ireland saying lately, he had found forty evangelists in what he called his church! All these had been dormant. Oh, can you conceive

anything so dreadful, so hindering, as this ordained ministry received from Rome?

One question more, Is it not said that Timothy was ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians?

Certainly not in scripture, but in a note which has been added to the end of 2 Timothy. It is impossible that this could be true. It would not only have entirely set aside the order of God; but when the apostles sent for the elders (Acts 20:1-38), there is not the slightest allusion to such a person as the bishop of Ephesus; and there must have been, had such been the case.

Well, but he might have been after this time?

Then he could not have been the first, for the elders are called bishops as we have seen. It was evidently another name for the office of elder. We must conclude then, the more we search the scriptures, the more evident it becomes that the whole pretensions of episcopacy have no foundation in the word of God.

Only once more. Is it not true, that the episcopacy is found in the most early church history?

It is. And what does this prove? That the most early. So-called church history, is the history of that ecclesiastical system which so soon entirely set aside the order of ministry we find in scripture. The one is of God, and found in His word; the other of man, and found in his history. Which shall we follow?

Many of these remarks apply to the episcopacy, falsely called the church — whether of Rome, or England. But what of all the various bodies of Dissenters?

I am not aware that any of them has returned to the scriptural order and constitution of the assembly of God and its ministry. — Is the presence of the Holy Ghost, dividing to every man severally as He will, owned in any denomination?

Well, but the church elects its own pastor or minister. Is this anywhere found in scripture?

Nowhere. The ministers are Christ's gifts to the assembly; and is the assembly to elect whether they shall have a gift from Christ? The glory of Christ and the heavenly dignity of the christian ministry is lost in such a carnal system. I do not mean the painful scenes that occur at such elections — rejections and splits — but merely to the principle of daring to call in question the prerogative of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Ghost; failure there is everywhere, but man's failure does not alter God's principles. It is, too, in vain to try to find the order of God, as found in scripture, in Wesleyan organization. Do we find a conference in scripture daring to dictate where the gifts of Christ shall be placed? God may be working by one of His servants in such a town, the conference says, No you must obey us, not God, you must leave that town and go to such a place. Can you show me anything like this in the word? Impossible. Not oven an apostle ever dare so set aside the administration of Christ. But do not these people pray to be guided by the Holy Ghost in appointing the ministers?

Yes, indeed, they do; and what must such prayer be to God? Asking God to guide them in acting in direct opposition to His word.

I ask, now, is there any wonder that the most spiritual in all these human systems, are leaving them; and are being gathered together, in the name of the Lord Jesus; a feeble despised remnant making no pretensions to be the church of God? But this they are; they are gathered together, as at the beginning, and owning nothing, but what they find in the word of God. Do you say, I own I see the truth of all this thus brought before me, and I admit how utterly wrong my position is, but I have been trained to it; I am in it? What can I do? There is my family, my needs; and all my friends would turn against me if I walked according to the word of God. I know all that, but Satan will try to magnify these difficulties. Is not God for us greater than all these difficulties? I feel for you; I pray for you; God will be with you in His own path. (See Psalms 119:59-60.)

All are moving either to infidelity, entirely setting aside the authority of God's word; to Rome, and dark superstition; or to the path of Christ as at the beginning. We now turn to our third inquiry:

What is the Church's Destiny?

We must be most careful not to confound this with Israel's future destiny, as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. No doubt every promise to Israel shall be strictly fulfilled, although they are for the present set aside, as we learn in Romans 11:1-36. I name this because of the common mistake of placing the church in the position of Israel.

All the promises to the church are heavenly, whilst the promises to Israel are earthly. The confounding these two destinies has led to the mistaken expectation that it is the church that is to be the means of the world's conversion to Christ. The gathering or forming the church is a special work, occupying a special period of time, a parenthesis in Israel's history: known unto our God is that moment, when the church will be complete. Then will be fulfilled that promise of Christ, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-31.) This is in blessed keeping with the first type of the church, when paradise was prepared, and Adam was there, and God brought Eve unto the man. Has not our adorable Jesus, gone up on high to prepare a place that the desire of His heart may be fulfilled? as He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (John 17:24.) What a destiny! with Him; where He is. The second Adam, the second Eve. We are assured by revelation from our dear Lord, that He will come Himself. He will not send His angels for us — this He will do for the elect Jews, for the earthly kingdom — but the Lord Himself shall come for us from heaven, whether we are alive and remain to that moment, or whether we are asleep. Yes, He who came down to Calvary's cross will also come in the clouds for us. He died for us; He comes for us; oh, what love is this! No judgment for our sins; no, He has borne the utmost due to us, and now He is coming without sin unto salvation.

One more precious fact, "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) What a destiny! to be like Him. In the full image of the heavenly man in glory — holy, pure, incorruptible! We are now accepted in the Beloved; the whole value of His person and work reckoned to us; reckoned dead with Him, and risen in Him, one with Him. But actually, and everlastingly, to be like Him! Do not our souls long for this? and can we not say, "As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness?" But, oh, most wondrous fact, is not this the language of Christ Himself? So really we are one with

Him, that His own resurrection was but the first-fruits. And it will be when His body, the church, raised from the dust, or changed in a moment, and the millions of the redeemed meet Him in His own likeness; then shall He see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied; sweetly shall we share His joy. From eternity has He looked forward to that moment, now so near, when the bride shall be presented to Himself: and when it comes, do we not hear Him up there in the heavens saying "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," &c. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." And again "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." (Song of Solomon 2:1-17; Song of Solomon 4:1-16.) The Holy Ghost must use sweetest poetry to express the heart of Christ.

Such is the joy and love of that Man in the glory. Is it not wondrous that the glorified One should thus be waiting and longing for us? He has not only loved the church, and given Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, but there is yet the presentation so dear to His own heart, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27.) This is the sure destiny of the church of God; the certain result of His work on the cross. "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight." (Colossians 1:22.) "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus." (1 Corinthians 1:8.) "To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thessalonians 3:13.) Thus we learn the settled purpose of God to fulfil the desire of Christ. We shall see Him as He is: we shall be like Him. We shall be unblameable in holiness, in spotless purity. Then shall the heart of our eternal lover be satisfied. Oh, think of Him thus! Do not merely read these burning words of scripture, but in them see your Lord; He who will come quickly to call you away. Ah, this world's cold wintry blast will be over and gone. No more groaning over inbred sin, no more conflict, no more sins and failure, no more sorrows; all, all gone. And if the church is thus the object fitted to be the delight of Christ through eternal days, as Eve was the object of the love of Adam, and one with himself, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, ought not then Christ to be the one object of His church now? He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for over. The same love that we shall enjoy in that unsullied and eternal brightness, is the love wherewith He loves us now in this world's night of darkness. Oh, let our hearts rest in His precious love. Oh, the riches of His grace, to give such vile worms a destiny so glorious. The new creation of God, pure and holy. Members of His body, of His bone, and of His flesh. I gaze on that risen Man in the glory, and can say, I shall be like Him. What can I desire more? Does scripture unfold anything further as to the church's destiny, after it is caught up to meet and be with the Lord as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18? Where will the church be in that hour of temptation, coming on the earth? And in that time of tribulation such as never was, and never shall be after? and when Christendom or Babylon is destroyed? and during the millennial kingdom of Israel on earth? Through all this, what is the church's destiny? Is it made known?

It is. After the close of its history on earth, and the outward testimony of the professing church is set aside, spued out of his mouth, the veil is thrown aside. Heaven is opened to our view. The redeemed are represented, by four-and-twenty elders. God rests — sat on the throne. The saints rest — they sit on thrones around the throne of God. When seraphim and cherubim, the four living ones, give glory to Him that sat on the throne, the redeemed reply with worship to God, as the

Creator of all things. (Revelation 4:1-11.) The Man in the glory has waited until His redeemed ones, gathered up at His coming are there with Him, then He will be known to be worthy to take the book of counsels and judgments out of the right hand of God — emblem of divine power. What a sight is that! look at it. The Man, the Lamb as it had been slain, worthy to go up to God — Himself God — and take from His right hand the book. The glorified Man thus becomes the executor of divine power and judgments. Up to this point, He sat on the Father's throne; now He is seen in the centre of the throne — the first preparatory act, for subduing of all things to Himself. This calls out the new song of the redeemed; and the loud saying of the angelic myriads. The redeemed become deeply interested in the future circles of redemption — as the corrected translation of Revelation 5:9-10 — not "us," but "them." Wondrous chapter, revealing the association of the saints with Christ, during the period of woes, on this earth afterwards described. There they remain during the opening of the seals, the blast of the trumpets, the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath on the earth, the sudden resurrection of the Roman Empire, the utter apostasy of Babylon the Great, the full ripened wickedness of Christendom, and its fearful overthrow and destruction. Then the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. (Revelation 19:1-21.) This glorious event having taking place, the Lord Jesus will come in judgment on the living nations. All that have been beheaded for the word of God during this time of dreadful infidel wickedness will now be raised from among the dead, and form part of the first resurrection, its full complement.

Then the millennium, the one thousand years of blessedness, begins. After which the judgment of the dead, and then the eternal state. The church is found in intelligent worship, during all these events, from the beginning of the judgments or before, until the marriage of the Lamb. What a destiny! all clearly revealed in the word of God. But all heavenly, and of God. Nothing earthly or of man. This is very marked, even during the millennial reign. I invite close attention to this important fact very fully explained in Revelation 21:9-27; Revelation 22:1-6.

"Come hither," says one of the seven angels, "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." And what did he show John? "That great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." What a contrast this will be to what is now seen on earth! "Holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven" — what purity! "from God." Do you, my reader, belong to this heavenly bride that will be from God, and "having the glory of God?" This language could not be applied to angel or archangel, principalities or powers: "Having the glory of God!" oh, wondrous grace! And her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. What a chance from this sinful state, to unclouded purity, in all its unsullied clearness! The wall, great and high, speaks of the perfect security of the bride during this time of reign, and putting all things under His feet. The gates of the city — place of administration — show the wondrous part the church will have in the administration of the world to come; and this though in connection with the earthly people of restored Israel. Every precious stone is named to show forth the glory of this building of God: it is a perfect vast cube, heavenly perfection: also a perfect square. (Ver. 16.) Divinely perfect whether viewed in the heavens or from the earth. The city pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the street of the city pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Inherent, absolute, stainless, purity, and divine righteousness. Constituted the righteousness of God — and nothing without to defile. All transparent purity, within and without — thus shall we be the righteousness of God. What a destiny! No temple there. The Lord God and the Lamb shall be there. Still the Lamb — for ever the

Lamb. All, all, we owe to the once bleeding Lamb. No need now of sun or moon, or creation-comforts: “For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” What a home above, and all is as certain, nay, more certain, than that the morrow’s sun shall light the eastern hills. Every moment bringing us, yea, bringing the whole church of God, nearer this place prepared, this home above of peace and love.

Students of the book are aware that the eternal state is described in Revelation 21:1-8. Is the destiny of the bride revealed there? Her destiny in the eternal state!

Oh yes, when the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea, she is described as the same holy city, new Jerusalem, entirely of God, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband — for ever the bride of the Lamb. What an eternity awaits us! Evil having been put down, all is happy subjection to God! There is now no wall, no gates. The administration is over, all is now eternal rest with God. The eternal destiny of the church is to be the tabernacle of God. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men. Such is a very brief outline of the destiny of the church of God, the bride of the Lamb. May our blessed Lord use these few thoughts to lead His children to search the scriptures in the presence of God; in whole-hearted dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we have found the church of the scriptures to be the church of God, composed of every believer born of God since God began the church at Pentecost. And that all believers are now baptized into the one body of Christ. And that to use the word church, as meaning any worldly system, as that of Rome, or England, is not only unscriptural, but calculated to deceive souls.

We have found that true christian ministry is direct from Christ, the ascended head of the church; that these gifts of Christ were never ordained, even by the apostles, and never should be ordained by men. To do so is to set aside the high privilege and administration of Christ. We have found no authority in the word of God for such a person as a clergyman or minister, over either a parish or a church.

We have found that the constitution of the church was, first, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. Secondly, He using whom He will of the gifts in the assembly. And though all Christendom has set aside the church constitution as found in scripture, yet we find no reason why we should give up the Word of God to follow the traditions of men.

We have found, the first man who did refuse the order of God in the fellowship and ministry of his brethren, in order to establish his own clerical pre-eminence, was strongly condemned by the inspired apostle John. We have found that the dreams of men, as to the Church being an improver of this present evil world, to be all false. That the destiny of the Church is entirely heavenly; and that it will soon be taken away from this dark night of sin and sorrow. The home above is prepared; the Man in the glory is waiting the moment when He shall rise and call us up to the skies. As Isaac waited for his Rebecca, so waits our precious Lord. Soon we shall meet, to part no more. Forever with the Lord. C. S.

Chapter 71

073. Vol 04 - Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome

Volume 04 Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome

Chapter 72

074. Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.

Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.

No. 1. The Cambridge Chamber of Darkness.

C. Stanley.

“And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.” (Ezekiel 8:5-16.) Thus did the ancients of Israel do in the dark. And thus speaks the word of God of their wicked abominations, both of the image of jealousy, and of their pictures portrayed on the wall.

I would now ask you to go with me, not to Jerusalem, but to Cambridge, one of the great seats of learning in England.

One word of explanation. I had been with a friend to visit a sick person. The mother of this invalid had a room in the court or yard, which she desired to let to my friend. He asked me to look at it with him.

Now I want you to go in with me, and I will help you to look at it for yourself. At least I will describe exactly what I saw. We will follow the owner of this room. It is dark: she takes a candle in her hand up the dark passage. She has the keys: but before we go in, I must tell you, so as to prepare you a little, that this room in the dark passage is let at present to some members of the University; and the owner is very wishful for them to give it up.

After some difficulty the door in the wall is opened. We have only one candle. Dear me, how dim and strange this place looks! What can that be opposite the entrance? Why look, it is actually a large image of a dead Christ lying down! And that? an image of a woman, leaning or weeping over the awful-looking dead body of Christ! And that? what can that large triangle of wood be, with candles stuck on it, burnt nearly down to the sockets? I should have been puzzled if I had not seen this same purgatorial triangle in the temples of idolatry on the continent. There you may see a distressed widow or orphan come and buy a candle, place it on the triangle, and then kneel before some image in prayer for a supposed soul in Purgatory whilst the candle burns. And this is done by millions in what is called Christendom! Do you see that penitential chair before the awful image? Just look at those sticks fastened to the back of the chair, to support, I suppose, the hands uplifted in idol worship! and did you ever see such horrid-looking cloaks, black and ugly? Well, you would almost think, the order of Beelzebub must worship here. Hush! some of the most gentlemanly members of the University meet here. You notice that large cross behind the prostrate body? And these articles, what are they? Incense vessels, and other utensils of idolatry.

Now step through this hole in the wall, and see other abominations. A strange feeling creeps over you. The light is very dim. You see that image of an angel, meekly asking you to dip your finger in the holy water; no, by the way, it is all dried up. Now look round. Yes, that is the image of the Virgin Mary queen of heaven; and the little child. And there the altar with its great flaring cross; there the desk; here lie vestments and books. We will examine those books shortly. But this place looks so dismal; where are the windows? Oh, this is like the old worship of Tammuz! The dark chambers of idolatry. Now look, those windows are carefully boarded up. Not a ray of God's light must enter this chamber of spiritual abominations. What! not a chink between the boards? The members of the Confraternity have carefully, most carefully, papered over those boards; and where the light of day should be, there stands their altar. Oh England! England! these be the men, preparing to be thy parish antichrists! The books! I said above, we will examine these books. As surely as God has bid me sound this alarm, those books will come into my hands, though humanly speaking, it seems impossible, as they are only sold to the Confraternity. But one of them came into my hands a few days ago — I will tell you how.

Last Lord's day evening I felt as it were compelled to preach from two words "The night." The verse reads, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Romans 13:12.) Truly God moves in a mysterious way. There was a stranger in the audience from a distance, a member of this very Confraternity; but I knew it not. I was led to inquire why the Holy Spirit speaks of the period of Christianity as "the night." And I was directed in the scriptures in a remarkable way. In Paul's farewell address, he distinctly foretold that after his departing grievous wolves should enter in amongst them; and even as to themselves things should come to a bad state. But he does not give the slightest hint of any succession of men to whom he could commend the believers. He commends "them to God, and the word of his grace." (See Acts 20:28-31.)

Nay, in the very earliest epistles, the night was advancing. He tells the Thessalonians, that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" and goes on until the days of the wicked one who "shall be destroyed by the brightness of the coming" of Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:5-11.) The apostle John said, "Even now are there many antichrists." (1 John 2:18.) And read the description that Jude gives of the "certain men that had crept in unawares." Is it not remarkable that during those days of apostasy, if God had intended to give a succession of priests, He should not, in at least one instance, have directed the believer to them? Peter devotes a whole chapter to these false teachers, but not a syllable about trusting his successors. (2 Peter 2:1-22.)

Paul shows them to be false apostles, ministers of Satan. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15.) And the Spirit describes expressly the Roman Catholic marks of the latter times; denouncing them as the doctrines of devils. "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." (1 Timothy 4:1-3.) And then, what a description of the condition of these very last days in 2 Timothy 3:1-17! And yet not one word either to trust the priest, or the church; no, God Himself and His holy word. "The night;" what a night this has been! but the morning breaketh.

There are two very striking numbers, often used in scripture: Four and Seven. The Lord has used each of these to divide the night. "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh; at even or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning." (Mark 13:34.)

1. The even. We see the church, as an outward testimony, fails even before the end of apostolic times. God had His own, and knew them; but the church, as a light in the world, failed immediately as all had done before it.

2. The midnight darkness of the papal ages.

3. The awakening of the Reformation.

4. The morning. The present moment; so near the coming of our blessed Lord.

Now if you turn to Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, the Lord divides “the night” (the prophetic history of Christendom and His judgment of it) into seven successive periods, the last four running on together to the end.

1. Ephesus. Decline of first love.

2. Smyrna. Persecution, and the introduction of Ritualism, and a priesthood; the blasphemy of saying they are Jews; that is, those who take the place of being so-called priests, &c., and are not.

3. Pergamos. Satan’s old seat of Baal worship, amalgamation of that world-worship with the professing church. It gets darker.

4. Thyatira. Dark long years of Jezebel — Rome.

5. Sardis. Results of the Reformation. Few names.

6. Philadelphia. Near the morning, souls gathered outside, to the person of Christ, and Ritualism again to contend with; those who take the place of so-called priests, and are not.

7. Laodicea. The sad final state and rejection of Christendom. After the close of this judgment of the seven stages of “the night.” The church is no more seen on earth, but in heaven until she comes with the Lord. (Chap. 19.) Such is a brief outline of the scriptures that were brought before us on Lord’s day evening last. On the Monday morning this stranger called upon me and owned the Lord had used the word in power to her soul. She wished to know however, if any one had informed me about her case. I assured her that I knew not a word. She then told me that she was a member of the Holy Confraternity; and that her eyes had been completely opened; and she felt she must give it all up utterly. She then took her little book out of her pocket, and gave it to me — a copy of one of the books used in the Cambridge chamber of darkness — the one from which I had taken extracts.

Before we look at this book, I would relate that this lady informed me that there are thousands of members of this Confraternity throughout England. She named Ritualistic clergymen of this neighbourhood, as members. The book is called “The Manual of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. Sixth ed.” The chief professed object of this Confraternity is “The honour due to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood.” (Page 7.) Its form of government is very similar to, if not the same as, the order of the Jesuits — a Superior General, and a council, also Superiors of various wards, in short, a most perfect organisation. The Superior General must be a bishop or a priest. The greatest care is to be observed in admitting a member. Each is to be fully instructed, name and full address kept, &c. The candidate is admitted kneeling, and the priest standing. Then follow prayers, on the

idolatrous principle that the bread and the wine are turned into God. A medal of membership is given.

Nothing in Rome can possibly exceed the idolatry of the prayers that follow. “O God, who dost wonderfully refresh Thy Church by Thy precious Body and Blood;” and again, “O my beloved Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I firmly believe, because Thou hast said, ‘This is my Body; this is my Blood,’ that in this blessed sacrament Thou art truly present; Thy Divinity and Thy humanity, with all the treasures of Thy merits and Thy grace; that Thou art Thyself mystically offered for us in this Holy Oblation.” Again, “I ADORE Thee, O Lord my God, whom I now behold veiled beneath these earthly forms; prostrate I adore Thy Majesty.” “Jesus, our wonderful God, who vouchsafest to be present upon the altar when the priest pronounces the words of consecration; have mercy upon us.” Prayer after prayer of this kind follows. In fact, every prayer an act of devotion and adoration is to “our Lord present in the Holy Eucharist.” The Eucharist is regarded as the victim offered on the altar: “O sacred victim, offered in satisfaction for the sins of the world.” It is spoken of as the “pure offering,” “the awful sacrifice,” and “the victim consumed on the altar.” The lady referred to above informed me that this book was commonly used by all the members of this Confraternity in the churches of England during what they call “celebration.” Here then is a vast confederation of idolaters. Thousands and thousands are worshipping the bread and wine as God, in the Church of England; and are either Romanists at heart, or fast becoming so. The process is simple but sure. They are told every fresh step is getting a little higher; but every step is a little nearer Rome. Thus the impression becomes universal, that Rome is right and they are wrong; and all is wrong but Rome. It is high time, however, to examine all this by the word of God; not by the fathers of even the second and third century. For as we have seen, “the night” of darkness had set in even by the close of apostolic times, so that what is called church history is the history of that darkness and wickedness, that began long before the close of the first century of this era.

Let us have a little inquiry then, with the thousands of these priest-associates. And to make the matter as simple as possible, let us introduce an inquirer into the doctrines and membership of this Confraternity; who, mark, must be a bishop, priest, deacon, brother or sister of a religious community, or communicant of the English Church. (Page 10.) And further we will suppose this inquirer to be an exercised soul, who believes the word of God. Let these priests answer these questions and scriptures in the presence of God if they can.

Inquirer. I have read in God’s word, that I am not to make any graven images, or to bow down to them; and in the prophets, I am told that the worship of idols is an abomination. If I join the Confraternity, shall I have to disregard all these scriptures? Ritualism tells me to bow down to the queen of heaven, or to an image of a dead Christ, or the cross, or to consecrated bread; but is not this to disregard what God says?

I have read these precious words of Jesus: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24.) As a lost sinner, I have been brought to Jesus in the confession of my sins to Him; and He has spoken to my soul in these words. And oh, the joy it has given to my soul, to know that I have, even now, everlasting life; and to think (to say nothing of purgatory), that I shall not come into judgment! Dead with Jesus, risen with Him, I shall not come into judgment, but I am passed from death unto life. Oh, the deep joy this gives! It so fills my heart

with love to Jesus: shall I have to give up these precious words of Jesus, and joy, and light and everlasting life, all mine now? Does not Ritualism forbid me to enjoy such certainty from those words of Jesus? Must we not humbly pray that “we may all at length attain by a holy and peaceful death to the joy, and light of everlasting life?” (Page 40.)

I have read, and through grace believed, that the Lord Jesus, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; and also “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:1-39.) And I read distinctly that this is in direct contrast with the other order of continued and repeated sacrifices, that never can take away sins. These are the very words; “And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” Now this is a most serious question, and I do trust you will give me a clear answer. Am I still to receive with joy the testimony of God’s inspired word to the everlasting efficacy of this one offering of Christ; that all believers who are sanctified by this offering are for ever perfected; and that there need be, there can be, no repetition of this offering; that Jesus sat down at the right hand of God in proof that this infinite work is accomplished? This may be thought to be the most dreadful heresy to believe what God the Holy Ghost says about this “perfected for ever,” by the one offering of Christ once — never to be repeated. If this be true, where is the use of the priest-associate? Where the use of your offering the awful sacrifice of the altar, standing continually offering those sacrifices, that never can take away sins? Must we reject what Christ has done, and what God says about it? And must we most humbly, and devoutly, believe in your continued, and ever repeated offering of the victim on the altar that never can take away sins? Why, if Jesus Christ be the eternal Son, and if His blood cleanseth from all sin, and thus perfects the conscience for ever, what need can there be for purgatory? for holy water? for all the intercessors including even the blessed Mary as queen of heaven? But do not the inspired scriptures plainly declare this everlasting efficacy of the one offering of Christ? And does not God say, “And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.” Oh, may I not believe God, and so enter into rest? Rest of soul to the weary is so sweet. Now does not the scripture say all this?

I cannot doubt that God says all this; am I not to read what God says? Or am I to get a little higher, and a little higher, that is, a little nearer holy church, whose priests a little while a ago would have incited and commanded the civil power to drag to the stake the Christian who dared to read and believe what God says in His word? If I turn from the word of God to your teaching, I see in the “Manual” that, so far from the believer being for ever perfected by the one offering of Christ, even after death he needs your intercessions for his soul. (See page 77.)

Remember you board up the windows, and, papering them over, carefully exclude God’s light. There in the darkness, you place your altar, with your victim, and there you stand, offering your offerings which can never take away sins. One ray of gospel light would expose the darkness and idolatry. Do you think you could bow and swing and adore the bread and wine, and offer it a “sacrifice for sins,” if you believed God that the one offering of the body of Christ (once offered) for ever perfects? Impossible! Right well do you know, or ought to know, that, in the beginning when Christians believed God, there was no need of so-called priests or altar, or offering the victim. They met as disciples together to break bread in remembrance of His death, rejoicing the eternal redemption they had through the blood of Christ. All that is quite different from what you do. They worshipped in the light; if I join you, must I worship in the dark?

I scarcely thought I should have to give up so much of Christianity, to become a holy confederate. I read in God's word of having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. I also read, how before Jesus died the one sacrifice for sins, "that the Holy Ghost this signified that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." (Hebrews 9:8.) That is, the Jew was shut out of the presence of God: the veil shut him out. When Jesus died, the veil was rent from top to bottom. And the blood of Jesus gives the Christian boldness to enter. The beautiful parable of the prodigal just illustrates what I mean. It shows man once a miserable sinner, needing mercy, coming in repentance and confession straight to the Father. Curious, there is no priest here! Then the Father's joy in receiving and clothing him, and we find him where the Jew could never come, in the Father's presence. And oh, the joy of that Father! In short, the proper place of the Jew, before the death of Jesus, was to stand afar off, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The proper place of the Christian now that Jesus has died, and risen again, is in the full joy of the Father's presence: "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his own Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12.) There is a great difference, is there not? The Jew, miserable, crying for mercy. The Christian happy, so happy! rejoicing, and giving thanks. The one afar off, the other inside; the one crying for forgiveness; the other giving thanks for sins forgiven. If I join the Confraternity, shall I take the place of the miserable Jew; or that of the happy Christian? Oh, must I give up all this blessed certainty? Think of it! meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Which am I to be, Jew or Christian?

If I join the Confraternity, what am I to do with the scriptures, and with what God says? If I, turn again to this "Manual," there it is as plain as plain can be, that I must give up all this bright Christianity. I must know nothing of the joy of sins forgiven, or meetness for heaven, or having redemption. I must take the place of a miserable Jew. (See pages 18, 29, 41-60.) But surely this is enough to convince anyone that the proper place of a member of the Holy Confraternity is to stand Jew-like, at a distance, crying for mercy. In your vain repetitions, do you not use everything in heaven and on earth to move God to have mercy upon you? Only, I observe, your God is the bread and wine, as you say, "O sacred victim, consumed on the altar by us and for us, Have mercy upon us?" You seem to know nothing of the risen person of Christ, at the right hand of God, having finished the work of our redemption. The only God you know is bread and wine, made God by you in consecration. Nothing could be farther from your religion, than the place the prodigal enjoyed in the Father's presence. How could he repeat page after page, asking for mercy, when the Father had received him with joy? Far better does it suit the unbelieving heart to keep crying for mercy — to say with the Jew before Christ died, "Forgive us our sins," than to say with the believer now; "God hath for Christ's sake forgiven our sins."

Excuse me a little: I had no idea that I should have to give up so much, in reality to sink so low, in order to belong to "high church." I have a few more questions. You often quote those words of the Lord Jesus, as though they referred to the sacrament, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life." Now Jesus explains these words. He says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:54-63.) This explanation makes the meaning of the Lord very clear. It was not enough to receive Him as the bread from heaven, the living Messiah, but the word of God as to the shedding of His

blood also, must be received. The actual accomplished work of His death must be received in the soul, through the spirit. Now where this is done, that soul has eternal life. May I ask, do you believe the Lord that His words are spirit and they are life, and those who thus receive Him have eternal life? as He says, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. Do you believe Him? Do you know that you have eternal life?

It is plain from your teaching in the “Manual” that you do not believe that these words are to be thus understood spiritually, but literally. That in your ever repeated sacrifices of the altar, you literally eat His flesh, and drink His blood; yea, you eat your God, body, soul, and divinity. Do you not teach this over and over again in “the Manual?” Jesus says, Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. Now, suppose that you do believe that this eating is literal, and that it refers to the sacrament, then in your way even, do you believe that all who take holy communion have eternal life?

Further, do you not teach in the “Manual,” by your prayers at least, that you must pass through a holy death to get everlasting life? This is the idea of holy church. The, or rather your, sacrifices on your altars can never take away sins or give eternal life. Do they not really hide the true and only sacrifice of the Lord Jesus? When it suits your purpose, you can quote isolated scripture. This one serves you well, “This is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me,” and “This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:19-20.) Is this enough to warrant you in taking a loaf or wafer, or wine, and trying to believe that it is, or any of them, Jesus Christ, very God?

You say, mark those words, “This is my body.” Let me understand what you mean. Suppose I am passing through a conservatory, and a number of people are bowing in prayer and adoration to a vine. The head gardener declares it is Jesus Christ, body, soul, humanity, and divinity. He declares that these people are the Holy Confraternity of the blessed body and blood of Christ in this vine; nay more, that he and other head gardeners have power to turn vines into God. And they have a secret society to worship this vine. And suppose they used the very prayers of “the Manual” addressed to this vine as God. I ask the head gardener for his authority for this worship. And he replies, mark those words, “I am the true vine.” (John 15:1-27.) I must inquire and examine. Tell me, would not all this, Manual and all, be simply blasphemy against God? And I want you to show me why “it is my body” means Himself literally, body soul, and divinity, any more than “I am the vine” means literally that a vine may thus be worshipped. Or take another illustration. I am passing, say through a lunatic asylum. I am shown into a room. The poor lunatics are bowing and swinging, dressed in the most odd old clothes. They have a little manual. Beautiful words of adoration and page after page of prayers, cries for mercy. But what are they praying to? Just see. An old door that the head lunatic has brought in and reared up against that wall. He declares it is God. Sternly does he rebuke all who neglect to worship the old deal door. He maintains that he and other head lunatics have power to turn old doors continually into God. I ask the poor lunatic for his authority. He says, Mark those words, “I am the door.” Another company of countrymen might worship an old shepherd, for Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd.” Where is the difference in each of these cases? The priest in the dark hole of Cambridge takes a loaf; the gardener a vine, the lunatic a door, the countryman a shepherd. Now is there the least thought in God’s holy word that any one of these should be blasphemously worshipped? Is there a trace that the apostles worshipped the bread and wine as God? Did Paul do so, or so understand it? “This do in remembrance of Me;” he

understood and states by inspiration, to be simply this: “For as often as ye [the assembly, not so-called priests] eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death until He come.” Evidently this is what the scriptures teach, and what all Christians understood and did then. Is it not still bread when eaten in remembrance of Jesus and showing forth His death? Do you take no notice of the scriptures, or what the early Church did? The church then was as different as possible from high church now. Since then, you priests have had it very much your own way. Why, there was no separate priest then; and no altar; and no flowers (it would be like Cain bringing them with his fruits); and no gorgeous temples then; and no worship of the Virgin as queen of heaven; and no Ritualism then; except as your early friends tried to bring it in. Only think that Paul condemned the first attempt to bring in the feasts of the church, as going back to beggarly elements. What a church should we have in England, if we had only the, church as God set it up in the beginning! There would be nothing but the worship of God in spirit and in truth.

Take up the New Testament and search it through; you would soon see it would never do to compare the Anglican church, as you want to have it, with the church you have in the word of God. You would find no priest over a parish, no such thought as children made members of Christ by baptism, no altar, no repeated sacrifices.

Really this perplexes me. If it will not do to go to the scriptures or to the church as set up of God, then where has the religion of holy mother church come from? Take a few particulars; for instance, the feasts of the church — this holy day and that holy day. I certainly do remember that our blessed Lord did not institute one holy day, except as His resurrection marked out the Lord’s day, the first day of the week. Neither did the apostles observe a single holy day or festival of the church. Some did cling to Judaism with its beggarly shadows; but nowhere does the Holy Ghost in the Epistles teach the observing of days, and months, and times, and years. Nay, he severely condemns the attempt of the Galatian deceivers to introduce them. (Galatians 4:9-10.) Then whence did you get them? Was it not partly from Judaism, but chiefly from paganism? The pagans sacrificed to demons. (1 Corinthians 11:1-34.) Now the doctrine of Balaam was to mingle the old pagan worship with the worship of Christians. Swarms of pagans were nominally called Christians, and pagan festivals were altered to festivals of the church, and pagan temples were called churches: and pagan idols, consecrated to demons, were called by Christian names. Now nothing could have answered better to corrupt the church than this. Just take one. The twenty-fifth of December was about the worst pagan feast. Well, it was afterwards called Christmas; and the drunkenness and wickedness of that old festival continue to this day, only in the name of Christ. Take again this trick — for such it was. Millions of pagans worshipped the queen of heaven and her little child; but especially the queen, under different names. Her name was altered from Diana, &c., to Mary; and millions continue to bow down to her image to this day. How dreadful — all this from paganism! And all this is the very cream of high church — I mean highest church! May I now ask, where do you get the authority for the separated order of priests? The Old Testament gives the history and appointment of an earthly priesthood. It failed, like all else, even in the very first priests; some offered strange fire, and were destroyed. And even Aaron made the golden calf. Thus it began; and it ended in chief priests and high priests putting to death the Son of God. Did God set it up again in the church? There is no such thought in scripture as to have a separated order of priesthood in the church; nay, God is dead against it, and gives a severe description of it in Jude; actually saying, “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

No, you have not a single text for it. That which is quoted in Hebrews 5:4, clearly refers to the old Jewish priesthood. The fact is the scripture speaks of the whole redeemed church of God, as being worshipping priests. (1 Peter 2:9.) And so they must be, if the blood of Jesus gives them boldness to enter the holiest, the conscience for ever being perfected by the one offering of Christ. Do you not in “the Manual” do your utmost to neutralize all this, by setting aside the infinite value of that one sacrifice on the cross? and this you do by crying up your own sacrifices that never can take away sins.

Certainly Christ gave gifts to His church; as evangelists, teachers, and pastors, to minister His truth. But the idea of an order of priests to offer up sacrifices for the sins of the people; this is utterly repugnant to the New Testament, and destroys the very foundation of Christianity — the one only Infinite sacrifice of Christ. No, you must not go to scripture for your order, but again to paganism, and by returning as much as you can also to Judaism. And just as paganism became fused with the church, your order became established.

Nothing is more certain in history; nay, if you want proof, you only need travel in India, or any pagan land. From the earliest days everywhere paganism has its order of priesthood. Why, take the pope himself, the holy head of all Christian priests of the West. Is there such a thought in the New Testament as a pope? Not the faintest, nor shadow of a promise of one. Surely you know that the Roman emperors were the very ancient pagan pontiffs; and when one of these was converted to Christianity, he thought it wrong to retain this pontifex of paganism, but the bishop of Rome actually took his pagan title, and retains it to this day. Well, do you know, that paganism, not scripture, is the undoubted source of the pope’s titles? Nay, in Thibet and China, you will see most of what you call high church, practised still in paganism, only honestly, without christian names. There you will find your monks and nuns practising far greater austerities than you do. Yes, you must go to paganism, not to scripture, for the origin of your religion.

Very highly you may think of the doctrines of forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, ancient Gnostic doctrines of paganism. But the scripture actually speaks of these very doctrines of demons. (1 Timothy 4:1-4.) I was going to say, and well they may. Did not these doctrines corrupt not only the priesthood, but the very world? I have read history these last forty years, but I have read of nothing producing more universal depravity than the “forbidding to marry.” Look back to those days of vaunted holy mother church — just before the trumpet demand for the Reformation; and after then too. The priests forbade to marry, but had power to compel every person to confess: and if any person crossed their will, they had only to point him or her out to a Dominican, and there is a rap at his door at midnight; he or she is hurried off to that awful prison, the holy inquisition, from which there is no voice or return. Oh, these chambers of torment and dungeons of untold horrors! This dreadful priestly power over the bodies and souls of men and women! Scripture then must be right, these are the doctrines of demons. Is it then a little higher, or a little lower down? Is it not to the depths of Satan? But I forget tradition. The tradition of the church is what you stand by. But if the tradition of men flatly contradicts the word of God, which will you take? I will give you an illustration, and I must say this is a point of vital importance to me. Suppose I am in great distress and need, deeply in debt beyond all power ever to redeem myself; in a word, I am ruined. A very kind friend undertakes my whole responsibilities. I have a creditor to whom I owe a great sum. This kind friend pays the whole for me, as my friend and substitute. The creditor settles the whole account, discharges me from it, on Her Majesty’s stamp. But the priest of

the place comes to me, and says, Yea, hath the creditor discharged your account? Tradition gives him a very bad word; do not trust him: do not believe him, nor his receipt. You will see after all that man will have you up for your debt, and he will cast you into prison. I reply, But he is an upright righteous tradesman, and he cannot first give me a receipt, and then afterwards have me summoned for that debt; it would not be righteous to my substitute, who paid the debt. Of course, if I had not the receipt, I might well doubt. What I mean is this: As a sinner, I am totally ruined. The law can only curse me; it cannot redeem me, and I cannot redeem myself. God sent His beloved Son for this very purpose. That Holy One became my substitute. He was wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my sins; He was delivered for my iniquities. The wrath deserved by me He bore to the utmost. In fact, He just stood in my place. He was condemned for me; and He was raised from among the dead for my justification. Believing this, God, against whom I had sinned, is my justifier. He raised up Christ for this very purpose. See Christ, who once bore my sins, now at God's right hand; and all this accounted to me on the principle of faith; all my sins atoned for, and Christ raised from among the dead is my receipt, my full and everlasting discharge — everlastingly discharged because Christ, my representative, is above. As He is, so am I. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And the best of all is, "It is God that justifieth." He says also, "and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more ever." (Hebrews 10:1-39.) Jesus says, I shall not come into judgment having passed from death unto life. (John 5:24.)

Now tradition, like the Jews of old, entirely denies the righteousness of God, and sets me working out a righteousness of my own; yes, by works of law. All depends on this one point — the righteousness of God. The word of God assures me that it is the righteousness of God that is revealed in the gospel; as to my very justification. Tradition leads me to doubt that God is my justifier: that after all He will be unfaithful to Christ who bore my sins; and that He will after all have me up in judgment for them: and I shall never know until then whether I shall be justified or condemned. Nay, this very "Manual," after all your sacrifices, leaves a poor soul in uncertainty after death, and needing your prayers. Christ hath glorified God in this very matter: and God hath straightway glorified Him as my representative. And God hath made me, as a believer, accepted in the beloved one; but then, if God is unrighteous, all is lost. I must be judged after all. What is the creditor's receipt worth, if he is unrighteous to my friend who paid the debt, and after all arrests me, and casts me into prison? And what is God's justification worth, if after all He is not righteous? If He is not perfectly glorified by the death of the cross? And therefore His very righteousness is not my everlasting justification! I know tradition brands this faith in God as dreadful heresy. Or take another illustration. The emperor declares peace is made — made on a righteous basis — peace is proclaimed. Tradition says, Ah, poor soldier, do not believe the emperor; keep on fighting and struggling. That emperor is an unrighteous man. He says one thing and means another. Now Jesus has made peace by His own blood: peace is made for me as a sinner on a righteous basis; and God proclaims peace to me. I believe Him; and I have peace with God — the very same peace that my dear Lord has in the unclouded presence of God for ever. But tradition says as it were, No, you must not believe God: He is not to be trusted; He says one thing, but means to do another. He says He justifies you from all things (Acts 13:38), but He means to judge you for all your sins; and such a terrible Judge will you find Him, that you will need, if ever you get safe through that judgment, all the saints in the calendar to help you. Now when tradition is not in harmony with, but in flat contradiction to, the word of God, which shall I take?

I think I hear many a priest with a deep sigh, speaking low to himself, “Righteousness of God! I never thought of it in that way. Oh, that that everlasting peace were mine!” Ah, for me there are prayers, fastings, masses, floggings, agony of death, and perhaps millions of years of torments in purgatory, before I can enter into everlasting life and enjoy peace with God. How different the Christianity of the Holy Scriptures! A dying thief believe in his heart, confessed Jesus the Lord with his lips, and that day was with Him in paradise. Think of those three sentences of Jesus to the woman of the city who was a sinner. “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” But tell me: Is it not shocking to doubt the righteousness of God? Did He not give His beloved Son to die for my sins? “Who was delivered for our offences.” Did He not thus become my Substitute, “The Just for the unjust?” Now was not God glorified by that death on the cross? Did He fail? No! was He not raised again for our justification? (Rom. 4: 24, 26.) Did ever creditor give such a discharge as this? And mark, it is God who gives this discharge; God who raised Christ my Substitute from the dead, for the very purpose of being my living everlasting discharge from all sins. By the blood of Jesus I am thus justified from my sins. The resurrection of Jesus is God’s assurance of that justification to my soul; believing God, righteousness is thus reckoned unto me. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1.) Thus the righteousness of God is unto all, and upon all that believe. And not only are believers thus justified from their sins, but also justified from sin, the root of all sins, by being dead with Christ, and risen in Him. (Romans 5:12-19; Romans 6:7; Colossians 2:12-13.) And “it is God that justifieth.” Is He just in doing it? Is He false, or is He true? Is He faithful to the claims of Christ once offered on the cross? There can he no question; for God hath raised Jesus from the dead. Then there can be no question that “By him all that believed are justified from all things.” (Acts 13:38.)

I must confess the word of God seems clear enough. You may point to the holy popes’ councils, fathers, bishops, and holy saints that teach us humbly to doubt. I see the choice. Let God be true, and every man a liar. The post has just arrived. I must close these questions of the inquirer for the present. Here is a book-parcel by post. My heart beats quickly as I open it. Here they are. I began to write this paper, assured they would come; and had written up to this point. And there they lie before me, the very books used in the dark hole of Cambridge. Not copies, but the identical books used in that dark chamber of idolatry, for the preparation of the parish priests of the church of England. This may seem strange to some. Often however our God is thus pleased, first to bid His feeble instrument do a certain thing for Him, then afterwards give confirmation to the work of dependent faith. Every line above was written, feeling the absolute need of these very books, and in faith that those very books would come into my hands; and here they are.

“The Manual of the Holy Confraternity” I have already noticed. This book reveals the fact of a vast confederacy in the church of England, determined to supplant Christianity by a system of mixed idolatry, the highest worship and adoration to a God of their own making, of bread or wine. Every form of prayer, praise, and loving adoration, that should be offered to the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ, is given to this idol, utterly contrary to scripture. So that whilst it is located in the English church, it is no longer limited to an attack on that church, but must be regarded as a vast attack on our common Christianity.

We will now open this second book, “The Garden of the Soul.” This is a well-known Roman Catholic book, and therefore does not call for particular notice. A Roman Catholic prayer-book is

thus found to be used by the Holy Confraternity. For those who may know nothing of it, a few words are needed. First, we have an engraving of the blessed mother of Jesus, as the queen of heaven in glory, surrounded with twelve stars, borrowed no doubt from the symbol of Israel in Revelation 12:1-17. Then follows a summary of the faith and practice of the Roman Catholic church, open, candid, and clear — much of which is common to all Christians. But tradition is put on an equal footing with the scriptures. (Chap. 19.) These traditions, on examination, frequently contradict themselves; and are always contrary to scripture. For instance; it is said, “Extreme unction, which wipes away the remains of sins” (chap. 19.); but purgatory flatly contradicts this. Both as flatly contradict scripture, that the one offering for ever perfects — perfected for ever. And again, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7.) And again, “Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” (Revelation 1:5.)

Take another tradition. We must believe that Jesus Christ will come from heaven at the last day to judge us all; that all the dead, both good and bad, shall rise from their graves at the sound of the last trumpet, and shall be judged by Him, &c. (Chap. 20: 13.) This is in flat contradiction to the tradition respecting vast numbers of saints now in glory, so holy that they can intercede for us poor sinners here on earth. These two traditions flatly contradict each other. What! have all the departed saints to be raised and judged? and is their eternal state still uncertain after being so long in glory? Have they yet to be judged? The Lord Jesus in holy scripture, when speaking on this very subject assures all believers that they shall not come into judgment. (John 5:24.) Nay, scripture is most explicit in direct contradiction to the tradition of a general judgment; that “as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:27.) Search the scriptures, and you will not find one single text to support the tradition of a general judgment. When speaking on quite another blessed subject — the personal rewards of the children of God — then indeed, in that sense, it is most blessed to know we shall all stand before the judgment seat, or Beema, of Christ. Oh, how many then, who have been cursed and burned by man, will receive the martyr’s crown of glory! But when Jesus comes to take His redeemed, there can be no question of sin to them, otherwise Christ would have died in vain. He comes as Saviour. (Php 3:20.) “When we shall see him, we shall be like him.” (1 John 3:2.) Will He judge those who are like Himself? No: He says, “The glory that thou hast given me, I have given them.” Brighter than light is the hope of His coming. The sons of darkness have turned it to midnight gloom, and dread of judgment. All true, sad, and everlasting, to the rejecters of God’s great salvation. But to return, from page 20: we have a vast number of what may be called christian laws, precepts, and duties: many most excellent, others utterly unscriptural; but all on false ground — build on a false foundation. “Every Christian in order to attain life everlasting, must” do all the things that follow. Therefore the principle on which all is built is, Do this and live. Thus, as a legal system, the bondage of all these rules must become greater than that from which the death of Christ delivered the believing Jews. If therefore the law entered that the offence might abound (Romans 5:20), the effect of all this mistaken and unscriptural system must be to provoke the transgression of these rules. If the tree be bad, the fruit must be bad also. A mistake in the first line of a schoolboy’s sum must produce mistakes all through, and at the end. The Lord Jesus says, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:1-71.) The Holy Ghost saith, “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that

hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: That ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John 5:10.)

Thus, as to foundation truth, no two books could be more opposed than the word of God, and the "Garden of the Soul." The one is God declaring that eternal life is a gift, and that he that believeth hath it, and that from this new life flows out the fruit of a holy life. The other says, No, you must keep this most elaborate law, "in order to everlasting life." Thus the whole system denies the record of God, and makes Him a liar. I cannot both have everlasting life, and at the same time be keeping all these laws in order to get it. Thus whilst the word of God gives divine certainty, the "Garden of the Soul" leaves us in darkness and uncertainty; yes, even for ages after death.

One cannot wonder then at all the confusion and contradiction of scripture that follows. There is no holy boldness to enter the holiest; no assurance of sins forgiven: but a sense of distance from God, and consequent gloomy misery, beseeching the blessed Mary, apostles, and a host of saints, to pray to God for them. I do not like to copy these dismal prayers of unbelief. The greater part of this book is prayer to the queen of heaven. Then follows the mass, with full instructions and candid explanations. It is regarded as a sacrifice — "A most powerful means to move God to show mercy to us in the forgiveness of our sins." (Page 39.) They believe the bread to be truly God, and as such worship it. Still no relief. There is confession, kneeling to the priest, and praying to him, "Pray, father, give me your blessing for I have sinned." There is confession to God, to Mary, Michael, apostles, &c., and repeated prayers to all these. Nay, it would be difficult to invent any book more contrary to the scripture than this "Garden." There are prayers for the departed faithful; prayers for the miserable souls in purgatory: "Have mercy on the souls of the faithful departed." No one, except he saw and read, could conceive it possible for the human mind to sink into such depths of unbelief. There are also prayers for the pope, prayers for England, page after page. And then the "Garden" ends with the Ordinary of the Mass in English.

We now turn to the larger book used in the chamber of darkness at Cambridge.

'The Day office of the Church according to the calendar of the Church of England.' The preface very ably explains how the Roman Breviary has been translated, and adapted to the church of England. All is Romanism: there are services for almost every hour and day in the year; lauds, prime, terce, sext, nones, and vespers; feasts of my Lord, and feasts of my Lady, feasts of the angels, and feasts of the saints. Sometimes you pray for them, then again you beg they will pray for you. What would the apostle Paul say to such a book for the observance of hours and days, and months and years? This is what he did say: "How turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Galatians 4:9.)

Now what is the real root of all this bondage; this perfect labyrinth of observances? Can it be anything else but unbelief, and the rejection of the record of God? The believer with his eye fixed on the risen Christ at God's right hand can say, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephesians 1:7.) His sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. In direct opposition to all this the priest says, "God Almighty have mercy upon thee, and forgive thee thy sins." And again, "The merit of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the prayers of our Holy Mother, the Church, whatsoever good thou hast done, or by God's grace shall

do, be unto thee remission of thy sins."

Such is the unbelief of the chambers of Cambridge. Christianity and these sons of darkness, are as far apart as the poles. It would be impossible in a small tract to follow the vain repetitions and gross unscriptural statements of this book. I cannot but think that every sincere Romanist must be ashamed of these men. If they believe Romanism to be right, why do they not honestly avow themselves? But I must let you see further what these books contain. No words can sufficiently describe the dreadful idolatry of this Day Office of the Church, used by these so-called priests of the Church of England. Could Christ be more deeply dishonoured than by the following collect? (Page 117 for Dec. 6.) "O God, who by numberless miracles hast honoured Blessed Nicolas, Thy Bishop: grant, we beseech Thee, that by his merits and intercession we may be delivered from the flames of hell, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen?" Can any man utter this prayer without entirely rejecting the testimony of God to the sacrifice of the cross of Christ and to His intercession? Or again, on the same page, is not the supreme worship to the blessed Virgin Mary exactly like the old worship of Diana or Tammuz? Is it not perfectly dreadful?

"What mortal tongue may dare to raise, O Mother of our God, thy praise?

Ye angels come, and lift your song: To you the office should belong." Can any creature, however blessed, be raised to is place of supreme worship? Was she the eternal mother of God? or the creature mother of the humanity of our adorable Lord? As to His humanity, she was the mother of the Lord. But does the word of God ever present her either as an object of highest worship, or as an intercessor of the saints? These priests who shut out the light say, "With delight let us celebrate the conception of Blessed Mary; so may she intercede for us to Jesus Christ our Lord." (Page 178.) And do not suppose that Ritualists limit their idolatry to Blessed Mary. This book is full of curious antiphons. Take one to Lucy (on Dec. 13), than which nothing could be more contrary to scripture: "In thy patience thou hast possessed thy soul, O Lucy, spouse of Christ; thou hast hated the things which are in the world, and thou shinest among angels; thou hast overcome the enemy with thine own blood." "O virgin Lucy, why dost thou seek of me, what thou thyself canst continually give to thy mother?" I might _give a vast number of quotations of prayers to various saints, as "That we who know that we are guilty of our iniquities, may be delivered there from by the prayers of thy Blessed Martyr Vincent." (Page 182.) Yes, in this book the atoning death of Jesus is simply robbed of all its glory. There is evidently the design of a master spirit, through the whole, to set aside the person and death of Christ, as the sole salvation of God to lost sinners.

Just as the types of the Old Testament set forth every aspect of that precious Holy One, so this book finds a saint to deny every aspect of the cross of Christ. Is it not through the death and resurrection of Christ that the believer passes to eternal glory? Ritualism has a Richard for this. (April 3.) "O God, who hast made thy church to shine by the deeds and glorious miracles of Blessed Richard, Thy confessor and bishop: grant, that we Thy servants, through his intercession, may attain to the blessedness of eternal glory." (Page 194.)

I ask, Can men who use these abominable prayers, have any honest pretensions to acknowledge the authority of the word of God? I might multiply extracts of a similar character. We have seen in the word of God that the Father runs to meet the penitent sinner. Thus Jesus reveals the Father; and thus He speaks to the weeping sinner: "Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee . . . thy faith hath saved thee . . . go in peace." (Luke 7:1-50; Luke 15:1-32.) With Ritualism, the mother of God,

angelic choirs, patriarchal sires, prophets, saints, the Baptist, and all apostles. “Strive to win from God remission of our sin.” (Page 231.) “And with their suffrages the clergy join.” In many part of this Day Office there is either the most gross ignorance, or designed confusion of scripture with superstition. Take this collect: “O God, who didst give the law of Moses on the top of Mount Sinai, and by Thy holy angels didst wonderfully convey the body of Blessed Katharine, Thy virgin and martyr, to the same place; grant we beseech Thee, that for her sake, and at her intercessions, we may be enabled to reach that mount, which is Christ.” (Page 236.) Can this be anything but wilful perversion? Is Mount Sinai Christ? The very symbol of bondage, and the curse to all under it. (Galatians 3:10; Galatians 4:24-25.) We are thus taught by High Church to pray to God that St. Katharine may by her intercessions lead us to the place of the curse. Can human folly go beyond this? It is written, “Their folly shall he manifest unto all.” (2 Timothy 3:9.) Many of my readers no doubt will be in happy ignorance that Ritualism would lead us thus to address all the apostles:

“We praise you all with hearts sincere, As suppliants now we worship here; To your prevailing word ’twas given To close and open the doors of heaven!”

How blessed is prayer in the word of God! The apostle Paul says, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Ephesians 3:14-19.) Compare this with the following written instructions found in the Office of the Church.

“In censing the altar there are twenty-five swings.

Directions for Officiant.

“Bow to the crucifix. Salute same with three double swings. Turn toward Epistle side, salute back of altar slab, three swings one swing lower corner of Epistle side, one swing upper corner; proceed towards centre of altar, salute forepart three swings. Repeat on Gospel side, and return toward Epistle corner, salute forepart of altar six swings. Salute, three swings.” This may be a very fine imitation of pagan worship, but what has it to do with Christianity? Is it not the very opposite of New Testament prayer, and worship in spirit and in truth?

It would swell this tract far beyond my present intention to notice, “Extreme unction; communion of the sick with the reserved Eucharist;” or the priest carrying God in a little box to the dying; confession; prayers before mass, and prayers after mass; all of which are in this Office of the Church. Call it no longer Ritualism. It is a vast Romish conspiracy of more than two thousand six hundred clergymen in the Church of England. “The union consists of more than sixteen thousand five hundred, of whom two thousand six hundred are clergymen.”* We now know by these books that it is Romanism. If the Garden of the Soul, and the Roman Breviary be not full-blown Romanism, what is? Let us then go to the fountain-head and examine the authoritative teaching of Rome. This I hope to do candidly in tracts to follow — comparing with scripture the Council of Trent. If you, my reader, are in this dark Confraternity, may the Lord use this paper to the full deliverance of your soul!

{*See list of most of their names and addresses in a pamphlet published at the office of “The Rock,” London: “The Ritualistic Conspiracy.”}

Thus is England, after all the fiery sufferings of her martyrs, returning to her vomit. This Holy Confraternity, or dark confederacy, is taking possession of her parishes. Ministers of Christ must be displaced by the priests of the hole in the wall. Nay, Christ must be displaced by the priest, shall I not say, by an antichrist? In how many things does this man in black and broad brim, take the place of Christ, and is against Christ!

I will notice a few. A sinner is burthened with his sins, weary and heavy laden. Jesus who died for his sins says, “come unto me, and I will give you rest.” And “He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Mark the presumption of this antichrist. “The priest, wearing a surplice, and a violet stole, shall be seated in the confessional seat (which ought always to be in the church); the penitent kneeling at his side shall ask his blessing.” (Litany 4.) Nay, his very name, and office is strictly antichristian. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is shown to be the long foretold priest, after the order of Melchisedec, an order one and exclusively in contrast with the many priests of the Aaronic order. As the fulfilment of all Aaronic priesthood, He is gone into heaven, and soon He is to come out, in the full display of His Melchisedec priesthood, King of righteousness, and King of peace. But the first order, the Aaronic, is taken away, with all its many priests, and many sacrifices, which could never take away sins. God hath established the second — the one only and exclusive sacrifice and priesthood of Christ. In Christ then we have one sacrifice, one High Priest. With those who say they are Jews (separated priests) and are not many sacrifices, many priests. The one for ever perfects; the other never perfects. The one is eternal redemption, and gives the purged worshipper boldness to enter the holiest; the other is the system of many priests and many sacrifices, and leaves man shut out of the presence of God: “The Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.” (Hebrews 9:8.) For believers now, except in the sense that all Christians are priests (Revelation 1:6), Christ is the one exclusive priest. This must be so, for every high priest must have gifts and sacrifices, to offer. He is ordained for that very purpose. (Hebrews 8:3-4.) But the one sacrifice of Christ is of infinite value; so that if He were on earth He could not be a priest, seeing the apostle said, There are priests that offer gifts according to the law, He could not go back to that which was imperfect, He was not of that order, “who needeth daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice . . . for this he did once when he offered up himself.” (Hebrews 7:27.) “Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” (Hebrews 9:25.)

He could not add to that which is infinite. He does not even stand as a priest in heaven. This would imply the work of sacrifice was not finished once. No, “we have such an high priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.” Is not all this most clearly taught in Hebrews 7:1-28; Hebrews 8:1-13; Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39? But now the many priests must deny all this. The many priests must have many sacrifices. But if Christ could not possibly add to His own once offered sacrifice, what shall we say of the pretensions of these men, who practically say, if Christ could not, we can? And if He could have no more that He could offer, we have. We can turn bread or wine into Christ, and offering Him again and again, we can set aside the one offering, and the one high priest who sat down in heaven; we can establish

the order of many priests, and many offerings on earth. I ask every christian reader, is not this dreadful? Is not every sacrifice the pretended priest offers on the altar, a distinct denial that the sacrifice of Christ is infinite, and that it perfects in perpetuity the believer sanctified by it? Do not say that I have written strongly; every word is warranted by these books before me. They are full of idolatry. The worship of the queen of heaven; the god made of bread, and carried in a little gold or silver box, and offered to God as a sacrifice for sins; prayers for the faithful dead; the priest taking the place of Christ; the grace of God obscured, yea, practically denied.

Many will say, what are we to do? Here we are in a country parish. We know that Christ gave gifts to His church, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and we see in the scriptures how these were used to edification by the Holy Ghost in the church. (Ephesians 4:1-32; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40.) But here is the priest, who says, as it were, Christ has no right to give or use anyone but me. Well it is just this; and there is no middle place betwixt. Christ or Antichrist.

Oh, precious words; oh, blessed refuge in these days of darkness. Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst.” Which is best, to gather with two or three to the Lord Jesus (it may be in your own house), searching the scriptures, and trusting the Lord.

Oh, my fellow Christians, it is not only the Church of England that is attacked by this Confraternity; it is the most precious truth as it is in Christ. Awake, thou that sleepest, search the scriptures; and test everything by the word of God. If an army invaded this country, would it not be aroused? Here is a secret army of priests, invading our most sacred and eternal interests, and few raise the voice of warning and alarm. To whom can you turn but to God and His word? C. S.

Chapter 73

075. Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.

Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.

No. 2.

Baptismal Regeneration: the Council of Trent tested by the Word of God.

C. Stanley. In our last tract, No. 1, we described our visit to the dark hole of “The Holy Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament” in Cambridge with its images of idolatry, and the books used by the priests-associates. Its windows were carefully boarded up, and papered over. Just as we found where the light of heaven should have come in, there stood the altar of Rome; so by the books used by this Confraternity we found, where the testimony of God to the one sacrifice of Christ should have been, there stood the many sacrifices of the Mass which never can take away sins.

These books used by some two thousand six hundred priests, or would-be priests, of Rome, under the disguise of being clergymen of the Church of England — these books are simply and wholly Romish. It is no use then treating this confederacy as merely ritualistic, but as a secret compact organization, to establish Romanism in this land. We propose then to go to the fountainhead, from which flows this stream of Ritualism, and the place to which every advancing step leads.

It is then a matter of the very utmost importance that we should understand what Romanism is. If it be of God, would it not be well, if not only these thousands of clergymen were leading the people back to it, but if we all were at once to go back to it? But if it be of God, it will be assuredly according to God’s word. With an ever increasing reverence for that word, and a sincere desire to test the Roman Church by that word, we feel it will only be just to examine the doctrines and practices of Rome, as found in her own authoritative books. And as all Roman Catholics acknowledge the authority of the Council of Trent, let us test the decrees of that Council by the word of God.* The Garden of the Soul, and other authentic Roman Catholic books may be referred to. Let it be however distinctly understood, that we do not propose to combat Romanism by any other religious system of doctrine, but our business is solely to examine it by the word of God.

{*The Edition used is the literal translation by T. A. Buckley, B.A. George Routledge and Co.; London, 1851.}

I had thought of going at once to the all-important subject of justification, but there is so much said in these decrees, about the sacrament of Baptism, as the instrumental cause of justification, that it will be well for us to examine first: — The Decree on concerning original sin. (p. 21.)

Notice the first line of this decree — “That our Catholic faith, without which it is impossible to please God,” &c. This would close at a stroke all inquiry and examination. If we have not the faith set forth by these men, be it according or contrary to the word of God, no matter; for without their Catholic faith it is impossible to please God! But if you turn to Hebrews 11:1-40, the passage quoted says nothing about their Catholic faith. They have thus added to the word of God. And it is

written, “if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book.” (Revelation 22:18.) The Fathers of the Council made this mistake; Paul was not speaking of faith in them, but faith in God. It is not nice to pervert the scripture at starting. There is not such a thought in Hebrews 11:1-40 as “our Catholic faith.”

We are perfectly agreed as to the utter ruin and sin, in which the whole race of Adam is born. “By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.” Every man on the face of the earth is a sad proof of this. By nature he is a child of wrath. He is born with a sinful nature. We are also agreed that the scriptures nowhere teach that the powers of human nature can deliver man from this evil nature of sin. But the remedy! that is the question. The Council, speaking of infants newly born, says that original sin from Adam has need to be expiated by the laver of regeneration for the obtaining life everlasting: or perhaps more distinctly, “For by reason of this rule of faith, from a tradition of the apostles, even infants, who could not as yet in themselves commit any sins, are for this cause truly baptized for the remission of sins, that in them that which they have contracted by generation, may be cleansed away by regeneration. For unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Then follows a little cursing which we will notice soon.

We never heard of this rule of faith in the scripture, no, it is from tradition. Baptismal regeneration is “from tradition.” Infants are baptized for the remission of sins. What sins? “They cannot as yet commit any.” Future sins? Does this Church teach that? No. Does she teach transmigration? are they sins committed before they were born? No; then here is a pretty sample of tradition! It is too bad to charge the apostles with it. But you say the decree points to scripture. “For unless a man be born again of water,” &c. (John 3:5.) Did the Fathers ever examine the context of this verse? Is there a thought in the passage of the baptism of infants for remission of sins? Certainly not one. Examine it carefully. Is there one word even about christian baptism? A ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night, mark, before christian baptism was known or instituted. The blessed Lord speaks to him as a Jew, about the earthly things of the kingdom of God; but does not speak to him about the heavenly things of the kingdom of God. He tells him what he ought to have known that man must be born again, or wholly anew. Nicodemus is greatly perplexed. He then says, “Amen, Amen, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus still says, How can these things be? Jesus reminds him that he ought to know these things. He said, “Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?” And again He says, “I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things.”

These Fathers of Trent seem to have been very ignorant of scripture. They do not seed in the least to distinguish between the earthly kingdom of God, promised to the people of Israel by Jehovah — that which the blessed Lord talked about to Nicodemus — and the heavenly truth and glory of the church. If Jesus had meant baptism, either of infants just born, or of believers in Christ’s death an resurrection, or forgiveness of sins through His blood, and baptism in His name, crucified, dead, and risen, how could this ruler of Israel have known a word about it? But now read the word of Jehovah to Israel in Ezekiel 36:22-36. All is, as the Lord said the kingdom. They shall dwell in their own land. The waste cities shall be builded. This land that is desolate shall be like the garden of Eden. “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,” &c. Therefore this ruler of

the Jews ought to have understood these earthly promises, especially as so many types of the law showed this absolute need of cleansing and holiness.

Another scripture, speaking of the same thing says, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zechariah 13:1.) And as Nicodemus ought to have understood these earthly things of the kingdom, it is proved Jesus did not speak of christian baptism in this text, “Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit,” &c.

Now examine His own explanation, how this new life is communicated, in this very chapter. Does He say, “As Moses commanded the laver to be placed at the door of the tabernacle, that the priests might wash when they entered; even so every person must be washed in water, that whosoever is baptized by a priest shall not perish, but have everlasting life?” Is there such a thought in this chapter? but if baptismal regeneration were true, and the Lord meant it to Nicodemus, He would then have so put it.

Mark the contrast of all this. Indeed, we may say the law even taught the contrary: before a person could reach the laver, there was the brazen altar of burnt-offering. The blood must be shed first, the atonement first. So here the Lord teaches us, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Whom shall I trust? The Fathers set before me baptism, as the medium by which I am to receive the new life. Jesus sets before me His own death on the cross, and faith as the medium, if I may so express it. His words are, “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The Council will not allow water here as a figure of speech; it simply refers to that which a ruler of the Jews ought to have known of the typical meaning of water in the law, and the prophets of Israel. You can say, “he that is born of the Spirit is spirit;” that is, the new nature is of the Spirit. But you could not say, “He that is born of water is water.” Could these doctors have said we are no longer flesh and bone, but water?

We must conclude then, that the Council made a grave mistake of ignorance in quoting this text on which they so much rely. It could not possibly refer to baptism of new born infants for the remission of sins they had never committed. Neither could it refer to the baptism of the church at all, but to the earthly kingdom of Israel, and therefore ought to have been understood by Nicodemus. The Fathers evidently wrested it from its proper connection and meaning. That baptism points to the same thing may be very certain. Whether of the individual, or of the future nation of Israel there must be holiness — cleansing from all uncleanness; and by the Spirit a new, wholly new, nature. And that water is used as a figure of the word none can deny. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,” &c. (Ephesians 5:25.) The Fathers say by the priestly washing of water in baptism; Paul says, “the washing of water by the word.” Did Peter understand that christian believers are born again by the sacrament of baptism? Hear what be says on this subject, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. And this is the word which is preached unto you.” (1 Peter 1:23-25.) Is not this remarkable that the Council should so flatly contradict scripture on this very foundation doctrine of their whole system? For it follows if this foundation is true, there needs no other. If an infant by baptism is regenerated — made a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, or member of the one body of Christ — then there is

no need to preach the gospel to such, and no need to be born again by the word of God. If it be true, it thus entirely sets aside scripture: and if it be false, it proclaims a soul-destroying delusion to millions of the human race.

Let us carefully examine a little further. Not only does this canon teach baptism for the remission of sins, but also “that in them that which they have contracted by generation may be cleansed away by regeneration.” And if any one asserts that all that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away, but says it is only erased, or not imputed, let him be cursed. And after a number of texts which we shall find misapplied to baptism, the baptized are spoken of as “made innocent, immaculate, pure, harmless, and beloved of God.” I ask, if this were true, if baptism did all this, could Paul possibly say, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel?” What gospel could be better than baptism, if there were a shadow of truth in these Fathers’ doctrines? They represent sin taken away; the person innocent, immaculate, pure, all that we contracted by generation gone. And all who assert to the contrary to this are to be accursed. The beloved John, inspired of God, denies this. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8.) These Fathers ought to have known scripture better before they cursed so freely. Their curse would rest on the beloved John himself. But John tells them they deceive themselves. I will be cursed with John, rather than be deceived with the Council of Trent.

I said we would notice the misquotations of scripture. They say, “There is therefore no condemnation to those who are truly buried together with Christ by baptism into death,” &c. Is this ignorance, or wilfulness? Could these Fathers be so ignorant of this glorious truth, of no condemnation now to them that are in Christ Jesus — so ignorant of the Epistle to the Romans where it is found — as to apply this to water baptism? We will not pursue it at this moment, as we shall examine the scripture when on “Justification.” The synod then goes on, and fully admits that concupiscence still remains, but it is not sin, unless we consent to it: and further, “this concupiscence which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin, as being a truly and properly sin, in those born again, but because it is of sin, and inclines to sin. And if any one is of a contrary opinion, let him be Anathema.” (Page 24.) Is not this dreadful? The Catholic Church sets itself confessedly against the inspired apostle, nay, against God. Their curses would rest on the apostle for having a different opinion from themselves. God says lust is sin. They do not call it so. If any one is of a contrary opinion, let him be accursed. Christ declares the contrary. He says to lust is to commit sin in the heart. (Matthew 5:28.) Paul says, “But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;” and after full deliverance in Christ he says, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Romans 7:8; Romans 7:25.) The flesh in regenerate Paul is thus called sin. The apostle John, speaking of the regenerate surely, says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8.) Well, says the Holy Synod, we do not call it sin; and if any one does, let him be accursed. Yes, God, and Christ, and Paul, and John all come under the curse by this dreadful decree. And this is called “Holy Synod!” And does not every true Christian mourn over his inward corruptions, his evil nature so prone to commit sins — the root from which all the sins grow? And does he not confess it to God as sin, and abhor it? Holy Church says, we curse him if he does. How low had Rome sunk, when she could issue such a decree! Oh, Lord, deliver Thy people from her.

They teach there is no harm in this inbred lust if we consent not. (Page 23) Now take a case. Suppose a priest knows a decided Christian who loves the Lord and studies His word. His corrupt heart hates this man, and he lusts to take his life. For many reasons he strives hard against this dreadful desire. Of course at one time he would have had him off to the Inquisition and dispatched him quickly, and thus have been a murderer. But suppose there is no outward action, what says the scripture? “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” (1 John 3:15.) Does not even common sense, or at least natural conscience, tell us that to desire to sin is sin? Is not the tree known by its fruit? There remains all this, they tell us, in the baptized, and yet all that has the true proper nature of sin is taken away — nature, guilt, and all. The baptized are innocent, immaculate, pure, and harmless. Could there be greater confusion, or more daring denial of the word of God?

Let us not however judge them too harshly: the word of God was little studied in those days. Many, no doubt, were seeking truth, in the midst of this awful darkness. These Fathers entirely overlooked, in their quotation of scripture, the all-important distinction betwixt sin and sins. Many serious mistakes arose through this oversight. I will notice one. I would state that the authorised Douay translation lies before me. I will quote from it. “Behold the Lamb of God: behold him who taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29.) Now this professedly infallible Council scarcely ever quotes this scripture correctly; instead of “sin,” they say “sins,” which completely destroys the meaning: and is utterly opposed to all scripture. A work has been accomplished by the Lamb of God, by which sin shall be finally taken away, and the new heavens and new earth appear, where sin shall be no more. But to quote it as if the death of the Sin-bearer had taken away personally the sins of the whole world is to teach universal salvation. Where Jesus is spoken of as the propitiation, there it is for the world. The blood is on the mercy-seat: and thus mercy and forgiveness are proclaimed to all. But where Jesus is spoken of as the Substitute, actually bearing and taking away sins, it is always limited to believers. We see Him, the Sin-bearer, exhausting all judgment due to sins in Hebrews 9:27-28. But there it is, “the sins of many.” These Fathers do not seem to have had the least idea of this, neither had they ever noticed that in the Epistle to the Romans the very verse they quote begins the question of sin. The other question of sins had been fully discussed up to that very verse, or end of Romans 5:11. Now there is no thought there of being justified from sins by baptism. It is by faith, without works of law. But more of this in our next. I say baptism is not once put before these believers as the means of their justification from their sins, but the blood of Jesus. But when we are thus justified from our sins, what about sin? The root of them all, that which came by Adam? This is the main question from verse 12 to the end of chapter 7. As to sin then, Holy Synod puts baptism before us. The Spirit puts Christ before us — Christ in contrast to Adam. By Adam came sin and death and condemnation to all his race. By Christ came righteousness, and life, and justification, abounding over all both sin and offence — to all in Him. We are thus justified from sins by His blood, His precious death for us. We are justified from sin by being dead with Him, and raised again. Only this is not yet accomplished, in fact, in us as to the body. But faith does so account it to be, or reckon it: “So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:11, Douay.) If you read these chapters in Romans, noticing the important distinction betwixt sin and sins, it is very clear and divinely complete. Without this distinction you cannot wonder at the Fathers’ mistakes. Should baptism then be set aside? Surely not. What is it then? If it is not regeneration, what is it? Let us show a photograph to a child. I ask the child, What is this? Is it Mr. Johnstone? No. “Yes,” says the child. It is a most striking, most correct, likeness — a picture drawn by the sun. But is it the living

real person? Oh, no; but it is a good likeness. Or take another. Here is a map of an estate. How very correct: every field and tree and fence, oh, how exact! But is it the estate? Now baptism is like one of these. What a type of doctrine! what an exact picture of the passing from death to life of a believer, dead with Christ, and risen in Him. Nothing can show more clearly how sin is gone for ever, as a thing to be charged against the believer, than being reckoned of God to be dead with Christ, and risen in Him.

You only need to read Romans 6:1-23 prayerfully in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to see the full force of this. But though you may use the photograph to describe the man, or the map to describe the estate, and baptism to describe this death and new creation in Christ Jesus, yet the photograph is not the man? The map is not the estate; and water washeth not from sin. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” A map is very useful in describing an estate; and in the beginning baptism was evidently most expressive of the passing from death unto life. To this day a baptized Jew is looked upon by his kindred as dead. It is just the same too with a Hindu. It was the solemn taking the place of death with Christ, in His name, for forgiveness of sins. The prophets did not bear witness to the baptism, but “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” (Acts 10:43.) Thus on the church’s birthday, the three thousand who had rejected and murdered the Lord Jesus first heard of His death, foreordained of God, and His resurrection foretold by David; and that He, whom they had crucified, was the exalted prince and Saviour. They were told to change their minds. This involved the deepest moral self-judgment, and owning their dreadful guilt; and be baptized in His name for forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Fathers, reading all this, have mistaken the portrait for the man, the map for the estate, the water of baptism for faith in the mighty work of redemption accomplished on the cross. They received the word and were baptized. And in answer to the jailor’s cry, “What must I do to be saved,” did the apostle say, Be baptized, and this will regenerate you? No; but, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.” (Acts 17:31.) He believed, was saved, and that very, night was baptized.

Let us listen to the words of Jesus as he explains so simply how this mighty change takes place, this passing from death to life. “Amen, amen, I say unto you, that he who heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life everlasting; and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death to life.” (John 5:24, Douay.) Oh, let those words of Jesus sink deep into your soul. What profound certainty they give! Have you heard His word, does it come, because His word, with divine authority to you? God who gave Him to die for our sins, and raised Him from among the dead for our justification? Do you believe God who sent Jesus? Oh, infinite love! Now those words, “hath life everlasting;” do you believe that sweet word “hath,” and “cometh not into judgment?” all your judgment borne by Jesus? And as surely as God gives you this precious faith, so surely you have passed from death unto life.

All this divine certainty Jesus gives the believer: can the Fathers in Council give the like certainty by baptism? No, never, never, never. And yet baptism very distinctly illustrates this. Dead with Christ, risen with Christ; one with Him for ever; passed from death unto life; once in Adam, now in Christ. Oh, read those precious words of Jesus over again. They speak life to your soul. Look at His hands and His side: can you doubt Him? But you may say, If I believe these words of Jesus, and thus know with certainty that I have life everlasting, this Council will curse me. If Jesus bless, let them curse. Oh, how sad to think that so many have been cursed, and burned, and, if it had

been possible, sent to perdition by these Fathers of High Church. And for what? For believing the words of Jesus! And 2,600 clergymen of the Church of England are doing their utmost to bring these days again!

Oh, my soul, they would rob thee of the sweetest deepest joy these precious words of Jesus give. The absolute certainty that then hast life everlasting, and shalt not come into judgment; passed from death unto life. In place of this, they would thrust thee into darkness and uncertainty, crying even like a Jew before Jesus died, God be merciful to me a sinner. But to return: not only do we find the Council of Trent in utter confusion about baptism, but they seem at utter variance with the word of God as to regeneration itself, however effected. The doctrine of Trent is that whatever has been contracted by generation is cleansed away by regeneration. And if any one asserts that all that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away, &c., let him be anathema. The idea is clearly the restoration of the original Adam-state before the fall, they “are made innocent, pure, harmless.” (Page 23.) Now apart from the means by which this is effected, where is this the doctrine of scripture? Nay, they themselves contradict it over and over again. They say, “They are renewed, as the apostle says, day by day, that is, by mortifying the members of their own flesh.” (Page 36.) Had Adam to mortify his members? How would you mortify innocent, immaculate, pure, harmless members? The apostle does indeed say to the faithful brethren in Christ, who have this certainty, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection; evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:4.) Can the Fathers apply all this and much more to Adam, innocent, pure, and harmless? And if any man says this evil in him is not sin, he deceives himself and the truth is not in him. (1 John 1:8.) The Council says this is not, properly speaking, sin: but all that is truly sin is taken away. Therefore the Council of Trent deceives itself, and the truth is not in it. Is this the infallibility of Rome?

I grant this is a difficult question, and no amount of human wisdom can explain it. But the scriptures of truth explain it very simply, and show Rome to be doubly mistaken on regeneration. That which is born of God is not Adam restored to innocence; but a wholly new nature. “That which, is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6.) And it is not that evil Adam nature — call it sin or flesh, that is taken away. But in the believer “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.” (Galatians 5:17.) That this refers to the true Christian is evident, for no other person has the Spirit. “For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Thus, although the believer is a new creature, or new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and not restored to mere Adam-nature, but made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), yet the scriptures distinctly recognise the fact that the old sinful nature is still in him, though having been crucified, and judged in the person of the Holy One, his substitute, who was made sin for us. It is thus our privilege, and by the Spirit dwelling in us we have the power, to reckon it dead, and to overcome it. But the epistles distinctly recognise the members of this evil nature which need to be mortified and overcome. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” But strange to say, these learned Fathers were profoundly ignorant of this scriptural doctrine of two natures in the believer. And hence their gross errors in seeking to restore human nature, the flesh, by sacramental infusion. They only know man in the flesh made innocent, pure, and harmless. They have lost all knowledge of men judged in Christ, and risen in Christ, in direct contrast with the

apostle. He says, “Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more; and if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; and, behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:16.) The Lord had taught this Himself. He says, “Amen, amen, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die; itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24.) Thus His holy incarnation, and spotless life in the flesh, could have been of no use whatever, unless He had died. The idea of His incarnation saving or improving man is utterly false and unscriptural. The apostle knew not Christ for any such purpose. It is just as false, as baptism restoring man in the flesh — innocent, pure, and harmless. These are mere dreams of men, who had lost the truth of the new creation in Christ risen from the dead. With all the doctrine of Incarnation and sacraments the priests can give you, and all their assurance that these take away sins, it still remains true “that if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins.” (1 Corinthians 15:17.) But this is more directly connected with our next tract, “Justification,” as taught by the Council of Trent.

Tell me, is not the experience of every Christian born of God, in keeping with the scriptural doctrine of the two natures? Have you been truly awakened to a sense of your lost guilty condition? Have you been brought to Jesus to hear His word? do you believe God who sent Him? The forgiveness preached to you in His name? Being justified by faith, have you peace with God? You say perhaps, Well, I thought I had all that; but the priest has told me that in regeneration all that can be truly called sin is taken away; and that I am so renewed that I am innocent, pure, and harmless. But I do not find it so. Do what I will, I do not find it so. I find a constant conflict with the flesh. And it is no better. I hate it, my old very self more and more. If I go into a monastery it is still there. If I fast, and flog my back until the blood runs down, I have still an evil nature. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” If I keep all the fasts and feasts of the church, my old self is still the same. I lose all confidence. How can any man be sure he is saved, and has eternal life? Ah, how many are thus plunged into despair!

Now does not the scripture distinctly recognise that, as surely as you are born of God, and have the Spirit, so surely the flesh will lust against the Spirit? Knowing the truth of all this, you also know the source of power, yea, have it, even the Holy Ghost dwelling in you; and thus you have the victory. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Every believer finds the sinful flesh still in him, but “sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but grace.” Truly soul-sustaining truth of God!

According to holy scripture then, a man passes from death unto life by the Holy Ghost applying the word! according to High Church and Rome, by a priest applying water in baptism. But then if this very foundation of baptismal regeneration be false and unscriptural; what becomes of confirmation? What does the bishop confirm? Well, if it is a falsehood, a lie, he can only confirm a lie. Oh, sad truth — deceiving and being deceived! Think of the millions of people thus deceived. And shall we make no effort to reach them?

Oh, ye High Church parents, will you thus deceive your children? Dare you say your baptized children are innocent, pure, and harmless; all sin taken away by baptism? Thus, no need for them to hear the word and live. You know they have the same sinful nature that other children have; how soon it is manifested! You know your own nature was not made pure in baptism. Say no

longer, I will give all honour to the priest that hath washed me from my sins in the water of baptism. Oh, that you could say, “Unto him that loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.” (Revelation 1:5.) Can you say that — the language of every child of God on earth? Christ or the priest, light or darkness. Joy in God, or gloomy despair! Oh, escape for your life; search the scriptures; study the scriptures. God speaks to you in His word. Need you, will you, doubt it? Think of His love in giving His Son to die for our sins. Oh, cease from man and come to Jesus. He says, “Come unto me and I will give you rest.” Satan may whisper, “It is enough; you have been baptized. You are pure, your sins are washed away by the priest in water; you are a child of God; you are a member of Christ; and the bishop has confirmed all this, just as I would have it. You do not need to be born again by the word of God; you do not need to come to Jesus, you do not need to hear His word; you do not need to believe God; or care to read what He says; you do not need to pass from death to life that way. It is enough for you to believe the priest, and do as he bids you. But the word of God you must not trust; it killeth.”

Reader, will you thus listen to and believe the devil? You must either distrust God, and believe the devil, or, believing God, flee from all the lies of Satan. There can be no mistake about this, it is either the priest, with his sacrament of baptism, or the blood of Jesus, God’s own Son, that cleanseth from sins. The Council of Trent teaches the one; the word of God declares the other. In my inmost soul, with deepest reverence, I receive the testimony of the word of God. On this I trust for eternity. And as surely as Jesus is the Son of God, so surely all those who believe Him have passed from death unto life. It came to pass that whosoever looked at the brazen serpent lived. And Jesus says, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:47.)

One thing more and I close. It is most important to notice that this new life is not intended to be given to us, and still leave us the slaves of lust and iniquities. The blessed Saviour Jesus Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14.) We were once the slaves of lust, living in all evil; but “after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Mark, this is entirely of God by the Holy Ghost, not of ourselves. The Holy Ghost not only gives us a new life, but we are brought into a new generation, a regeneration. This word only occurs once besides this place, in the New Testament, and it is there used in this sense of an entirely new state. (Matthew 19:28.) But then this new nature is holy. And thus the cleansing of a laver, or bath, is most expressive. Not only does the Holy Ghost communicate this divine life in regeneration, but He is shed abroad abundantly. Thus by the Holy Ghost, the man who was a slave of sin becomes not only possessed of a new nature, but in the development of that new holy nature, a new creature in holiness. And being justified by His grace — God’s own free grace and goodness through Jesus Christ — he is to be careful to maintain good works. And though the flesh is still there, yet by the power of the Spirit, and ever occupied with Christ, he becomes practically a changed man in thoughts, affections, and in all his ways. It is not the old nature changed, but the Spirit giving power to the new to overcome and walk in holiness of life; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord.

We who were enemies by wicked works “hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death [not the water of baptism the type of it] to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprovable in

his sight.” (Colossians 1:22.)

Let not the Ritualist lay aside this tract, and say, what have we to do with the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as taught by the church of Rome? Well, do you know that you hold this soul-destroying error? Are you not teaching thousands of children in this land, to believe this falsehood? It is not found in scripture; it is found in Rome. Yes, Rome is its source; and therefore we test it as found there by the word of God. In view of all this apostasy, the apostle says, “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32.) In our next we hope to examine justification as taught in the scriptures compared with the Council of Trent. C. S.

Chapter 74

076. Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.

Plain Words to Ritualists on their way to Rome.

No. 3.

Justification: the Council of Trent tested by the Word of God.

C. Stanley.

We have in tract No. 1, described our visit to the Dark Chamber of Idolatry in Cambridge of the “Holy Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament,” and the popish books used there by its members. It is remarkable we found no Bible there, but only books of the full Romish stamp. In tract, No. 2, we went at once to the fountain-head of Ritualism, the doctrines of Rome as taught in the decrees of the Council of Trent. In that tract we examined the doctrine of “Baptismal Regeneration,” this being declared by Rome to be the instrumental cause of “justification.” (Page 34.) We found the decrees of the Council on Baptismal Regeneration utter confusion, and in direct contradiction of the word of God. And to every Ritualist we say, Remember, these are the doctrines of that church to which you are doing your utmost to lead all you can influence.

We will now examine the decree of the Council of Trent on Justification, and test it by the word of God. (Chap. 7, page 33.) It admits indeed that the meritorious cause of justification is “His most beloved only-begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, for the great charity wherewith He loved us, merited justification for us, by His most holy passion on the wood of the cross, and for us made satisfaction unto God the Father.” But then it goes on to say, that the “instrumental cause, moreover, is the Sacrament of Baptism;” and that, “Lastly, the sole formal cause is the justice of God; not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He maketh us just, that to wit, with which we, being endowed by Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed but are truly called, and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost divides to every man severally as He will, and according to each one’s proper disposition and cooperation.”

We suppose the Council allows us to turn to the scriptures to examine these statements; otherwise, why do they give us so many scriptures as footnotes for proof? Here we would notice that these references to scripture are most deceptive. In this way, passages or texts are constantly quoted, that, have no connection with the subject whatever: so, much so, that these Fathers must have been in the greatest ignorance of the purpose and scope of scripture. For instance, in this very quotation above, they refer to Ephesians 4:23, only they also misquote it as usual. It is “and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” (Douay.) They say “are renewed in the spirit of our mind.” The text is the aim of a Christian in his life (one who has been justified). The other makes it a state because of which if you have it God can justify you. But the fact is, this text refers to the Ephesians who were justified and had redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins (as in chapter 2, “By grace ye are saved);” so that to quote chapter 4: 23 for justification is a perversion of scripture.

It is a mistake something like this: A nobleman takes a poor boy, gives him a large estate, and places him in full possession. Then he informs him that he must conduct himself in a manner becoming his position, and wear clothes &c., according to his new rank. “Ah,” says a third party, “your new manners and clothes are the sole formal cause of the nobleman’s gift of the estate.” What a blunder! This is the exact mistake of the Fathers. Will you read this epistle to the Ephesian Christians? God had taken them from the lowest depths of sin, and given them the highest estate in the heavens, Jesus Christ the Lord taking possession as their head, and they blest with Him in the heavenlies. “Now,” says the Holy Ghost, “let your manners and clothing become your high calling.” What a blunder to say this is the sole cause of their justification!

Now let us take the very next scripture: — 1 Corinthians 12:11 is misquoted as scripture to prove that justice, or righteousness, is within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost divides to every man severally as He will, &c.

Now let us turn and examine this passage. The scripture, thus wrested, is on a totally different subject — the gifts of Christ as used by the Spirit for the edification of the body of Christ. But this consists of all Christians. “The church of God that is at Corinth, to them that* are sanctified in Christ Jesus.” — “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption.” (Chap. 1: 2, 30.) What then has the manifestation of the Spirit, or the distribution of the gifts in the church, to do with the question of justification? Clearly nothing whatever. It is simply a blind quotation, leading the poor Romanists into uncertainty and perplexity. This very chapter shows the constitution of the church of God; whilst chapter 14 also describes those gifts in exercise. Chapter 13 shows that, whatever gifts or knowledge, if there be not love or charity, all is vain. But they are for the edification of the body of Christ.

{*I understand that, as the article is wanting here, the sentence should rather run, “to men sanctified,” &c. in opposition to the church or assembly in Corinth just spoken of; but this does not affect the argument.} And mark the meaning of the apostle in that often misquoted text, the last verse. “And now there remain, faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greater of these is charity.” Charity is the greatest: but for what? The apostle is speaking of ministry and edification; not a thought in these three chapters about justification or salvation. He begins that as a new subject in chapter 15. The Fathers on the contrary, wrest this text from its plain meaning, and quote it as their great text for justification. They tell us faith without hope and charity cannot bestow life everlasting. Of course it cannot, if for that purpose charity is greater than faith. What does this blunder involve? Why this — that my love or charity is greater than Christ’s work. I stand before God for justification. Faith is one hand, that rests on the person and work of Christ. Charity is the other hand, that rests on myself — my love, my charity! And in this sense the Council tells me, greater is my love than Christ’s work for me on the cross. Soul-destroying delusion! Quite true in the scriptural sense, that I might have all faith and knowledge to remove mountains of difficulty in this tract; but if there is not charity, real love to these deluded Ritualists, the tract will not be worth a straw. Oh, for more of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and the love of Christ flowing out in all our preachings and writings! But, remember, this has nothing to do with the question of justification. I am not aware of a single instance where a Romanist has quoted this text intelligently, according to its context.

One would have thought that every person who ever read the word of God must know that faith is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8.) The Fathers however treat this as a mistake. The anxious soul or catechumen begs this faith of the church. “Whence also do they straightway hear that word of Christ: If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Page 34.) This is surely one of two things, using the word of God either ignorantly or craftily. Little children had been brought unto Christ, and He had announced that new and startling fact, that “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.” A little child receives a gift and does nothing for it. This was the very opposite of the ministry of the law, yet most true, as explained by the Holy Ghost after redemption was accomplished, and Christ was risen from the dead. Eternal life is now the gift of God to those who, like a little child, do nothing for it: otherwise it would not be a gift. After the announcement of this new fact, a certain ruler puts a question, which lies at the root of this announcement. He asks, “What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” And the Lord at once tests him on his own ground, as under law. And mark He does not apply the law as to his duty to God, but the lowest test-duty to his neighbour. He says, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” “Which?” says the ruler. “Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; honour thy father and mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Well, the young man declares he has kept all these; and evidently he thinks so. But if so, where is grace? Where the Christ-announced doctrine of the little child? Oh, mark the divine wisdom of Christ! He takes the very last — “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” and only applies this to the heart of a sincere Jew, under the administration of the law. Just, and holy, and good in itself, but the ministration of it to this young man is found to be death. He says, as it were “You have property; the poor, whom you say you love as yourself, need that property; sell it and give to the poor.” Ah, he failed at once, not only to his neighbour, but in departing from God speaking to him in love. And thus was the truth not overthrown, but established; that the kingdom of God must be received as by a little child and not a commandment-doing man. Was it not very crafty of the Fathers to misapply such a text as this? Surely they ought to have known that “if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Galatians 2:21.) And “if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Galatians 3:21.) This is a long digression; but as these are texts most relied on for the doctrine of Rome, it is of all importance fairly to examine their contexts. After this is done, you will find it difficult to believe that the Council were so ignorant of the just meaning and use of scriptures. One can only compare them to a number of men blindfolded, seeking a certain place, but uncertain as to whether they are on the right road, and therefore catching at anything in the dark. I ask every Ritualist or Romanist, Is it not so? Are you not utterly uncertain whether you have eternal life or not? and whether you are on the road that will surely end in glory, or not? Or whether you are, after all, in your sins, or justified from them? My fellow-believer, if thou hast got into the wrong road, if thou art blindfolded, following the blind guides, let me lead thee to the scriptures that were written “that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”

Let us then look at the subject of “justification,” not as a matter of controversy, but one of eternal importance. If there are only two roads, one leading to endless perdition, the other to endless bliss, in the unclouded presence of God, is it of no importance on which of the roads you are found? There are only two principles of justification, or righteousness — that of faith, or that of works — of God or of man. Is it a matter of indifference which? The one is what man is to God, and what he

can do for God, righteousness in man before God — perfect consistency before God, meeting all the claims of God. This had been fairly tested in the Jews for fifteen centuries. And, as we have seen in that amiable ruler, he could not bear the test of a single commandment.

Let it be distinctly understood the Council of Trent takes one of these roads, and defends one of these principles — the one we have been describing — that which has to do with what man is to God. Man by baptism makes his fellow man pure, immaculate, and harmless! This is his best robe, and this must be kept spotless by keeping the commandments. The whole principle is what man is, and what he must do. The Jew was brought into that position by circumcision; the Romanist and Ritualist by baptism: but the principle is precisely the same; it is what man is to God. And whilst the Council quotes texts which have no reference to the subject, they almost entirely overlook the scriptures which speak explicitly on the subject. Is it not remarkable that the Epistle sent to Rome should be occupied, say eight chapters at least, with this very subject — the justification of the sinner — and yet the Council do not seem to have known this? If they had read this Epistle, they certainly took great pains to contradict it. How is this? God gives the church at Rome a full inspired explanation of justification, and the Council of Trent takes no notice of it, but invents a doctrine of justification, the very opposite to that of the gospel, as set forth in Romans 1:1-32; Romans 2:1-29; Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25; Romans 8:1-39. With the scripture it is what God is to man in the death and resurrection of Christ. With the Council it is what man is to God, made righteous by baptism. If of faith, it is what God is; if of works, it is what man is — the righteousness of God, or the righteousness of man, that is the question. The Council first, in baptism, forgives the sins of an infant, never committed. But if the baptized man should commit sins after baptism, he does not know what to do with them. They see God cannot possibly justify sins; and yet the baptized, who, as they pretend, are by that sacrament made innocent, pure, immaculate, and harmless, how are they then to be justified if they sin? Clearly Rome cannot say. And they do sin. And thus there is no justification for them worth a straw. Having been justified, have they peace with God? Nay, instead of this, ages of untold torments in purgatory. Purgatory declares Rome's doctrine of justification utterly worthless. It were all well, if baptism did make them pure and innocent, and every thing truly sin washed away, and then the baptized kept the commandments without spot. If we were thus righteous, then certainly God must justify righteousness. Is there such a thought in scripture, or in facts? Millions of us were baptized when infants. We bear the name of Christians. Is there one amongst these millions innocent and pure? Is there one that has not a sinful nature — a nature ever prone to sin against God? Do you not mourn over that sinful nature? And how terrible its fruits! Let us not then trust in a false justification. Oh, where shall we turn, to know with certainty that our sins are forgiven, and that we are justified from all things? Let us turn to the scriptures; there alone shall we find certainty for our souls.

Let us read the Epistle to the Romans, as God speaking to us on this very subject. Here then we have the two principles of righteousness fully revealed. The righteousness of God is the principal subject of the glad tidings: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith or on the principle of faith to faith." (Chap. 1: 17.) The propitiation of Christ is set forth of God "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Chap. 3: 26.) The Council denies this point blank: "The sole formal cause is the justice of God; not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He maketh us just." (Page 34.) Thus

the Council distinctly denies that which is specially revealed in the gospel — the righteousness of God — that by which He Himself is just in justifying the believer. Nothing could be more opposed than the Council of Trent and the word of God. The Council maintains the righteousness of man: what be is, and what he does. The scripture reveals the righteousness of God: how He is righteous in justifying the sinner who believes on Him.

First, however, scripture fully examines the question of the righteousness of man. This was needed, as the Jew then (like the Romanist now) went about to establish his own righteousness, refusing to submit to the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:1-21.) In chapter 1 then God examines the heathen world, and, instead of righteousness, He finds all unrighteousness and wickedness — the most debasing wickedness. The very judges who condemned the fearful iniquity were no better, but did the same things. We know history everywhere corroborates the statement of this scripture. But what of the chosen nation, with all its privileges, circumcision, and the oracles of God? Are not they found righteous? No, not one! all are proved under sin. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world guilty before God. Read the description God gives of them. (Chap. 3: 9-19.) On the principle then of what man is to God, when even tested for centuries, no righteousness is to be found: all are guilty, all have sinned. Considering their privileges, the Jews were worse than the Gentiles, and showed more intense hatred to God, when Christ came on earth. And may we not ask, What is the judgment of God on baptized Christendom? Let anyone read the history, say of Baronius, the Romanist. Could there be worse wickedness than this? And could man show more intense hatred against God, than has been shown, by Rome, in the murder of the saints of God? If, then, considering their privileges, the Jews, were worse than the heathen; may we not say that baptized Christendom, whilst maintaining the righteousness of man on the principle of works, has been more wicked than both put together? and more, let the reader, or the writer of this paper be brought into the all-searching presence of God: ah, it is not then how bad the heathen were, or how bad the Jews, or how bad the professing church has been; but how bad, how vile, am I? What a world of iniquity is in my own heart! If I look back, oh, what cause for self-abhorrence! Tell me, reader, is it not so? Where then is righteousness of man? Is it not, as God says, There is none on the principle of what man is to God? “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Baptism or circumcision, law of Moses or law of church so called, on this principle of law of what man is, or can do for God, all are sinners and righteousness there is none. It is quite true, that on this ground, no man can know that he is justified. All are guilty, under condemnation and death. But now the righteousness of God (the very thing denied by the Council; the very thing manifested in the scripture, witnessed by law, and prophets), “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” Yes, that by which He Himself is just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. What is that by which God is righteous in justifying us? Do the scriptures, like the Council, say it is righteousness in us, each one according to his measure? No such thing. No, it is exclusively what He has done, “Whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” And not only is it so with believers in the past, before He died, but that same propitiation on the cross is “To declare, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” (Chap. 3: 20-26.)

Thus the scripture points us to the death of Jesus, the propitiation for our sins, as that by which God is just in justifying us. So it was the bitten, Israelite, owning his sins, looked upon the brazen serpent lifted it. “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” They were not told to look within for healing from the dreadful bite, but to look without, even at the brazen serpent lifted up, and all that looked lived. Do the bidding of Rome, look for righteousness within, and death is your certain portion. God give you faith to look at Jesus on the cross, for all that look shall live. Now what do I see there? By faith I see the Son of God bruised for my iniquities; taking my place; the Just for the unjust, to bring me to God; bearing my sins in His own body on the tree. Oh precious, infinite sacrifice, that for ever puts away sins! Oh precious Substitute bearing Thy people’s sins! Jehovah laid on Thee the iniquities of us all. In our stead it pleased Jehovah to bruise Thee. Thy love to me! thy death for me. Deep was the hatred of man, and dreadful Thy sufferings from his hands, smitten, buffeted, spit upon, mocked, scourged, nailed, pierced. But ah, my Lord, what was all this to that deeper suffering — the horror, the darkness, when Thy soul was made an offering for sin; forsaken of God and all for me, for me? Oh, watch Him there, and now hear that last cry, “It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” Oh, my soul, God sets this before thee, as that by which He is just in justifying thee. That holy body cold in death was taken from the cross, and buried according to the scriptures. He, came to bear my sins, to glorify God on that cross. Did He fail? Is He still in the grave? “If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.”

Let us look carefully at two facts, the two facts overlooked by Rome; but the very facts of our justification. They are very clearly stated thus. Yea, righteousness is reckoned to us believing God about these two facts, “If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:24.) Here is a justification suited to lost, helpless, guilty sinners. All is of God, who delivered Him to bear our sins on the cross. And there He glorified God; there God’s love to the sinner and hatred to sin was proved to the utmost. But if my Substitute glorified God in His atoning death for my sins, then must not God in righteousness raise my Substitute from among the dead, and give Him glory? This is exactly what God did: He raised Jesus our Substitute from the dead for the very purpose of our justification. At present it is the question of justification from sins, not sin; that we will look at afterwards. How is God righteous in justifying us from our sins? He sets before us the atoning death of Jesus our Substitute, and He says we are justified by His blood. (Chap. 5: 9.) But how are we to know that we are justified from our sins which Jesus our Substitute bore on the cross? How? why Jesus was raised from the dead for this very purpose. Who raised Him? God the Justifier. Thus God reveals to my soul how He Himself is righteous in justifying me. How can I doubt Him? But then believing Him I am accounted righteous, that is to say, I am justified, and “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Would it be righteous to reckon the person guilty when the Substitute has put away that guilt? Would it be just to charge a debt when a bondsman has paid it? The resurrection of Jesus our bondsman is the believer’s everlasting discharge from sins. The scripture asks, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

All this is indeed opposed to Rome, which directs the soul to innocence and purity by baptism, to receiving justice within us, and keeping the commandments of God and the church; which sees nothing beyond what man is and can do for God. On the other hand, the scriptures reveal what God is to us in perfect righteousness; what He has done in the gift of His Son, in the atoning death of Jesus for us, raised from the dead for our justification; we justified by His blood, He our Justifier. Are you, my reader, with the Jews, the Ritualist and the Romanist, going about to establish thus a righteousness of your own, or have you submitted to the righteousness of God? if it be a question of looking within, could any person say there is now nothing to condemn? But since God laid all our sins on Jesus, it is most true that “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

First then God is righteous, He Himself is just as revealed in the propitiation, or mercy-seat. Rome only leads you unto hope, trusting that God will be propitious for Christ’s sake. This is to deny that Christ has come in the flesh. The type of the great day of atonement has surely been fulfilled. The blood is sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Through that blood God now freely forgives and is just in justifying. And this free forgiveness is presented to all. God is righteous, consistent with all His attributes. We cannot hope He will be propitious. Freely He meets the sinner at that mercy-seat, and there without money and without price freely forgives. Guilty sinner, God has set forth that mercy-seat; His righteousness is there declared. Sin has been punished, and judged to the utmost. Therefore the sinner that meets God at that mercy-seat, in righteousness is freely forgiven.

Secondly, what is the fact as to those who do receive the free mercy of God? They are those who believe God, who in self-abhorrence before God own they are lost guilty sinners, who believe (not that God will be propitious, but) that He has sent His Son, that He has been offered on the cross, the propitiation for sins. They believe the proclamation of God from that mercy-seat. “Be it known therefore to you, men and brethren, that through him forgiveness of sins is preached to you, from all the things from the which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. In him every one that believeth is justified.” (Acts 13:38, Rhemish.) I say what is the fact as to those who believe God? May we conclude that such a man is justified, or may he only hope to be? The scripture says, “For we account a man to be justified by faith without the works of the law.” (Romans 3:28, Rhemish.) Oh, what a blessed fact, “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Chap. 3: 24.)

Pursue this fact a little farther, that all who believe are justified. You will find in chapter 4 Abraham and David believed God, and faith was accounted unto them for righteousness. Believing God they were accounted righteous. If this was true of them, before Christ died, is it not also true of the believer now since the death of Jesus? Yes, but mark, now I have faith, believing God, it is not merely propitiation but actual substitution. Thus righteousness is reckoned to us, we are as believers accounted righteous, “If we believe in him who raised up Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification.” (Chap. 4: 21, Rhemish.) Therefore being — not hoping to be, but — “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The righteousness of God, and the sinner’s need are both met on the cross. If you will compare the two goats in Leviticus 16:1-34, you will find the one to be Jehovah’s, and sets forth propitiation, the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Thus the judgment throne becomes the mercy-seat. But the other goat, the people’s, shows in type substitution — all

the sins of the people actually laid on, or transferred to, the head of the goat. So this scripture presents Jesus as the believer's Substitute delivered for our offences. What a fact all my sins transferred to Jesus on the cross! My blessed loving Substitute taking the whole guilt of my sins, bearing their full penalty! Deep reality! Oh, believer, our Substitute raised from the dead for our justification! And He, our representative, so justified from our sins, that He is seated in the unclouded glory of God. Yes, the glory of God shines in the face of the very One who once bore our sins and curse on the cross. Ah, such is the eternal efficacy of His death, that God says of all believers "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Now souls believing God, see the end of their sins in the death of their Substitute. The certainty of this is seen by the resurrection of that Substitute from among the dead. If God has raised Him from the dead for our justification, then the risen Christ is the full everlasting discharge from all our sins. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17.)

It is very striking, that in all the ramblings of unbelief, the Fathers never once, name this all-important cardinal fact that God has raised up, from among the dead, the Lord Jesus for our justification. Just like some learned person trying to show how a man is discharged from his debts when paid by another, but forgets the receipts; or like the case of two manufacturers, reckoning the cost of a piece of cloth, but forgetting the wool, the principal thing. So these Fathers forgot, or never knew, the principal evidence of the believer's justification. This is not the worst. Does not God in His word, in the passages above, distinctly tell the believer that he is justified — that he has peace with Him? Does He not point to the risen Christ as the proof of it? These ignorant Fathers have the daring wickedness to brand as vain confidence the faith that believes God. (Page 35.) Jesus declares that he that heareth His word, and believeth God that sent Him, hath life everlasting, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. God declares that through Jesus is preached the forgiveness of sins, and all that believe are justified from all things. I believe Jesus; I believe God. God is true; and as surely as God speaks truth, I believing have eternal life; I am justified; and he that does not believe God is judged already. And yet the Council tells us this confidence is remote from all piety! Instead of this "joy in God," they would give us to "have fear and apprehension concerning His own grace; inasmuch as no one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to mistake, that he has obtained the grace of God." The scriptures point me to the cross, the expression of the grace of God to me. The Fathers point me to my own grace, and tell me to have fear and apprehension. Here we have the result of the two systems clearly brought out. The Holy Ghost by the scriptures gives the certainty of faith. Every believer, in the church of God as found in scripture, had this certainty. No member of the church of Rome dare enjoy this certainty on pain of anathema. God sets before the believer the Lord Jesus Christ as his Substitute, delivered for his offences and raised again for his justification. By this, God is righteous in Himself in accounting the believer righteous before Him in his Substitute. So that confessing our sins God is, yea must be, faithful to His Son — must be just in forgiving us our sins, and in cleansing us from all unrighteousness. This is the simple question. Once my sins were charged against my Substitute, God entered into judgment on Him, Jesus bearing them on the cross. All my sins were transferred to Him. In divine love He took the entire responsibility. Is there one sin yet to be charged against Him? Who shall lay that charge? On one side I have God the Justifier; who is on the other side to charge or to condemn? And mark, it is not concerning my own grace. It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again. All Fathers, popes, and Councils cannot rob my soul of this divine certainty of faith. If it be myself, God entering into

judgment with me for my sins, there is not a shadow of a hope. I must be condemned; but the full wrath and judgment of God passed over the soul of Jesus, my Substitute, on the cross. That work is accomplished. “It is finished,” never to be repeated. You say, How do you know? Because God, who laid my sins on Jesus, has raised Him from the dead without them. Is it vain confidence then, to say with the beloved John, “Unto him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood?” Oh, begone, dark unbelief of Rome! It is pleasing to God that we rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

If any man could have stood on the ground of what he was to God, the young Jew of Tarsus was the man. He says, “Touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.” Does he trust in this, and the merits of Christ as a make-weight? No, he utterly rejects the whole ground and principle of what he was to God. He says he “counted them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Php 3:8; Php 3:2.) Thus he gives up as dung the whole basis that the Council seeks to establish, and accepts that which the Council repudiates — the righteousness of God — that by which He Himself is righteous in justifying us from all sins.

There is much more in this scripture; but we must now turn to the second part of the subject of justification — the question not of sins but of sin. We have already seen how God has justified the believer from sins, and that by which He is righteous in thus justifying, and how the believer is brought into the enjoyment of peace with God as to his sins. All this forms the subject of Romans to chapter 5: 11. From chapter 5: 12, the apostle treats of sin. We pointed out in tract number 2, that the Council teaches that all that which has the true and proper nature of sin is taken away by baptism. Surely this is too monstrous for any man to entertain with the history of baptized Christendom before him. But what saith the scripture on this question of sin — the root? Romans 5:12 to the end of chapter 8 is the answer, Sin entered by Adam, and death by sin, and so passed upon all men. The whole race is involved — not only transgression in the case of Adam and the Jews to whom God gave the law, but, for so long a period when there was no formal law, death proved that sin was there. But far and wide as the stream of sin abounded flowing from its fountain head, Adam, another stream much more abounds in grace and justification of life flowing from the obedient One, the other head, Christ. And where by the presence of the law, the offence did abound, grace did still much more abound: “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is not our Adam nature improved or restored, but an entirely new head, Christ; not old life in Adam, but new resurrection life in Christ. True, we have lost all in Adam, but in Christ we have infinitely more than we lost. But you say, Is not that old sinful Adam nature still in the believer? Yes, indeed it is. Then how can he be justified as to that? Can God justify an evil nature? Certainly not; but He has judged it, as we read, “God, sending his own Son in thee likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin], condemned sin in the flesh.” (Romans 8:3.) Not only was He delivered as our Substitute to bear our sins, the Just for the unjust; but sin, the root of all sins, was also for ever judged by His sacrifice for sin, was also for ever judged by His sacrifice for sin as surely as He bare our iniquities, so also He was made sin. Thus sin was judged to the utmost that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Read carefully 2 Corinthians 5:21. This is very precious to a soul, knowing that not only his sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, but that he, the sinner, is

reckoned dead, crucified, judged with Christ. As we have seen, baptism is a wonderful type of this — dead and buried with Christ (Romans 6:1-23), and also risen with Him. (Colossians 2:1-23.) Now the scripture assures me of this completeness — justified from sins by the blood of Jesus, justified in the sense of complete deliverance from sin by being dead and risen with Christ. Thus the scripture says, “Ye are complete in him.” (Colossians 2:1-23.)

“No,” says the Council, “no such thing. Your justification in Christ is not complete, is not perfect.” Rome can never admit that the one sacrifice of Christ for ever perfects. Stoutly does she deny this in face of these scriptures of truth. She says, (chap. 10, page 36), “Having, therefore, been thus justified, &c., they, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the church, faith co-operating with good works, increase in the justice [or righteousness], received through the grace of Christ, and are still more justified.” Then scriptures are misquoted in proof; such as Revelation 22:11, James 2:24 : “And this increase of justification the holy church begs when she prays, Give us, O Lord, increase of faith, hope, and Charity.” Thus our observance of the commandments of God and the church, and an increase of faith, hope, and charity add something to the justification of the believer by the death and resurrection of Christ. Our works are of more value than His death. According to the Fathers we are not in a completely justified state as dead and risen with Christ. Our good works increase this state of justification. Universal has been the influence of this lie of Satan. “Yea,” hath God said “you are completely justified by Christ?” Just as he insinuated a doubt in the garden, so has he insinuated doubts, until at last this Council plainly declares against complete justification in Christ, and looks at the works of man to complete the work of Christ. Had they ever read these words? “Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.” (Galatians 5:4.)

Now if God’s righteousness is revealed and set forth in the one infinite sacrifice propitiation of Christ, that very thing by which He is righteous in Himself in justifying us; and if the Fathers deny that it is infinite, by teaching that our works and observing the commandments can increase it, or add to it, inasmuch as this infinite propitiation is the very foundation of the whole gospel to man, it follows that the Council denies the foundation of the gospel of God to lost sinners. But then I grant this is not limited to Rome. Let me test every reader of these lines. How is it with your soul and God in this matter? We will look at keeping the commandments in its place shortly; but to keep close to the subject of justification before God, Do you accept the testimony of God simply and truly as to your own utterly lost guilty condition? Secondly, do you believe God laid your sins on Jesus, that He bore them on the cross? Surely our works have nothing to say to this. And do you believe the testimony of God in raising Jesus from among the dead for your very justification; just as you would believe a person giving you a receipt for a paid bill? Do you believe that your very nature as a child of Adam is sin; but that this and all that you are, as a child of Adam, has been judged in Jesus on the cross? That He died for your sins, that they are gone from the sight of God, to be remembered no more? And more that you are reckoned dead with Christ, crucified with Him, risen with Him, and thus completely justified from sin? (Romans 6:1-23.)

How works could add to this is hard to say. But do you really believe the wondrous fact, that by faith in God, through Jesus Christ you are complete in Him without works at all, as justified even now, as complete as to your position in that risen Christ, as you will be when in the glory? Justified from sins and sin, and possessed of a justified life — the life of the risen Christ? And yet all this is simply the faith once delivered to the saints, alas! long since almost lost. There can be no

difference between the justification of the head and the members. “As he is, so are we in this world.” Being thus justified, we have the same peace in the unclouded presence of God, and with God according to all that He is, as our Substitute, Jesus Christ the Lord. But oh, how few enjoy this completeness in Christ! Do you, my reader? How common and how sad, to say as it were, We are barely saved by Christ, now we must increase our justification by good works! This is the inward feeling of thousands, who do not speak out their unbelief honestly like the Council of Trent. My judgment of the Council is that they were in complete ignorance of the true doctrine of justification — of that by which God is just, righteous in Himself, in justifying us. Had they known it, they never could have thus set it aside and groped in darkness after baptism, commandments, faith, hope, charity, anything but what it is — the accomplished work of Christ, God’s righteousness submitted to by faith, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away.

I would ask every Ritualist and Romanist, Is not this a most serious error, to teach that our good works can add to the value of the atoning work of Christ for an increase of our justification? Was it not the very heresy deceivers sought to introduce into the assemblies of Galatia? Nay, was it not the very error for which Paul had to withstand Peter? There were Gentile believers justified by Christ alone through faith. There were Jewish believers not only justified by Christ, but also they observed the law. Peter dissembled, as though the latter were more justified than the former. This could not be without making Christ the minister of sin, and Paul withstood him to the face. Read Galatians 1:1-24; Galatians 2:1-21, and see if this is not so. Now the Council teaches the very same thing. You may be justified by faith in Christ, but still more justified by works of law. This is that different gospel which is not another, for there is really none other gospel or good news to a lost sinner, but the righteousness of God as revealed in the accomplished work of Christ; the believer in which is justified freely, for Christ’s sake. But be it marked, the Council teaches that other gospel, in direct contrast to the gospel of Paul, concerning which he says, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8.) The true gospel is the death and resurrection of Christ, that by which God is righteous in justifying us from all things. The false gospel is that by which we pretend that God has made us just in ourselves by baptism, and our keeping the commandments of God and the church. This other false gospel is the distinct teaching of the Council of Trent. The true gospel is what God is to us in Christ; the false is what we are to God by sacraments and works. The two men in the temple exactly illustrate these two principles. The one thanked God that He had made him righteous by good works in himself. The other had nothing but sin to bring and confess to God; and he needed God to be propitious to him a sinner. The Council takes the exact ground of the Pharisee. The believer in the word of God takes the ground of the publican; only he has not now to pray thus afar off, but to believe that God has met all his need in the propitiation of Christ. And it is the Son of God that says, “I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.” (Luke 18:13.) As surely then as God has spoken the truth to us in His word, so surely has the Council of Trent brought to one hundred and eighty millions of people the most false soul-destroying error. And equally certain is it, that more than two thousand six hundred clergymen are leading giddy thoughtless England to the darkness of Rome.

Some unacquainted with scripture might be misled by the scriptures quoted by the Council in defence of justification by works; by which, and the grace of Christ in them, as they say “we must needs believe that to be justified nothing farther is wanting, but that they be accounted to have, by

those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and truly to have merited eternal life to be obtained also in its due time" (page 41), with very, very much of the same sad sort. Now let a person be placed on such ground as this. He must keep the holy precepts of the word of God, so as to fully satisfy the divine law, truly thus to merit eternal life. In contrast with all this, the Lord Jesus assures our hearts, the moment we believe that we have eternal life. "Amen, amen I say to you, he that believeth in me hath life everlasting." (John 6:47, Rhemish.) The Council tells us to keep all these commandments diligently, in order that we may be justified, and still more justified. On the contrary, all the precepts of the inspired Epistles are addressed to those who are justified. "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to hope of life everlasting;" and to those who do believe God and are justified, "That they which believe in God be careful to excel in good works." (Titus 3:7-8, Douay.) And let it be distinctly understood, that the gospel, applied by the power of God to such as even never heard it before, gives, when believed, the immediate certainty of justification, without one question as to works first. See the apostle's first proclamation of the gospel at Antioch in Pisidia. "Be it known therefore to you, men brethren, that through him forgiveness of sins is preached to you, from all the things from the which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. In him every one that believeth is justified." (Acts 13:38-39, Rhemish.) Let me beg of every sincere Romanist to ponder this well. Oh, return to the word of God. Do not put that justification at the end which God puts at the beginning. Nay, instead of this immediate justification from all things on the certainty of the very word of God, do you not make justification utterly impossible? Oh, where is the man that has satisfied the claims of the divine law? Where but that Blessed One at God's right hand? And if you, could satisfy the demands of a holy God, where would be the need of the death and resurrection of Christ?

Test these teachings of vain men by the word of God, and you will find them utterly false. Can anything be more certain than the above statements of the word of God that he that believeth is justified? God says it. I believe God, and God says I am justified. The Council says, If I assuredly believe for certain and without any hesitation that I am justified and my sins forgiven, I am accursed. (See Canons 12, 13, 14.) Shall I believe God, or man? Which is it with you, my reader? Certainly the scriptures teach us that good works are the fruits and signs before the world of justification before God by faith. But if I believe this, the Council will again curse me. (Canon 29.)

Here are thirty-three canons and curses: dreadful work would it be to go through these. Truth there is mixed up with it; but as a system of doctrine, nothing could be more opposed to the glad tidings of God. As Satan once led the world, its priests and Pharisees, to reject and kill the Prince of life; so now behold him leading that vast gathering of priests, bishops, and Ritualists, to reject the gospel and openly set aside the authority of the word of God. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." (Romans 10:3.) The sole object of the Council was to establish their own righteousness, so that by their own righteousness God might be just in justifying them. This is the plain principle; be it by baptism, sacraments, or keeping of commandments, they entirely set aside the great truth of the righteousness of God. Christ in the glory of His person, and the everlasting value of His work, His death, and resurrection, is that by which God is righteous, just in Himself in justifying us. Can anything please Satan more than thus to set aside Christ, and thus to exalt poor

sinful man? And now, my reader, will you, with the Bible in your hands, join the ranks of these Confraternities? Will you deliberately and wickedly refuse to hear God speaking in the Son? Will you sin against the Holy Ghost, and refuse to hear Him in the inspired epistles speaking of Christ as the end of the law for righteousness? Will you reject the free pardon of sins proclaimed to you through Jesus Christ? Dare you deny the truth of God that all who believe are justified from all things? True, you might not believe if all the waters of the Atlantic had been rolled over you in baptism; but “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.” Oh, will you turn from that precious blood? from the very testimony of God? From God Himself, the Justifier, to vain presumptuous man? Can God who freely gave His beloved Son possibly deceive you? Will you say, I will not believe Him, I will not read what He says to me in the word; unless the priest says it is so? Would a child treat His father thus? would he say I will not believe what my father says, unless the servants say it is true? Will you exalt the Council, or the priest above God? Do you honestly say I will not hear God, I will only hear man?

Oh turn to the scriptures and hear God speaking to your soul. You must either know Him now as Justifier; or a day is fast approaching when you must know Him as Judge. Then every sin must be brought to light. Oh, what will sacraments and idolatry do for you in that day? Will you say in that day I preferred my own way, my own righteousness to the great and free salvation of God? How blest every child of God! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Romanist, or Ritualist can never say so. The most he can have is, not peace, but an armistice. With Him the great question of peace will not be settled until the assembled congress, before the great white throne of judgment. Then it will be for ever too late. If we stand before the Judge to be judged for our sins, then shall no flesh living be justified. One thing is clear, God cannot be both my Justifier and my Judge. He was both to my holy Substitute, in whom I have been judged, and now can only be justified. The infinite claims of my holy Substitute demand my everlasting justification. Oh, blessed God, Thy righteousness denies the possibility of judging me for the sins, which have been laid on Jesus; on Him, once judged, never can they be judged again. I bow my head, and worship in the unclouded peace with Thee, my holy holy, holy God. Thy majesty, righteousness, and grace, Thine every attribute, in perfect harmony. And I have peace, peace with Thee. Thou, my precious Jesus hast made peace by Thy blood, Thou art that peace to me. Gone, gone every barrier to Thine everlasting love: now to serve Thee be my only delight.

Oh, fellow believer, wide open is the way into the holiest! The fatted calf is killed; all things are ready. The Father says, “let us eat, and be merry.” The veil is rent in twain. The precious blood gives boldness. Satan is leading men to stitch up that vail, to shut man outside again in beggarly ritualism, in gloomy misery, afar off from God, with priests between.

What a moment, a nation going back from the profession of Christianity to papal idolatry! And shall we look on with supine indifference? How is it that Christians can remain silent, yea, even linked and thus identified with all this grievous insult to God, and denial of His truth? “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Ritualism is a vast effort of Satan to extinguish the light of the gospel. But “Christ shall give thee light.” Let us have faith in God. Greater is He that is for us than all they that be against us. And if God be for us, who are they that are against us? C. S. The prayers of all Christians are asked for the blessing of God on these tracts.

077. Rahab, or, the Siege of Jericho.

Rahab, or, the Siege of Jericho.

“Now Jericho was straitly shut up.” — Joshua 6:1-27. The iniquity of the Amorite was now full. The time of righteous judgment had arrived. As this was the first of the doomed cities to be destroyed, God has been pleased to give us most interesting details, in which we shall find Himself revealed, both in grace and in judgment. The natural mind may in all this see only wrath and destruction; but the Spirit can reveal God in the richest display of grace. Yea, even in this scene of judgment.

If we turn to chapter 2 we find Joshua sending two men to spy out the land. He may have had only thoughts of judgment; but God had thoughts of mercy, and the two spies are turned into evangelists. And now to show out the riches of the grace of God, and that no person can be found beyond the reach of mercy, a harlot is selected as the object of that grace. “They went, and come into an harlot’s house and lodged there.” There may have been no better place in that wicked city in which they could lodge. Who can tell the moral condition of that city, and of all the cities of Canaan? For four hundred years had God borne with the ever-increasing iniquity of the Amorites. This woman’s full character by nature comes out: not only is she a harlot, but it seems natural for her to lie. She deceived the king of Jericho, who sent to inquire after these men. Such is the sinner whom God in His grace delights to take up. Divine faith is communicated to her soul and repentance is wrought in her heart. She has self-judgment, and faith in God. She said to the men, “I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom he utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:9-11.) This was very striking, for at that moment Jericho abode in its strength. But faith knew, and the heart did utterly melt. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” “For the Lord your God,” said she, “he is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.” Now is not this beautiful, such faith given to a lost sinner, in a city doomed to destruction? And now her faith rises higher; she regards the two men as the servants of Jehovah, who cannot lie. Faith claims the kindness of Jehovah, “That ye will also show kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.” Faith seems to say, there is nothing too much to claim from God. Father, mother, brethren, sisters, and all that they have. Do you not think that that ancient faith of Rahab puts many of us to shame? Think of the grasp of that faith — there too in the city of destruction.

Well, God is equal to the utmost demand. He now responds to this noble faith, through His two evangelists, “And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.” She

then let them down by a cord through the window. “And they said, Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father’s household, home unto thee.” (Ver. 18.) Not only so, but pray mark the two whosoevers. “And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless; and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.” “And she said, According unto your words, so be it.” Is not this a wondrous display of grace which God pledges to whosoever takes refuge in the house of faith, in this doomed city of wickedness? Not a soul shall perish that takes refuge beneath the shelter of the scarlet line. This is very simple. Judgment is the certain doom of whosoever is found in the street of Jericho. Life and salvation, the assured portion of whosoever shall be found in the house of faith.

We will now pass on to the siege of Jericho. “Now Jericho was straitly shut up.” Is not this a striking figure of man’s present condition? What has been the state of this world for eighteen hundred years? Is it not guilty of the greatest possible sin — the rejection, and murder of the Son of God? What a vast Jericho this is, shut up in unbelief, and under judgment! “Every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God” (Romans 3:19), or “subject to the judgment of God.” Has God ever opened your eyes, as He opened the eyes of Rahab? Has your heart ever melted at the thought of the certain judgment that is hastening? Let us return to Jericho shut up. There was no escape but through the house of faith. Every gate was closed, none went out, and none came in. It is so now, every gate is closed, law-gate, ritual-gate, works-gate, merit-gate — all are closed. Man is a sinner without strength. There is only one way of escape. What is it? For the king, and all the mighty men of valour were given up to Joshua. But what is the meaning of this compassing the city with trumpets of rams’ horns? “And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns; and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the rams’ horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up before him. And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord. And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them. And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout: then shall ye shout. So the ark of the Lord compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before, the ark of the Lord went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the Lord, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. And the second day they compassed the city once, and

returned into the camp: so they did six days. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city. And the city shall be accursed, even it and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent." (Joshua 6:3-17.) Is not this the long-suffering of our God, not willing that any should perish. Long had He borne with the wickedness of this city whilst Israel was in Egypt; and now the whosoever principle of divine grace must be fully tested. Rahab sees the destroying host approach the city. But what a strange sight — what can that object wholly of blue be? If we turn to Numbers 4:5 we shall learn: "And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, add shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue." It is the ark of the Lord with its blood-sprinkled mercy-seat covered with a cloth wholly of blue. Blue is the heavenly colour. And was it not wholly of God that mercy should compass the city of destruction? Does not this seem to speak to us? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now Rahab hears the sound of seven trumpets of rams' horns: from seven priests walking before the ark, as they pass on before the ark of the Lord. To her faith these would be the soft sweet sounds of mercy.

See her there persuading her old father to take shelter beneath the scarlet line. No sooner is he in, than that sweet word "whosoever" cheers her on; a mother — ah, it is not always the work of a moment to persuade a mother and a father to believe the bare word of God! and now, brothers and sisters. The trumpets still sound; and the city is compassed the first day. I do not know how many are housed the first day; but not one of that household must be lost. Another day that ark of the Lord, with its covering of blue, and those seven trumpets sweetly sounding, must surround the doomed city. Oh, how our God delights in mercy! Now brother, now sister, now "whosoever;" oh, hasten to the house of safety! Blow, ye priests, blow softly and sweetly; it is our God that welcomes the sinner in. Do not shout or make a noise yet, these are days of mercy; count them one to seven; oh, how perfectly welcome all ye whosoevers, welcome every one. Blow, ye priests, for God is glorious in His mercy, heavenly and righteous all the city round.

Oh, how cheered is believing Rahab! See her gathering in the crowd. All are welcome, whosoever everyone. Early in the dawn of the morning, they take the ark, and sound the trumpets, wakening notes of threatening judgments to the ears of unbelief. Continually they blow the trumpets; God would have it so. Oh, the heart of God! not a child of faith should perish, not one be left behind. Six days did they thus compass the devoted city — not one day, but seven days, did the ark, emblem of God's throne of mercy, compass the city. But this is not enough. The mercy of God must be manifested to the utmost. On that seventh day, that last day of long-suffering forbearance, and mercy, those trumpets must sound the blasts of judgment, and strains of mercy, seven times around the city. And now the last trumpet must sound. The last soul is gathered to the place of safety. The great shout is heard, and then the sudden crash of judgment comes, and not one found in the streets of Jericho escaped. Where now is Rahab, and all that took shelter beneath the shadow of the scarlet line? Will God fail to fulfil the word of His servants that they would deal kindly

and truly with her? In God's dealing with her kindly and truly, two things must be observed. She was brought out; and she was brought in. Out from the city of destruction — in to the privileges of Israel. "And the young men went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had, and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein."

Kindly and truly as God did thus deal with this child of faith, and all with her, yet if this had been all, it would come far short as a picture of the exceeding grace of God to us. "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

Thus was she brought out, and thus was she brought in. Saved out of, and from the doom of Jericho into all the royal privileges of Israel. Grace translated the harlot of Jericho, into the most honoured mother in Israel — a mother in that royal line from whom David, and David's greater son was born. She became the wife of Salmon, the father of Booz. (Matthew 1:5.) Kindly and truly did God deal with her, and, to all in that city of wickedness who believed the word of Jehovah.

I would now ask my reader to notice in this beautiful history, four things, which strikingly illustrate the sinner shut up under judgments; the sinner brought into the place of safety; the saint brought out of the place of judgment; the saint brought into the privileges of the church of God.

We have seen Jericho straitly shut up. And though the trumpet of warning and mercy blew long yet the terrible crash of judgment came at last. It was similar in the days of Noah, when the long-suffering of God waited one hundred and twenty years. But at last the flood came and destroyed them all. Again in the days of Lot, what a night of wickedness; and though the sun arose once more in all its eastern splendour on the doomed city; yet when Lot was out of Sodom, God rained fire and brimstone and destroyed them all. Is there not equally distinct testimony in the word of God as to the end of this age? Men may no more believe it than they did in the days of Noah, but Jesus has said, "Now is the judgment of this world." The Holy Ghost sent down consequent on the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ convicts the world of the awful sin of the murder of Christ. Yea, that all have sinned, and are under the judgment of God.

Nothing can be more clear and certain than the teaching of Christ, that the end of the age will be as it was in the days of Noah, and of Lot. Read Matthew 24:1-51; and Luke 17:24-32 : "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." In Luke 21:1-38 you may trace from the past destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, to the coming again of the Lord Jesus, with power and glory, and you will find that just as the destruction of Jericho came like a snare, so shall the judgment of this world come, "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

I know Satan has persuaded men, there is no truth in these scriptures; that they need not fear — a good time is coming. But the apostle says, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Will not this be as it was in Jericho? There was no escape. Though long delayed, the crash of judgment came at last. And "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel

of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7.)

Now read 2 Peter 3:1-18. Are we not assured by this scripture of truth, that though scoffers shall come, questioning and denying all these things; yet the heavens and the earth are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men? But just as the Lord was longsuffering the days of Jericho, so again "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall he burned up," &c. No doubt this takes in the day of the Lord in its fullest sense; but I ask, God having thus spoken, is it reasonable to doubt His word, or explain it away? Surely not.

Now have you ever been really awakened, like Rahab, to believe the word of God? What a grave position this really is! A sinner in a world under judgment — a judgment from which there will be no escape. You may say, but will there not be a millennium of blessing to this earth? Certainly! But did the millennium hinder the destruction of Jericho? Neither will it hinder the judgments coming on this world. It will come in its place. But judgment is the end, and doom, of the present age.

Such then is the condition of every soul in the world that has not passed from death unto life. Shut up, waiting the judgment of Christ. Oh, think of everlasting destruction from His presence. What would you feel if the dearest friend you have on earth, had committed some crime against the law of the land; and was at this moment in the condemned cell, waiting execution? But what is this compared to everlasting punishment? And how terrible, when the longsuffering of God only hardens the heart! It is an undeniable fact, God hath said it, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Rahab was deeply convinced of the condition and doom of Jericho; are you as deeply convinced of your own condition and everlasting doom, unless saved in pure undeserved love?

We will now look at the second point illustrated, the sinner brought into the place of safety. There was faith in Rahab: "I know that the Lord hath given you the land." There was repentance, self-judgment: "As soon as we heard these things our hearts did melt." And there was prayer: "I pray you swear unto me by the Lord." Blessed marks of the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner! And is it not to be noted that every desire the spirit prompteth, is answered to the utmost? Did not God give her a true token? Did He not deal kindly and truly with her? Did He not save alive her father and mother, brethren and sisters, and all that they had? Did He not fulfil to the utmost bounds of "whosoever?" Ah, will not this once-lost harlot rise up in judgment against thousands who have rejected the kindness of God? And is there not something very beautiful in the way in which the priests compassed the city of destruction? I am struck with the position of the ark. Before they had crossed the Jordan they were to go after the ark, even in the very last march into Jordan. "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it." (Joshua 3:3-4.) And there was to be a space between it and them of two thousand cubits. But now they are in the land, blowing the rams' horns, the ark must be behind them. They must be in the land to surround Jericho, and sound the trumpet. No person can sound the true gospel of God to a lost world until he knows his standing through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and sees himself dead with Him,

and risen in Him. Redemption is not a thing before him now; once it was, when a seeking soul; now it is behind him accomplished once, and for ever. It is important to be quite clear about this before sounding the trumpet to others. Is the passage of the Jordan before you, or behind you? And more, is the ark before you, or behind you? Is the propitiatory, the mercy-seat before you, or behind you? Truly with us, but not before us. The propitiatory sacrifice once offered, finished, accomplished. When that work was before the soul, and Jesus had not been offered up, the true expression of the heart was prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses.” Now that work has been accomplished, and we have passed with the true ark through Jordan, as it is written, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Our joy now is to give thanks and to rejoice in Christ “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Thus now the true expression of the heart, is praise and thanksgiving.

Let then the servants of the Lord who know that they have crossed the Jordan; who know that they are dead and risen with Christ; who know that God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven their sins; let such compass this whole world of sin and judgment, and sound aloud the trumpet of salvation.

God is pledged to deal kindly and truly. He hath given a sure token. He hath given His only-begotten Son. What the scarlet line was as a figure to “whosoever” believed the word of God in the city of Jericho, such and much more so, is the precious blood of the Lamb. It was fastened in the window — He was nailed to the cross. “He died for our sins according to the scriptures.” “The just for the unjust to bring us to God.” God was pledged in that wicked city to whosoever. God is pledged to this wicked world, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. If the heart of God lingered then for four hundred years, it has now waited in long-suffering grace for eighteen hundred years.

Oh, let us compass this wide world with sounds of mercy; blow continually; blow softly, the household of faith is being gathered in. Have you a father, a mother, brothers, sisters, yet under judgments? for he that believeth not, is condemned already.

Oh, call them in. The poor and wretched.

God is waiting,

Call them in. When that believing company was gathered into the house on the wall, they were safe beneath the scarlet line. It was not a question how vile they had been, but giving up all other hope of escape, they were brought in faith to take refuge beneath the scarlet line. There and there alone they were safe. The trumpet blast of alarm to all beside, was the soft strain of mercy and safety to them.

Now, I ask, is this not a stupendous fact, that God is pledged to deal kindly and truly with whosoever, amongst the lost and guilty, shall take refuge beneath the blood-stained cross of Christ? But those evangelists preach a very defective gospel who would only bring the sinner to the cross and leave him there. This is not deliverance. All this — the scarlet line, the true token, the gathering them to the house of Rahab — all this was but preparatory to two things. The purpose of God was to bring them out, and to bring them in. It is all important to notice this. The same thing may be seen in Israel’s redemption from Egypt; Israel in the house sheltered by the

blood sprinkled on the door-post, was just like the elect company in the house of Rahab, sheltered by the scarlet line; both pointing to the sinner brought to take shelter beneath the cross of Christ. But the judgment on Egypt, the death of the paschal lamb, the blood that shut out the avenger — all this was preparatory to two things, as Moses says, “He brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land that he sware to our fathers.” (Deuteronomy 6:23.) In like manner the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, and the work of the Spirit in bringing the sinner by repentance and faith, to take shelter beneath the precious blood of Christ, all this is preparatory to these same two things; to bring us out, that He may bring us in. The passage of the Red Sea was the bringing them out, the passage of the Jordan was the bringing them in. Just so, according to the word of Joshua. The young men “brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had, and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.” Thus the deliverance from the scene of judgment was complete. They were now saved alive; not a stroke of judgment fell on them. See them there outside the camp in perfect safety. The crash of destruction falls upon the doomed city, upon whosoever believeth not, but not one of the whosoevers perished who believed the glad tidings of shelter in the house of Rahab. So far, then, God dealt kindly and truly with her; and all that believed. But God’s kindness went far beyond this; as we have seen, she was brought into all the privileges and heirship of the house of Israel. Have you over thought of what the believer is not only brought out of, but brought into? He is indeed sheltered by the blood: “When I see the blood I will pass over.” Oh, depth of mercy! the blood of Jesus shelters my soul from every stroke of deserved wrath. And more, we are not left in Egypt beneath the sprinkled blood, blessed as that blood is; but He “hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” (Colossians 1:13.) Sheltered and delivered. Read on: “And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

Now, what are we brought into? We have seen Rahab the harlot brought into joint heirship with Israel; a joint partaker of their hopes and inheritance. Can you take in this marvellous translation? From the depths of sin, in that city of iniquity, to joint heirship in the future throne of the Israel of Jehovah? And the word says there she dwelleth to this day. Such grace must be permanent and everlasting. What a figure or type of the riches of the glory of His grace! Surpassing strange as this is, it is no less strange than true. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him that we may be glorified together.” We must not for a moment judge of our destiny by our present condition; it may be suffering, and deep sorrows here. If Rahab, became a joint-heir in Israel’s earthly inheritance, all God’s “whosoevers” now are made joint-heirs with Christ; one with Him in all that awaits him, as heir of all things. Do not forget that it is His own work that fits us for this; we can only bow the heart, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” When Israel were buried unto Moses in the Red Sea, they were out of Egypt; when they came out of Jordan with Joshua, they were in the land. We are not only buried with Christ, but risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12.) Thus God reckons us dead with Christ, and risen with Christ. “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” Through His death we have passed out of the place of judgment. With Him in resurrection we have entered into joint-heirship with Himself. Everlasting life our portion, joint-heirship our everlasting destiny. Was not this what the Lord meant in His commission to Paul, “To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,

that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me?" (Acts 26:18.)

Oh yes, not only deliverance from Satan, but the bright inheritance of the sanctified, by faith in Him. And is not this what the Father hath begotten us unto, according to His abundant mercy by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1:4.) Calm and certain hope, amidst the trials of the wilderness! And was not this very dear to the heart of Paul, in that parting scene with the elders from Ephesus, knowing as he did how every thing in the professing church was coming to the bad? "And now, brethren I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." (Acts 20:32.)

I beg of you then, do not for a moment suppose that deliverance from wrath by the precious blood of Christ, is the whole gospel of God, blessed as that is; neither allow the thought, that the inheritance was an after-thought or attainable by a few of the children of God, by some work or effort of their own. No, joint-heirship with the risen Christ, is the predestined inheritance of every member of the body of Christ, of every child of God, from the descent of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-47) to the taking of the church to be with Christ. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.) To the glory of His grace be it known, that during this unexampled period of wickedness, God has no less, no other favour to bestow, than the predestined inheritance of the saints. What then is the believer's inheritance? This can only be answered as you would answer the question what is the believer's justification, in its completest sense? He stood in the believer's stead, bare his sins in His body on the tree, as his Substitute bare the wrath due to him. (Isaiah 53:1-12.) In His resurrection the believer is justified from sin, and sins once charged to and borne by Him, as He says, "He is near that justifieth me; who shall condemn me?" (Isaiah 50:8-9.) All this is reckoned to the believer. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." What could not be done by me as a sinner, is done by Him for me, and reckoned to me. So that if you ask, What and where is my justifying righteousness? I point to the risen Christ, my representative in the glory. Who can condemn Him, therefore, who can condemn me? What is my justification then? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again. Look not at self; look off to Christ. What He is, is the completeness of our justification. Just as truly as what He was on the cross was our complete condemnation. In like manner whatever is the inheritance of Christ is the inheritance of every child of God now, co-heir, joint-heir with Christ. To use a legal term, we are tenants in common with Christ over the universe (His own essential glory as God of course excepted). Immense and glorious as it is, yet how fully and how simply this is revealed in scripture! What could be more simple in the case of Rahab? What was the inheritance of this poor sinner? Whatever was the inheritance and destiny of Israel? What is the inheritance of every sinner saved by grace now? Whatever is the inheritance of Christ.

Now do not misunderstand, let us not be occupied with a mere doctrine, however true: but with the fact that this inheritance is predestined. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans 8:29.) There is no break in the golden links from predestination to glory. There can be no separation betwixt Christ and the

co-heirs. Precious Jesus! Has he not said it? “And the glory that thou hast given me, I have given them.” (John 17:22.)

Now turn to Ephesians 1:11. Do you see this tracing of the plan drawn in eternity? God hath dealt kindly and truly with us. We are not viewed here as still in Egypt, beneath the shelter of the blood: or in the house of Rahab, sheltered with the scarlet line; all important in their place. Here we have entered into our heavenly land. “Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Here all is of God; like the ark behind us, all covered with blue. It is God that hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children.” Here we are accepted in the beloved; “in whom we have redemption, through his blood the forgiveness of sins.” Follow the tracing: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

We are also here sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, “which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Well might the apostle so earnestly pray that they might know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Now Christ is revealed to the soul in the high 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; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Think of being a joint-heir in all this! What a tracing of the eternal plan! At present we can scarcely bear the thought, destined to dwell one with Him, above all principality and power. All things put under His feet. Thrones and crowns, and royal sceptres, around that throne in unclouded light await the redeemed of the Lord. Surely Moses and Elias speaking with Him in glory in the mount, was a bright figure of our co-heirship with Christ. What holy scenes of power, and love, and service, await us in the joint reign with Christ!

Satan may here suggest that though grace did bring the harlot Rahab, and whosoever believed the reports, into the blessing and privileges of Israel: yet surely, none but the most worthy of mankind can be thus associated with Christ, over all things. But as it was then, it is even so now, as grace compassed the city of iniquity, ripe for judgment, and brought out every sinner that believed, so now grace has surrounded this world, ripe for judgment, ever since it rejected and murdered the Son of God. And this is the character of those grace now gathers to be the joint-heirs of Christ.

“And you who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time passed ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in time past, in the lust of the flesh fulfilling the desires of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Oh, the greatness of that love of God, the riches of that mercy who takes up such lost sinners, and raises them up with Christ, even into joint-heirship with Him! and thus shall the exceeding riches of His grace and kindness to us be shown in the ages to come. Surely He hath dealt kindly and truly with us, as well as with Rahab of old.

I have only a few words to add. Our adorable Lord is waiting there on the Father’s throne, until the last co-inheritor is gathered from this city of Jericho. It is not until the church is complete, that He takes His place in the midst of the throne. (Revelation 5:1-14.) Until then He says, “Let not your

heart be troubled, neither be afraid! ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again to receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3.) My fellow believer, are not these words true? Do they not come from the very heart of Christ? Joshua sent the spies to take out Rahab. Christ Himself will come and take us out of this doomed world. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.) But if this is the blessed hope of the children of God — the Rahab household of faith; all that are Christ's at His coming — the crash of judgments on the rejectors is not less certain. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall not escape." The coming of Joshua to Jericho had two very distinct characters: The salvation and entrance of Rahab into the joint privileges of Israel; and the terrible fiery destruction of all that were found outside the household of faith. Just so, the coming of the Lord has two distinct characters: First, He comes to take His own without sin unto salvation. They enter into rest and glory. They see Him as He is and are like Him; for ever with the Lord. Then after that when the now hated and persecuted saints are in rest, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7.) The scriptures are largely occupied with these two aspects of the coming of the Lord. Which is before my reader? Have you been brought as a lost and ruined sinner like Rahab to take shelter beneath the blood of Jesus? Do you believe God in His kindness and love, nay more in His righteousness, has provided that place of shelter? Has He in pure grace delivered you from the wrath to come? Then can you not trust with child-like certainty His word? Are you waiting for Him from heaven, to come and introduce you into that home of love and holy delight, the unclouded presence and glory of God? A little more conflict. And those who walk before the ark do indeed need to be armed with the whole armour of God. The better we know our destined place in the heavens, the more will wicked spirits in the heavenlies dispute it.

Rise up, my brethren, and, fully armed, march on before the ark of the Lord. Sound the gospel trumpet loudly, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. It is our Master's voice who says, "Surely I come quickly." Do not grieve the Spirit by half-hearted doubts. Do not say, If I may but be just saved. No, no, none will be merely just saved. If saved at all, you will be brought into all that Christ is; as surely as you have borne the image of the earthy, you shall bear the image of the heavenly. Without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Unblamable in holiness, in His presence with exceeding glory. Thus our God and Father speaks to us, and shows us the riches of His grace in the history of Rahab and the siege of Jericho. And soon shall we say, One half hath not been told us, of His boundless love. To Him all praise. Amen. C. S.

Chapter 76

078. Christ the Centre: or Why do we meet in His Name alone?

Christ the Centre: or Why do we meet in His Name alone?

C. Stanley.

Preface This booklet is published again with the earnest desire that God will make it a blessing, as He has done with previous editions.

It will be seen that reference is made in the illustrations to events current at the time of the first edition, and it has not seemed necessary to bring these up-to-date.

London, C. A. Hammond 1968. This is a question often put to those who meet in the name of the Lord Jesus. Many have expressed a desire that a plain tract might be written on the subject. The following considerations are affectionately presented to all the beloved children of God.

First. The Worthiness of Christ! It is God who “hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Php 2:9-11.) Thus hath our blessed God and Father delighted to honour Him, who “is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” (Colossians 1:18.) In this name, so precious to every believer, did all Christians meet in the days of the apostles; and when the veil of the future was drawn aside, what did John the servant of Jesus Christ behold? When he saw Jesus Christ he says, “His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.” (Revelation 1:16-17.)

“A door was opened in heaven.” What a sight! The vision of the future glory of the Lamb in the midst of the millions and millions of the redeemed! A Lamb as it had been slain.

“And they sung a new song.” What will it be to be there; to hear that swell of joy unspeakable — to join that song? Not one redeemed to God by His blood will refuse to sing, “Thou art worthy.” Angelic hosts cry with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches . . . and honour, and glory, and blessing”: yea, all redeemed creation shall be heard saying, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Revelation 5:6-14)

Thus shall our adorable Lord be adored, and owned in heaven and throughout all creation. This is God’s estimate of the risen Christ, who once died for our sins — the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And thus shall God’s will be done in heaven. Should an anxious, troubled soul read these lines, mark well that this is the redemption-glory of Christ. And who were those worshipping millions, redeemed by His blood? Dying thieves, Mary Magdalenes, sinners of the city. And is Jesus worthy of bringing such to glory? Yes, the most holy, holy, holy God says He is worthy; and all creation shout Amen. Oh, do you, my reader, now give God credit? Such is the worthiness of this risen Jesus, that God says, “Be it known unto you . . . that through this man is preached unto

you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39.) Thus salvation is wholly through Christ. Blessed are they who can say, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

I do not presume to be able to set forth by pen, or tongue, the glorious pre-eminence of Christ. I point to the scriptures that so clearly declare the worthiness of Christ. But many who read this paper will say, "What true Christian doubts for a moment the worthiness of Christ, or the greatness of His exalted name?" True, true, there is a chord in every Christian's heart that responds to the name of Jesus. But the question is how much, or how great, is that worthiness? There may be one thousand Christians in a town, or ten thousand in a city — I mean such as really have redemption through the blood of Christ, whose sins are forgiven. Now if Jesus be worthy of the united praise and worship of all creation, if all the millions of the redeemed in heaven shall gather round His adorable Person, then is He not worthy of the united worship of one thousand in a town, and ten thousand in a city on earth? Surely in heaven every name and sect must fall. And why not on earth? It is a great mistake to suppose, then, that we separate from every name and sect because we think ourselves better than the dear children of God in those sects; far be the thought! No; it is because Jesus is worthy — yes, worthy the sacrifice of at once giving up every Name and sect, and of gathering to His blessed name and Person alone. Yes, my fellow believer, He is worthy that you, whoever you are, and to whatever sect you belong, He is worthy that you should own no other name but His. What must angels think, knowing and delighting as they do in the exalted name of Jesus, when they see our ways on earth? The divisions on earth must present a dark contrast to the unity of heaven. In many places all God's redeemed people may be seen bearing various names: and not two even, or three, meet in the whole town in the name of Jesus alone. And yet, most assuredly, Jesus is worthy that every believer in the place should meet only in His name. Now, if God's will is so plainly done in heaven by all gathering to the Person of the Lamb, how can I pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," unless I am prepared to give up every name and sect on earth as it is done in heaven? Would it not be more consistent to say — I have been in such a sect, and all my friends are there; excuse me therefore from doing Thy will on earth, as I shall do it, and as it is done, in heaven? Is it narrowness to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven? Is it too much to own the Lordship of Christ, to the glory of God the Father, and to own no other but Christ? God sets the highest value on the name of Jesus. Man says it is no matter what name you bear. Every Christian who owns the Lordship of Jesus who has visited the Romish places of worship on the Continent must have been deeply pained at the reverence paid to the name of the virgin. And is not human nature the same in England? Is there not the same idolatrous tendency where any name is owned as the head of a sect? As that name is exalted the name of Jesus is disowned, until at length it is a small matter to be a Christian, but a great one to belong to the sect. Surely this is wood, hay and stubble, that will not endure the coming day. In the days of the apostles, Jesus was the name exalted above every name. To exalt another, though it were a Paul, or a Cephas, was denounced by the Spirit of God as carnality and schism. Even to tolerate another name, or names, was virtually to lower the glorious Christ to the level of a mere man. (1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:4-5) Is it not the same now? Jesus is worthy of the united worship of the millions of the redeemed who shall be gathered in heaven; therefore He is worthy of the united worship and praise of all Christians now on earth. Whatever others may do, whether they own that name alone, before the world or not, fellow believer, if thou

desirest to do the will of God, thy path is plain — give up every name and sect, and meet only in the name of Jesus, heaven's exalted Lord. A question may now arise in the mind as to what order of church government is really according to the mind of God. This leads us to the

2nd consideration: — The sovereignty of the Spirit of God as the second reason why we meet in the name of the Lord Jesus alone. Before Jesus left this world, while in the midst of His sorrowing disciples, He said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:16-17.) The Lord Jesus solemnly promised that this Comforter or Guardian should teach us all things. Jesus says, "He shall testify of me." (John 15:26.) Observe, Jesus did not promise an influence, but the real, divine Person of the Holy Ghost; as real a Person as Jesus. And as really as Jesus had testified of the Father, so really should the Spirit testify of Jesus. And further, that He, the Holy Spirit, should guide us into all truth. "He shall glorify Me." (John 16:14.) This promise God hath fulfilled. Jesus being glorified on high, God hath sent the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:4-38.) Now from that moment, we search in vain in the New Testament for any church government except the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. As really as the blessed Jesus had been present with the disciples in the gospels, equally so is the Holy Ghost present with the church in the Acts. Pentecost was a marvellous display of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. And again, "When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31.) Yes, so real was the presence of the Holy Ghost, that Peter in the case of Ananias said, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" etc. (Acts 5:3.) And when the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost fell on them in like manner. (Acts 11:15.) Also at Antioch. (Acts 13:52.) And how marked the guidance of the Spirit to the Apostle Paul and his companions when "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia," and when they would have gone to Bithynia, "but the Spirit suffered them not." (Acts 16:6-7. See also 19: 2.) If we now turn to 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the government of the Spirit in the church is stated with the utmost clearness, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." This passage is often applied to the world, in violent opposition to that scripture which saith, "whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." (John 14:17.) But whatever variety of gift in the church, "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Corinthians 12:11.)

Now tell me what denomination thus owns the Spirit of God in our day. Nay, the moment any assembly of Christians do thus own the Spirit of God, that moment they cease to be a sect, or denomination; because the Holy Ghost would not honour any name but the name of Jesus. Now let us compare an assembly 1800 years ago with a denominational assembly now, and this will be plain. All the Christians in a neighbourhood assembled together in the name of Jesus; the Spirit gave diversities of gifts; some were gifted to preach, others to teach, others to exhort, and so on with all the various manifestations of the Spirit. And He the Spirit, was really present in their midst, dividing to every man severally as He would. They speak two or three — if anything is revealed to another that sitteth by, the first holds his peace — and this is the order of God; as we read (1 Corinthians 14:29-33), "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one,

that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." When the sovereign guidance of the Spirit of God was owned, this was plainly the order. Now let us enter an assembly belonging to any denomination of the present day. Tell me, where is the Holy Spirit either expected or allowed to divide to every man severally as He will? This may not be intentional; the presidency of the Holy Ghost is forgotten. A man fills His place; and, whether led of or happy in the Spirit or not, he must occupy the time. This disowning of the personal presence and sovereign guidance of God the Holy Ghost is most sad every way. The diverse gifts are not exercised; the work of the ministry becomes a burthen to the one man. But more than all, God is disowned in the assembly for guidance in worship; and a human order, or rather, every kind of human disorder, takes the place. It may sound well to call it liberty of conscience; but where is the liberty of the Spirit of God to use whom He will for the edification of the church of God? Is this a light matter? Was not the disowning the guidance and government of God by His people Israel and the desire to have a man in God's place the first sad step in the downward path of that people? And what is the history of the prophets but that of a few men (in the midst of general departure from God) still finding and holding fast this blessed reality — the presence of God? How solemn the teaching in the Book of Jeremiah: he sat alone, yet called by the name of the Lord God of Hosts. How sweet were the words of the Lord to him, "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." (See Jeremiah 15:16-21.)

Such is the solemn yet blessed place of all, in these days, who have been led to own the real presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly. The Lord's words have indeed been found to be sweeter than man's. Oh, that all God's dear children, in every denomination, knew the blessedness of unfeigned subjection of heart to the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. Where there is this, not in mere form but in reality, He does testify of Christ in such a manner, that no human wisdom can even imitate. Often the hymns by one, the prayers by others, and the reading of the word, as led by the Holy Ghost, so manifest the divine guidance, and give such a sense of the presence of God, as can only be enjoyed where the Spirit of God is thus owned. I cannot then go where He is not owned whom the Father hath sent to guide us and guard us, and abide with us unto the end. It is no matter what may be substituted — whether the Pope, or the Emperor, or the King, or the Conference, or the minister — God is right, and man is wrong. It is not a question of opinion, but of owning or displacing the Holy Ghost as the sovereign guide and ruler of the assembly. I have found the reality of His very presence; and for this I must be separate from every community — Greek, Romish or Protestant, all alike — where He is not thus owned.

I now state the third reason why we meet in the name of Christ alone — The unity of the Church; or more correctly, the unity of the one body. I am not aware that there is such a passage of scripture as one church, but there is "one body." (Ephesians 4:4.) The word translated church simply means assembly. It is so used to describe a crowd of heathen in Acts 19:32; Acts 19:39. The church of God is the assembly of God: saved persons in every place who assemble as such to worship God, all their sins being put away for ever. (Hebrews 10:1-39.) Such an assembly they were not to forsake. No other assembly can possibly be called a church or assembly of God. Nor could even such an assembly be truly called the church of God unless that assembly truly owned God the Holy Ghost to guide and guard them in all things, as the assemblies of God did in the days of the apostles. Take the following illustration: suppose His Majesty the King sends out a

commander-in-chief to the British army in India, and that for a time the army puts itself entirely under his command. It could then be properly called the army of His Majesty. But if that army were to set aside the commander-in-chief, and appoint another of their own, or if the army should divide into separate parts, each division appointing its own commander, each soldier might be still a British soldier, but could that divided army be correctly called the army of His Majesty? Having set aside the authority of His Majesty's appointed commander-in-chief, would not every division be in a state of mutiny? And would it not be disloyalty to join the ranks of any such mutinous division?

Now apply this to the church or assembly of God. For a time the authority of the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, was owned, just as the British army for a time owned the authority of His Majesty's commander-in-chief. Then the sovereign authority of the Spirit of God was set aside, and the authority of the Pope of Rome was put in the place of God the Holy Ghost. Can the Church of Rome, then, be called the true church of God? Impossible! she has mutinied against God's Commander-in-chief, the Holy Ghost. To join her ranks is disloyalty to Christ. But if I must declare the whole counsel of God, am I not compelled to adopt the same conclusions respecting every division of the professing church? Take the Greek Church: has it not set aside the command of the Holy Ghost? And though it put so high a person as the Emperor of all The Russias in the place of the Holy Ghost, yet would it not be mutiny to join its ranks? Take again what is called the Church of England. Are we not compelled to acknowledge that the sovereign command of the blessed Spirit is entirely set aside? As in Russia, so in England, the head of the world's government is made the head of the church; and instead of the Holy Ghost being allowed to divide, severally as He will, a prime minister, whatever his principles may be, can appoint a minister over a given town or village, and according to this system no other person ought dare to name the name of Christ in that so-called parish. Only this post I have a letter from a christian lady in such a town. A young woman had just been to request her to see her dying husband. She went, and put Jesus before the dying man. He appeared very thankful, and wished to see her again. She left him three gospel tracts: as she came out the vicar met her, and in the most authoritative manner bid her only attend to the bodily wants of the dying man; that his soul's affairs were his (the vicar's) business alone. When he left he took all the three tracts with him. Oh, when I think of the eternal interests of that poor man dying this day, his young, weeping, anxious wife by his side, and then think of the delusion that I know that vicar will put before him, my heart turns sick at the fearful results in thousands of such instances, all springing from the solemn fact that the Church of England disowns the sovereign guidance of the Spirit of God. Do you think it possible that the Spirit of God could appoint such a man: a man who will enter the cottages of the poor and take their gospel tracts and put them in the fire? Could Satan desire more sad departure from the Spirit's rule? Surely then I cannot be loyal to Christ and join or sanction such a mutinous system. No; so far from the Church of England being the true church of God, it is only a piece of the world governed by the world — in fact the very opposite of the church of God, which is gathered out of the world, and governed by the Spirit of God. I am compelled then to leave her communion if I would own the personal guidance of the Holy Ghost, just as much as I am compelled to leave the Church of Rome. It cannot perhaps be said that she has set aside the Spirit. She never knew the Spirit's sovereign guidance. Henry VIII certainly was not the Spirit of God and yet he was the first head and governor of the Church of England — sad, dark contrast to the church of the Scriptures! And as I have before proved, every other division of the professing church fails to recognise the personal government of the Holy Ghost, and sets up a government of its own; therefore, no

division of the professing church can be called the true assembly or church of God, any more than a division of the British army which failed to recognise the commander-in-chief, and set up a commander of its own, could be called the true army of His Majesty the King.

I am fully aware that the personal guidance of the blessed Spirit of God has been so long forgotten that it is most difficult to make even Christians understand what is meant. Take another illustration: a certain nobleman is announced to preside over a public meeting of the inhabitants of any given town. The meeting assembles, the nobleman comes, he stands on the platform, but nobody recognises him; he speaks, but still no one knows him. Message after message is sent to his house begging him to come: they then desire his influence, and not knowing his personal presence, they appoint someone else to preside. Such is a precise picture of the divisions of the present day. However we may have grieved and disowned the Spirit, still that precious promise is fulfilled, “And he (the Father) shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” Yes, as the nobleman was present, though not known, when the letters were sent to his house, even so in the assembly of Christians the Holy Ghost has come, is present, at the very time prayer is being offered, in ignorance, for Him to come from heaven. Yes, to hear many Christians pray one would almost think that they were praying for an influence. Would it not be shocking to speak of God the Father as an influence? Would it not be most revolting to say the life of God the Son, on earth, was only an allegory or an influence? And is not God the Holy Ghost as real a person now on earth as Jesus was when on earth, and now is in heaven? What a commander is to an army, or a president is to a meeting, such is the Holy Ghost to the assembly of God: commanding, directing, using whom He will. Where He is not thus owned, no assembly even of Christians can be called God’s assembly. And hence, from all such assemblies I must separate if I would be loyal to God. But it may be objected, Has there not been failure and division amongst those who professed to own the Spirit of God? Sadly true: but nothing could more clearly prove the truth of these statements respecting the Spirit’s presence. What has been the cause of all the sorrow and division? The setting aside the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. But to say that failure is a reason why any should not own the guidance of the Spirit in the assembly, or refer to it as an excuse for remaining where He is disowned, is like a person saying because he, or any other Christian, has failed in walk, that therefore he should, as an individual, cease to walk in the Spirit. Should not our past sins and failures make us the more watchful and earnest to walk in the Spirit? He alone is the safeguard of the Christian and the church. Blessed Guardian! The source of every failure the church has ever had has been by disowning the guidance of the Spirit; no matter what comes, if she only trusts her blessed Guardian, all is well. So with the Christian: if walking in the flesh a straw may cause a fall, but if walking in the Spirit, no matter what temptation, all is well. Every past failure then in the church, or assembly, calls for unfeigned subjection to the Spirit of God. What would you think of a man saying, Such a person, who professed to be a Christian, has failed, and has been found drunk in the streets; therefore I may remain a drunkard with safety. Is it not the same in principle to say, Such of the children of God have failed to keep the unity of the Spirit; therefore I may now remain where the Spirit is not owned. I beg of you, judge not this weighty question by the failures of men, but by the word of God.

What then is the “one body”? (Ephesians 4:4.) The Church of Rome is not even the catholic church; much less can she be the “one body.” Catholic means universal, so that the millions of the Greek and Anglican and other churches are so many millions of living witnesses against the

catholicity of the Romish church. It cannot be either the one church, or the one body, being but a division — and the same remarks apply to every other division.

“All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” (John 17:1-26.) These precious words of Jesus embrace every child of God during this dispensation. What then is the glory that the Father hath given to Jesus? He hath “raised him from the dead, and set him at his own 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: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:19-23.) And again, “And he is the Head of the body, the church: who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” (Colossians 1:18.) The glory then given to Jesus is given to Him as The risen Christ — and as the risen Christ He is the Beginning and Head of the body. Every member then of the one body must be risen with Christ. And thus if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, or a new creation. Now does not Jesus say, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them”? And this is true of all that are His. Then every Christian is one with the risen Christ in the highest glory; as it is written, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 2:6.)

What a vast difference then there must be betwixt a heavenly risen body and an earthly society; the only earthly society that God ever had was the nation of the Jews. Even during the lifetime of Christ the little company or flock of disciples were of that nation. It was not until after His resurrection and ascension to glory that the Holy Ghost could be given to form “the Church, which is his body.” This was the mystery kept hid from ages, that the earthly society, or nation of the Jews, should for a time be set aside, and that the Holy Ghost should gather out of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, a heavenly body — and that this body should be joined to the Head in risen, highest glory: blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. And mark, all this is true of every child of God during this dispensation; because Christ says to the Father, “All are thine.” Wherever the child of God is as to his body on earth, in spirit he is as really one in the risen Christ as a member of the human body is joined to the person whose it is. Yea, our oneness in Christ is not union, but perfect unity. As we could not say, the union of the members of the human body, for all those members constitute one person, so also is the heavenly risen Christ. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free,” etc. “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (1 Corinthians 12:12-27.) Certainly the Spirit uses the strongest possible words and the most striking figures to express this wondrous unity. Compare the above passage with the following: “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5:30.) It does not say we were one with Him during His life in the flesh — that were impossible. Had He not died, He must have remained alone. (John 12:24.) Earthly oneness of sinful men with a sinless Christ could not be; no, He must die, and has died for the sins of many; and having passed through death for them, as their substitute — having — through the shedding of His precious blood paid their ransom — He has been raised from among the dead, and, as their surety, justified. (Isaiah 50:8.) And all this for us: “raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:25.) And thus we

are reckoned dead with Him, raised with Him, justified with Him and one with Him in that risen, justified, sinless state. So that we are, not were, one with Him. As a man is one person, though having many members, so is the risen Christ; though having many members on earth, yet all joined to and one with and in Christ the Head in heaven. “We are members of his body.” “There is one body.” (Ephesians 5:30; Ephesians 4:4.) What a wondrous new creation, new existence, this is! Translated into the kingdom of His dear Son — we are, not we shall be when we die. “Hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Colossians 1:13.) It is the forgetting of this present reality, the oneness of the whole church of God in the risen Christ in heavenly glory, that is one sad cause of the worldly systems and earthly divisions which men call churches. I often ask, “When you are in heaven, will you tolerate sects and divisions?” “ Oh dear no!” is the reply. Christ will then be all. But are we not now raised with Him, and made to sit with Him in heavenly places? (Ephesians 2:6.) And is not Christ all now? (Colossians 3:11.) In the new creation there is neither Jew nor Greek, Romanist or Protestant, Independent or Methodist; oh no! Christ is all. “Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18.) And this is true of every man in Christ. He is, or let him be, a new creature. The risen body of Christ, then, is one, composed of all believers out of every nation; a new creation from among the dead, raised together and joined together by God the Father. (Ephesians 2:1-22.) Can never be separated. (Romans 8:39.) There are no divisions in that heavenly body, neither indeed can be. For the old things are passed away. Blessed Jesus, Thy prayer is answered: “that all may be one.” (John 17:1-26.) Yes, all who believe are one with Christ in the heavenly places.

What then is the will of God as to believers on earth? For, whilst one with Christ in heaven, we are still for a very little while absent from the Lord whilst here in the body. I do not wish to state opinions, but what is the mind of the Lord? Solemn question. May He give grace to do His precious will. That God condemns division none would wish to deny who bow to His inspired word. At the very first appearance or bud of divisions the apostle says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you . . . Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13.) Surely I cannot mistake the mind of the Lord in this day, when one saith, I am of Rome, I of the Greek, I of the Anglican, I of Wesley, etc. God beseeches all believers by the glory and pre-eminence of the Name of the Lord Jesus that there be no divisions. Not one name or division can God tolerate. To allow any name but His is to lower His blessed Name to the same level. I of Paul, and I of Christ. If it is thus God’s will that there should be no divisions, how can I belong to any, or in any way countenance any sect, without positive disobedience to God’s revealed mind? Do, my reader, answer that question in the presence of God with His word before you.

Lest there should be any mistake, the Spirit of God again speaks on the same subject: “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” If it thus grieved the Spirit to say, I am of Paul, or Apollos, does it now please the Spirit to say, I am of Wesley, I of the Independents? Is this carnality? or is it spirituality? Does God approve or disapprove? And again, when the apostle refers to having heard there were sects among them, he says, “I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.” (1 Corinthians

11:17.)

Yea, God could not speak more plainly, not only as to what He condemns, but also what His will is as to what is right: “That there should be no schism [or division] in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” (1 Corinthians 12:25.) Man says there should be sects, and would have me join one or help to increase it. God says there should be none, for the body is one. Shall I obey God or man? Judge ye.

What a blessed unity, one with the Head above and one with every member here below! Yes, every member, every Christian on earth! How precious the will of God: “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (1 Corinthians 12:26-27.)

Surely, now, we have failed to own this wondrous unity. But let us not lower the standard. Let us not call evil good. Surely division is an evil, and a bitter thing in the sight of God. He even classes it with such sins as adultery, murder and drunkenness. (Galatians 5:17-21.) The word translated heresies means sects. Oh, let us then return unto the Lord with deep humiliation. Let us confess the common sin and shame of the divided church.

We are called to heavenly oneness with the risen Christ. It is the will of God that “ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit,” etc. (Ephesians 4:1-4.) Would you, my fellow believer, do the will of God? Here, then, is the blessed path: the unity of the Spirit. This must ever be to the Head — Christ. The blessed Spirit gathers to the Person of Christ, and where two or three are gathered in His name, there He is in the midst of them. Man makes a meeting in what name he likes. It is division, or scattering. The Spirit alone gathers to Christ. The two things are as different as the unity of heaven and the scattering of earth.

All believers are one in the risen Christ, and the will of Christ is that that unity should be manifested to the whole world. How deeply and touchingly this is seen in the present intercommunings of the Son with the Father: “That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe”; and again, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:1-26.) Thus, instead of earthly divisions and discord, the blessed Lord would have us manifest to the world our oneness with Himself in glory. We are dead with Him, risen with Him, and shall be glorified with Him. But oh! to attain to this power of resurrection, to walk worthy of this oneness with the risen Christ, being made conformable to His death. However we may have failed, I am not thereby excused from faithfulness to this risen Christ; and I cannot therefore be identified with anything that grieves Him or is contrary to His mind. Sects and divisions have been shown to be utterly contrary to His will; therefore I must separate from them all if I would walk according to God’s word. I can own no church but the one body, no principle of church government but that of the Holy Ghost, no name but that of the Lord Jesus Christ — alone Head of the risen body, the church of God. The path may be difficult, but when was the path of faith easy? These are perilous times. Evil is called good; good, evil; indifference, neutrality. “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what

the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:14; Ephesians 5:17.) The Lord is at hand, and He hath said, "Surely I come quickly." How very soon the last sound of discord shall be heard! Oh, haste the day when the exalted Lord shall be for ever owned and adored. Oh, my fellow-believers, with such a prospect shall we not, during this little while, seek to do His blessed will? He would have us separate ourselves and purge ourselves from every vessel of dishonour. (2 Timothy 2:19-21.) He would have us gathered in His name. (Matthew 18:20.) Surely we need no argument in addition to our Lord's revealed will.

I would add a few words, in conclusion, to those who are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, desiring in everything to be subject to the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Let us remember, beloved brethren, That God has gathered us together in the name of the Lord Jesus; that we have not met of our own will; that we have only to seek the glory of Christ, and to win souls to Him. Let us not be ashamed of His precious Name and the blessed place in which He has set us as witnesses of Him. Yea, let us rise as one man to make known the claims of Christ. But this can only be done in unshaken faith. There may be the name and form, and not the power. When gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus, do we always expect the Spirit to testify of Him? If men go to hear an eloquent preacher, they expect to hear him. Do we thus expect the teaching of the Spirit of God by the word? God is pleased to use gifts, but His own presence is more than all gifts. I am not speaking of a blind impulse, or of what some men call inward light. No; I ask do we really believe in the presence of the divine Person of the Holy Ghost? Then let not one rise to deliver his own thought, ready prepared as it were; and let not the weakest say, I am not fit to be used of God. Let there be a real yielding of ourselves to God, to be kept silent, or used to speak the words He shall give — it may be but the reading of a verse of scripture. Have we not often felt more of the real power of God's presence at such a time than we can possibly describe? How blessed to feel you are in His very presence, to hear His words, as though He were speaking in an audible voice. Oh, may there be such fervent prayer that the manifest guidance of the Spirit of God may be seen and felt in every gathering. Have faith, my brethren, in God. To my brethren who are still in the sects of men, whether Roman, Greek or English — of whatever name — let me earnestly entreat you to seek divine guidance in the scriptures of truth. My confidence is in God, that He will, by this feeble paper, lead many of you to own the name of the Lord Jesus in unfeigned subjection to the Spirit of God. We may never know each other here, but when we meet around the throne, then we shall not regret having left every sect, and every name, and having been gathered only in the name of the Lord Jesus. Do not suppose I imply that the name of Jesus is not dear to all the children of God in the various divisions of the professing church. No; for to you who believe He is precious. But you are not gathered in His name alone, as the one body of Christ. Each sect has some other name, or some other principle, which hinders all the children of God being gathered with them, in contrast to the true ground of being gathered by the Spirit of God to the Name and Person of Christ. In thus gathering, there is no barrier to any or all the children of God walking in subjection to the Holy Ghost. Nor can such a gathering or assembly of God be truly called a sect, any more than the assembly of God in the days of the apostles could. Nor would I for a moment imply that my brethren in the various divisions deny the existence of the Holy Ghost. What I say is, that when you meet for worship or teaching you do not submit to the Holy Ghost, and allow Him to preside over the meeting, using whom He will, as in 1 Corinthians 12:14. You have departed from the Spirit's rule, and have set up human order. And thus one member is

burthened, and the others become mere listeners. There is work for every member, according to the measure of grace. All cannot speak in public; but cannot God use the feeblest attempts — a word by the way? Yes, often the prayer of a poor man, filled with the Spirit is more blest to the saints of God than the eloquence of an Apollos. May the Lord Himself lead you into unfeigned subjection to the Holy Ghost, according to His blessed Word. C.S.

Chapter 77

079. The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Notes of Lectures

C. Stanley.

Revelation 1:1-20.

Introduction.

It should not be forgotten, that when God gave this “Revelation of Jesus Christ” to His servant John, the substance of this book was new; supplementary to all the revelations of Jesus which had gone before. It will be found of the first importance to bear this in mind in all our meditations on this blessed book: and, whilst the study of this book requires acquaintance with the whole word of God, yet we must not confound this with the revelations which had gone before. Even the introduction is new, and different from any other book. This blessed revelation of Jesus is given of God to the servants of Jesus Christ. How marked this is! It is not to the saints in Christ Jesus, as in some of the precious epistles, but “unto his servants.” As the Holy Ghost has made this distinction, let us meditate a little upon it. A person may be saved, and if saved certainly a saint, for ever perfected in Christ Jesus: “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14.) To be thus saved is the portion of every true believer in Christ. — But how few can say with Paul, “a servant of Jesus Christ;” “separated unto the gospel of God.” Very few walked in this path with the devoted Paul. With sorrow he had to say, when speaking of many saints, “For all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” What a searching word for both the writer and the reader! How far are we separated to the service of Jesus Christ?

I was going to ask you a question as to this, but before I do so, let us read Revelation 1:5. You will observe this text tests you. If this is the language of your heart; if you can say to Jesus, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” then surely you are saved. This is the language of none but the saved; and it is the language of all the saved. It is not Unto Him and unto me. Now can you look up into heaven, and say, There is the blessed One, who loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood? O how simple and how certain! I do not say, I hope He will, but it is done. If you are thus saved, then I will ask you this question, Are you a servant of Jesus Christ, apart from everything, and every human interest, and every human sect and party? What have you ever done for Jesus Christ alone? This is the question.

I was struck with a remark from a Christian lately. Speaking of a gentleman — I trust a Christian too — who gives large sums of money for sectarian uses, my friend, who know him well, said, I never knew him give one shilling to Christ; or, strictly speaking, for the service of Jesus Christ alone. You may build a church, or a chapel; give largely to this interest or that; and you may never have given a cup of cold water to a disciple solely because he belongs to Christ. Is there any wonder then, since this book is a revelation of Jesus Christ to His servants — and we are, all

seeking our own instead of the things of Jesus Christ — I say, can there be any wonder that this blessed book should be so little understood?

Then there is another thing of very great moment. In looking at a picture is it not important to get the right standpoint? Now what was the standpoint of the beloved John, when God gave this revelation of Jesus Christ to him? Are we companions of this servant John, “who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ?” This servant “in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Just in proportion as we are companions with this servant John, for the word of God — not for the theories of men, but the testimony of Jesus Christ — in that same proportion we must be shut out with him at Patmos. Is this our standpoint? Is our platform the Patmos platform? Do you say, I do not understand the Revelation a bit? The reason may be simply this — you live too far from Patmos. It can only be understood by the servants of Jesus Christ who live at Patmos. Are you living in that Babel world, from which the testimony of Jesus Christ must separate? Then is there any wonder that your eyesight is too dim to see the revelation of Jesus Christ?

It must follow that since the great bulk of Christians in our day live in the world, and are one with it in spirit, this book must remain to them, as they say, a sealed book. Oh how sad! A young Oxford man said to me a few days ago, I always lay aside the book of Revelation as a book not to be understood. Think of this, always laying aside the Revelation of Jesus Christ!

Then, this servant John was not only shut out of man’s world, at Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ; but he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” Now this again is all important. The human mind, however cultivated, is utterly incapable of seeing or understanding the person of Jesus Christ. The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. Without the Holy Spirit man never could, or can, see Jesus, and thus know the Father. My reader, let us ponder this well: it is only as you, and I, are in the Spirit, that we shall understand this blessed Revelation. Now may the Holy Ghost open your ears to hear, and give you eyes to see, this revelation of Jesus Christ. The Lord’s command to His servant John in chapter 1: 19, is of great value, as it enables us to understand the proper division of this book. “Write the things which thou hast seen.” This is the first part: the things which he had seen — Jesus as Judge in the midst of the seven candlesticks, which are the seven churches.

“And the things that are.” This we shall find will occupy chapters 2 and 3. The things that are during the whole history of the present period of the Church.

“And the things which shall be after, or after these.” The things that shall take place after the close of Christianity, or the period of the Church, “the things that are.” This will occupy us from chapter 4 to the end of the book. The things that are about to take place in heaven, and on earth, after the close of Christianity. Do not hasten over this verse 19, for a clear understanding of these three divisions of the book will greatly help you in the study of all that follows. It is the Lord that thus divides the book. The things which John saw.

“Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.” What wondrous titles! “Faithful witness: ” witness of God for us; yet witness of the wrath of God against all sin: witness of God justifying us, in perfect righteousness: as the risen Son of

God He takes His place, and title, “the first begotten from among the dead.”

“Behold, he cometh with clouds: ” the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.” What themes for holy contemplation! Long might we linger; and often may we, with adoring worship, thus contemplate this revelation of Jesus Christ.

Hearken! John first hears a voice, and that not a whisper, but a great voice as of a trumpet. It is the Lord announcing Himself as “the first and last.” Do we thus own Jesus the eternal God? He commands him to write what he sees, and send it to the seven churches of Asia. When John turned to see the voice that spoke, he saw a remarkable sight — “Seven golden candlesticks,” and one like unto the Son of man in the midst of them. Have you ever seen Jesus, the true centre of the Church of God in its completeness? What is your centre? is it Jesus?

If we look awhile at the Lord as thus revealed, we shall observe He is not now before us so much as a Saviour, but as a Judge. But how can we look at Him in this character if we have not first known Him as the one who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood? And if washed from our sins, are we able to bear the eyes as a flame of fire, from which nothing can be hid? The servant John said, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” Yes, he needed to hear those words of comfort — words which took him back to the day of His resurrection — “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead.”

Look at this revelation of Jesus; look at Him as “the Ancient of days” of Daniel, clothed with judicial robes: girt with divine righteousness: nothing hid from His eyes: His own walk brightest holiness: a voice that shall be heard: the right of administration in His own hands: power to execute judgment: His countenance of majesty, supremacy, and strength. This is the one to whom I now introduce you, my reader. Look at Him, and remember it is not of prophecy I now write, but to see, and hear, the revelation of Jesus Christ. The things that are.

Before we go on to the addresses to the seven assemblies of Asia, it will be profitable to consider verse 20: “The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest, in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.” We must go to the scriptures of truth for the Holy Spirit’s meaning of these symbols; not to the opinions or practices of men. Is not the scriptural meaning of the symbol, a star, or stars, very plain in Daniel 12:3? “They that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” In this period then the seven stars would be all such as the Lord thus used in turning many to righteousness. John in his time saw these in their completeness, in the right hand of Christ the Lord. Have you thought of this? Have you seen the administration of all the gifts, at the commencement of the history of the Church, in the right hand of Christ? Concerning these gifts or stars, we read that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” “And there are differences of administrations [or ministries], but the same Lord.” This subject is fully stated in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40. We have the same primitive fact clearly stated in Ephesians 4:1-32 : “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.” “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” These are the stars: and when we think of what has taken place since as to ministry, we may say truly, What a mystery! Do you now see this revelation of Jesus Christ, holding in His right hand the seven stars:

the risen and glorified Lord exercising the complete administration of the Church?

Well, now there is another term used: the seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies. What does this term “angel” mean? I know there is a common thought that this means a clergyman. But then at that time there were no clergymen. In the New Testament there is no person that answers in the least degree to a modern clergyman. There were apostles, evangelists, teachers, pastors, and elders; but no such person as a clergyman. There is not the most distant reference to a district of the world being called a parish; and a person ordained over that parish. Perhaps you say, the term angel of the Church may mean a dissenting minister, or a minister ordained over a congregation or church. But the same objection meets its as before. We find no such character in the New Testament times. Not in one single instance was there such a minister ordained over a church. Elders were ordained by apostles or their delegates; these were the recognized gifts of Christ; and those whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers, to feed the flock, the Church of God. Surely departure from this would be sin. I do not discuss the practices of men; I only state well known facts, seen and proved in the holy scriptures; as it is only from scripture we can understand these symbols or words. The scriptures use the word “angel” in the sense of a representative. It was so used when Peter stood knocking at the gate; they said, “It is his angel.” So the Lord uses it when speaking of little ones: He says, “their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” In this sense we shall find the Lord addressing that, or those, who represent the Church during its entire history; and we shall find it a term of great force and meaning. And now as to the symbol of “the seven golden candlesticks.” If we turn to the pattern of heavenly things, we find the beautiful golden candlestick, with its centre shaft, and six branches, and its seven lamps, “was one beaten work of pure gold” — made from one talent of pure gold. Now was not this very fine, as a figure of Christ and the Church, all of one; both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified? The veil was on the face of Moses; and that candlestick which was in the tabernacle was still hid from the sight of men: its light never shone into the world. But now the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. O what ought the Church to be! “For 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.” As each branch was of the same piece of pure gold — as each lamp was supplied with the same pure oil — so is the Church one with Christ, and the one Spirit dwells in each member of His body. What a witness for God should the Church as a candlestick be! All this is about to be judged, tested, by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2:1-29.

Addresses to the Seven Churches. No doubt these seven churches then existed, and the revelation of Jesus Christ was literally to each of them. But as God gave this revelation to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and as these seven addresses take up the whole period of the things that are: we shall find them to contain a distinct revelation of Jesus Christ to the seven successive stages of the Church’s history as a whole, from its beginning to its end. For, as the states of these churches are so entirely different, they could not as a whole be applicable to the whole state of the Church at one time. With one it is a time of fierce persecution; with another a time of luxury and self-indulgence; so that both these could not be true of the whole Church at one time.

I will give you a very simple illustration, which has been helpful to many in understanding the purpose of these seven addresses. I was looking down the deep shaft of a coal mine, and noticing the rapid motion of the rope, but I could not tell whether the motion was upwards, or downwards. The proprietor of the mine invited me up into the engine-room. There I found two immense engines with a huge drum, around which was coiled the rope hundreds of yards in length. Attached to this drum was a clock-work contrivance, with a dial like a clock face. The fingers marked the exact depth the cage had descended by the rope: so that the moment the cage reached the bottom, the steam was turned off by the man in charge. I also noticed that when one cage reached the bottom, at that very moment another cage came out into the full light of day at the top. I was remarkably struck with this arrangement: it was so different from straining my eyes in the dark shaft. Now whilst reading the revelation of Jesus Christ in Paris, I saw how strikingly the pit dial-plate illustrates these seven addresses. If we look at Christendom, human reason may fail to see whether it is going down or up. One may think he sees progress and improvement; another may say he sees declension and apostasy: motion there is, anyhow. But when I look at these addresses, I find they contain as it were God's dial-plate, divided into seven periods or stages of the history of Christendom: and here we have not to strain our short-sighted reason, but we have the very judgments of Christ on all that has and will take place.

Ephesus.

Ephesus is the first hour or stage of the Church's history. It is the Lord that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. We see Him walking in the midst of the churches, clothed in His judicial robes, as we have seen before. As a king holdeth the sceptre in his right hand, so the Lord exercised His divine title of administration in the first stage of the Church's history. For a pope, a conference, the world's parliament, or a majority, to be exercising their authority, in those days, was simply impossible. The Lord of glory ascended up on high; He held the stars in His right hand; and He must be set aside before any of these could take the administration of the stars, or servants of Christ. I love to dwell on that scene; and from my inmost soul I say, Thou, thou art worthy, holy Lord, and thou alone! Concerning spiritual gifts, I own thee, Jesus, Lord.

Alas, as we follow the history of Christendom, never again do we find the stars in the hands of Christ. Never again does the Church as a whole own the administration of her Lord as at the beginning. This is sad.

Now will you hear what Jesus says to the Church in its first stage of decline? He judges: we hear. "I know thy works." This is not a question of salvation, but the judgment of the Lord as to works and ways. "And thy labour and thy patience." It you compare this with 1 Thessalonians 1:3 you will find that a good deal of freshness was gone. There it was "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." But still, what the Lord finds He commends. Is not that just like Him? And He commends all He can first. They could not bear them which were evil: they tried, and resisted, the beginning of that false apostolic succession. They found them liars — no doubt this gave them much sorrow and trial. But they bore up with patience; as He says, "for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." All this was very dear to the Lord. What a revelation this is! for we thus get to know what is pleasing to our deal. Lord.

Then follows the first mark of declension: "Nevertheless I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Then warnings and threatenings; but mingled with what He could approve: hatred to

the deeds of the Nicolaitanes — practisers of sin. And then, “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Men would alter or add to this; they would say, You must hear what the Church says. The question is, Shall we hear God, or man?

Smyrna.

We now come to the second period of the Church’s history. The Lord again addresses that which represents the Church: “Unto the angel of the church at Smyrna.” This period is marked as a time of persecution. We know that such was the case. The blood of the saints was spilt like water — a time of sore tribulation for the true servant of Jesus Christ. He therefore is in this revelation “the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.” In each case the revelation of Jesus is most suited to the state of the Church at that period. The blessed link with Him that was dead and is alive takes away the fear of death. At this period there was a desperate effort of Satan to introduce ritualism: a return to beggarly ordinances. We have the thoughts of Christ as to such efforts: “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but the synagogue of Satan.” Surely it is important that the servant of Jesus Christ should mark this. And there is an important word from Him here: the persecuted Church, or that which represented it, was in deep poverty; “but thou art rich,” says the Lord. There was peculiar honour in being thus near and like Himself, who had not where to lay His head. I have learnt this, Jesus is specially the partner of His poor servants. And then the promise is so sweetly adapted to this time of suffering and death: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

Pergamos.

We now arrive at the third period of the Church’s history. What a change! The Lord is now revealed as “he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Does not this imply marked need of judgment? Let the servants know what their Lord condemns, and what He approves. We find Satan’s seat here, in this third period of the Church’s history. One thing is very much approved by the Lord Jesus: He says to the representative of the Church of this period, “Thou holdest fast my name.” Is it nothing to us to see what the Lord thus approves of? Are we holding fast His name? I know this is nothing in the sight of men: as they say, What’s in a name? “And hast not denied my faith.” Thus the Lord again approves what He can first.

“But I have a few things against thee: thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.” The Church is still regarded in its outward unity. There were two parties in it most hateful to Christ: those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes — the doctrine of the Balaamites, and the doctrine that those who professed faith in Christ might practise sin. Now surely it was in this third period of the history of Christendom — say from about the period of Constantine — that the clergy began to imitate the practices of Balaam. Not merely preaching for hire; but, just as he advised the mingling of the Jews with idolatry, so the clergy advised the mingling of the Church with the idolatrous temple worship of the world. I have read how great divines approved of this: I hear how solemnly the Lord condemns it. Idol temples were now called churches; shameful idol feasts were turned into shameful christian festivals: the gods of the heathen were turned into saints; and these old demons were still worshipped under new names! Tell me of one so-called christian festival that was not thus linked with the worship of demons. Call you find one of these saints’ days in the New Testament? which of them did the

apostles observe? Was not the attempt denounced by the Holy Ghost? See Galatians 4:10-11. And then as to practising sin: this became most sad. The clergy lived in open sin, kept concubines. The world was called the Church, but remained the world still.

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly.” And then notice the change in the persons: “and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” In the midst of the dreadful corruption that had now come in there was still the angel of the Church; that which represented it. And very precious is the promise to the overcomer at that time: “To eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it: ” sweet communion; enduring purity.

Thyatira.

We now come to the fourth period of the Church’s history. That this marks the dark middle ages of Popery we cannot mistake. There was that which represented the Church, and to it the Lord speaks. Here He is revealed — mark it well — as “the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass.” Before one reproof, even as to wicked Jezebel, He again approves of all He can. In those dark days there was not a heart true to Him, or all act done to Him, that His eye did not behold. “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.” Now is not this very touching? so encouraging to any obscure servant of Christ at such a time!

“Notwithstanding I have against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,” &c. The words “a few things” should be omitted. Surely it is the strongest possible disapproval of the allowance of the pretences and the wickedness of this woman Now did not the church of Rome become this woman? Read carefully the history of Jezebel, the upholder of idolatry; the murderess of the servants of the Lord; the wicked counsellor. Could there have been a more striking picture of Rome than that woman? She carried out to the full the wicked principles of Balaam. It is written of Ahab that he sinned so that “there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” Whilst professing to be the bride of Christ, she, the Church so called, has been married to the world; and has stirred up more wickedness than can be found in any other history. Such is Rome — the wicked Jezebel — as condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And I gave her space to repent.” Oh which is most marvellous, this huge system of wickedness, or the grace that has borne with it for a thousand years? “And she will not repent.” I believe this is the correct rendering. Solemn word of the Lord! He says Rome will not repent. Jezebel’s pretension to infallibility makes it, so to speak, impossible for her to repent. “She will not repent.” And since she will not repent, it follows that all her guilt — her murders and iniquities — are upon her, and remain upon her until the day of her terrific destruction. Suppose a person commits a sin, and refuses to repent of that sin, is he not as guilty forty years hence as the day when he sinned? So is it with Rome. Like Jezebel of old, she has stirred up the civil powers to deeds of wickedness, of robbery, of murder, such as have no parallel. And before the Son of God, she stands, as wicked, as guilty, as if she had committed all this iniquity this very day. Oh! think of this, you who are converts to Rome; converts of Jezebel; you deliberately accept her deep-stained guilt. And she will not repent; she will not acknowledge her sins; she will not abhor herself. She is drunk with her intoxicating wickedness. And who cannot see that England is returning to her horrible vomit

again? The moment you join Jezebel — Rome — that moment you are — guilty, with her, of all her unrepented murders. If I ask, Lord, what is thy judgment of Rome? He answers, She is Jezebel; and Jezebel's doom awaits her.

We must distinguish between the "angel" and "her". The threatenings are to her. The Lord deeply censures the angel for suffering her; but the threatening is to her, and to her children. And then, for the first time, a distinct remnant is recognized by the Lord. The words "and unto" in verse 24 should be omitted. It is another party, a remnant. "And unto you I say, the rest [or remnant] in Thyatira." And how truly this was fulfilled! In the dark days of Jezebel, the Lord had His remnant — often persecuted to death by Rome. These might not have had much truth; but Jesus says, "that which ye have, hold fast till I come." And now this remnant is recognized, there is a marked change. Before the Lord names this remnant, from wicked Jezebel, Rome whilst the Church was regarded in its outward unity, the whole Church was addressed: "He that hath an ear let him hear: " but in the last four stages of the Church's history, after the remnant is seen and owned of the Lord, it is first "he that overcometh," and then, as it were, out of these overcomers, "he that hath an ear."

Before I leave this fourth stage or condition of the Church's history, I would recall the revelation of Jesus to this state, as "the Son of God." Every false doctrine of Rome is a masked attack on the Son of God. If we own Jesus to be the Son of God — God manifest in the flesh, the infinite God — then His sacrifice must be infinite also: and if infinite, it must cover the finite sinner. As taught by the Holy Ghost in Hebrews 10:1-39, such a sacrifice must for ever perfect. That one infinite sacrifice, once offered, needs no other sacrifice, or it is not infinite. And to add another sacrifice is surely to deny that it is infinite. I have often given this illustration: suppose I speak of an infinite line, passing through space, and some one says, You must add one inch to that line, would not this be a denial that the line was infinite? Then it follows that every time a pretended sacrifice in the Mass is offered, it is a masked but distinct denial that the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ is infinite in value. And if the sacrifice is not infinite, then the person offered is not infinite. And thus the Mass is a denial that Jesus is the Son of God: neither can that sacrifice be continued, or prolonged, in the Mass; for after He had offered one sacrifice for ever He sat down. To prolong the sacrifice is to deny that the Son of God finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. And again; the exaltation of a creature, say Mary the blessed mother of Jesus after the flesh, to the place of equal worship with the Son of God, is only another way of reducing the infinite God to the level of a creature, or the denial that Jesus is the Son of God. I forbear to say more; but Jesus as the Son of God tests everything of Thyatira, or the fourth stage of the Church on earth. May it test our hearts! What think ye of Christ? Is He the Son of God? "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Has His one sacrifice, like Himself infinite, for ever perfected you before God? What a test! Do you want anything in addition to Christ?

Revelation 3:1-22

Sardis.

We now pass on to the fifth state of the Church, and we enter upon a very solemn revelation of Jesus Christ: the very revelation of Jesus to those protestant times which succeeded the dark days of Romanism, or Thyatira. In other words, we come to the judgment of the Lord Jesus on the things around us: still addressing that which represents the Church, the angel. At this stage the

Lord presents Himself as “he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” What a depth of meaning in this! Oh that Christians in the protestant period had known and owned this! In the primitive Church, the Lord held the stars in His own right hand, as we have seen: He exercised the administration. The Church owned His authority; the Spirit using the gifts, or stars, as He would. In the Church, or assembly, there was divine liberty in the Spirit for ministry. (1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40.) The servants of the Lord might speak, two or three; the rest judge. One man ordained over a church was then a thing unknown. During the days of popery, the so-called church took the stars, or the administration of spiritual gifts, out of the hands of Christ, and assumed to rule, or administer authority over the world. Its princes were expected to do obedience to the pope; and they were cursed if they refused. And what have we in protestantism? Though the Lord presents Himself as having the authority, and all fulness of the Spirit’s power, “he that hath,” did the protestant churches recognize His all-sufficiency? Sad, oh sad, to have to confess it! they have placed the stars in the hands of the world; and have not only linked themselves with the world, but have requested the princes or governments of the world to exercise the administration of the Church. Yes, they have done this, until the very world is saying, We have had enough of it.

Thus in the primitive Church we see Christ governing the Church. In popery we see the Church assuming to govern the world. In protestantism we see the world governing the Church. These are the three principles of Ephesus, Thyatira, and Sardis. And the revelation of the Lord Jesus to each is adapted to their respective states.

It is true we find in protestantism other forms of church government, separate from the state. It may be a synod, or a conference, or the worldly principle of a majority; but all these agree in one thing; they utterly ignore the Ephesian state — the owning the authority of Christ as Lord in the administration of the gifts. None of these regard the commands of Christ, as to church government and ministry in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40. And if any Christian were to obey Christ as Lord in those portions of the word, it would be to them the greatest disorder. Oh let us own with shame how we have failed to recognize the seven stars in the hands of Christ. There is the same fulness in Him, to meet the need of His saints, that there was during the first days of the Church. But we have failed to own and trust Him. Failure to do this has been the great mistake of protestantism, and the greatest loss the Church has sustained in these days. What is the best religiously educated man you can have over a church, compared to those whom the Lord would find, and the Holy Ghost would use? But the loss is scarcely felt, because not known. Can there be any doubt that the protestant state has succeeded the fourth or Romish state of the Church? I suppose none can question it. Then let us in this address to Sardis, the fourth state, hear the very words of Christ about protestant churches. We look at protestantism, with its unspeakable privileges — the scriptures of truth in its hands, and the great truth of justification by faith having been proclaimed — and what saith the Lord? “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” Oh what sentence on the churches and chapels of our days! Lord, thou sayest it: it is true; and we own it in the dust.

“I have not found thy works perfect before God.” How much will be found to be wood, hay, and stubble! No one call deny there are works in abundance done by protestants; but are they done to or before God? Whatever men may think, and however they may applaud one another, Jesus says, “I have not found thy works perfect before God.” We may do a good work for ourselves, or to

men, or to be seen of men; but we ought to yield ourselves to God. The sentence is just: He says it. Let us accept it with unfeigned humiliation. The Lord, do you hear, commends the works done by His people in popery, Thyatira, more than the works done by His people amongst protestants, Sardis: but this difference I note; whilst He says wicked Jezebel will not repent, He commands the protestants to repent. This is encouraging — yet, if not, the same threatening is used against the protestant churches here as is uttered against the world in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 : “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.” And is this the terrible doom of the world, the doom of the protestant churches? What is the Lord’s reply? “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.” Oh think of this, a few names in protestantism. Is not this enough to wake the sleeping multitude of professors? Will you notice, it is not the professor, but the overcomer, who shall be clothed in white raiment, and whose name shall not be blotted out: which are you, my reader? Oh will it not be terrible for the multitude, who have a name to live, but are dead, and who will shortly be blotted out? Now is it not wonderful that we have the very Judgment of our Lord on protestantism, so solemn; and yet many shut up this book as not to be understood? Perhaps its searching truths are not liked. Let us not suppose this is the Lord’s judgment on His honoured servants the Reformers: but it is on protestantism, as a result in the world.

Philadelphia. This is the sixth stage of the Church’s history. Again that which represents the Church is addressed: “Unto the angel of the church in Philadelphia write.” It is now not what the Lord does, but what He is: “He that is holy, be that is true.” Then what he hath: “the key of David.” Then what he doeth: “he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” Let us thus see our blessed Lord, revealed for this period of the Church’s history. And let us remember, that God has given us the special revelation of Jesus expressly adapted to each successive stage of “the things that are.”

It will at once be seen how deeply important this revelation to the Philadelphian state is, when we remember that it is only within the last fifty years the Holy Ghost has been gathering believers to the Lord Jesus because of what He is: the holy and the true. After the general corruption of the outward body of Christendom in Jezebel, popery, we have seen a state of protestantism exactly answering to Sardis. And since then the Spirit of God has certainly gathered a feeble remnant of believers from all the dead protestant bodies, and out of corrupt Rome too. And nothing could be more striking than the answer of this last work of the Spirit, to the features of this sixth state of the present period of the Church.

Well do I remember the exceeding goodness of God in leading me, many years ago, to know the blessed reality of what I now write. I had in some measure felt the sinfulness of sectarianism. I knew a great deal about what was wrong, but really had no knowledge of what was right. In this state I was led to witness a few Christians met together in the name of the Lord Jesus, to break bread, on the first day of the week; and against whom I had, in my ignorance, felt bitterly opposed. I entered the room where they had just assembled, and were in solemn silence, waiting on God in worship. Naturally I looked for the pulpit, and the man of the pulpit. There was no pulpit, and no pulpit man. I then looked for the president. There was no president to be seen. Never shall I forget the deep solemnity that fell on my soul, when I felt these people were gathered in reality to meet the Lord Himself. Never before had I thus felt the presence of God. The Holy Ghost had not gathered them to peculiar doctrines, or to some man; but to Jesus, the holy and the true; realizing

the all-sufficiency of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and to show them to them. It is impossible to express in words the unspeakable reality of this rest of the soul in the presence of God. Let not my reader suppose that those whom the Lord has thus blessed think themselves better than others. Where all is known to be grace, the thought of betterness is an absurdity.

Ah, since then, what grace to me, and what cause for self-abhorrence! Yes, depths of mercy only known to God. But never once has there a doubt crossed my mind that this is the present most sure work of God. Never have I heard a sentence or read a line that has shaken my confidence. False brethren have crept in, and have gone out: they have said and written bitter things; for which my heart has grieved. This work has been hated and attacked by the whole of professing Christendom; it has only the more convinced me that the work is of God. Yes, as Jesus said to the Jews of old, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not;” so these words may now be surely applied to many who are even saved by His precious blood. But I must go on. To the feeble flock, thus gathered to Jesus because of what He is, the holy and the true, the Spirit has also led them to look for Him, and to know that the government shall be laid upon His shoulder. In the midst of this world’s gross darkness, wars, and tumult, the coming reign of Christ is a bright fact. The Holy Ghost has unlocked the scriptures to their souls. And is it not a fact, that in the former history of the suffering servants of Christ, the door has soon been shut, and the devoted servant of the Lord persecuted to the bitter death; but now “he openeth, and no man shutteth.” From the palace to the cottage, the Lord has opened a wide door; and though the truth was never more hated, yet no man can shut the door. At this moment I have letters before me from devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, labouring in many nations, in much poverty and trial, unknown to the world — but what a wide door is open everywhere! He openeth, and no man shutteth, not even the pope; for some of these letters are from Italy. Go on, beloved brethren, in the name of the holy One and the true. He says, “I know thy works,” however unknown and despised: “behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”

O, it is so sweet and real to get back in spirit to the person of the Lord, and to His administration! I cannot help dwelling a little on this. How often have I proved this: as a dear departed brother once said to me, “One direct answer to prayer has settled my soul, as to the Lord, even as to His existence, more than all the reasoning and reading of my whole life.” I do want us, my reader, to have more of this direct dealing with Jesus as Lord. I will give you one or two instances, out of many, during the Lord’s dealings for thirty years.

I was at a meeting for prayer in Hull, one Saturday forenoon. The Lord said to me in the Spirit, “You must go to Scarborough to preach the gospel to-morrow.” I knew His voice: but, lest I should be mistaken, I went to my room, and looked to Him in prayer; and then I became assured it was the Lord. I immediately left for Scarborough. I had never been there before, and I knew the name of only one person there, but had not seen him. I travelled with a young man going home to die. The Lord blessed His word to this young man, and his mother pressed me to make her house my home during my stay. I said I could not accept her kind offer, as I had just made a request to the Lord — it was this: I had been telling the Lord I knew no one in Scarborough, and the name of only one christian man. And I had said, “Lord, bring him on the platform and show me him.” The train stopped, a man looked into my carriage, and straight at me; and the Lord said to me “That is the man.” I hesitated, he walked to one gate, and I to the other. I thought, How foolish this is: the Lord

assuredly answers prayer. He came toward me, and I met him. I said, “May I ask, is your name Mr. L.?” “ He replied, Yes, it is; is your name C. S., of S.?” I said, “Yes, it is; but how do you know my name?” “Well, he said, I came to meet Mr. Y., of Hereford, who is expected to preach Christ here to-morrow; and there will be a large company to hear him. This is the last train. [There was no train on Lord’s-day morning then.] I was on the platform, and Mr. Y. has not come, and it was just as though a voice had said, ‘That is C. S., of S., I have sent him,’ and that caused me to look so earnestly at you.” On the following day I found the truth of those words, “I have set before thee an open door.”

One more instance: some years ago the Lord brought before me a town between Derby and Stone. I think this was on a Monday; and He told me I was to go and preach the gospel there. I did not know the name of the town, but had passed it once on the rail. I waited on the Lord in prayer. I named the matter to a christian brother, from Staffordshire; he knew the town, and told me it was Uttoxeter. I still waited on the Lord for the time to go; a letter arrived on Friday; I think, it was from a lady in Tenbigh, South Wales, enclosing another from a Christian in Uttoxeter, asking this lady, if she knew the address of C. S., to forward the enclosed, begging that I would go at once and preach the gospel at Uttoxeter. And the Lord, who had prepared hearts, proved again that He openeth and no man shutteth. From that day a few have met to own the Lord Jesus, the holy and the true.

I could fill a volume with such instances, and could many a servant of the Lord Jesus. But I merely give these to illustrate what I mean by having to do directly with the Lord Himself.

Another mark of this sixth stage of the Church’s history is this: “For thou hast a little strength.” This so marks the present work of God as to all outward appearance, that compared with human boasting it is only a subject of ridicule. Nothing in the eyes of men at this day is so feeble as that which is really of God. Boasting marks that which is of man; feebleness and utter absence of reputation marks that which is of God. And did not this mark the path of the holy One? What do you think of this revelation of Jesus Christ? In the light of His presence look abroad, and then can you say, I now see what is of God, and I now know what is of men. Lord, grant that the reader from this day may be satisfied with nothing but that which is of thyself.

“And hast kept my word.” Oh, blessed be the Lord! He has fulfilled this also. The remnant which He has gathered, have been drawn from theology and human teaching, to the word; to the very testimony of the Lord Jesus. Those who hate this remnant, and this work of God, as I once did, must own how precious the scriptures are to this feeble remnant.

“And hast not denied my name.” Is not this also a distinct mark of God’s remnant in this day? The moment you own the name of Jesus alone, you are at once reproached with a term that implies you belong to that despised feeble remnant. Do you say, Oh what is there in a name? Do not you forget who it is that says “And hast not denied my name?” Oh, is there any name given among men so sweet as the name of Jesus? If you bear the name of any man or sect, He regards it as “denying my name.” Do you ask, Why will you not bear any other name, or belong to some sect? I reply, It is not of faith, it is not of God. I should grieve my Lord if I denied His name. Can you say, By the grace of God, from this hour I desire to have done with everything that is not of Himself? Then I will say, Amen.

What is this that the Lord Jesus now so strongly condemns? “Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.” If you know the scriptures well you will remember that the great effort of Satan was, by his ministers, to introduce ritualism into the primitive Church. Paul and Barnabas went up to the Church at Jerusalem about this matter. See, Acts 15:1-41. And though Peter on that occasion strongly rebuked these false teachers, yet he himself was on another occasion greatly to blame about this very matter, as the apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 2:11 : He says, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Peter was afraid of the Ritualists. The point was this, and which had been settled at Jerusalem: That there was no difference between the believing Jews who observed the ritual of the law, and the Gentiles who did not. Both were alike saved by Christ. Satan’s ministers, and perhaps Christians, said, No; those Gentiles who do not observe the ritual are, though saved by Christ, still unholy, and not fit to eat with us. When these teachers came to Antioch Peter also refused to eat with believers of the Gentiles. And many were led astray by his dissimulation. Now this, as the apostle shows, made Christ a minister of sin: “If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” If those who are justified by Christ are still sinners, unfit for the ritualist Jew to eat with, then this would make Christ a minister of sin, and would plainly exalt the ritual of the law above Christ, and the ritual would make a man more holy than Christ makes him. This is true of the law morally as of the ritual. Now do you not see why Paul, or rather the Spirit of God through Paul, so sternly rebukes the Galatians on the folly of going back to the law? The whole subject is fully discussed. To go back to such beggarly elements, to observe days and months, &c., was to make the apostle afraid of them. This dreadful leaven was also being introduced at Colosse; and the apostle asks, How can we, being dead with Christ, be subject to ritualism? See Colossians 2:10-23. Ritualism exalts man in the flesh: to be dead with Christ, or to be a Christian, condemns man in the flesh. If you are justified from your sins by the blood of Jesus, and justified from sin by being dead with Him; and completely justified in Christ risen — “He was raised again for our justification” — I say, if after all this, you are a sinner, and must needs go to the law, or to its ritual, or to any other ritual, then plainly Christ died in vain. Now do you wonder that the Lord Jesus should treat this as a very solemn question? And how remarkable that during this sixth stage of the Church’s history these two things should have run on together: namely, the Holy Spirit gathering souls to Jesus, the holy and the true, leading them to value more and more His word, and opening that word with divine power, and, at the same time, Satan has made the most determined effort to leaven Protestant Christendom with ritualism. Is it a light matter that he is fast turning the protestant establishments into “the synagogue of Satan?” The truth and testimony of the gospel of God has been proclaimed as it never was before since the days of the apostles; and men hate the truth, and the free pure grace of God, and say they are Jews, and are not. Sabbaths and saints’ days; the blasphemy of that Mass, which is the direct denial that the one offering of Jesus on the cross for ever perfects; and the putting of souls under the bondage of the law; this is the boasted restoration of the ministers of Satan. Lord Jesus, I believe thy word; they are the synagogue of Satan. It is not a little remarkable that the Lord’s people, who have been deceived by Satan amongst the ritualists, are beginning to read the tracts written by the servants of the Lord, and to own it is the voice of the Lord. How valuable is the revelation of Jesus Christ on the ritualism of this sixth stage of church history! And this is what He calls it, The synagogue of Satan. And now He gives a peculiar promise, “Because thou hast kept the words 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." Have you thought of the patience of Christ, waiting in heaven for that moment when He shall arise, and with the assembling shout, call up His redeemed saints from the earth to meet Him in the air? The joy set before Him! If you keep this word of His patience, bearing as He does with this wicked rejecting world, it will also separate you from the world; how can you mix with the politics of a world which reject your coming Lord?

Now one of the first throes of this poor world's trouble, during the Philadelphian stage, has come in a very significant manner. When they were saying Peace and safety, sudden destruction came. May not this be a warning of that coming day of this poor world's sudden destruction? The wars of the first French empire were before the Philadelphian state of Christendom, or the present work of the Holy Ghost: but that terrible scene which came so suddenly on France in 1870, 1871 was a sort of sample or first fruit of that coming storm of woe and hour of temptation which shall come on all the world. And from which the Church shall be taken and kept above. England may have been spared a little while, because the Lord has many of His redeemed ones in it. The world prepares for its own mutual destruction; but before it comes we shall be with the Lord. Will you notice what the Lord reveals in close connection with this promise? He gives another promise, and for the first time with the adverb quickly. Now if this terrible scene of human trouble and destruction be a drop that coming storm, then how marked the promise "Behold, I come quickly." And this is what the Lord Jesus says at this time. May we hear His voice! Can you say, Lord Jesus, come?

If you have the present testimony of your Lord, then "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Do you understand the Lord here?

Now I want you to notice one sweet little word to the overcomer in verse 12. It is the Lord's little word "my." Nothing could be more precious. It is as though He had said, I know what is mine will be dear to you. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name." I was told the other day of a dear old saint: just as she departed she said, "He is mine and I am His." She had learnt the sweetness of the Lord's little word "my."

Laodicea. And now we come to the last closing scene, the seventh stage of the history of Christendom. The Lord again addresses that which represents the Church, even in its last state: "Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans." You will notice that the last four states run on to the end, that is, to the coming of the Lord. And as Thyatira, or Romanism, goes on in her unrepentant state, this state, described in the address to the angel at Laodicea, shows the final result of what takes place in protestant countries. Those who know what the special teaching of the Holy Ghost has been during the last fifteen years must be struck with the revelation of Jesus Christ to this last state of the Church. "These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." It is in these characters that He has been specially made known by the Holy Ghost; together with a deep sense of the utter failure of the creature, of man in the flesh, however tried; and an enlarged apprehension of Jesus, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father — the believer's subsisting righteousness before God; yea, the righteousness of God established by Jesus, the Amen, the faithful witness of God. The minds of these saints have been directed to the risen Jesus, the beginning of the creation of God, and have learnt, through the Spirit's teaching, that all is secured in Him, alive from among the dead. And yet, with this great

increase of light and knowledge, and clearness of gospel truth — lost since the very first age of the Church — there has also set in a most serious time of lukewarmness and indifference.

It is true though that there never was such a time of outward religiousness, and such boasting of the protestant sects: If money, ministers, and buildings, and societies, were signs of true christian prosperity, what more is there to be desired? But what says the Lord? “Neither cold nor hot; I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me.” All this is most true: it is the revelation of Jesus Christ — all around us judged by Him who cannot make a mistake. Oh is not this very solemn? This boasting Christendom about to be utterly rejected as a witness on earth? At this moment the Lord is outside it, knocking at the door. And even here in the very last state how peculiar the promise! It is not where two or three are gathered in His name only: but “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” There are many towns and villages, even in England, where two or three could not be found gathered in the name of Jesus. How sweet then this promise, “If any man.” This then is the close of the things that are — the complete history of Christendom — the seven successive stages of God’s dial-plate. First, declension — Ephesus. Second, period of persecution — Smyrna. Third, mingling of the Church with the idolatrous world — Pergamos. Fourth, popery, or Jezebel, in Thyatira. Fifth, protestantism — Sardis. Sixth, a remnant gathered to the person of Jesus — Philadelphia. Seventh, protestantism in its final deceived boasting state — Laodicea. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ in the midst of the seven states of the Church, and His judgment upon the whole seven. To use the figure of the pit, the cage of Christendom has thus gone lower and lower, until it has in Laodicea reached the bottom. The Spirit of God in these seven stages marks the downward course as distinctly as the dial-finger marked the descent of the cage down the shaft of the pit. But, as I said, there were two cages, and as one descended the other ascended; and as the one touched the bottom, at that moment the other came right out at the top, in the full blaze of day. It is exactly so here — Christendom, as a witness for God on earth, reaches the bottom in Laodicea, and is then cut off as loathsome to Christ. At that moment a door is opened in heaven, and the redeemed are there.

We now pass from the study of the things that are, the whole history of the Church on earth.

Revelation 4:1-11. The things which shall be.

I wish to go up to heaven with you, through that opened door. But before we go let us remember that this revelation was a revelation, and not a comment on what had been revealed before. It was, it is, supplementary to what had been revealed to Paul, Peter, &c.; but it is quite new. And being the last revelation given, it supposes the reader well acquainted with all that had been revealed before. And unless you are so, you cannot enter into the blessedness of reading this revelation of Jesus Christ. Do you notice that there is not one word about the taking of the Church, at the close of the complete history of Christendom, to heaven. This could not be; it would not have been revelation. Do you say, Indeed, how is that? Simply because that rapturous event had been revealed to the apostle Paul. You must understand this, or you cannot go one step farther without all being confusion and mistake. The apostle Paul states that revelation of the Lord to him in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This is the grand key that unlocks every ward of prophetic scripture: and

without it all is confusion in the minds of men. You observe, and do observe closely, that this is not the coming of the Lord Jesus in judgment; but in love to receive his living and sleeping saints, to meet Him in the air. The Lord had revealed this to Paul. But there the revelation stops; and just where it ceases to Paul, there it begins to John. This rapture of the saints takes place betwixt chapters 3 and 4 of the Revelation: and now the Lord reveals to John what will take place when He has thus taken us away from this earth. And thus you see the importance of being well acquainted with the revelations that had been given before — and O, are we thus waiting for the Lord Jesus from heaven, to come and take us to the place prepared? Do we know that Christendom has well-nigh run its course; that at any moment He may come; and surely will come soon? How gracious then of the Lord to give us a still further revelation of what will take place in heaven, and on earth, after we are taken up to be with the Lord.

Now look up. The voice which John had heard at Patmos, as it were of a trumpet talking with him, now says, “Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter,” or after these. Do not forget how the Lord divides this book in chapter 1: 19: “The things which thou hast seen;” the Lord Himself in the midst of the churches clothed in judicial robes. “And the things that are: ” the history of Christendom in chapters 2 and 3. “And the things that shall be after these;” the things that shall be after Christendom ceases to be a witness, or candlestick on earth. We now enter upon the last of these divisions of the book. “I will show thee things which must be after these.” From this point then we never find the Church on earth again.*

{*That is, the scriptural idea of the Church. That which began on the day of Pentecost. All believers are not as formerly, merely individual saints, influenced by the Spirit of God; but they are now baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body: the very opposite of a national body. All believers, who have passed from death unto life, now compose the Church of God, according to scripture. All saints from the descent of the Holy Ghost, to the coming of Christ to call them up to meet Him in the air. And that is what I mean when I use the word Church. See Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:4; Ephesians 5:24-33.} May we now, as John, be immediately in the Spirit; for, whether we look at the things on earth, or in heaven, we can only understand them in the Spirit. This is of great moment; mere human learning is sure to err. Now is it not very gracious of the Lord to give us two chapters in heaven, before He reveals the dreadful things that will take place on earth, after the saints are taken up?

Now we arrive. “And behold, a throne was set in heaven, and . . . sat on the throne.” Why is the name of the one sitting on the throne omitted? Every word the Spirit omits, as well as every word He uses, is of meaning. This omission is very blessed, especially at the moment of our entrance to those scenes of unclouded joy. If you enter the house of a dear and long intimate friend, you need no introduction. If it be the house of a stranger, his name is announced to you, and your name to him. O, does not this omission say, “no stranger God shall meet us?” There shall be no need of an introduction to our Father’s home. The just One died for the unjust, to bring us to God: and we are there in all the welcome of a Father’s love: welcome as He is welcome, who died to bring us there. There is no mention of that redemption which had brought us there; that had been fully declared in other epistles. But we are seen there according to the infinite value of that one sacrifice that brought us there.

He had said “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” And we see the one sitting upon the throne, to look upon like a jasper stone: symbol of that glory in which the Church is seen in millennial days; “having the glory of God: and her light like unto a stone, most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Chapter 21: 11. And what a though of rest is this revelation of God! “Sat on the throne.” Rest of God; as well as rest of the saints above. God rests in the gathered firstfruits of redeeming, love. Do not suppose that this is the end of all things here below; or looking down, as we should say, of all things there below. No, for “there was a rainbow round about the throne,” reminding us that God’s covenant with the earth will still be kept — blessed token, as we look down on the judgments coming on the world below.

“And round about the throne four and twenty seats (or thrones), and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” What a scene of unclouded rest and peace! This is the throne of judgments; for out of it proceed lightnings and thunderings. But the redeemed are not represented as standing before it to be judged for their sins; but seated in heaven’s calm of holy rest. O, happy, happy prospect; brought so near to God! What a blessed revelation, thus to see our happy place when He comes to take us to the place prepared!

Let us dwell a little on this scene of holy rest. We see crowned worshippers. If you turn to 1 Chronicles 24:1-31, you find that there were four and twenty courses of priests, as there were twice one hundred and forty-four, or two hundred and twenty-eight Levites of praise in the next chapter. This is used by the Spirit to show the character and relative position of these twenty-four crowned worshippers; and the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapters 7 and 14. The priesthood had the nearest place to God — and such is the place of the twenty-four crowned worshippers. I doubt not that these four and twenty, being a complete number, or doubly complete, represent, not only the Church but “all that are his” taken up at His coming. It should be observed, that the Church is not yet seen in heaven in its separateness as the bride of the Lamb. The marriage of the Lamb takes place in a subsequent chapter. Surely the Holy Ghost has a purpose in this. O, what a contrast is this revelation to the dark doctrines of Romish purgatory, and the deep gloom of uncertainty that torments the minds of many out of Rome. Believer, this is the holy scene that awaits us. Look up with joy. The nearest possible place to the throne of God is yours. Holy and intelligent worship is your happy employment. “Not a cloud above, nor a spot within.” When the priests of old entered the sanctuary of the Lord, there was a molten sea, containing water to wash their feet; but in this scene of glory we find a sea of glass before the throne, like unto crystal: solid and transparent. No more defilement to wash away. O, the joy this gives even now — an eternity of purity itself. And, blessed Lord, until we arrive there, never wilt thou fail to wash our feet, to restore our souls.

Now I must ask your closest attention to a revelation that will throw great light on all that follows. “In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four beasts [or, as it should be, living creatures] full of eyes before and behind.” Here we find the need of knowing the scriptures. In Isaiah 6:1-7, you will find a description of the seraphim, or burners. These have six wings, and they cry, Holy, holy, holy, as the four living creature do in and around the throne. This cry of Holy, holy, holy, gave such a sense of his own vileness to Isaiah as to make him cry out, “Woe is me.” Then flew one of the seraphims, having a live coal in his hand from off the altar: “and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy

sin purged." Thus we see in the seraphim, burning, and purifying — and the sinner purified by fire from the altar; purified by the burning judgment that consumed the holy One on that altar: or, will you understand this a little better? — purified according to and by the judgment of God fully executed against sin on the cross.

Now turn to Ezekiel. Read chapters 1 and 10. In this vision of the four living creatures you notice that there are the same symbolic heads of creation as in the four living creatures of Revelation. These four living creatures are the cherubim. And mark the action of the cherubim. It was not to take a handful of fire now for purification, but for judgment; that he, now clothed in linen, might scatter it over the city. The cross is the measure of both purification and judgment. Now in the description given of the four living creatures, in our revelation of Jesus Christ, we have the combination of seraphim and cherubim. The Holy, holy, holly, cry of the six-winged seraphim, and the symbol of the four heads of creation as in the cherubim. Verse 7 is cherubim, and verse 8 is seraphim. Surely this sets clearly before us the two great principles of the throne of God in government. Burning purification and consuming judgments. And yet, when we shall thus behold the righteousness of God in unclouded light, the effect will be, not dread, but profound worship. In this combined action then of the throne of God will take place the judgments that are about to be executed on the earth. God will act according to the cross of Christ, both in purifying and in judgment. Indeed these two principles have marked the action of God. And in tracing scripture, the seraphim is found to precede the cherubim. Even in Eden, before the cherubims and flaming sword are seen, the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them. Surely this was seraphim: it told out the counsel of God in cleansing and clothing the guilty. In Hebrews 10:1-39 these two principles are very clear. First, the seraphim: perfect and everlasting purification by the one offering of the body of Jesus on the altar, never to fail, never to be repeated; and therefore boldness to enter the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. (vers. 1-23.) Then the cherubim: judgment that must fall on all who despise the seraphim purification: as in chapter 12: 29, "For our God is a consuming fire." The cross exalts the righteousness of God above the very heavens, whether in seraphim burning purification, or in cherubim consuming judgment. Blessed for us to know the cherubim looking inwards, on the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. It is not mercy that makes a compromise with sin; but the righteousness of God revealed in the very mercy shown, through the atoning blood of the Lamb. O, how gladly could I linger on this deeply interesting theme of seraphim and cherubim! One more thought — very sweet to me — the seraphim had six wings; the cherubim had four. God is more swift and ready to purge away our sin than to judge. Long has His long-suffering delayed the judgments! But cherubim judgment must come. You say, Well, I only see this dimly at present. True; but O when we arrive in the brightness of His presence; when we know as we are known; when seraphim and cherubim combined give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sits on the throne; then shall we worship Him that liveth for ever and ever; casting our crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Revelation 5:1-14.

We here still linger in heaven before we see the judgments commence on the earth. A book, or roll of sealed judgments, is seen in the hands of Him who sits on the throne. And a strong angel gives the challenge with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?"

No man was found worthy to open the book of judgments and take inheritance. In that scene of unclouded light not one amongst the myriads of the saved will feel worthy to judge another. Do not you think it would be well if we felt a little more of this now? In a sense we do feel something of this. In cases of discipline, when evil in another has to be judged, there is deep and proper feeling of unworthiness to judge and act. O, who am I, to judge my brother? Now, without care, this feeling of unworthiness to judge another may weaken, if not destroy, proper and holy discipline. There is only one who is worthy and surpassingly beautiful is the way in which even Paul takes shelter beneath the worthiness of his Lord. He does not say, I am more holy; or, You are worthy to judge a fallen brother; but with such holy delicacy he says, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan.” See 1 Corinthians 5:4. This is the only true principle of holy discipline: the name, the person, the worthiness, and the power, of our Lord Jesus Christ. This produces brokenness of spirit in all, whilst discipline in our own name, or fancied worthiness, would be the very worst form of phariseeism. I believe there is much failure in discipline, for want of seeing this all-important principle.

John seems surprised, and weeps much because no one was found worthy. But now the Lord assumes a new character. Worthy to open the seals of judgment surely He is, the holy one: but He is now the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. You will observe this indicates a change: now that the Church has been taken from the earth, all that follows will have a Jewish bearing. God will not forget one promise to His ancient people. But if He is now to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah, it is because He is “the Lamb as it had been slain.” John beheld, “And lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures [seraphim and cherubim combined], and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” What a key this is — the slain Lamb in the centre of the judgment throne of God. As witnesses of this we see seraphim and cherubim, and the assembled myriads of the redeemed. This is the key note of the judgments and counsels of God: all must be according to the wrath hat was endured by the Lamb of God. He is the centre and the exact expression of the righteous requirements of God. Rejected and hated here below, but the centre there above. You, my reader, have a centre. Is it self, or the Lamb of God?

Yes, when the Lamb as it had been slain takes the book, then seraphim and cherubim bear witness that He is the worthy One; and the four and twenty, or the redeemed, fall down in worship; “having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” Mark, this is before the Lamb. He is the object of heaven’s worship. And the prayers of the saints come up before Him. Who are these saints, if the Church is now completed and seated in glory? If you will look closely, you will find that the new song which the Church sings is not about themselves, but about those saints whose prayers ascend. The best scholars are agreed that this is so; and that verse 10 should read, “and hast made them unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign on the earth.” It is the new song, not only of redemption, but the worthiness of the slain Lamb to take the book. Surely not one amongst the myriads of the redeemed but will own, with untold joy, the worthiness of the Lamb. Yes, this shall be our everlasting theme. But the least attention to this revelation of Jesus will show you that in this song we shall be intensely interested in the saints then on the earth, whose prayers have been presented: that our blessed Jesus is not only worthy of presenting all the redeemed, then gathered around the throne; but also worthy of all that shall be saved out of that scene of the tribulation about to commence: and far beyond that, as

we shall know, as this wondrous revelation opens up to us.

Yea, and as we see, the myriads of myriads of angels also become intensely interested in this same wondrous theme. The future opens; and all heaven shouts, “Worthy is the Lamb: ” all creation sings His praise: seraphim and cherubim bear witness, and say “Amen;” and the crowned worshippers “fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Before we enter on the things that are about to take place on the earth, after the close of the history of Christendom, it would be well to take a glance over again, to see clearly the point at which we have arrived. In chapter 1 we saw the revelation of Jesus Christ, clothed in His judicial robes, walking in the midst of the churches. Then in chapter 2 and 3 we saw the judgment of the Lord Jesus, as to the seven stages of the history of Christendom. That being completed, then we have had the things that will take place in heaven immediately after the Church is taken there. Now we come to the things that will take place on earth after the close of Christendom, and the redeemed are taken to heaven. How very important it is rightly to divide this precious book. If you are washed in the blood of Christ, then be assured that you will be seated in glory around the throne of God, before these judgments, of which this book now speaks, can possibly take place. As the voice said, “Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be after these;” that is, after the close of the Church’s history on earth, as fully described in the addresses to the seven churches. Therefore, before we go on, let us lift up our hearts to the Lord, to keep us in the Spirit in heaven, whilst we look at the things that are about to take place on the earth. This will really be soon. We shall be there, and then shall take place on earth what is now before us.

Revelation 6:1-17. The Lamb opens one of the seals. He who, during, this long gospel day, has been the expression of the grace of God, is now in the very centre of the throne, the unfolder of the judgments; and, as it were, with the voice of thunder, not now the soft sweet whisper of mercy. The four living creatures command the judgments to commence. One says, “Come: ” the words “and see” should be omitted. It is not an invitation to John to see; but a command, with thunder, “Come.” Now we shall find that the unfolding of these seals simply reveals to us the exact order of the providential judgments that will take place after the Church is removed.

First. “A white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer.” A crowned warrior makes rapid conquests and distant ones, as the “bow” implies. And being seated on a white horse seems to imply that he makes great pretensions to righteousness.

Second. “And there went out another horse — red; and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” Thus, after the time of rapid conquest, a dreadful state of mutual slaughter. If we have seen lately the horror produced by only two nations at war, what will it be when peace is taken from the earth? And think how all nations are preparing for this!

Third. And now we see “a black horse.” A time of deep mourning and gloom and famine succeeds the time of dreadful slaughter; “a measure of wheat for a penny.” The measure, or chœnix, contained about a pint and a half; and the denarius, rendered penny, was a little under our eight pence. But, as it is used by the Lord to express the value of a day’s labour, the famine will be such that it will require a day’s labour, or say three shillings, to buy a pint and a half of wheat; or, in

other words, the common necessaries of life will be about sixteen times their ordinary value.

Fourth. When the fourth seal is opened, the four sore judgments — the sword, hunger, death, and wild beasts of the earth — fall specially on a fourth part of the earth; that is, the earth as held by the Gentile monarchies. All this will simply take place in the order given by these symbols: providential judgments in an extraordinary degree. But bear in mind that all this is after the close of the history of the Church on earth.

Fifth. When this seal is opened, an entirely new scene is presented. This is not the crowned elders, in glorified bodies; but the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. This slain remnant cry for vengeance, as the remnant of the Jews cry in the latter-day Psalms. And in this disembodied state they must wait until many shall be killed, as they had been. I grant this was all new to John. It is revelation.

Sixth. At the opening of this seal the whole fabric of society is shaken to pieces. What a picture these symbols present, sudden and unexpected! the sun implying supreme government, and the moon that which should reflect it; stars high and eminent persons. What a scene of darkness and shaking! So terrible that all classes of men become intensely alarmed, and think that the day of the wrath of the Lamb is come. If we compare the opening of this seal with Matthew 24:29, the events symbolized are very similar; only we must note, that this hour of temptation, described in the sixth seal, is before the great tribulation; and in Matthew it is immediately after the tribulation. Thus we see at every step that this book is the revelation of that which had not been made known before. Thus chapter 6 describes the order of events that will take place on earth immediately after the Church is taken up to heaven: a time of rapid conquest, by one pretending to great righteousness. Then a time of general and terrible slaughter. Then blackness of mourning and famine. Then the four sore judgments of God let loose on a fourth part of the earth. Then great persecution, and the killing of the saints of that day. Then the most awful convulsion of society, so that men say, The day of wrath is come.

Before the opening of the seventh seal there are two things which demand the closest attention. The wonderful parenthesis of chapter 7, and silence in heaven. I would make one remark here as to the time occupied during the judgments of the seals. This is not revealed. It may be short or it may be long. The disciples did not seem to have had any idea that this period of the Church, in which we live, would have lasted eighteen hundred years: our thoughts also may be far too contracted as to the vast events of this wonderful book, and the period of judgment.

Revelation 7:1-17. In chapter 7 then an entirely new purpose or work of God is made known. And as the Church is no longer on earth, it is, again the Jews, and the Gentiles, or nations. I take for granted my reader knows that in the Church of God there is neither Jew nor Gentile. (Galatians 3:28.) Before the Church there was the Jew and the Gentile. And again, after the Church is taken to heaven, the tribes of Israel are first sealed, and then an innumerable company, or great multitude, of all nations are saved. The omission of Dan may be to remind us that this is all sovereign grace. We must not suppose that all these are saved between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals. It is a break in the dark clouds of judgment — a bright revelation of the purpose of God. And O, is not the Lamb worthy of the sealed thousands of Israel, and the vast multitude of the nations. Does it not fill your heart with joy — the thought that when the world is seething in the last days of iniquity, even then such a vast harvest of souls shall be saved? You notice, this vast

company do not sit with the Church on thrones around the throne; but they stand before it. This vast company arrest the attention of all heaven; but, beginning with the outer circle of the angels, then the elders, then seraphim and cherubim, the living creatures. What joy, worship, and praise this glorious work of God produces in heaven! And just think that this seventh chapter of the Revelation of Jesus was entirely new then to John, and is little known now. O yes, seraphim and cherubim can rejoice, or rather, I take it, bear full witness to the glory of Christ the Lamb, in the salvation of this vast multitude. And now a question is raised in heaven by one of the elders: “Who are these?” That they are not the Church is evident, or that question, could not be raised. Even John has to refer to the elder for all answer: but that answer is very distinct: “These are they that come out of great [or, the great] tribulation.” Thus do we learn that this happy multitude shall be gathered from the nations during the time of tribulation, after the Church is completed and taken to be with the Lord. O, gladly could I linger on this glorious revelation of my Lord! Can we not say, Worthy the Lamb to receive this honour and glory? Do I hear a rejecter of the gospel of God say, “Oh, then I may refuse the grace and truth of God now and yet when the time of tribulation comes on this earth I may then be saved.” Let not Satan thus deceive you. The Holy Ghost has spoken plainly as to this matter. These are His solemn words: “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

These are solemn words; and they are the words of God. They shut out every ray of hope to the present rejecters of Christ. But think what millions and millions are ignorant of the gospel, and no doubt from such this innumerable company will be gathered. Our God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His thoughts.

Now is it not blessed to read this book, to believe this revelation, to know that God will thus be glorified in the salvation of this vast multitude, though they do not form part of the Church? As the two hundred and eighty-eight singing Levites stood to the twenty-four courses of priesthood, so do these one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones, and the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter 14, and this multitude, stand to the twenty-four crowned seated worshipping elders. O how perfect are the ways of God!

Revelation 8:1-13;Revelation 9:1-21.

If chapter 8 has revealed the seraphim action of God — the purification of this vast multitude from sins, by the blood of the Lamb, the live coal from the altar again; sin put away by the one offering on God’s altar — then also in chapter 8 we shall find the cherubim action of God in consuming judgment.

It is of all importance to notice, that the ways of God in this book are on the combined principle of seraphim and cherubim, as His throne is revealed to us in chapter 4. But before the cherubim action, there is silence in heaven. This is very solemn. And now the seven angels prepare to announce the judgments direct from God: and to them were given seven trumpets. Still, before the judgment, another bright gleam of seraphim glory. The prayers of all saints are offered upon the golden altar, the altar of incense. Now is not that a wondrous scene? The prayers of every saint, down there in that world of violence and iniquity, coming up before God, with all the sweet perfume and all the acceptance of the value of Christ, once offered on the altar? How deeply all this will

interest us seated in the heavenly vision! Let us think of it now. And now the most solemn action is brought before us: “The angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth.” We must compare this with the cherubim action of Ezekiel 10:1-22, as the fire was there cast on the city.

Now the fire, mark, of the altar is cast to the earth. And what is fire of the altar? Is it not that wrath of God which consumed the holy One made sin for us? The throne of God is, so to speak, composed of seraphim and cherubim. God must purify by the burning seraphim, by the fire of the altar, or consume by the cherubim judgments of the fire of the altar. In other words, they who have refused the mercy of God, through the atoning death of Jesus on the altar, must endure the same wrath against sin that consumed that holy sacrifice for sin on the altar. My reader, you and I must be either purified by that fire, or for ever judged by that fire.

Providential judgments there have been, and will be again more terrible, as in chapter 6. But this is now altogether another thing — fire from the altar — the very wrath that made Jesus cry out on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — that same wrath will then be cast on the earth. Well might heaven pause in silence. if you examine the first four trumpets you will find that they symbolize the blighting of all that supplies the needs, or pleasures, of man — at least on a third part of the earth, where these judgments fall — the trees, the sea, the rivers, the sun, the moon, and the stars. The judgments thus fall on the circumstances of men during the four terrible blasts of these trumpets. Does not this show out the marvellous long-suffering of God? There is warning after warning; and even now, though the judgments of God through angelic agency begin, still the mildest are first. But at last the fifth angel sounds; and men are now tormented in their own persons. The bottomless abyss is opened; hell, as it were, let loose on earth: Gross darkness now covers men’s minds. And out of this darkness come terrible locusts. These seem to me to figure wicked spirits, which shall sting men with horrible doctrines; for the angel of the bottomless abyss is their king — and thus are men tormented five months.

“The sixth angel sounded.” And the four angels, bound in the great river Euphrates, are loosed. And a vast army of horsemen, a terrible show of human power and strength, pours into the prophetic earth from the east. These seem to me to be possessed by the wicked spirits of the previous woe. Though Satan is the god of this age, yet his power is only permitted so far; but who can conceive the state of the earth when Satan, and the hosts of demons, are thus let loose? And, my reader, if you are not caught up to meet Christ, and be for ever with the Lord, you may see all this, and feel it in your own terrified soul!

I do not dwell further on these six trumpets; as my object is only to help the enquirer in reading this wondrous book.

Revelation 10:1-11. As there was a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seal, so is there also between the sixth and seventh trumpet. A mighty one cried with a loud voice, and seven thunders uttered their voices. We are not permitted to know the things uttered by these thunder voices: but if we compare a trumpet with thunder, we may expect those last scenes of ripened human iniquity to be indescribable. But time shall be no longer delayed; and in the days when the seventh angel shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished. This is dispensationally a point of great value. The period of the mystery, or the interval, thus comes to a close: the break in the dealings of God with Israel here closes: and those dealings commence by measure and time in

the next chapter. It is sweet to the mind at first thought to enter on such history; “but it shall make thy belly bitter.”

How sad it is to think of the ignorance that prevails in Christendom as to all these things, which are surely coming on the earth. Even many Christians are deceived, and under the delusion that this wicked world will be converted by the gospel. They cannot have read and understood this revelation.

Revelation 11:1-19.

It is of the greatest importance new to notice the division of the book at this point. We are now on Jewish ground. The temple is rebuilt, with its altar, and worshippers. The court and the city shall the Gentiles tread under foot forty-two months. This is the marked change in the book, and here dates commence. There are also two witnesses prophesying twelve hundred and sixty days, like the prophets of old in Israel. At the end of this period of testimony, the beast, who then comes on the scene, makes war with them. These prophets will be a great plague to the men of the earth, who try hard to say, There is no God. And when the prophets are slain, the world rejoices. Oh what a picture this is of man! They are raised to life, and received up into heaven. And then a great earthquake takes place. Surely these things will come to pass. The seventh angel sounds. And this brings before us the end of all these judgments: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.” The Church, and all the redeemed, represented by the four and twenty elders, are still seated before God. Nothing shall ever disturb their unclouded rest. They worship also, and give thanks.

Revelation 12:1-17.

Chapter 12 should begin with the last verse of chapter 11. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in it the ark of His testament. This shows that we are now occupied with the revelation of God as to Israel. His counsels as to them shall stand. I must remind my reader again, that all this becomes simple, and easy to be understood, just in proportion as we are acquainted with the scriptures. Who is this woman clothed with these emblems of supremacy? If we turn to Micah 4:8, there can be no doubt who she is. “And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.” Do you think God can break this promise? Read the first eight verses carefully. To a person ignorant of scripture, chapter 12 must present serious difficulties. In verse 2 there is the pain and travailing in birth of Israel; and an objecter might say, there was no commotion, or travail, of the Jews at the birth of Christ, the man-child. Jerusalem was asleep, and a few peaceful shepherds only were awake. Quite true. If we turn again to the prophets, you will see that the revelation rightly presumes that we should know that this must be so; and that the travail of Israel is not at the birth of Christ at all. Turn to Micah 4:1-13 again. The travail of Israel is described in verse 10, when she has gone out of the city, even to Babylon. “There shalt thou be delivered.” Does not the Lord also speak of this sore travail in Matthew 24:15-22? Now let us read carefully Micah 5:2-3. In verse 2, the man child is born: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Thus we have the place of His birth, Bethlehem, not Babylon; and though He is to be ruler in Israel, yet is He caught up to God: “shall he come forth unto me.” And though He thus went

to God, yet was He equal to God: “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” But what of Zion and the time of her travail? In verse 3 the prophet says they shall be given up “until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.” Is not this very striking? Jesus, the future Judge of Israel, was smitten on the cheek: He was rejected: He did go unto God. Israel has been given up, and will be until the time of travail, the great tribulation.

Some may have thought, in reading Revelation 12:1-17 that the time of travail was at the birth of the man child; but scripture is very clear as to this. Turn to Isaiah 66:7 : “Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.” Then, it may be asked, what is brought forth at the time of travail? See the very next verse. Verse 8; “as soon as she travailed, she brought forth her children.” Ah, we may have confused thoughts; but how clear is scripture! With these scriptures before us, we now turn to Revelation 12:1-17. Israel, who is to have the first dominion, is in travail and pain: and now mark, the very symbol used in chapter 13 to describe the power of the Roman empire, is used here to describe the power of Satan, the great dragon: “having seven heads and ten horns.” This is an awful fact, that the source of the power of the Roman empire is Satan. Christians who meddle with this world’s politics would do well to ponder this. Can Satan be reformed? Then can his kingdom be improved? But here all this is connected with the Jews. When the man child was born, we see Satan was the mover of Herod, the representative of the Roman power, in seeking to destroy the infant Lord: and again at the cross. But He is to rule all nations, and He was raised up from the dead and caught up to God.

If you look carefully at verses 5 and 6, you place, as it were, one point of the compass at the time of Satan’s hatred of Christ on earth to His ascension, and the other point reaches to the time of Israel’s tribulation. Thus the whole of the period of the Church is entirely omitted between these two verses: as is the case in the well-known passage of Isaiah 61:2. And now the time of sorrow is marked, twelve hundred and sixty days; but, as always, these dates refer to the Jews — the time of tribulation so fully described in Matthew 24:1-51. At that time will take place what is called the war in heaven; and then Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth. This gives great joy to the heavens, and terrible woe to the inhabiters of the earth. Satan will then direct his special wrath against the Jews, but they flee into the wilderness, and are nourished there during the three years and a half.

Thus has our God been pleased to reveal to us the hatred of Satan against His Son as Messiah, and against His chosen earthly people. All this we have seen in heaven, as indeed we shall be there when these things take place. We now get the development of Satan’s power amongst men on earth.

Revelation 13:1-18. A beast is seen to rise up out of the sea; and the description of this beast shows distinctly that it is the same beast that is described in Daniel — the fourth empire of Gentile power, or the Roman empire. But this revelation is not of what had taken place; it was seen to “rise up.” It is the seven headed and ten horned beast which suddenly appears on the scene again, in a new and most dreadful state.

It may be asked, How can John see this rising up, when the Roman empire did exist in his time? We shall get the answer to this question when we come to chapter 17. This terrible beast has the characteristics of the leopard, the bear, and the lion. And the dragon, or Satan, shall give him his

power and throne, and authority. One of the heads of this dreadful empire is wounded as it were unto death: this wound is healed: and now all the world wonder after this beast. They worship Satan, and they worship this terrible beast. Such is the future of Europe. What a revelation to the servants of Jesus! and shall they mingle with that world which will surely come to this? Are you surprised at this? I should be more surprised if it came to anything better. Having rejected Christ for so many centuries, is there anything wonderful that God should at last give men up to their own folly and choice? Yet, how dreadful the thought, that the worship of Satan, and the beast, or head of the Roman empire, will assuredly be the worship of all that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb! and power is given during this time of tribulation to overcome the saints of that period. And now, when the peoples become, as it were, ordered, or formed, under Satan, another beast comes up out of the earth. He assumes the look of the Lamb, but his voice betrays him: “he spake as a dragon.” He has immense influence and power. This is the wicked one. He had two horns as a lamb. Now though we must not confound this wicked one with the woman, the great whore, yet I judge, from Daniel 11:36-38 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12, that the final apostasy of both the Jews and Christendom will find its centre and head in this wicked one. There is a trinity of wicked ones, and in fearful imitation of God. The head of the restored empire takes the place of God. This lamb-like dragon-speaking Antichrist exerciseth all the power of this first beast, and is co-equal with him, and doeth great wonders. And Satan takes the place of the Holy Ghost on earth. Idolatry is set up and enforced by death. Then they that dwell upon the earth shall be deceived. God in righteous judgment sends them strong delusion, that they all may he damned.

I ask, Can any man, having the Spirit of God, fail to discern that everything around is tending to this frightful end? And what a climax of human progress! All this will surely come to pass: it is impossible for God to lie. Satan is already beginning to whirl his vortex: are you in it, my reader?

Revelation 14:1-20.

We have now another higher scene before us. Not the reign of the king in Zion, but a kind of joyful anticipation of that approaching event. He who shall be king is still seen as a Lamb, and identified with the remnant, the hundred and forty-four thousand. Is not this anticipation most cheering? I judge it marks the near approach of the reign of Christ: and this gives great joy, in heaven. They are connected with heaven, but are not the Church, or the redeemed as seen in heaven in chapter 4. “They sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders.”

These are kept pure from the fearful apostasy. They follow the Lamb. The opening of the seals of judgments by the Lamb as it had been slain, caused the new song to be sung in chapter 5. Now the sight of the Lamb on mount Sion raises the joyful anticipation of that reign in righteousness, borne witness to by cherubim and seraphim upholding the throne, and witnessed by all the redeemed, symbolized by the four and twenty elders. There is something most fitting in this burst of joy, remembering that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. To turn from the dreadful state of the earth during the reign of the beast, and to anticipate the reign of Christ — can anything give more intense joy?

Yesterday I met an old preacher who reminded me of scenes he had been with me in thirty years ago. I remarked, that when I was led to see the coming of the Lord in scripture, and to wait for Him

from heaven, that separated me entirely from those things. And I went on to speak of the blessedness of that coming event, when we shall be for ever with the Lord. He pointed to his breast, find said, “He has come: He is here; He is in me now.” And he said it in a manner which showed he desired no other coming. I do not know which is the more deplorable — the ignorance, or selfishness, of so many, who, like this old preacher, get a little comfort to their own souls, and Satan may go on reigning over this poor dark world; Christ may still be rejected. Now what can this blessed revelation of Jesus be to them? I suppose they never care to read it. Ah, my soul, the coming reign of Jesus: this is the theme of deepest joy!

I do not doubt but that this very remnant will have a peculiar place when the Lamb shall reign. Seraphim and cherubim shall support and be the witness of his throne. What a reign of righteousness! The cross, on which He end red wrath, will be the expression, and the principle, of the throne. What a theme for meditation!

It is important to notice the historical order of this chapter, in its seven distinct announcements. The joyful anticipation of the reign of Christ. Then the announcement of the everlasting gospel to all nations. It seems rather difficult to us, who are so accustomed to the present gospel of grace, to understand the good news of “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him,” &c. Surely this has been the eternal purpose of God, and “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8.) It is good news that the present reign of Satan will shortly close. The everlasting gospel is evidently linked with the reign, and though the hour or time of judgment is limited, yet its blessed effects are everlasting. This was always foretold by the prophets; and the gospel preached by the Lord was “The reign of God is at hand;” and again will be proclaimed to all nations. Blessed prospect when all shall be subject to Him! The next messenger announces the fall of Babylon. Details of this we have further on: but one thing is made known by the order of these announcements — the destruction of apostate Christendom before the crisis of the beast’s iniquity: as in the next announcement the wrath of God is poured out without mixture on those who worship the beast. All this we shall have in chapter 17. I only notice the order. False apostate Christendom will he destroyed to make way for a still worse thing, the worship of the beast. Dreadful will be that time, and the final end of all who thus give themselves up to Satan is described. And what a time for the patience of the remnant, who keep the commandments of God! And next in order, a voice is heard from heaven, saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” In God’s past dealings with Israel, long life was a mark of His blessing. But in this time of dreadful iniquity, to die is the mark of favour. Oh, how little the world knows or expects such a state of things!

Then comes the time of the harvest, and next the vintage. The Lord’s parable, and its explanation of the harvest of the earth, in Matthew 13:1-58, must be remembered; and now the time is come. The harvest would thus refer more to the world at large, whilst the vintage describes the last terrible judgments on the Jews, the vine of the earth — most dreadful will be the slaughter around the city. This is the time of trouble such as never was, and never shall be again. We must never forget that the first thought, yea, God’s thought, running through this prophetic future, is the coming reign of the Lamb, on mount Sion. But before we arrive at the actual coming of the King of kings, we have further revelation.

Revelation 15:1-8;Revelation 16:1-21.

Chapters 15 and 16 must be read together, as the revelation of the closing scenes of the wrath of God. This must be the very close; as John saw “them that had gotten the victory over the beast,” they stand on the emblem of solid purity, yet mingled with fire, showing the tribulation out of which they had come. The theme of their song also is the coming reign.

Special attention is called to the fact, that “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened;” and also that the seven executors of the wrath of God come out of the temple; and more, that one of the living creatures gave unto these seven angels the seven bowls, full of the wrath of God. Thus, as seraphim and cherubim combined bear witness to the worthiness of the Lamb, they also bear witness that the same wrath must be poured out. We have seen this in chapter 8 in the third part of the earth in the sounding of the trumpets. Now it is on the earth. This is evidently the prophetic Roman earth: upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them that worshipped his name. The second angel poured out his vial or bowl upon the sea: those nations that surround the Roman earth, and are in a state of confusion. Then the third poured out his bowl of wrath on the rivers, or streams of distinct peoples. In the midst of these judgments the angel of the waters, the one watching over the peoples, ascribes righteousness to the Lord, which art, and wast, the Holy One. And the altar responds, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” O, what a light the altar throws on the judgments that are about to be executed on an impenitent earth! Look at the pouring out of the wrath of God on the nations, and then pause, and gaze on the Son of God, once bearing the wrath of God on the cross. God is everlastingly the same. He will surely act according to the cross of Christ; whether in the purification of His saints, or in the pouring out of His wrath. What a key this is to understand this blessed book!

How often the burning victim on the altar of sacrifice had pointed forward to the consuming wrath of God, as seen on the cross! And now the fourth angel shall pour out his bowl of wrath upon the sun, and men are scorched with fire; and they will blaspheme the name of God. The supreme power becomes the source of scorching judgment and there will be no repentance. How little men know what is coming on the earth! The fifth angel will pour out his bowl on Rome, the seat of the beast. “And his kingdom was full of darkness.” What a blank to all human hopes and delusions! It will be a foretaste of hell! the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. “They gnawed their tongue for pain.” Filled with blasphemy, they will not repent. Surely the time is at hand! These things are at the very door; and men heed them not.

“The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east night be prepared.” The Euphrates is the eastern boundary of the Roman empire. The boundary will be broken up, and a way opened for the kings of the east to come. This must bring, Palestine into great prominence; and the western empire is moved by this to go forth to the great battle. The trinity of iniquity puts forth all its unclean power: unclean spirits like frogs go out of the mouth of the beast (the head of the empire), but the dragon is named first, and last the man of sin, the false prophet. Satan, the emperor, and the man of sin: what a trinity! Men will have these; but they reject the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And they will receive and be led by the odious spirits that proceed from this terrible trinity of iniquity! And when the hosts of the east come against this apostate empire, they come as the bowl of the wrath of

God. These things cannot have been yet fulfilled. The empire is not yet restored, and the man of sin has not yet appeared. Let not then the fancies of men take away your attention from the awfully solemn fact, that these things will surely soon come to pass! The seventh angel poured out his vial or bowl of wrath into the air. A voice is heard out of the temple in heaven from the throne, saying, “It is done,” and very terrible is the convulsion of the empire at this closing scene of the pouring out of divine wrath. The cities of the nations fell: and can we not see a vast preparation going on? The world, though it rejects the testimony of God, yet seems to expect some such terrible convulsion, of which a mighty earthquake is a striking symbol.

Then Babylon comes into remembrance. Ah, you may join her, ye rejecters of the gospel, but remember, in doing so, you voluntarily take upon yourselves her murders, and her guilt; and you must drink, with her, of the cup of the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of God. Dream not that these things have been fulfilled. Each of my readers will soon be either called up to meet the Lord, and be with Him, in unclouded rest, or be left, a rejecter of God, in these terrible and unparalleled judgments that are at the very doors.

Revelation 17:1-18.

Chapter 17 gives a very special revelation of the judgment of apostate Babylon, and her position as to the restored Roman empire. Who is this woman? I beg my reader to ponder this question. She sits upon many waters; and the waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. She assumes the purple and scarlet. Who is this Mystery, Babylon the Great — mother of abominations — this drunken murderess? John marvelled greatly at her; and so may we. Well, the angel gives the explanation: “I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.” And first the angel explains as to the beast. Let us attend carefully. “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” That this is the fourth empire, as described by the prophet Daniel, there can be no doubt; and we know that the fourth empire was the Roman. Its seat of power the seven-hilled city. And as this woman is seen sitting on the beast, she must be where it is. The centre then of this dreadfully corrupt system is Rome.

There are several solemn facts made known to us in this chapter. The Roman empire was: it no longer exists. It shall be again — shall ascend out of the bottomless abyss. Its whole future character shall be satanic. The rising up again of this fearful empire shall astonish the world. Five forms of government had passed away: the imperial then was the sixth. The other form of government is not yet come. The seventh will continue only for a very short space; as the eighth, who shall be of the seventh, is the terrible beast. In this last form of the Roman empire it will be composed of ten kingdoms. These give their power and strength unto the beast. This is certainly all future. The Roman empire was, is not, and thus shall be again. Can it be denied that many centuries after this revelation was given, a false apostate church has had its centre at Rome? that this church has become the woman of the world, whilst professing to be the bride of Christ? Has she not so entirely ignored the heavenly calling of the Church, as to become one with the nations? Is there one mark of this woman that does not literally describe the apostate church? In verse 16 we are told of her terrible destruction by the ten kingdoms of the empire. All this, my reader, is surely true.

Revelation 18:1-24.

Passing now from the empire, we have the character and fall of apostate Christendom brought before us in terrible detail. Now whilst Rome is the mother and centre of all these abominations, yet it is impossible to avoid observing, that this description takes in all that is false in Christendom. As the daughters grow up, there is more family likeness. This must be so wherever the church becomes one with or marries the world. The true principle of the Church is a people taken out of the world; one with the risen Christ; joint members of His body; baptized by one Spirit into one body. The essential principle of a worldly religious establishment is the opposite of the Church of God. It is the world, called Christian, and the Christians in it are thus in Babylon, in the confusion and captivity of the world.

But, as my object is not so much to comment, as to lead souls to solemn meditation on this book, I will only ask you seriously to read this chapter, and tell me if it does not describe protestant nations as well as Romish. Is there greater commercial prosperity and greater iniquity anywhere than in the church-and-world nation of England? From the study of these chapters it seems probable that as the kings agree with the beast, so the daughters may agree with the mother; at all events the whole is spoken of as Babylon the Great: and can any one fail to see that everything in Christendom is becoming more like Rome? And what will it be when the true Church of God is taken up to be with the Lord, and Christendom is given up to strong delusion, to believe it lie? What think you of that call, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins?”

Revelation 19:1-21.

It is remarkable what deep interest is taken in heaven in the fall and judgment of Christendom, or the apostate church. A great voice is heard in heaven. This loud Alleluia and shout of praise is about the righteous judgment of God on this great whore. The glorified Church also worship God, saying, “Amen, Alleluia.” The four living creatures, seen for the last time, also say, “Amen, Alleluia.” Seraphim and cherubim bear witness to the righteous judgment of God on apostate Babylon. One day with the Lord is as a thousand years; but this terrible overthrow in judgment must come. The Lord use this searching truth in separating us more to Himself! What an end of all human boasting! the end of the period we live in, and so near! If we believe all this, it must separate us from all around to God Himself.

It is remarkable that the marriage of the Lamb does not take place until after the judgment of apostate Christendom. How terribly dishonouring to Christ is that which calls itself the Church! A voice came out of the throne. Let us still keep in mind the coming reign of Christ. The great multitude, with a voice like thunder, say, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” But one thing above all others shall give joy and gladness to this vast multitude — the marriage of the Lamb. The bride, the Lamb’s wife, now takes her true separate place in the glory. As the four and twenty elders had represented all the redeemed, now the bride is seen, distinct and separate from the vast multitude, who are called to the marriage, and rejoice; the four and twenty elders are seen no more. The Church is never found in scripture until Christ the Head had been raised from the dead, and ascended on high. But it may be asked, Were none saved then before the Church was formed at Pentecost? and are none saved after the Church has been taken up (as in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, and represented in heaven, in Revelation 4:1-11); that is, during these days of iniquity and judgments of which we have thus spoken? Oh, doubtless; and these no doubt are portions of this vast multitude, who are evidently distinct from the bride, and who rejoice because

her marriage is come. Was not Rebekah distinct from her maids who attended her? was not Ruth distinct from the women who rejoiced in Bethlehem's gate? Is not the bride distinct from the guests at the marriage feast? Even so do we find the wife of the Lamb distinct from even the rejoicing heavenly hosts. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." When God looked at Adam in the garden — figure of Him that was to come — He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him." And the Lord God laid the man in the typical place of death — "a deep sleep" — and out of that dead Adam, so to speak, He builded the living woman. Not one member of Eve was built, or formed, until Adam was thus laid in the type of the death of Him that was to come. Even so, out of the death of Jesus God has not only raised Him from among the dead, but the Church is raised up in Him. The life of the Christian is the risen life of Christ, the Head of the body the Church. He must suffer the death of the cross, the atonement for sin, and be raised from the dead, before the second Eve could be formed. O blessed theme! God, in past eternity, looking forward, and seeing the risen glorified Son, was saying, It is not good for Him to be alone: I will build a help meet for Him. God thought it; God said it; and God has done it. All, all is of God. O think of the predestined glory of the Church. Whatever Adam was, such was every particle of Eve. Whatever Christ is, as the risen man from among the dead, such shall be, such is, His bride. We shall see Him as He is, and be like Him.

There is one thought more sweet than all the rest — the marriage of the Lamb is the beginning of the manifested glory of Christ. The marriage having taken place, heaven is immediately opened, and He comes forth with all the armies of heaven, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

O glorious event! The wicked are now to be destroyed: evil is no more to lift up its head. Where is now the power of the beast, the satanic head of the Roman empire? where the kings of the earth, and their armies? Read their dreadful doom. We are told the beast the head of the empire, and the man of sin the false prophet, will not die, but will both be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. The personal coming of the Lord Jesus occupies a large place, both in the prophecies of the Old and New Testament; but what we have in this chapter is new, and most solemn, and true.

Revelation 20:1-15. The next act of judgment falls on Satan. The time is come that he should be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit. This is absolutely necessary during the thousand years blessed reign of Christ! Could Christ and Satan reign at the same time? Impossible. Now Satan is the god of this world. We have seen in chapter 12 that he is, as the dragon, the very source of the power of the Roman empire, both past and to come. But you ask, Are not the "powers that be" ordained of God? Most surely. But have not, those "powers that be" rejected and murdered the Son of God, the rightful King? And does not the whole world lie in the hands of the wicked one? This is a solemn question to be quite clear about. Is Satan the god of this world? and does he continue to be so until the event foretold in this chapter?

Perhaps my reader asks, If the world has rebelled against Christ, murdered Him, and is now led on and ruled over by Satan, how can a Christian take part in the politics of the world, instead of taking his place with Christ in rejection? I do not see how he can, without being unfaithful to Christ. No doubt many do so, through ignorance; but not without great loss to their souls. God in His

providence does overrule; but the present reign of Satan in this world is a fearful fact. A little while then, and the apostate church, or Christendom, shall be fully judged; and then the apostate empire; and then Satan, the prime mover in all this iniquity. Who can conceive the blessed contrast, when the old serpent, the devil, Satan, shall be cast out. Men have no idea how he leads them on. And then the first resurrection will be completed. Could there be a more certain proof that many will be saved who do not form part of the Church, the bride of the Lamb? Surely the bride was completed when the marriage took place in heaven, chapter 19. And yet all these are raised from the dead, and form the completion of the first resurrection. All who had been slain, refusing to worship the beast, will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is all a new revelation, and embraces a company not included in the extent of this resurrection, as made known to Paul: hut it is clearly revealed here. The rest of the dead will not live again until the thousand years are finished. The first resurrection is very blessed. How surely the Church has lost all this precious teaching, and gone back to the old Jewish idea of a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked together. Scripture never contradicts itself, and nowhere does it teach a general resurrection.

There is then most certainly, not only a first resurrection, but a thousand years — the glorious millennial reign of Christ — before the second resurrection. That this first resurrection refers to the persons of the redeemed is most clear, for “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Unspeakably blessed as will be this period of the reign of Christ, and no enemy to tempt and deceive; yet from verse 7 to verse 10 we have the fact made known that even after all this happy season of millennial rest — when Satan is let loose for a little, and the last time, on earth — the nations immediately fall into the snare of Satan: the final proof that the creature, if left to himself in any circumstance, cannot stand.

We have no information that the nations will all be born again. During the millennium, righteousness shall reign; in the eternal state righteousness shall dwell. Judgment from God falls on the rebellious host, and Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet have been during the thousand years.

Then takes place the judgment of the great white throne; and the dead stand before God. At this point the reader may remember the judgment in Matthew 25:1-46 : the sheep and the goats. Perhaps you ask “Is not that the general judgment? Are not the wicked dead and the righteous both raised up together, and then separated by the Judge?” How strange that such an error should have become so common! If you read that parable again, you will find there is no thought either of the righteous or wicked dead; no thought of the resurrection at all; but simply the judgment of the living nations, at the coming of Christ. That is quite a different scene from this judgment of the dead, and evidently will take place a thousand years before this. This is not at the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; but the heaven and the earth fled away. Woe be to you, my reader, if you are one of those who stand before this white throne. Judgment there must be, either on the cross, or on the throne. If you can look back in faith to the cross, then sins are put away, to be remembered no more. If your sins shall be judged at the great white throne, then your place must be in the lake of fire for ever and ever. O, ponder this revelation of the great white throne! Deepen, O my God, in my soul, the sense of thy mercy to me!

Revelation 21:1-27;Revelation 22:1-21. The new heaven and the new earth now appear, and up to verse 8 the prophecy views the eternal state. The Church is seen now coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Everything earthly has passed away: it is now pure as from the hands of God; entirely heavenly. Not only pure, but incapable of impurity. We shall have a fuller description of this further on; but there is the new earth, and God dwells with men. In the eternal state we do not find the word “reign;” but “dwell: ” God dwells with men. Still the Church has a distinct place, as the tabernacle of God. “The tabernacle of God is with men.” O, my soul, meditate on this supreme blessedness. There is nothing now to subdue. The eternal Son has subdued everything, and now gives up the reign; for in the new heaven and the new earth dwells righteousness. And as the Son is ever the revelation of the Father, He now, not as man, but as God, wipes away all tears, and banishes from the new creation all sorrow and pain. As God He makes it impossible for this to be again; for the former things are passed away. I can only give an outline; but every sentence in these verses is an ocean of blessedness. And He who thus makes all things new says “These words are true and faithful.”

It may now fairly be asked, But what of the wicked through the unending ages of eternity? It is remarkable that before their eternal doom is declared we have the most solemn assurance that none are now excluded from the life everlasting: “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all [or these] things.” Yes, it will be a dreadful thing for the lost one to remember in eternity that the word of God had thus been pledged. As Jesus says, “He that cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast out.” O, thirsty one, God is pledged to give the water of life freely.

“But” — yes, the eternal doom of the rejecter is thus described, when the tabernacle of God is with men, when He throughout eternity shall dwell with them — “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Thus the state of torment is as eternal as the eternal state of the blessed: in that lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Chapter 20: 10.

Nothing can be more certain than the awful fact of the eternity of punishment; and here at verse 8, with this solemn fact the prophecy as it were comes to a close. And it is also remarkable, the denial of this solemn truth is the last great effort of Satan to overthrow the truth of God. From thousands of pens and tongues Satan is saying “Yea, hath God said, for ever and ever? Oh, He does not mean it. Do not believe it.” Children of God, beware. This denial of God’s truth often reveals a minister of Satan, though men may regard him as an angel of light. From chapter 21: 9, to 22: 6, we return as it were; and one of the seven angels describes the bride the Lamb’s wife. This does not go on prophetically, but evidently is a revelation of the Church during the millennial reign; just as one of the same seven angels described the character of the false Babylon after her fall. After the Church has been seen in eternal glory, then we return and see her fully described during millennial rest. Many features are eternal: blessed be God! but we shall see the bride of the Lamb in relation to the earth.

She is the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. O how precious this character is! It is not merely absence from evil, but essentially, inherently holy: holiness from God, pure as

heaven itself: all heavenly, “from God: ” all of Adam, all of sin, for ever gone!

“Oh how I thirst The chains to burst.”

I cannot write; I long to be there. O let us awake, and wait for our Lord.

“Having, the glory of God; and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” The very revealed glory in which God appeared the moment the Church was caught up and was in heaven in chapter 4 Jesus said, “And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” “Pure as crystal.” Not one unholy thought: accepted in the Beloved. But it is the glory of God, and “having” it! Hath not God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus? More could not be given. And all so certain, and so near!

We must bear in mind that this is the revelation of the Church, as it is to be seen when the world shall know that God hath loved us even as He hath loved Christ. The Church shall be seen having the glory of God, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Precious stones are used to express earthly glory; but who can tell what is the brightness of that glory, set forth by these heavenly stones? The city is described and measured by the golden reed. All is perfect in divine righteousness. From the north or south, the east or west, the nations shall see the same divine perfection. In Solomon’s temple the altar was four square, the exact size of the holiest. The death of the cross must be, and was, equal to all the claims of God. There is now no longer need of the altar. The city lieth four square: all is divinely equal; divinely perfect. The holiest was twenty cubits every way. The city is twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” As the apostle Paul heard things impossible to utter, so it seems to me these divine symbols of glory cannot be expressed in words.

We know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. “And he that sat [upon the throne] was to look upon like a jasper.” (Chap. 4: 3.) Oh what then shall be the glory of that city, the bride of the Lamb, when the building of the wall of it is of jasper! All that can express glory is used in the foundations and building of this city. It is essential purity; inherent holiness; “Pure gold;” “clear glass;” “transparent glass.”

It should be noticed that in themselves all these stones are dark: the light is all reflected. Sweet it is to own that when made like Him, still all the glorious perfections will be Christ Himself reflected in the Church. The Holy Ghost may enable you to learn much of this our future glory, by comparing it with Ezekiel 28:13-15; and also the four-square ephod, with its precious stones, covering the heart of the high priest. The eternal purpose of God shall be fulfilled — are not our names now on the heart of our great High Priest? Then shall we most certainly be in that place of glory prepared for us, of which this wondrous building is the symbol. It is the pearl of great price, to redeem which to Himself Jesus came down from the highest glory. No more possibility of defilement: the streets of the city are of pure gold. That is, we shall find nothing but divine purity. No going into the temple, and out; no change from worship to carelessness: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. No need of created helps — of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

If you read carefully Isaiah 60: 62; 65: 18, 19, and many other prophecies of the future glory of Jerusalem, you will be struck with the similarity there is betwixt the earthly and the heavenly cities, in many points. Zephaniah 3:17 may also help us to understand the relative position of both during the millennium. “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.” A comparison of these scriptures will show that the heavenly city, the bride of the Lamb, will be over the earthly city of the great King. And thus “the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it;” God resting in His love over it. It will be joy and singing. O sweet the sound will be, when Jerusalem the earthly shall re-echo the songs of Jerusalem the golden. Nothing shall interrupt heaven’s harmony; for nothing that defileth can enter there.

There are also points of contrast surely between the earthly city and the heavenly. I only notice one, to prove that they are not the same. Where the future earthly Jerusalem is described as the metropolis of all nations in Isaiah 2:1-4, it is said, “And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks,” &c. This could not for a moment be applied to the heavenly city. No need for either swords or ploughshares there. Oh how clear and distinct is the word of God! Sad that man should confound what God has so made to differ.

“He that believeth hath everlasting life.” And that life is now shown to the servant John under two figures; the “pure river of the water of life,” and “the tree of life.” The source of the river is the throne of God and of the Lamb. “Grace reigns through righteousness.” According to the established throne in righteousness, flows forth, in its river-like abundance, the water of life, clear as crystal. That which proceeds from God must be pure as He is pure. These are the words of God; “but what will it be to be there?” And now the tree of life, no longer forbidden or guarded, but yielding her fruit every month. Thus life and healing flows forth, and is for the life and healing of the nations. There shall be no more curse; for sin has been put away according to the righteousness of God, for “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”

What a blessed scene this is! “and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” The activities of the Church the bride shall all be according to God; shall bear the mark of God. They shall dwell in the light of God; “and they shall reign for ever and ever.” And all this is sure, on the very faithfulness of God. For He thus “sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.” This verse 6 finishes the description of the heavenly city. Then follows the closing remarks. And first, the Lord would have us remember this, that there is nothing between this moment and His coming. “Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” His coming is to be before the soul as the very next event. You may fall asleep and depart: “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Have you just now written a letter to a friend, saying you hope, if the Lord will, to come and see him at such a place? Well, you may perhaps go — many things may take place — but the one event really to expect next is the coming of the Lord: “Behold, I come quickly.”

I do not see how any one can thus expect the Lord as the next event, unless he believes the taking up of the Church, as made known to the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18. If we are falsely building on dates, which do not belong to this period of the Church; and if we are only looking for the Lord when He shall come in judgment on the nations, and to reign; then we have seen in this

book that many events have to take place before He thus comes. The Roman empire is not even reconstructed; the beast has not yet taken his place. The second beast, the man of sin, the false prophet, has not yet been manifested. Babylon, so far from being judged, is coming more into favour and fashion every day, even in England. We have seen that the lord comes to take His Church before all these events; and therefore faith can take hold of these words, “Behold, I come quickly,” and can hope for the coming of the Lord as the next event. And to deny the coming of the Lord to take the Church is to falsify these words, and practically to say, The Lord cannot come quickly.

Another closing remark of great importance is the instruction, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.” Daniel was commanded to seal his prophecy, two thousand four hundred years ago, until the time of the end. That time is therefore now come, or near; for this prophecy is not to be closed, for the time is at hand. And this surely is a time for individual faithfulness and holiness. The final state of Christendom is described in verse 11. I believe this is being developed all around. Nor can the true saints of God reform the masses; but in the end it will be “He that is injust, let him be injust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Keep the coming of the Lord before the soul, in the midst of all that discourages; for again He says, “Behold, I come quickly.” And He will reward every man according to his works. And He reminds us that it is indeed Himself: “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” O, is this the living Jesus, the same Jesus? is He the bright and morning star? Yes; it is our Lord, the one for whom we wait. No doubt the Spirit is acting powerfully where owned, and not grieved: and one word is heard by Jesus from the Spirit and the bride — “Come.” And if the ear of my reader should be opened, “let him that heareth say, Come.” And where the hope of the Lord’s coming is fresh in the soul there will be gospel testimony. “And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Then follows solemn warnings against any who shall add to, or take away from, the word of this book. And the last parting word to us from the Lord is again, “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” C. S.

Chapter 78

080. Vol 05

Volume 05

Chapter 79

081. The Young Believer's Difficulties;

The Young Believer’s Difficulties; A Dialogue, the Substance of Various Conversations.

C. Stanley.

No. 1.

James. With your permission, John, before I state my difficulties, may it not be well to see first if we are agreed as to who are meant in scripture by believers? The words of the Lord Jesus you often quote to me, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation” — do not these words teach that a believer is born again — Hath everlasting life? That he has not merely assented with his mind: but receives the words of Christ into his heart, believing God who sent Him.

John. Certainly, James: and as said elsewhere righteousness is imputed, or reckoned unto us “if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 4:24; Romans 5:1.) Such then is the believer. He hath eternal life, as Jesus says, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” And, believing God, he is accounted righteous. He sees his Sin-bearer once delivered to bear his sins, now in the presence of God his righteousness, raised from among the dead: sins all gone for ever, and never to be remembered any more. And, being accounted righteous, being justified on the principle of faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: and therefore always the same peace.

James. Very well; now then, bearing in mind that we have — for, through the mercy of God, we have believed God, and our ears have been opened to hear the words of Jesus — yes, we have these two things, eternal life, and unchanging peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. I will now state my difficulties.

John. Stay a moment first, James. You might have named much more. Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?

James. I have been much struck, with that question lately. It is a very solemn one. Most Christians seem to go no further than our having life: but I see a great distinction in Acts 8:16; Acts 19:2. It would be a very important question to examine fully, and I should like on another occasion to do so; especially the difference between holding the Holy Spirit to be an influence, and, as scripture reveals Him, the very person of God the Holy Ghost. And, oh, to think that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost!

John. Then do I understand you to say that you have, since you believed, received the Holy Ghost?

James. It is a very solemn question, through grace I trust I can say so, though very young in the faith, and greatly desiring, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to inquire more fully the meaning of the word of God. The first scripture then I would name is Hebrews 6:1-20. If we have eternal life, and peace with God, what can this mean, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c . . . If they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”? There are many who feel this is a very difficult statement.

John. If this meant, should a Christian in an unwatchful moment commit a sin, and thereby fall from Christ, that then there is no possibility of restoration, then indeed the difficulty would be insurmountable. Indeed plainly Christianity would be far worse than Judaism. A Jew could bring a sin-offering and his sin would be forgiven him, as is stated in Leviticus 4:1-35. And this was true whether of the whole congregation, or of an individual. Now surely this cannot be the meaning.

James. That certainly is clear; but then what does it mean?

John. It is important to notice that this epistle was addressed or written to the whole of the Hebrews who professed to be Christians, who were also zealous of the law, as James said: “Thou seest brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are who believe; and they are all zealous of the law.” They were in a transitionary state. The law was not the perfect or complete truth. It contained the first, or elementary principles, of the oracles of God. The effect of their remaining in this state was, that they could scarcely distinguish between Judaism and Christianity: they were dull of hearing. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” (Hebrews 5:12.)

James. Then is that what is meant, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ” (or the word of the beginning of Christ) as in margin, “let us go on unto perfection”? Does this mean leaving the elementary principles of truth as known to a Jew, and going on to the complete truth, that is as revealed in Christ?

John. Exactly so; and that makes all that follows very simple. Let us take up each clause. “Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” They had done this once if Christians, they had judged themselves as guilty of rejecting the Lord Jesus, and putting Him to death; yet faith toward God had owned Him, in raising up Jesus from the dead. This change of mind in utter self-judgment had accepted forgiveness of sins in His name, and thus the only foundation had been laid, which could not be repeated. But as they were zealous of the law, they were in great danger of going back when they failed, as of old, to repeated offerings and repentances. You observe, James, Christianity as set up of God the Holy Ghost, was such a contrast to Judaism. The Christian has no temple, no ritual, no sacrifices, nothing for the eye to rest upon. All heavenly: all spiritual worship: no wonder there was such a tendency to give up the spiritual, and go back altogether to earthly visible worship.

James. I had not thought of that: then do you think it was to meet that tendency to give up Christ, and go back altogether to the law that this Epistle was written? I mean to the washings of the law, the offerings and shadows, and even truth as imperfectly revealed, or incompletely known by the Jews? Does not the next clause mean christian baptism?

John. If you look, it is not baptism, but “of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands.” The same word is translated washings in chapter 9, “Meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances,” &c. That is, we must go on to Christ, the one offering, leaving behind the doctrine of all the various washings, of pots and pans; lepers, and priests of the law. And also all the laying on of hands on the heads of goats and bullocks. We must go on from all that system of repetition, to the one sacrifice brought out in chapters 9 and 10.

James. That is new to me; but when we think of the object of this Epistle it is clear enough. But tell me, how can we go on from the doctrine “of resurrection of the dead;” is there anything more complete than that doctrine?

John. The Jewish doctrine of resurrection of the dead is certainly true as far as it goes, and was held by the Pharisees, and all Jews, except the Sadducees, who, like the heathen philosophers, denied it. But the Lord Jesus taught a resurrection from the dead, or, plainly, from among the dead. (Luke 20:35.) And have you not noticed this was the very thing that so grieved the Jews: that the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead? The resurrection which is from the dead went beyond all their teaching, and greatly offended them. And was not this the mark at which Paul aimed — the resurrection from the dead (not of the dead), at which he longed to arrive? (Php 3:11-14.) And has not God been pleased to reveal that the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are fulfilled? (Revelation 20:1-15.)

James. I had never thought of this important difference between the imperfect, or incomplete revelation to the Jews, and the complete christian truth in Christ.

John. I am glad to hear you put it that way; for though not explained in this Epistle, it is elsewhere. All this is linked with Christ the Head. We are conformed to Him in this, the first resurrection from the dead. It is the resurrection of them that are His. “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming: then cometh the end,” &c. (1 Corinthians 15:23.) I am sorry to say, James, instead of going on, the professing church for many centuries went back to Judaism, and merely held the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; and quite lost the christian doctrine of resurrection from the dead.

James. I will, the Lord helping me, give this subject a careful examination. But now the next clause, “and of eternal judgment.” Is not the doctrine of a general judgment as held by the Jews true? Will not all stand together before the judgment to be tried? Is not this the doctrine of creeds and councils? Does not scripture say somewhere that it is appointed to all men once to die, and after death the judgment? And does it not say that the wicked and the righteous will be raised from the grave together, and be separated as described, the sheep on the right, and the goats on the left? &c. I do not see how these things can be from what we see is said of the first resurrection. But, John, why I ask is this, so many speak in this way, it puzzles one very much.

John. If you examine these scriptures you will find they are very much misquoted. By adding even a word the whole meaning is altered. Thus if we add the word “all” to Hebrews 9:27, it alters the sense entirely. If you heard a fearful explosion in a coal pit, where three hundred hands are employed, and fifty had just come out, you might say that explosion is certainly the death of the colliers; but would that mean the fifty who had been drawn out? Or if twenty men were under the sentence of death, and three received Her Majesty’s free pardon, would that mean that the whole

twenty were still under the sentence of death? It is quite true that all have been found guilty — all under the sentence of death.

“And as it is appointed unto men [not all men] once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:27.) And now, James, if you will read that other scripture where the Lord Jesus describes the judgments of the living nations, there is not a thought of the resurrection of the good and bad together. There is not a word on that subject, it is simply the living nations; it is a judgment of the quick. Surely there must be a great difference between those still under judgment, and those already pardoned, and justified from all things? Her Majesty cannot pardon a man, and hang him at the same time. Then how can God both justify a man, whose sins Christ bore on the tree, and also bring him into judgment? This does not touch the blessedness of standing before the Bema of Christ, His judgment for reward.

Thus the apostle would go on from the elementary truth, as known to the Jews, to complete truth in Christ.

James. Then is all in contrast between the doctrine of a general judgment as held by the Jews, and Christ having once borne the sins of many; to them there is no judgment for sins but looking for Him without any question of sin unto salvation? All I can say is, if that is the case, it is just the opposite of what I have been taught.

John. The word of God says it; and it must be so.

James. Then what was the difference between those who had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, tasted the good word of God, &c.; and the true believers who had eternal salvation?

John. They had been in the shower of Pentecost and afterwards, they had tasted, but had not (like the earth in verse 7) drunk in the truth. Like the seed by the way-side, there was no root. The hard ground had not been broken. The heart had not been prepared by the Holy Ghost to receive the word.

James. Then what did they fall away from?

John. If they fell away from the profession of Christ, and went back to the washings and offerings of the law (just the thing they would be naturally), it was simply impossible now for those washings, and offerings, and carnal ceremonies, to restore them to repentance. Yea, for Jews to give up Christianity as a profession, they would, even to this day, have to treat Christ as accursed, as an impostor, “to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Will you read this chapter to the end, James? We must part now for a time.

James. I see now it is a question of a Jew who professed Christ going back to Judaism. I should like to look at Hebrews 10:26, If we sin wilfully, no more sacrifice, nothing but judgment, &c. When could you explain this?

John. If the Lord will, we shall look at this scripture the next time we meet.

No. 2.

James. I am very glad to have another opportunity of speaking with you about those scriptures which have perplexed so many. Before we look at the question of sinning wilfully, I would just say, I have done as you wished in reading the whole of Hebrews 6:1-20, and the end of the chapter strongly confirms the view you gave me — that the falling away there was going back from Christianity to the washings and sacrifices of the law, which, of course, have now lost all their efficacy, and can never restore to repentance. Would you say that the principle of promise and oath of God is also in contrast with Judaism, that is, the covenant of works as given at Sinai?

John. Exactly so. For instance, in that covenant there were two parties, and Moses as mediator between them. God, on His part, engaged to bless them on condition of their obedience; and they accepted the conditions, and engaged to obey. We know they utterly failed; and so do all who attempt that principle of covenant. The blessing depended on the faithfulness of two parties — God and man. Man failed. Where it is the principle of promise, the blessing depends only on one. If you engage a servant, his wages are dependent on the faithfulness of two: you to pay them, and he to do the covenanted work. Now in this matter of our eternal salvation, God wishes us to have absolute certainty, sure and stedfast. He therefore gave us two things, in which it was impossible for Him to lie — His promise and His oath. The promise and oath of God are both immutable. Nothing can disannul the promise of God. (See Galatians 3:16-22.) What a contrast this is to man under the covenant of law! Our eternal salvation depends solely on the promise and oath of God. Yes, as with Abraham, the promise of Genesis 12:1-20 was confirmed when he received in figure Isaac from the dead, in chapter 22. So the promise is fulfilled to us in the actual death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead. What certainty! what “strong consolation”!

James. Yes; but that just brings us to the point: if our eternal salvation rests on the faithfulness of One, and that one God, who cannot lie, what, then, is the meaning of Hebrews 10:26-30? “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,” &c. Can this possibly be the doom of one who is eternally saved, has eternal redemption?

John. You put the question strongly, but I am thankful for it. Better to look things fairly in the face. The question, then, again is this: if a true Christian should commit a sin, is there nothing but judgment and indignation for him? Solemn question, for then who could be saved? But then this would contradict the very context of the chapter. Would it not plunge all into despair?

James. I must confess, if this were so, I should be without hope: besides, such a thought would take away all the comfort of what goes before. And, may I ask, would it not deny the effect of the atonement, as stated in this very chapter? I should like to be a little clearer as to this — what is it to have no more consciousness of sins? (Hebrews 10:2.)

John. It is to know that God has not a single sin to lay to my charge. If you met a person to whom you owed a large debt, and had no means of paying, you would be so troubled in conscience, you might want to turn up the first lane you could, so as to get out of his sight. The more you desired to pay it, the more troubled you would be. And if a friend had paid it, and you did not know it, you would still be troubled. It is thus common for an awakened conscience to flee away from God. How can I meet God against whom I have so sinned? Blessed, when the messenger of God meets the fleeing sinner at the other end of the lane, and says, Do you know that that very God from whom

you are fleeing, sent His beloved Son to bear your sins on the cross; and, having purged them — put them from God's sight by His atoning death — God has now raised Him from the dead, and received Him to glory? What, says the awakened sinner, have my sins been put away by the one sacrifice of Christ? Yes, and God will remember them no more. What could never be done by all the sacrifices of the law, Jesus hath done by the one infinite sacrifice of Himself. Thus He hath done the will, the eternal purpose of God, and is for ever sat down. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." You will notice, James, that all this is in reference to boldness or liberty to enter the holiest — the holy presence of God in the heavens. As to this, all is done, all is complete.

James. How would you illustrate the contrast of this liberty by the one sacrifice of Christ, with the imperfection of the law?

John. Well, James, if you wanted a pass to travel from Derby to London, and you pay a certain price for a yearly pass, you present it to the guard, and he says, I must inform you that the way into this carriage is not yet made open for you: I cannot admit you yet, this ticket is only typical, a sort of promise of a better yet to come. Now, James, if you renewed this yearly pass year after year for fifteen years, and it never gave you a title to take your seat, it would not be very perfect, would it? The great day of atonement came round, for fifteen centuries, year by year, but never gave liberty to enter the holy presence of God. It was a typical promise, that pointed forwards. If a real friend of yours went to the Midland Company, and said, Cost what it will, I am come to purchase for my friend, not a yearly pass, but an everlasting pass. The pass is granted. The door is ever open, you have the perfect, continuous liberty to take your seat: no veil now to shut you out. Such was, and is, the love of Christ. He came to do the will of God. Yes, it was His will that we should have liberty to enter His holy presence without conscience of sins. And the Holy Ghost bears witness that the will of God the Father has been done by the Eternal Son of God.

James. Oh, John, there is just one point here I should like to be clear about. Does having no more conscience of sins mean that after we are saved we never sin again, are never conscious of sin? It is all very clear at conversion, but if the evil nature should act, and there should be sins after, what about those future sins?

John. Ah, James, that one point is the point with many an anxious soul. When we are born again, that is, have a new nature wholly of God, and are in the light of His presence, the more we are there, the more conscious we are of failure and sin. In that very epistle where we are looked at as in the light, as He is in the light, both these things run together: — "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," and also, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

James. I wish I could see this clearly.

John. May the Holy Ghost enable every anxious believer to see this, for He says, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Does not this take in all our sins from birth to glory? It is not their sins up to conversion. If so, what could put those away since? There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Has not the man Christ Jesus borne all our sins? Have they not been judged on the cross? Can God in righteousness ever impute one to us?

James. Then what must I do if I sin? Not that I want to sin, I long after holiness, for He is holy. I am sure I have at such a time lost communion of soul with God. What must I do? Have I then boldness or liberty to enter the holiest?

John. Certainly, you have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus — indeed this is what you must do, come right into the presence of God your Father, and there confess your sins. Think, now, is not Jesus He who bore these sins on the cross, in the presence of God, and, for you, your Advocate with the Father? Is He not the propitiation for your sins — the mercy-seat? Is not the Father righteous or just to forgive? Never forget that He cannot impute or charge the sin on you. He can only forgive.

James. Oh, I see, He cannot impute the sin to one who has been purged by the blood of Jesus. Believing this, I have a purged conscience.

John. Very well; now we will look at our difficulty. What can be the wilful sin spoken of here — this trampling under foot the Son of God? It is compared to one despising Moses' law, to whom there was no mercy; and far sorer judgment must be inflicted on those who commit this sin. You will notice, as in chapter 6, the apostle spoke of those who had tasted, not those who had drunk in, the truth of Christ. So here, it is not those who had received the truth in the love of it, but those who "have received the knowledge of the truth." This is a very different matter. This would, no doubt, for a time sanctify, or separate them for a while, with the company or people separated by the one offering of Christ. There were the two things at that time going on, the temple worship, with all its sacrifices, which can never take away sins; and the gathering together as believers in Christ to worship in spirit and in truth. Some were evidently giving up thus assembling themselves together. No if it were unpardonable of old for any to despise Moses' law, what was it to wilfully despise Christ — to trample the Son of God underfoot as an apostate — to treat His blood as unholy? Having shown the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ, and that God had taken away, set aside, all the sacrifices of the law, had no pleasure in them, because they could not take away sins; he now simply declares that if any sinned wilfully, by rejecting Christ and His infinite sacrifice, there was no other sacrifice for sins: and to all who thus despised Christ, there was nothing to look for but certain fearful judgment. Is not this so. James? Have you so despised Christ?

James. Oh dear no, I want to know Him more and more. Despise the one atoning sacrifice of Christ, and go back to the sacrifices of the law; or to the pretended sacrifices of modern priests; or to despise Him by denying His Deity as Son of God; or His atoning death? No, no; I never thought of so denying my Lord and my God. It is strange I ever had such difficulty in this scripture. It is plain enough. If there is only one infinite sacrifice for sins, to despise it, there can be no other, there can be no remission, there must be terrible, everlasting judgment. Dreadful words, no more sacrifice for sins! Through countless ages of eternity, no more sacrifice for sins — Jesus dies no more — no more sacrifice — no more remission! Surely I never thought how terrible it is to despise Christ. What infinite mercy to be able to say, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Ver. 37.)

John. We often find, by patient study of the word of God, that what at first sight seems to present a difficulty, when understood is full of richest blessing. Just think now what this chapter 10 presents to faith. The atoning death of Christ is seen to be the very eternal will of God. This has been accomplished by the Son of God. The worshipper, therefore, once purged, has no more

conscience of sins — for ever perfected by the one offering of Christ. The Holy Ghost bears witness to all this. Sins no more imputed, no more remembered, and we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

James. What peace of conscience and heart this gives! The will of God. The work of Christ. The witness of the Holy Ghost. The three Persons of the Godhead engaged in bringing the poor sinner to God.

John. Well, James, have you any more difficulties? as we must part again for a time.

James. I am glad you are willing to continue these conversations. At our next meeting I should like you to explain this: a person in our parts asked me this question. He stated that the apostle said, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.” Now, said he, does not that imply at least that even Paul thought there was a possibility of his becoming a castaway, or reprobate? This seems to make many persons question that salvation is not eternal.

John. Well, James, if there really were such a scripture we must honestly admit it would imply the possibility of a true Christian becoming a castaway, or reprobate. In the meantime, will you look if you can find such a text. For the present, good-bye.

No. 3.

John. Well, James, have you found such a scripture as the apostle saying, I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway, or reprobate? As we said in our last conversation, such a scripture would clearly imply that even Paul might become a reprobate; and this, of course, would shake to the foundation the truth of eternal salvation.

James. But is there not such a scripture in 1 Corinthians 9:27? And, to tell you the truth, John, it is a scripture that has greatly troubled me, and thousands more. The possibility of a Christian becoming a castaway, or reprobate, as I am told the word really means, is no light matter.

John. Read it carefully; and now, where is there a thought in it of a Christian becoming a reprobate? It is, lest “I myself should be,” not, should become, a reprobate.

James. I never noticed that before. Surely that makes a wide difference.

John. You will see this still more clearly, if you turn to another scripture written to this same assembly. “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . . Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith . . . Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be [not become] reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:3-5.) This is the same word reprobates as is translated castaway in the other scripture. Thus, with the apostle, there were only two things before him: either Christ Jesus in you, or ye are reprobates. No thought of a Christian becoming a reprobate. He says, “But, I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.” Neither had he any personal uncertainty in the first epistle. (Chap. 9: 24-27.) It was the apostle’s habit to say I, when he transferred the question to himself, as in 1 Corinthians 4:6. What he shows is this: it will not do to trust to being a preacher to others. Just as he shows in chapter 10 it will not do to trust to merely making a profession by baptism.

James. Then do we understand that a man may be a preacher to others, and yet be a reprobate, if there be no holiness of life, the fruit of faith?

John. No doubt that is the fact distinctly taught in the word, in more places than one. There are many such preachers — not a few — who are reprobates; Christ Jesus never was in them, as He says, He never knew them — men held in great estimation, and who seem to have done a great work for God, and yet are reprobates, and will perish everlastingly. You know, James, if a preacher is a reprobate, he cannot become one.

James. I was going to say, this is dreadful to think on. Surely it is very heart-searching. It is enough to make every one, preacher or not, say, Am I resting on myself and my doings, and all the while practising sin? or am I resting in Christ, and, by the power of the Holy Ghost, walking in holiness — keeping under my body? But does the scripture teach there are many such preachers?

John. Hearken to the very words of Christ: “Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:20-23.) And did you ever notice, a mark of a reprobate preacher, or one who takes the place of servant, but says in his heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken”? Will not the Lord appoint him “his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”? (Matthew 24:48-51.) It is rarely a faithful word is spoken to preachers. But you see it is not a question of a true christian minister becoming a reprobate, but of “false teachers among you” who are reprobates. Are there none in this day who say in their heart, My Lord delayeth His coming? Are there no preachers who smite with pen or tongue their fellow-servants, and who find their pleasure at the world’s table? They may not be drunkards, but find their pleasure with the drunkards.

James. This is very solemn truth, it makes me tremble. Just think: a man to be a preacher to others, and yet a reprobate! And not to know it; be trusting to his supposed official character and popularity; and yet at last to hear those dreadful words, “I never knew you.” It reminds me of Noah’s carpenters, if he had any; what an awful thing, to be so near the ark, and yet shut out. In the ark, or out of it; in Christ, or out of Christ. But, John, you said something about false teachers. If I mistake not, that is in the very chapter I wanted to ask you about: yes, these words have been quoted to me to prove that the Christian has not eternal life, or eternal salvation, but that, after all, he may be lost — that the latter end with them is worse than the beginning. These verses are so often used to perplex souls, I should like to read them over with you. “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” (2 Peter 2:20-22.) Does not that really look as if a true Christian, one of Christ’s sheep, to whom He gives eternal life, may, after all, be lost? What do you say to this, John?

John. Nay, it is not what I say, but what does it say? Are they Christians at all that are spoken of? Is a dog, or a washed sow, a sheep? All depends on who the “they” are. “If, after they have escaped,” &c. If we read the whole chapter, then we see clearly that the “they” are “false teachers among you.” What a picture of every feature of false teachers, from that day to this, in Christendom. Jude describes the same persons as natural men, not having the Spirit. One most distinct mark is that they mock and scoff at the coming of the Lord. They cannot bear it. (2 Peter 3:2-4.) “Scoffers, walking after their own lust, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” This must be the case when a natural man, not having the Spirit, is educated for the christian ministry, The end is sure to be bad, one way or other. It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness. The difference between mere knowledge and saying faith is very important. It does not say they had believed. There is not a line in this chapter describing the false teachers of Christendom that has not been fulfilled for these eighteen hundred years. Have you not noticed, James, that wherever the Spirit of God begins a work, the false teachers are sure to try to hinder it? But it would be most unjust to say this was also true of the faithful servants of Christ.

If you read a description of counterfeit, bad, false half-crowns, you would never dream that genuine ones were meant by the description. It might be difficult to tell them asunder, they might be electro-plate, but all would wear off in time. Just so the false teacher; he may be electro-plated with education, and the knowledge of Christianity, but in the end be like the dog, or the washed sow. How strange that godly souls should have been troubled with this chapter; there is not a word in it about them, except this, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

James. I see it is not, to use your figure, the good half-crown becoming a bad one.

John. Just so. Never is there such a thought in scripture as a child of God becoming a reprobate. Can your child cease to be your child? It may become very naughty. It may fail, and you may have to chastise it. Even in nature the relationship is unalterable. If, then, a Christian could cease to be a Christian, the Spirit would never have used such a term expressive of unchanging relationship.

James. Certainly there is a great difference between a servant in a house, and a son.

John. Yes, it is the Lord who says, “and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever.” Doubtless this applies primarily to Himself: but what saith the scripture to those who are born again, who are the children of God? Are they to fear that some day they may not be the children of God, but lost? No; “For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so he that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Romans 8:15-17.)

Now, James, whilst a servant that is a professor, even a greatly admired teacher, may be a reprobate and perish everlastingly, yet a child is a child for all that. Do you think, James, if a Christian, a child of God, could be lost, that God would use such language as this? — “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son and if a son, then an heir of God through

Christ." (Galatians 4:6-7.) A servant abideth not in the house; the Christian can no more be on that principle. Oh, the blessedness of that unchangeable relationship! if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. If Satan and men tell you this is not true, will you believe them, or God? If the Spirit of God dwell in you, you are a joint-heir with Christ. Wondrous unity! He must cease to be Christ, if you can cease to be a Christian.

James. It seems almost too good to be true. That assurance of joint-heirship with Christ is so different from my past state of fear, and doubt, and uncertainty. I do not think, John, you can have any idea of the gloom such teaching as I have had produces. I do not wonder that many who are sincere lose their reason. I have been told I might be a happy, faithful Christian all my life, just about to enter heaven, fail at last — just at last — and go down to endless woe. Like a ship, they say, after having braved: the storms of a long, long voyage, and heavily laden with merchandise, is just entering the port with streaming flags; see, she strikes a rock as she enters the harbour. Down she goes, and every hand perishes in sight of home. Now, John, can a man be happy under such teaching as that?

John. Happy! I should say not. All well enough if applied to a mere deceived professor, a reprobate. But to teach the child of God such dark unbelief, must surely be the work of him who long ago urged, "Yea, hath God said?" Will you read Ephesians 1:1-23? Has not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as truly blessed the believer now even with all spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ, as he will be blest with when in glory? Is he not "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory?" Does not that seal make the inheritance as sure as if we had it now? Think of this, James: joint-heirs with Him who is raised from the dead, "and set at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power," &c. Oh, think of that man Christ Jesus in the glory, Heir of all things, and that we are joint-heirs with Him! If he abideth ever, all the Son's joint-heirs abide for ever. Remember we have been reconciled unto God by His death. (Romans 5:10.) So far from Paul having such a thought as that he might personally become a reprobate, he says, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:1-39; read vers. 28-39.)

James. That seems unanswerable; but they say, Yes, but there is the rock at the harbour: if he should sin before he gets into heaven, he will be lost.

John. And the scripture says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And again, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 1:8; 1 John 2:1-2.) Oh, precious Advocate and mercy-seat! I may fail, James, but He will never. I dare not trust myself one step of the way; but my heart has perfect rest in Him. He who has sought His lost sheep, and placed it on His shoulder, will safely bring it home.

James. I am thankful there is no such thought as that of a true Christian becoming a reprobate in the word of God. If there had been, I should have been certain to become one. I hope now to rest in Christ. There is another scripture I should be most thankful to look at — it is this, "Work out your

own salvation with year and trembling." I can assure you, great numbers are troubled by these few words, and I do not know exactly how to answer them. They will have it, that after all, salvation depends on themselves.

John. We must close here, James, for the present. If the Lord will, we will take up that subject in our next conversation. In the mean time seek to keep your eye on Christ, and not on self.

No. 4.

James. I am thankful for another opportunity of conversing with you on such portions of the word as many feel difficult to understand. The scripture I named was this, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Php 2:12.) Many understand by this that they are by works of their own righteousness to finish, or complete their salvation. Some would say they were regenerated, or saved, by baptism, but that their final salvation has to be worked out by themselves. Others have some idea that they are justified by faith to start with; but still their final salvation depends on their own working it out some way themselves, and they quote this scripture in proof. So that the difficulty is this — How can salvation be eternal, if it depends on our works of righteousness?

John. If we examine the context, the very opening of the epistle shows that the apostle could have had no such thought. He says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform [or finish] it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is said, too, in connection with these very words, "Wherefore [or so] my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

James. Then the apostle's confidence was in God, that He would finish the work in them unto the day of Jesus Christ.

John. Now, further, James. As you have beard these words explained, did it not look more like words of our own righteousness for salvation?

James. Well, that is what it comes to. I am saved by Christ so far, but never learnt how far; but my final salvation depends on my working it out to the end, so that I must keep the law for righteousness, and the day of judgment will decide whether I have done so.

John. But if on that ground, and if that can possibly be the meaning we do not need to wait for the day of judgment. If we think we are working out our own salvation by works of law, we are surely condemned: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" and "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 3:10; Galatians 5:1-14.) "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." (Ver. 18.) Indeed, nowhere is this truth more forcibly brought out than in this very Epistle to the Philippians. This doctrine of salvation by works of law is the concision of which we are to beware. (Chap. 3: 2.) And Paul, looking back on his whole religious life as a Jew, could say, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But what does he say of all that system of works for salvation? He says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Yea, he utterly renounces this plan of works for salvation, and "counts them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Now mark, this not only

expresses his then present state, but that at the very end he should not be found in, or having his own righteousness. He longs for the resurrection from among the dead, and then to be found in Him (Christ), the righteousness which is of God. Therefore Paul cannot possibly teach doctrine the very contrary of all this, as though Christ had saved us in a very limited sense, and we had to complete what He had begun by our works of law for righteousness. Have I made it clear that he could not mean by “work out your own salvation,” that we had not eternal salvation in Christ, but it must be by works done by ourselves?

James. You have certainly made it clear as to what it does not mean; indeed, I remember the apostle says elsewhere, “And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace.” And again, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Romans 4:5; Romans 11:6.) But, John, the question is, what do these words mean, “Work out your own salvation”? I am quite satisfied as to what they do not mean; for if a man could work out his own salvation before God, what need was there at all for the death and resurrection of Christ?

John. Quite true. We will, then, now look at what these words do mean. The Lord give us the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And first, it is of importance to notice that these words are not addressed at all to an unconverted sinner, nor even to an individual saint or believer, but to an assembly. “To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops [or elders] and deacons.” Of course, as the assembly of God is composed of saved individuals in Christ, what is said to the assembly as a whole is said to each individual member, but still in the assembly character. Further, notice, the state of this assembly was such that the apostle could say, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy; for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first until now.” Now, James, do you see that all this must first be settled in your soul before there is a word about working out your own salvation? Are you a saint in Christ Jesus? Remember, to such there is no condemnation, and no separation. (Romans 8:1-39.) All such are accepted in the Beloved. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Ephesians 1:3-8.) In Him they are complete, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. For Christ is made unto them “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (Colossians 1:12-14; Colossians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30.) Thus, if we look at the saint as seen of God in Christ, his salvation is accomplished and eternal, He “having obtained eternal redemption for us.” And all this fully proved to be without works in Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21; Galatians 2:16. Nay, as many as are of the principle of works for salvation before God are under the curse.

Then, James, are you in Christ? If you are, then Christ is in you. (Romans 8:1-9.) And this is the first statement, the foundation of all that follows. “To the saints in Christ Jesus.” Mark, James, to such there can be no uncertainly as to the final issue. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform [or finish] it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 6.)

You will find it will help to clear the meaning of this difficult text, that as justification before God is the subject in Romans 1:1-32; Romans 2:1-29; Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25; Romans 8:1-39, and justification before men the subject of James; thus, the one by faith, the other by works (both true and important, surely, in their place),

and no contradiction, but in perfect harmony; so the subject of the believer's standing in Christ is the theme of Ephesians 1:1-23; Ephesians 2:1-22; Ephesians 3:1-21. The saints, as seen of God in Christ, having eternal salvation, perfected for ever, as Hebrews 10:1-39. So, in Philippians, the assembly is presented as seen amongst men, pressing through this wilderness-world to the glory yet to be revealed. So that, James, I do not well see how any believers can understand this working out their own salvation until they have first seen what it is to be in Christ Jesus before God, and that this is secured unto the day of Christ. And, further, they must be on the same ground of the one assembly of God on earth amongst men.

James. I had never thought a word about all this.

John. I dare say; and as little have they thought who try to perplex you with this text. But are not these the facts? Was not this epistle written to such as were in Christ? and is it not chiefly occupied with the assembly's behaviour in this world? much as James and Peter teach works before men. What men see (James 2:14-24), "ye see."

James. Why, John, already the epistle becomes quite new to me. What a pity it is to jumble the scriptures together, and thus lose their distinctive teaching!

John. We will now go on, only carefully notice the assembly character of the teaching. "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 in nothing terrified by your adversaries . . . For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Chap. 1: 27-30.) I must say, James, I cannot see how Christians can work out these divine assembly principles, unless they are on the ground of the one assembly of God, in the unity of the Spirit. How could the company of a ship work out the orders of the captain in the spirit of unity, if they had left the one ship, and were flying their sails in boats of their own? I do assure you, James, these words are very precious and timely to all who desire to do the will of God. You see, James, it is the assembly of God on earth in the midst of many adversaries. Pursue it, and study every verse. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Has not Christendom sadly departed from all this? Yes, even to defend divisions the very opposite of this assembly truth.

Then, James, we have the Lord Himself, as seen as Man on this earth. "Who, being in the form of God . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant," &c. In this world He took the lowest possible place. Now, is not the aim of the multitude in Christendom just the opposite of this? every one seeking to be a little higher in the world before men. The blessed Lord looked forward to the glory He should have, not in a world where Satan is the acknowledged prince, but with His Father.

"Wherefore [or so] my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much wore in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Now, whether we look at the verses before or what comes after, it is plain this is not the question of the soul's salvation from sin, the eternal salvation wrought out by Christ; for sin is nowhere the question in this epistle, but the simple point is the difference between the presence and absence of the apostle in the assembly at

Philippi. They had had his support in the midst of terrible opposition. He had laboured hard to save them as an assembly from adversaries. Now he was absent, a prisoner of Jesus Christ at Rome. They would now have to work out their own salvation, or deliverance from enemies without or within, with fear and trembling; not with high-mindedness and boasting. Christ was their example. And mark, he does not direct them to a bishop in his absence; no, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” It is a salvation similar to that meant when Peter said, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” (Acts 2:40.) Jude speaks of the same thing, not, however, to make them uncertain as to eternal salvation — no, but “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus.” Then follow directions how they are to behave in the sad circumstances of these last days.

James. Then how were the Philippians to work out their own salvation?

John. Read on, James. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life,” &c. Are you satisfied, James?

James. It is altogether so new to me; would you mind having a little further conversation on this subject, and especially as to its present application to those who desire to be on the ground of the assembly of God?

John. It will give me pleasure to do so the next time we meet, if the Lord will.

Chapter 80

082. Hezekiah; or Brief Lessons on Church Truths.

Hezekiah; or Brief Lessons on Church Truths.

2 Chronicles 29:1-36. A Brief Outline of Lectures on Hezekiah.

It is important to notice, that, at this time, both Judah and Israel had utterly departed from the Lord. Sad, and low indeed, was Judah's condition, as described in 2 Chronicles 28:1-27; all was wrong; all apostasy and idolatry. What a hopeless picture! But a picture drawn for us — written for us. Is it not a picture of all around? A man said to me the other day, as an excuse for remaining in what he knew to be wrong, "I have read, and compared the Acts, the early days of the church, with all I see now; and all is so different from what I read, that I have no hope of things being right, and so I go on as I am." In contrast with this man, we read of Hezekiah, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." (Ver. 2.) Yes, in the midst of all that was wrong, he did that which was right; and mark, not in his own sight, not in his own opinion, but in the sight of the Lord. This, then, is the foundation-principle of our present lesson: God can raise up a man, can enable His child, to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, in the midst of all that is wrong.

These things were written for our instruction, and how very striking the analogy! Has not Christendom departed as far from the inspired teaching of the Holy Ghost, as Judah had departed from the inspired words of Moses? When the one is seen as a picture of the other, then every verse contains instruction to our souls.

Let us notice three things, as especially illustrating the present condition of Christendom:

First, "They have shut up the doors of the porch."

Secondly, "And put out the lamps."

Thirdly, "And have not burned incense, nor offered burnt-offerings, in the holy place." (Ver. 7.)

If we look at the established church of God, as found in the beginning, we find the way into the holiest open; every believer, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:1-39.); perfected for ever by the one offering; all purged worshippers in the unclouded presence of God.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Delivered from the power of darkness; translated into the kingdom of His dear Son; absolute certainty as to redemption and forgiveness of sins; all trespasses forgiven: sins to be remembered no more, no more; immutable peace with God, according to all that God is; no longer afar off, but so near, in all the fulness of the Father's love. (Colossians 1:12-14; Colossians 2:13; Hebrews 10:1-39; Romans 5:1-21, &c.)

Compare all this with the state of Christendom for centuries. Read all prayer-books — Roman, Greek, Anglican, and especially the sad, despairing wail of the Ritualists. Yea, hearken to the pulpit prayers of all Christendom. Is this the worship of divine certainty — that sins have been

atoned for, and, having been confessed to God, are all forgiven? Hark, is this the worship of the Christian in the holiest, in perfect peace with God? Has not Christendom practically shut up the doors? and, instead of the worship of the purged worshipper inside the veil, is it not taking again the place of the Jew afar off, crying for mercy, just as the Jew did before redemption was accomplished? Is not this saying we are Jews, when we are not; the sin of unbelief? Is it not like denying that Jesus has come in the flesh, and finished the work — that work of redemption — which the Father gave Him to do? Do not millions still pray as Jewish disciples were taught by the Lord before His death and resurrection, “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us”? In contrast with the Christian’s thanksgivings now, “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” The scripture says to all Christians, “Having forgiven you all trespasses.” (Colossians 2:13.) Christendom says, No; we must keep praying to God as miserable sinners, hoping that God will forgive us. Oh, how sad our unbelief! Have we not also shut up the doors? This is so solemn, that I must dwell upon it a little longer. If it were sad for Judah to shut up the doors, is it not far more so now? “Then, verily, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary,” &c. And there was still the veil that shut man out: no saint, not a David, or an Isaiah, could pass that veil. Now the established church, as found in scripture, was the very contrast of all this. No worldly sanctuary, and no veil to shut out the least of all saints: the veil was rent, and there was boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus. The believer’s calling and worship now is heavenly. Oh, how sad the departure from God’s established church! to go not only back to a worldly sanctuary and ordinances, but practically to hang up again the rent veil, and shut up the doors. Not only so, they had “put out the lamps.”

What did the seven lamps of the sanctuary typify? Was it not the Spirit of God in the assembly, or church? The all-sufficiency of the Holy Ghost? Those seven lamps were to be lighted, “that they may give light over against it” (the golden candlestick) — the very command of Jehovah, when He spake the first time, from between the cherubim. (Numbers 8:1-26.) And was not that golden candlestick Christ? And in that light stood the table of showbread — the twelve representative loaves, borne on that table, covered with pure gold, and the loaves covered with frankincense. What a picture! The whole redeemed children of God sustained, borne, in divine righteousness, before God, and covered with all the preciousness of Christ. Not now, however, twelve loaves — there were twelve tribes of Israel — there is only “one body,” and therefore only one loaf on the table of the Lord. But as all the particles of bread are chemically one loaf, so all Christians form spiritually the one body of Christ. All borne in divine righteousness before God — all covered with the perfections of Christ — one with Christ, the Head. But where was the beauty of all these golden shadows of Christ when the lamps were put out? All was darkness. Can this be a picture of Christendom? If such was the place and importance of the seven lamps of the temple, what is the place and importance of the Holy Ghost in the divinely established church of God? Did you ever notice how much this occupied the thoughts of Christ that last night He spent with His disciples? “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive,” &c. (John 14:17.) Again, the promise is repeated in verse 26, “He shall teach you all things.” Again, John 15:26, and much of John 16:1-33, is occupied with this all-important assurance of the coming and presence of the Spirit. It was even expedient that Jesus should go away, that the Spirit might come. And just as the typical lamps gave light over against the candlestick, so the Holy Ghost “will guide you into all truth.” And “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you.” When redemption was

accomplished, and Jesus received up to the right hand of God — Pentecost being fully come — the Holy Ghost was sent down to take His place and form the church of God. Thus, as when the lamps were lit, all was light in the sanctuary: so when the Holy Ghost had His place in the church of God, all was light.

What a reality this was! Take just one instance. The church was gathered together; the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them;” and these beloved, honoured ministers of Christ were sent to that special mission by the Holy Ghost. (Acts 13:1-4.) And His divine place is fully recognised in the epistles. (See 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, “Dividing to every man severally as he will.”) Oh, think of the established church of the scriptures! The Holy Ghost revealing the glory of Christ, using whom He will, in the assembly. The prophets thus speaking, two or three. Oh, sad, solemn fact, for many, many centuries, man, as far as lies in him, has shut up the doors, and put out the lamps. Yes, as far as possible, the Holy Ghost has been displaced, until Christendom is so conscious of its distance from God, and its darkness, that it is constantly taking the place of the Jew before Christ died, and the Holy Ghost was sent down to abide to the end. Its prayers are those of the Jew afar off — cries for mercy; and on all sides, in the dark, may be heard prayers for the Holy Spirit to come, as though the Father had refused to send Him, and He had not come. Is not all this far more sad than the state of Judah in the days of Hezekiah? Yes, for centuries cries for mercy, distance and darkness, instead of incense and burnt-offerings, worship and adoration, in the full, blessed enjoyment of our acceptance, in all the sweet savour of Christ. In the first year of Hezekiah’s reign, He opened the doors of the house of the Lord. No doubt he lighted the lamps, but this is not recorded. However we may have grieved and set aside the Holy Spirit, He is still here. He has not to come again. We have to own Him, in unfeigned dependence. And has not God, rich in mercy, opened again the doors of the house of the Lord? Has He not restored to our souls, in these days, the discovery, that, instead of saying we are Jews, and standing afar off, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? Has He not swept away to faith the rubbish of all human, worldly sanctuaries? May we never forget the all-sufficiency of the Holy Ghost. Again, unhindered, may He ever glorify Christ. Oh, wondrous grace, thus to restore the long-lost worship in spirit and in truth!

Those words of Hezekiah are very applicable again — “My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him.” Yes, the Lord has chosen a feeble little band; may my reader be one of them. And what was the effect when the doors were open, the rubbish taken out, and the lamps burning brightly? “They brought seven bullocks, and seven rams and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah.” All these were killed, and the blood sprinkled upon the altar. Hands were laid on the sin-offering, and reconciliation made for all Israel. And what has been the case since our God has been pleased to make known the open way into the holiest, in these days, and to gather again His children in the guardian care of the Holy Ghost? Fuller and deeper discoveries of the infinite value of the blood of Jesus! The glories and perfections of His Person! In each of these offerings the number was seven — the one offering of Christ, perfect in every aspect. The blood was sprinkled on the altar, before hands were laid on the sin-offering, in identification. Oh, my soul, dwell on this — yea, go a little further, for it is the same principle. On the day of atonement see the golden censer, and the sweet incense, beaten small, and the fire from off the altar, and the cloud

of incense covering the mercy-seat. That censer had no pattern, its manufacture is not on record. No; in this figure see the uncreated, eternal Son — the Holy, Holy, Holy One! as known only to the Father. And why all this first, before the blood is taken in, and sprinkled before God? Does not God solemnly tell us in this, that no less a victim could make reconciliation for sins? Such His wrath against sin, no other propitiation for the sins of men could be made. And, more, nothing could meet the claims of God but that which is equal to God. He who in the beginning was with God, and was God; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. Just as the blood was first taken in, and sprinkled before God, and then afterwards sins, all transferred to the people's goat, and borne away, so, in our chapter, the three sevens — the bullocks, the rams, and the lambs — were first killed, and their blood sprinkled upon the altar, thus presented before God, and then hands laid on the sin-offering. What, then, is this distinction? and what its lesson to our souls? Surely that the death of Jesus has first met the infinite claims of God — His righteous, holy claims. It was taken into the holiest, figure of the heaven of heavens. Yes, the blood of Jesus must be shed, or how otherwise could God have dwelt in this sin-defiled universe? Precious words of Jesus, "I have glorified thee." Oh, the glory of the cross! He must needs suffer. "It is finished!" Dwell on this. God is glorified, so glorified by that one offering once, that Jesus, crowned with glory, is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Three times seven fulfilled in this one offering.

Let us be clear about this point first. The resurrection of Jesus, by the glory of the Father, proves that God is perfectly, infinitely glorified — immutably, eternally so. For a moment sin had dishonoured God; the death of Jesus has glorified Him through eternal ages. It was not that God only loved us, precious as that is; but He must be glorified, He must be righteous, in justifying us. But if the death of Jesus has met the greater, the first requirement, the infinite claims of the holiness of God: then is it not manifest that He has met the lesser, the sinner's need? What, then, are those hands laid on the seven goats, killed to make atonement? And, mark well, this was for all Israel, not merely Judah, but the revolted tribes of Israel. This is important; the atonement is not merely for those who attain to a certain path of holiness, but for the whole church of God, wherever found — for all believers who have passed from death unto life; though many such may be found in revolted tribes of men. Think, then of the sins of the whole redeemed church of God: transferred to the holy, spotless Victim, who died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! What a sight! What a sin-offering! Did He fail? God is glorified, we are sanctified, by that one offering.

I now ask the closest attention to the present place and position of Christ. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12.) What do we see here? The One who glorified God on the cross, sat down. The words, for ever, mean in immutable continuity. Nothing can disturb that immutable rest He has, in the unclouded presence of God. But then these very same words are applied to every child of God, in verse 14: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Mark, He hath done it by one offering. He hath perfected, in immutable continuity, them that are sanctified. Remember, all the sins of the whole redeemed family of God transferred to Him, borne by Him. And now, as to all charge of sins, perfected in immutability; the Holy Ghost bears witness, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" — no more. Oh, why should we doubt God? Why say, No, no, this is not true? I must stand and pray for mercy afar off. Oh, dwell my soul for ever on the glory of the cross. Is it not remarkable that God should have restored to our souls in these days the very truths

typically set forth in the history of Hezekiah? But not only do we find the sin-offering, but also the burnt-offering; that is, not only have our sins been transferred to Christ Jesus, and borne by Him beneath the consuming judgment of God, and those sins put away, to be remembered no more, but also we are identified with Him in all the burnt-offering aspect of His death; a sweet savour to God. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began. Then “all the congregation worshipped.” All this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. Yes, there can be no real worship until the Holy Ghost reveals to the soul the immutability of the work of Jesus, and our immutable perfection by that one offering — complete identification with Him, in all the unchanging perfections of His Person, for a sweet savour before God. Will this lift up the heart in spiritual pride? “The king and all that were with him, bowed themselves, and worshipped.” We are thus brought to bow ourselves, and joy in God. “And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.” Is it not even so? Instead of standing at a distance, uttering prayers of unbelief, have we not been brought to own again the presence of the Holy Ghost? Has He not brought before us the glory of the Person of Christ, and boldness to enter the holiest by His precious blood? Yes, and instead of cries for mercy, has He not put songs of praise in our lips, and worship and gladness in our hearts?

“Then Hezekiah said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the Lord, come near.” What is consecration? The margin reads, filled your hands. Yes, if the Holy Ghost reveals the immutable Person and work of Christ, the effect is, we are filled with Christ; and that is consecration. If this is not so, we shall be taken up with men, and things, and so-called churches of men. But if the doors are open, the lamps lighted, Christ revealed, He, He will engross every thought and desire. Oh, to live on account of Christ, as He lived on account of the Father! And if we are thus consecrated to Him, thus filled with Him, then the consecrated things will be in abundance. Six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep. Nay, we are not our own. Burnt-offerings in abundance, with the fat of peace-offerings, and drink-offerings! What untold delight of heart, filled with all the fulness of Christ! “So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order.” When Christ by the Spirit has His true place, then the house is in order. All else that man calls order is simply the house in disorder.

“And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.” What God did then in Judah, has He not done now in Christendom? Is it the hand of God, or another sect? Has God, during the last fifty years, opened the doors, and revealed the way into the holiest? The believer, by the one offering of Christ, perfected, as to the conscience, in immutable continuity? — and all this in direct contrast with the Judaism into which Christendom had sunk. Has not God, by the Spirit, awakened His people in all parts of the world — in Java, in Russia, throughout Europe, America, Australia? The thing is of God, and done suddenly. Souls are being brought from the dark regions of unbelief to the unclouded presence of God, With joy and gladness. Is there a doubt that this work is of God? To Him be all praise! Oh, what grace and mercy to us in these last days! The Passover.

2 Chronicles 30:1-27.

We shall now find some very important church truth typified in this chapter. The order is very striking. We have had the doors open — the full gospel of God; the grace that brings the prodigal right into the presence of the Father. Then, the lamps giving their full, perfect light; the Holy Ghost taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us; the infinite value of His one sacrifice; our

immutable perfection by that offering, accepted in all the sweet savour of the burnt-offering, the Lamb of God — the joy, gladness, and worship.

Now the invitation goes forth to come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel. And in wisdom and counsel, both of the king, the princes, and all the congregation, this must be, not in the appointed time, the fourteenth day of the first month, but in the second month. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together at Jerusalem. (Ver. 3.)

If we read carefully Luke 22:1-20, we see how the Lord's supper took the place of the passover. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." The last passover before He suffered: Himself the fulfilment of it. He then presented Himself to faith, no longer the body of the lamb, or the cup of the passover. The passover looked forwards — the Lord's supper is a remembrance. "This do in remembrance of me." The blessed Lord Himself, our Passover, is slain. It is no longer the wine of the passover, but the cup, in remembrance of His blood shed for us. But they were to come to Jerusalem, to the house of the Lord. Is there any such house of the Lord now? any place of worship, or earthly sanctuary? No, there is no such place now. All this belonged to the first covenant, or to Judaism. "Then, verily, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." (Hebrews 9:1.) What, then, have we now, if all the system of worldly sanctuaries, called the house of God — places of worship with divine service; all this is simply Judaism; not a vestige of which have we in the New Testament. What have we, as the true centre of gathering? Have we not Christ Himself? Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20.) I know that in millennial days to come, Jerusalem shall be the city of the Great King. But let us remember that at present He, as their King, is cut off, and has nothing; and that now the only place of gathering is to Him, the rejected One. But why did they keep the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month?

If we turn to Numbers 9:1-12, we shall find a very distinct reason given there. The keeping of the passover in the first month is confirmed: but there were some men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day. The question was brought before the Lord; and the answer of the Lord was, that if any were unclean by reason of a dead body, &c., they should keep the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month. Thus Hezekiah acknowledged the defiled state of Israel. Is it not so with the church of God? Is it in its first condition, or second? Has it become defiled by the dead body of the world? Oh, does it not become us thus to own the sad, defiled, ruined state of the church as a testimony for Christ?

Now we come to a very important point. The invitation and responsibility to keep the passover was as extensive as the atonement. The sin-offering, the reconciliation, was made for ALL Israel. ALL Israel are invited, and responsible, to come and keep the passover. So they "make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even unto Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written." This deeply important principle as to the Lord's table, also, is little understood. The analogy is striking; souls everywhere, who have been led to own the Holy Ghost in the assembly, like the lamps in the sanctuary, have been also lead next to remember the Lord's death, in the

breaking of bread. Nay, more, they have learnt from holy scripture that the church had not done it of a long time, in such sort as it was written. I am not aware of an instance for seventeen centuries, where Christians broke bread as it was written, until within about the last fifty years {before 1890}. There was always something omitted, or added, to what was written. I need not dwell on the Mass. But what were we doing? Take one thing added, which we all thought right — a minister administering the sacrament. Was this written in the inspired word? Where? Disciples came together to break bread, or "we came together." (Acts 20:1-38.) In 1 Corinthians 10:1-33; 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, is there a thought of such a person at the Lord's table? This is not a question of the gifts of Christ: the evangelist to preach the gospel, and the teacher to teach the church of God. But at the Lord's table, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Place a man unscripturally to administer, and the communion is lost sight of! It is the expression, essentially, of equal co-partnership in that blood, and in that one body. Blessed fact, every redeemed sinner has equal partnership in the reconciliation; every washed soul whiter than snow! Fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. Where it is service, then all are not alike. Just as in a firm — one servant may have a pound per week, whilst a foreman may have three. But co-partners are all equally alike. In the equal co-partnership, fellowship, communion of His blood, communion of His body. There are no servants, and no foreman, in scripture to administer the sacrament. No, for a long time the Lord's supper had not been kept as it was written. Oh, the grace, the love our Father has, to have restored it in these last days, before the coming of the Lord. But have we understood the heart of Christ in this? The invitation, and the responsibility to gather to His name, to break bread as it is written? Is not the invitation to do so as wide as the atonement? The responsibility reaches every reconciled child of God on earth. Not only Judah owning allegiance to Hezekiah, but to every Israelite in the revolted tribes. Not only those gathered, and owning allegiance, to Christ, but every redeemed soul in every revolted sect on earth, from Beersheba even unto Dan. As there was the perfect substitution offered, the seven goats for all Israel: we must understand here Israel as a type of the whole redeemed church of God, whatever their outward position. And this is a great truth, that every believer, passed from death unto life, stands in all the immutable perfection of Christ, accepted in the Beloved — sins and iniquities to be remembered no more, no more! Is not the Lord's table, as it is written, the true place for every one of them? Yes, the basis of gathering to Christ to break bread, our passover, is as wide as the atonement. Does not Jesus say to every reconciled soul, "Do this in remembrance of me"? And would He not have each one enjoy communion with Himself? Other questions will arise, but the basis of true fellowship is seen to be equal to the extent of the atonement. So the posts passed from city to city, but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Oh, when did not men despise the message and the messengers of the Lord? It was so in the days of Noah, of Lot: yea, when the Son of God walked in the midst of men. And even so now, the present work of God in love is despised of men. Nevertheless, divers humbled themselves and came. Also in Judah, the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king, and of the princes, by the word of the Lord. And is not the hand of the Lord seen now gathering souls to Christ, and giving them one heart? If it is not this, it is only another sect in selfwill. Yes, it is the hand of the Lord. Reader, are you asleep, or awake; can you discern the present heart and hand of the Lord? If so, it is a little thing to be laughed to scorn. The next point in order is this: when the

Lord had thus gathered a company to keep the passover, “They arose, and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.” (Chap. 30: 12-14.) Thus, where the Lord has now gathered a company to break bread, as it is written, the first thing, is to put away from themselves everything inconsistent with the holiness of His presence. Just as when the doors were opened, the cleansing away the rubbish began in the very holiest. The holiest we enter in perfect peace with God. There, surely, holiness becomes that holy place. This is a solemn point to all whom the hand of the Lord doth gather, to keep the Lord’s supper, as it is written.

Sanctification. The effect of killing the passover was, that the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves. It is very important rightly to divide the word of life, as to the subject of sanctification. There are three kinds of sanctification come before me in scripture.

First, the absolute, immutable sanctification of every believer by the one offering of Christ. Immutably perfect, this can never change. This, as we have noticed, is abundantly seen in Hebrews 10:10-19. This is what He hath done; and what He hath done must be perfect.

Secondly, there is sanctification in wickedness; separating ourselves in wickedness — abomination in the sight of the Lord. “They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one in the midst [or one after another], eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.” “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” In contrast with, “Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions,” &c. (Isaiah 66:17; Isaiah 66:2-4.) No doubt this applies to the Jews, and their cleaving to the man of sin. But it also has a solemn voice to us in these last days. Yes, the very last and worst marks of these last days. Can anything be worse than pretentious separation from others, but only to worse evil? Oh, beware of these mockers of the last time. “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.” (Jude.)

Thirdly, there is “sanctification in holiness.” This is not what we are by the work of Christ; but practical sanctification — sanctifying ourselves. Have you noticed how much there is in our chapters on Hezekiah about this, over and over again? “They could not keep the passover at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently.” This is not merely a question of gross sins, but defilement by touching the unclean. This we noticed in Numbers 9:1-23. Those who had touched a dead body were unclean. You could not say it was gross sin to do so. Neither could you say, True, that dead body is unclean, but I am alive, and not unclean. This would be to deny the word of the Lord. All these types show that before the Lord, contact with evil, is evil. To touch the dead body is to be unclean. But, say you, what is to be done in the present defiled state of Christendom? If the true ground of being gathered to the name of the Lord to keep the passover, the Lord’s supper, as it is written, be equal to the reconciliation, as we have seen; and if the invitation is also equal, does it not follow that all ought to be together, no matter what defilement? Is there an express word of the Lord to us on this, in the midst of all the circumstances of these last days? There is; and it is very plain. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood: and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use,

and prepared unto every good work." (2 Timothy 2:19-21.) And then, after describing the very corruptions of these days — yes, of that which bears the name of Christendom around us: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." What is the mind of the Lord? Does He say, Keep in it; try to mend it: use your influence for good in it? No! but "from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5.) This is to sanctify ourselves, to purge ourselves, to turn away from all known evil. But, oh, let it not be to a worse thing, but in holiness. The Lord search our hearts, and, by His precious word and Spirit, enable us to sanctify ourselves from all iniquity. Let us test ourselves by the precious words of Jesus. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:1-26.) This brings us to A Seeming Difficulty.

There were many that had not sanctified themselves (2 Chronicles 30:17), had not cleansed themselves; yet they did eat of the passover otherwise than it is written. How was this difficulty met? Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." This is very beautiful, and important instruction to us. When we think of those balances of the sanctuary, the words of Jesus above, oh, who is cleansed according to this purification? Not of the world, even as He is not of the world.

Suppose a Christian to be in such a place in the world, as a bishop of the church of England. As a Christian, he is a priest — for all Christians are priests. But he has not sanctified himself. He touches the dead body of this world. He is linked with the state, and defiled with all the defilement of this world. And he never kept the Lord's supper as it is written. But he earnestly desires once in his life to obey the Lord, and break bread as it is written. Does he thus prepare his heart? Does he seek to do the Lord's will? Is this really the state of his heart? Who are they, then, whom the hand of the Lord hath gathered in mercy and grace, to hinder him from obeying the Lord this once? Surely there is blessed instruction for us in this. And then, as it was with the priests, so would it be with this bishop. Would he not, when he found the blessedness of the Lord's supper as it is written, be ashamed of the link with the world, and cleanse himself? We ought to expect this. Let us not forget our dear precious Lord looks at the heart. Surely it would be altogether different with those who are deceiving, and being deceived, who do separate themselves, not having the Spirit. These may be easily known by their murmuring spirit, fully described in the Epistle of Jude. Many dear souls are only, it may be, deceived; and the Lord would have us so tender to these, "and of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." The Lord fill our hearts with love to all His own, who have been turned aside by men, and give us constantly to remember them in prayer. Surely we would fully own that none but the Holy Ghost is able to take care of the church of God in these last days.

Well, they kept the feast with great gladness, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. And all that came, even the strangers out of Israel, DWELT in Judah, and rejoiced. It is remarkably so now, seldom does a stranger Christian come from any revolted tribe or sect of men; but it is his joy to dwell, to abide, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus. Rarely can one ever go back that comes with a true heart, seeking the Lord. It is altogether so different. Oh, how little the children of God know what deep, sweet communion of soul they miss. Truly it makes one ashamed — and well we may be — but all is pure, free grace, unclouded and unbounded. And if

we confess, it is only now to feast again in His love. Oh, to really meet the Lord Himself! to sit at His feet! — the Holy Ghost present to glorify Him. Yes, deep, deep the joy. Great joy in Jerusalem; untold joy in His presence.

Now the Hammer and the Axe.

2 Chronicles 31:1-2.

Yes, “Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves.” As with the Thessalonians, they turned first to God, then from idols. We must be purged worshippers first within the veil, before there can be power for testimony without. This is God’s way. Then Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests, and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service. And did not the ascended Lord give gifts, every man according to his service? (Ephesians 4:1-32.) The Holy Ghost distributing to every man severally as He will. (1 Corinthians 12:1-31.) Is He not the same Lord above? Is He not the same Spirit here below? “Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17.) However the church may have failed — doors shut and lamps put out — have not as many as have been gathered to Christ found the Father the same; the Lord, the Holy Ghost the same? “No variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Let us, then, in faith wait on the Lord, and He will put both priests and Levites in their courses, every man according to his service for worship or service. This bring us to the question of Fruit. read 2 Chronicles 31:5-11.

How beautifully the order is still brought out! Now is the time for fruit. And what abundance did the children of Israel bring; of corn, wine, and oil, and dates. And the tithe of holy things consecrated unto the Lord their God, and they laid them by heaps; or, heaps, heaps. As all fruit must be in the power of resurrection to be perfect, so in this type, “In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month.” What a principle this is, and so little understood: “Dead to the law by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead: that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” (Romans 7:4.) “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.” (Php 3:10.) The Holy Ghost could not be given to dwell in us until Christ was risen from the dead and glorified. And if the Spirit could not be given until then, how could we have the fruits of the Spirit? What a contrast this is to man under law! But is it not a universal fact, wherever the doors are shut, and the lamps put out? Yes, wherever men are not led by the Spirit, they are invariably placed under the law, for fruit-bearing. Just as the opposite is also true, even as it is written: “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” (Galatians 5:18.)

How little is this true, only resurrection-foundation principle, in the power of the Holy Ghost, for fruit-bearing, understood! We might meditate on this with great profit. Has anything occurred answering to these heaps, heaps of fruits? The doors have been opened again by a full gospel. The Holy Ghost is again owned in the assembly; the immutable perfection of the believer, by the sacrifice of Christ again revealed. Joy and worship, the result. The Lord’s supper again as it is written. The Lordship of Christ owned; and the blessed fact again enjoyed, oneness with the risen Christ. The Holy Ghost known and owned as sent down to lead and guide. All this, not the work of men, but the hand of the Lord. Now, can it be denied that the blessed Spirit, now owned again, has poured forth such a stream of Christ-exalting ministry, by tongue and pen, as the church never

knew since He was set aside at the close of the apostolic age? This, not for money, or worldly applause, but the Holy Ghost, leading the children of God thus to serve in consecration to the Lord. Spiritually, we may say with Azariah, “Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the Lord hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store.” Now this is a notable fact, that since the Holy Ghost has been known, and oneness with the risen Christ believed, the most astonishing numbers of tracts and pamphlets, books and periodicals, have been sent forth, without any sectarian motive, but “unto the Lord,” and for the food and edification of His people. “Tracts, periodicals,” said a brother to me the other day; “I do not know what to do with them; it is impossible to read them all.” I dare say it would have been impossible for Hezekiah to have eaten all the oxen, and rams, and heaps, heaps of fruits. But was that God’s intention? And, my brother, you may have mistaken the Lord’s intention; it may not be that His only thought is, that you should eat all the heaps, heaps of precious fruits, thus laid up in the chambers, or depôts, of the treasuries of the Lord. This just brings us to the question, What is The Porter’s Situation?

Observe, in this business of the fruits, each name is known to the Lord, and registered; enough for the servant of the Lord. “And Kore, the son of Imnah the Levite, THE PORTER toward the east, was over the freewill-offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things.” (Ver. 14.) Let us examine the scriptures on this deeply interesting subject — the trusteeship and responsibilities of the porter. The first thought generally as to a porter in any establishment is, that it is the lowest situation. And it is true here also; if any man would serve the Lord, he must take the lowest place. Will you turn to 1 Chronicles 9:1-44, read verses 17-32. They were keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, keepers of the entry, porters of the door of the tabernacle, porters in the gates. And mark, wherever you find the word “office,” the margin reads, “trust.” We shall find this is not truth for officials, but for every child of God, as a trustee of Christ.

What is the door now but Christ? Their first service was to keep the door; and have we not now to guard the door; and, not only seek to keep Satan and men from closing the doors again — but maintain the gospel of Jesus, the way into the holiest? Mark, they were placed by wards. In four quarters were the porters — toward the east, west, north, and south. Oh, that each beloved servant of the Lord may know his appointment of the Lord! Now we find four chief porters in their trust, “over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God,” and their place is to lodge near the house of the Lord. And their charge, or trust was to open these chambers of treasures of the Lord every morning. And some have charge of the ministering vessels — the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices. And some in their trust over the things made in the pans. And some over the showbread. Oh, my soul, dwell on each of these types of Christ, and then say, Hast thou ever understood the porter’s trust — all the treasures of the house of the Lord? The opening of those treasures every morning. The fine flour — the perfection of Christ in His blessed humanity. The wine — the joy of heart in God. The oil — anointed with the Holy Ghost. The frankincense and spices — the infinite preciousness of Christ. The meat-offering in the pans — the Person and walk of Christ, as a sweet savour to God. The showbread — Israel covered with Christ. The frankincense, and borne before God in divine righteousness. Now also fulfilled in the church, as presented in Christ, in all the sweet savour of His Person. One Spirit with the Lord. All these glories and perfections of Christ committed in trust to the porter.

Still more, turn to 1 Chronicles 15:18-24. Will you notice Obed-Edom and Jeiel? Now it is highest praise with harps, in the Sheminith, or eighth, to excel . . . The worship of the eighth, or resurrection . . . I heard harpers harping with their harps. What a trust is this, thus to worship in Spirit and in truth. Lowest, as to self, is the porter's situation — highest in Christ, with songs of praise. And these same porters are keepers of the ark. And is not that ark Christ? entrusted to make known the very heart of Christ? As he lived on account of the Father, surely the porter is called to live on account of Christ.

Now read 1 Chronicles 26:1-19. Strong men do these porters need to be. Such were the sons of Obed-Edom — "able men for strength for the service, three score and two." (Ver. 8.) These porters were placed in their wards by lot, the then way of appointment for every gate. Now the Holy Ghost appoints to the porters every man his work. (1 Corinthians 12:1-31.) Some have service in the gatherings, as it says, "To Obed-edom, southward, and to his sons the house of Asuppim." (margin, "gatherings"). Others have service in the causeway going up, ward against ward. Eastward, six Levites; northward, four a day; southward, four a day; and toward Asuppim, two and two. At Parbar, westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar. So now each porter has his appointed place and service. Some in the gatherings in fellowship, two and two; others in the open air, the causeway going up; well for each one to know his own appointed Parbar. That service which is of the Spirit will be going up, waiting for the coming of the Lord. That which is of the flesh will be going down to the world. In 2 Chronicles 23:1-21, we find the porters are the royal guards of the hidden king. Here they are divided into thirds. "A third part of you entering on the sabbath of the priests and Levites, shall be porters of the doors. And a third part at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation." What a trust here again during these the days of the hidden King, whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution! To guard the true rest of the saints in Christ; to guard the person of the hidden King of glory; to guard foundation-truth. "And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the Lord: that none which was unclean in anything should enter in." (Ver. 19.) This is a great trust, and questioned by many. Nay, many do practically deny this, by maintaining that contact with those that hold false doctrine does not defile.

Let us now return to 2 Chronicles 31:14. This verse is the key to the whole subject of the porter's trusteeship and responsibilities. Whatever may be the precious treasures committed in trust to the porters, it is that they may distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things. Yes, my brother, if you do not know what to do with the heaps upon heaps of tracts, and publications, and precious truths, given unto us by the Holy Ghost, distribute them. Does the Lord thus commit to your trust some fine flour, wine, or oil, or frankincense — some unfoldings of the preciousness of Christ? Ah, it is not merely for your own eating, important as this is — no, but distribute it to others. But I think I hear a porter saying, I have no gift; I might, perhaps, tell of Jesus to an infant class in a Sunday-school. So it was with these porters in their trust, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small: beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward. Thus were they to give to everyone their daily portions. Yes; if you can only speak to one of the Lord's little ones — three years old and upward. Let Christians thus love to distribute. Did not Jesus say, "Feed my sheep." "Feed my lambs"? Do not say this belongs to an official class. All believers are priests to worship, and Levites, porters, to serve. I saw the arrival of the prince at St. Pancras station; not a porter was there but would have felt it a high honour to carry a parcel for him. Will you not rejoice to be a parcel-carrier for Christ? To carry, to distribute the precious truth

He has committed? Surely the precious treasures of Christ, committed to His saints in these last days, are for the whole redeemed church of God. Is not every Christian responsible to distribute according to the grace given to him? Is not this the principle of Romans 12:1-21 according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith? “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Then follows a list of different gifts, but each one responsible to use that he hath. So, in Peter, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10.) Such, then, was the porter’s trust, “For in their set trust they sanctified themselves in holiness.” (2 Chronicles 31:18.) “And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good, and right and truth before the Lord his God.” (Ver. 20.) And whatever he began in the service of the Lord, he did it with all his heart. Is He not the same God now — can He not lead His children now thus to do that which is good, and right, and truth before the Lord? Oh, that we may have faith in God, to seek only thus to do His will, and to do it with all our hearts!

Well, and after these things, and the establishment thereof (chap. 32.) —

Then the Tug of War.

What after the doors were open, the Holy Ghost owned in His true place: the infinite value of the blood of Jesus: the worship and the gladness: the Lord’s supper in its true place: testimony against all evil: abounding fruits of the Spirit: the porters’ vast range of trust and responsibilities: hearts fully awake to distribute the precious things of the Lord: sanctified, separated to the Lord in holiness: serving the Lord with purpose of heart. Is not this the end? No, indeed, now Satan comes with all his power; “Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself,” or, as in the margin, to break them up. Such is the fact, and it is well to know it; wherever God has gathered a little company to Christ, it is Satan’s object to break it up. In Isaiah 36:1-22 we learn that he took the cities of Judah — sad havoc, and at such a time! But was it more terrible than the havoc Satan has made in the professing church of God? So early as the third stage of its history, we find, even in Pergamos, Satan’s seat was there; yea, where Satan dwelleth. (Revelation 2:13.) In Thyatira, or Rome, we find the depths of Satan spoken of. And at this moment, the Lord says, “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie: behold, will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” (Revelation 3:9.) “That I have loved thee” — not that thou hast loved me. But this is very solemn. My reader may be of the synagogue of Satan, or loved of Jesus: which is it? What a question!

Now, as Hezekiah was delivered, we shall do well to study carefully how he meets the power of the adversary. The first thing he did, when he saw the purpose of the enemy, was this: “He took counsel with his princes to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city; and they helped him.” Then, also, they stopped the brook that ran through the midst of the land. It is very easy to see the wisdom of this on the part of Hezekiah; but not so easy always to see our path in this matter — our safety is in dependence on the Holy Ghost — lowly dependence. The moment we act in independence we are exposed to Satan — nay, we give him a handle. He succeeded with the first Adam, he did not with the Second. But it may be said, Surely it is right for the water of life to run through the land. Surely it is right for the fountains to gush out anywhere, even without

the city. In the unity of the Spirit, and in dependence, perfectly right. But would not that be wrong, however right in itself, if done at the bidding of Satan, or in independence of will, without the guidance of the Spirit? Let us look at the Holy dependant one, He who was of quick understanding in the fear of Jehovah. “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Now, if the Father had commanded Him to turn all the stones on the rocky shores of Gennesaret into bread, would that have been wrong? Did the Holy One listen to the tempter to do that which was right in itself? Did He act independently of His Father’s will? Impossible! He answered him, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” We do not find this quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, even in the beloved Paul — well of living water as he was. “After they were come to Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.” Jesus never essayed to do anything that the Spirit suffered Him not. On another occasion, when Paul and other servants of the Lord, were together in the assembly, the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” And so they were sent forth on a special mission of service by the Holy Ghost. Says Satan, Are you not sons of God, porters of Christ? Then open a fountain of blessing, or form a gathering here or there, outside the unity of the Spirit. Send forth a running brook through the land — turn the stones into bread.

You are wonderful folks, cannot you do as you like? brethren, is there not special danger here? That which would be most blessed if done in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit, in lowly dependence, may it not become pride and self-will? The Lord lead us in His own lowly steps, in unfeigned dependence, lest the very truth be used for Satan, like the water for the kings of Assyria. I see great danger in this independence of action. We cannot too much seek the guidance of His eye.

Separation to the Lord is a sacred and special thing. Human reason cannot understand it; and it must be maintained. The next thing was the building of the wall that was broken down, “and raised it up to the towers.” Ah, those towers! “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.” (Habakkuk 2:1.) Man would say, Come down from the watch-tower, use your own judgment; break down the wall of exclusiveness, and be one with all the false doctrine of the land. Satan hates that wall, and hates to see you sit watching before the Lord, to know His mind, and only do His will. Oh, how much depends on this! — waiting on the Lord in the watch-tower, or doing our own will. But not only must the wall, the hated wall, be built up, but we must put on the whole armour of God. Oh, soldiers of the Lord, ye young men, chosen to stand before Him in these last days, study the word. Take the whole armour. Be well equipped with the word of God, spiritual weapons, and shields, in abundance. It is the last conflict, before we rise to meet our Lord. It is well to be informed of the enemy’s intention. Satan is specially occupied with, and determined to destroy, the assemblies gathered to the Person of Christ. Such was the object of Sennacherib to take the cities of Judah. Give all diligence, in dependence on the Spirit, not to help the enemy in his work in any one thing.

Hezekiah spake comfortably to the people, saying, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles.” At such a moment, how important to know with certainty that we are with the Lord,

and He with us. No doubt, to some, all this will be utterly unintelligible. But we are meditating on the position of those who desire to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, in the midst of all that is wrong: wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits in the heavenlies.

Now we will sit down in our watch-tower, and wait before the Lord. See there the hosts of the foes encamped around, even in the heavenlies. Now, if we look within the enclosed walls of separation to the Lord, what a feeble few! But is the Lord there — is the Holy Ghost there? Yes, He who has conquered the adversary is there. The Holy Ghost sent down is there. All is well, more than all against us . . . Take courage, be strong in the might of the Lord. It is a remarkable sight, this look from the watch-tower. You see that city enclosed in the walls of separation to Christ. That feeble company has been besieged for nearly forty years {before 1890}; and, sad to tell it, Satan and his hosts have so deceived Christendom, that nearly all Christendom has besieged that little city. Yea, professing Christians have been notable captains in the attack. Captain C., Captain R. — yea, noble ladies, through ignorance, have taken service — and not a few runaways have heated the balls red hot. Yea, some of these have become the veriest Rabshakehs. Now what is all this rage against? A feeble little company, who desire to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, and, whilst answering not a word, place their entire confidence in the Lord. And thus, through His loving care, they abide in the siege. Now, as we sit in the watch-tower, is not this little city a study? “Thus saith Sennacherib, king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?” Yes! whereon do ye trust? Dreadful have been the destruction of many nations; their gods have not been able to deliver them. In like manner Satan can point to the churches of Asia. Where is the church which was at Antioch, at Ephesus, and all the assemblies in Greece? Rome also? And all the churches of the Reformation? What is their condition now? And are you the feeblest of all; are you stronger or better than they? Wherein do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege? Solemn questions. But did any of the assemblies of Palestine, Greece, or Europe — or have any of the churches of the Reformation continued in lowly dependence on the guardian care of God the Holy Ghost? No; an arm of flesh, poor puny man, took the place of the Holy Ghost in every one of these — and hence the overthrow. Be it episcopacy, or the popular will, all was of man, and the Holy Ghost set aside. Now, as we look from our watch-tower on that little besieged city, all depends on unfeigned dependence on the Lordship of Christ, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. Mind, all the wall that was broken down must be builded up. Is it not wondrous grace to gather the weakest saints to the Person of Christ, separated to Him by that wall, and kept in peace, amidst the rage of Satan, and hosts of deadly, and some, perhaps, only mistaken, foes? So useful to us is the study of this siege, that the Spirit has given us a long account of it in Isaiah 36:1-22; Isaiah 37:1-38. As we have noticed here, many cities of Judah were taken. This is humbling. We have known it. Many gatherings were gathered years ago, which had not built the wall of separation up to the watch-towers. A most determined attack was made — first, to displace the Holy Ghost, and set up clericalism; afterwards to introduce and allow, to refuse to judge, heretical doctrine. Being a young soldier during that early war, I just remember how many gatherings were taken. I believe every one, where clericalism had got the least footing. I believe every gathering that really trusted the Holy Ghost stood the siege, and Rabshakeh could not deny it.

Yes, what baffled the Assyrians was this trust in the Lord. And now they cry, and lie, and threaten, and blaspheme. “But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not.” What dignity in quiet faith! No spirit of defiance and

boasting. No, no: rent clothes and sackcloth; deep humility. And though not noticed by Isaiah, yet that little prayer-meeting: “And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven.” (2 Chronicles 32:20.) Do not forget this: our safety is in prayer in every time of conflict. Some in the siege might not know what to do, when another furious pamphlet cannonade is fired. “Why,” say you, “this is full of the grossest falsehoods.” What did Hezekiah? “Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.” (Chap. 37: 14.) And how he pleads with the Lord that dwelleth between the cherubim! It is written, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. Yes, the mercy-seat between the cherubim is our place of victory. The enemy, with all his power, was entirely defeated. And whilst we plead there, let us never forget to plead for our dear mistaken brethren, who have been, and are, so sadly deceived by the enemy. Should these lines reach any such, let me beg of you to search the scriptures, and ask the Lord, by the Spirit using that word, to lead you into the path that is right, in the midst of so much that is wrong. Ah, if even that path leads to the little besieged city within the re-builded walls. The doom of the Assyrian army only illustrates, or foreshadows, the certain doom of Babylon the great. (Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24.) Thus, step by step, how remarkably this history finds its answer in the events of these last days! This now leads us to The Unsettled Question.

You may have thus been privileged. The doors opened. The Holy Ghost known and owned in the assembly. The immutable value of the precious blood known. Joy, and bowing, and worship in public. Gathered to take the Lord’s supper as it is written. Testimony in the world. Abundance of fruits. You may know the privileges and responsibilities of the porter — the parcel-carrier for Christ. You may have been preserved through long years of the siege of the city, within the exclusive walls. Great victories of faith and prayer. And yet there may be the unsettled question of Isaiah 38:1-22.

“In those days [days of such victories] was Hezekiah sick unto death.” We now come to the inner experiences of the soul — a soul that has not yet learnt the death of the flesh. What a sentence on the old man — “Thou shalt die, and not live.” Ah, now he says, “I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth.” Very sorely did Job try this, but it would not do. Neither would it do for Hezekiah; no; there he lay, with his face to the wall; and he wept sore. The Lord is very pitiful; He heard those prayers, He saw those tears, and He granted a new term of life. He also assured him of full deliverance of the city, and He gave him a remarkable sign, that the Lord will do this thing which He hath spoken. “Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.” “He restoreth my soul.” “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” We speak of the sun rising, or going down; as to fact, it is the earth that has turned from the sun. So with our souls. Our constant tendency to depart from the Lord is like the diurnal motion of the earth. The Lord is ever the same, as we always find, when He restoreth our souls. Will you read Hezekiah’s own account of his experience in learning this unsettled question? (Vers. 9-20.) His heart almost sank in despair. Is it not very striking, after such public testimony for the Lord? He says, “I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living.” Yes, at such a time, such is the sense of the vileness of the flesh. And Satan now suggests the terrible thought, that afflictions prove that God is against us. He says, “He will cut me off with pining sickness; from day to night wilt thou make an end of me.” The dreadful working of unbelief. “I reckoned till morning, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones.” Oh, what chattering, and

what mourning! “Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.” Was it not just so with Job? “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Is not this the very condition of a quickened soul under law? “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Romans 7:1-25.) However earnest the desire of such a soul to keep the righteous requirements of the law, yet no power. “For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Hezekiah says, “Behold, for peace, I had great bitterness.” Behold, reader; until the question of the old man is settled, for peace what bitterness of soul you have had. Yes, bitter herbs indeed. You love the Lord — you long for holiness; but, oh, the bitterness, the loathsome flesh. Did I not hear you saying, Surely I must be a hypocrite. What did that deep groan say: Oh, shall I ever see the Lord? Are not all these afflictions a proof that He is against me? Oh, how I loathe, abhor myself! I am oppressed — undertake for me! Oh, wretched man that I am — no better, no better — who shall deliver me from the body of this death? This lesson must be learnt: and what is the answer? With Hezekiah it is, “What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.” With Paul it is the eye turned from wretched self, the old man, to Christ, and then the joyful exclamation, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” What a deliverance, when we learn the answer to the unsettled question, as to the old man! He hath both spoken Himself, and He hath done it. He has been fully judged for us, made sin for us. In the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Thus we accept the death of the old man, crucified with Christ — buried with Him in death. Judicially there is the end of I. No longer I, but Christ. I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He hath spoken it — He hath done it. There is generally a little more sobbing at the funeral of the old I. “I shall go softly all my years, in the bitterness of my soul,” says, Hezekiah. No, not so, Hezekiah! Not so, deeply exercised soul! No, you will have higher thoughts. Sweetly now the Spirit whispers in the heart, “But thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” Yes, dear soul, it is true, quite true — rest in it. Oh, think of the love of God in delivering you from the pit of corruption. Had He left you to your wretched self — ah, the pit, the pit. Thanks be to God. Now a little further discovery for you. It is blessed to be brought to the foot of the cross — yes, to the very grave of Christ — dead and buried with Him. This is the answer in part, full answer, to the old man; death, and the grave of Christ. But do not be too sure that that is all — that you are to remain there. No; “For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.” Is not this also most true? Yes, if Christ be only dead for us; and if we are only dead, and even buried with Him; all is in vain. “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” (1 Corinthians 15:17.) “The living, the living,” exclaims Hezekiah, “he shall praise thee, as I do this day.” Yes, we are not only dead with Thee, Lord Jesus, but risen in Thee. “The living, the living, shall praise thee, as I do this day.”

Thus, through the death of Christ, we have passed through death into life. Old things are passed away, all things new, and all of God. What a new creation!

It is not now bitterness of soul, and doubts, and misery. Oh, no, says Hezekiah, “The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.” Oh, that is far better; yes, let us sing His praise with adoring hearts. The Warning. The business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon. If we are left but for a moment, to prove us, alas! all is failure again. What a danger, even in much blessing and prosperity! “Hezekiah was glad of them,

and showed them the house of his precious things." (Isaiah 39:2.) "Mine house;" "My treasures." (Ver. 4.) Yes, if left to ourselves, it will be, "our precious truth," "our testimony," "our table," "our treasures." Rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. There is only a step from Laodicea to Babylon. We cannot praise our God and Father too much for the precious truth He gives — for the treasures of His word — for the restored table of the Lord. But are these treasures to be boastingly shown as ours to the princes of Babylon? If Hezekiah humbled himself, surely we ought to take the lowest place; nay, not take it — it is ours. The Lord keep us near Himself, in lowly dependence, and enjoying the discernment of the Holy Ghost. Thus may He enable us to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, in the midst of all that is wrong. C. S.

Chapter 81

083. Samuel

Samuel Who was Samuel? Of what tribe of Israel was his father Elkanah? Such were the questions put to the writer a few days ago. Yes, these questions are important, inasmuch as the history of Samuel is so full of instruction for the very time in which we live.

Samuel was not only of the tribe of Levi, but he was of the very family of Korah, whose children were spared, in sovereign distinguishing grace, from going down alive into the pit; at that very time that Korah, and all the men that appertained to him, and the families of Dathan and Abiram, went down into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. The account of this we read in Numbers 21:1-35. From what we find there, we might conclude that the children of Korah perished also in this dreadful judgment on the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. In another chapter we read, “And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not.” (Numbers 26:10-11.) Of that family was Elkanah (Redeemed of God). Such was his name. As has already been dwelt upon in the tract on Shiloh,* this family was the one chosen of God to illustrate what is pleasing to the Lord, in these very last days, after centuries in which the true and only divine principle of gathering to the name of the Lord had been practically lost.

{*“From Egypt to Shiloh.”} That which preceded, or introduced the restoration of that place, which the Lord had chosen, in the days of Samuel, was the picture of the Redeemer-Bridegroom, in the beautiful book of Ruth. In like manner, that which preceded or introduced the restoration of the knowledge of the Lord present, wherever two or three are gathered in His name, was the re-unfolding of Jesus the Redeemer-Bridegroom. In this day of rapid increase of wickedness and soul-destroying doctrine, which is coming in like a flood, it is surely of great importance to seek to help the perplexed to understand what is the remedy, and what is really pleasing to the Lord in these last days. Let us dwell a little on the character of Samuel and his family, for present help and guidance.

He was then the child of Hannah (grace and mercy) and Elkanah (God has redeemed). How far, dear earnest inquirer, do you answer to this? Have you been born anew, through grace, the free favour of God, and the depths of His mercy? And can you say that God hath redeemed you to Himself, and at such a cost? And can you say, I am of that family saved from going down into the pit? If God had dealt in righteous judgment on us, might we not have been crying for a drop of water to cool our tongues? If we really believe this, it will make us little in our own eyes.

Such was Samuel. His mother prayed for him in bitterness of soul, at the only place on earth where the Lord had set His name. (1 Samuel 1:1-28; Jeremiah 7:12.) And when the Lord had answered her prayer, she brought him to that place which the Lord had chosen, when He had brought His people into the land, and had given them rest. To this very place Samuel was brought. He was a little weaned child, dedicated through the death of an offering, and was a worshipper. How far is all this true of us? Are we little in our own eyes? Are we weaned from this world?

Separated from it by the death of Christ? And are we worshippers in spirit and in truth? This is the only condition of soul in which we can have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Thus was Samuel dedicated to the Lord, at the place which the Lord had chosen to place His name, and which had been almost forgotten. Hannah not only brought him unto the place, but also unto the Lord. Many in this day may have been brought to the place, but not to the Person of the Lord.

Hence, when difficulties arise, they are perplexed, and say, All is lost, all is over. Not so the words of Samuel's mother, in her marvellous prayer of faith. (Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10.) The Lord Himself is before her soul. "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." He filled her soul. There was none other "none holy as the Lord, none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God." What is the arrogant boast of that day, or of this, to a soul thus before the Lord? Blessed Lord, when Thou shinest forth in Thy glory, all, must fade away; all human, or even a created lights, must disappear. The range of divine truth, now reported to us, is truly wonderful, far beyond the day in which these truths were uttered.

If we ask, How does the Lord quicken a soul and give life? Hannah replies, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." And who are they the Lord hath chosen to bring to Himself? "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Think what is involved in these few words, as revealed to us now by the Holy Ghost. How utterly beyond all human thought. Do the learned of this world know that the whole fallen race of man, however religious, is but a vast dung-heap of fallen humanity? What a discovery was this to the learned Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus! Reviewing his blameless life under law, with all his learning and innumerable advantages, he says, "I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him," & c. Oh, ye learned Universities; oh, ye bishops, doctors, and divines; oh, ye cultivators of the human mind, how long have ye tried to improve the loathsome dung-heap! Will ye never learn the secret of a Hannah, or a Paul? Will you never know the truth? In perfect keeping with Ephesians 2:1-22, Hannah says what God does, not what the beggar of the dung-hill says or does.

Yes, God raiseth them up. He lifteth them up out of one place into another — from the dunghill to inherit the throne of glory. God has no lift short of this, from the lowest to the highest. Oh, my soul, rejoice in the riches of His grace.

God separated Israel from the nations. God sent His Son to that separated nation, His own nation; but they rejected that beloved Son, and killed Him. God knew the enmity of that act of Jew and Gentile; and God looked down on that seething dung-hill of humanity, and right down from that glorified Man on the throne of glory: He sent the Holy Ghost, and He said, as it were, I will take out of that dung-heap, out of that loathsome place, the poor, vile, ragged, guilty beggars of that dung-heap, a company, to inherit with my Son, His throne of glory. What a place! What a state of immutable purity and glory! Yes, unblameable in holiness, lifted up to be with God Himself.

Well may the apostle say, "According to the riches of his grace." All this can only have its fulfilment in the church, the bride. And, mark, the purpose of God will be fulfilled. There is just one anxious question some of my readers might like to ask Hannah. Is it this, "May my feet not slip so far, that I may so fail, as, after all, to be lost; and, instead of the throne of glory, like and with my Lord, may I

not be lost at last, and sink to the lowest hell?" What says the inspired Hannah? Listen, "He will keep the feet of his saints." Not "I," but "He," "will keep the feet of his saints." But many say, "We may be lost, and He may fail to keep the feet of His saints." Ah, they do not know Him, or they would not doubt Him. He has given too much for His sheep, to let one of them be lost. He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27.)

Some may say, Oh, that is a very dangerous doctrine. What! is there danger in the words and unchanging, love of Jesus? Suppose a person is a professor, and yet practising sin, is such an one safe and sure to be saved at last, and inherit the throne of glory? Jesus says, "And they follow me." Is practising sin following Him, the holy and the true? But what says the mother of Samuel? "The wicked shall be silent in darkness." And how terrible that silent darkness of never ending despair. Is it then that some have more strength to endure than others? No, "For by strength shall no man prevail." No, the deeply important question is this, Are you one of His saints, one of His holy ones? If so, He has strength to keep your feet. And His love is as great as His power.

It is remarkable how these three chapters (1 Samuel 1:1-28; 1 Samuel 2:1-36; 1 Samuel 3:1-21.) answer to the restored truth of saints gathered to Christ, like the restoration of Shiloh. So these words of Hannah as wonderfully illustrate the order of the truth restored. The beggars of the dung-hill lifted up to the throne of glory, come in verse 8, before the time of tribulation on the adversaries in verse 10. And then, in the same verse, the judgment of the ends of the earth, and then the reign of the King.

This, as the reader will see, answers to the order of the New Testament revelations:

1st. The grace of God taking out the vilest sinners, to take them, the church, to the throne of glory.

2nd. The absolute security of all who are the Lord's saints on earth.

3rd. The time of tribulation after the church is taken to glory.

4th. The coming of Christ to judge the quick, and set up His kingdom on earth.

How far Hannah may have entered into these things, or understood them, is not for us to say. This is what the Spirit saith by Peter, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:12.)

All this flowing through Hannah (grace and mercy) has much to do with forming the character of the pattern of the man, who desires to answer to the heart of Christ now, as set forth in His address to Philadelphia.

We will next turn to the deeply instructive principles set forth in the history of our Samuel; and then to the proofs that he was of the family of Korah, and its cheering lessons. Can we shut our eyes to the fact, that we find Christendom, now at this very time, answering in the most striking way, to the history and state of Israel in these days of Samuel. And more, just as the only true place chosen of

Jehovah for Israel to gather to Him, so remarkably revived, or became again after centuries so prominent in 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 1 Samuel 2:1-36; 1 Samuel 3:1-21; so now, after centuries, the true and only place which God has chosen for His saints to be gathered to, has been revived, or become the only place of safety and real communion with Himself in this very century. We have not the least doubt these chapters were written for our instruction.

Yes, in the midst of all the unrest and ever increasing wickedness, there is still the calm unspeakable peace of His presence wherever two or three are gathered to His blessed name. But mark, this cannot be known, or even understood, where officialism has its sway. This is most strikingly illustrated in chapter 2. The weaned child is in perfect peace. “The child did minister unto the Lord.” How blessed is such employ. What a holy privilege to know His will, and have nothing in this world to do, yea, nothing in His presence, gathered to Himself, to do, but to do His will, to minister unto Him. Not so the official family. “Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.” (Ver. 12) It is just so now. The greater the official dignity, the less may the Lord be known. We may seek the interest of sect or party; or, as in the case of the sons of Eli, seek how much we can get up by the flesh hook of three teeth, from the pan, the kettle, the caldron, or the pot: self, self, self. Was there any wickedness in Israel to equal the sins of these sons of the priest, at the very place where Jehovah had placed His holy name? And who are bringing in this down-grade, as it is called, this flood of blasphemies? Who are the “False teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction?” Who are undermining and seeking to destroy the word of God? Who are seeking to set aside God by the horrible and insane doctrine of evolution? Who are setting aside the divinity, the deity, and the atoning work of the Son of God? Is it not the official family, the sons of Eli? Is it not the family of the humanly ordained ministry? — each man with the “hook of three teeth in his hand”? Is it not awful to contemplate, that the very men who are seeking to destroy Christianity, are deriving their rich supplies from its profession? All this is most strikingly foreshadowed in the life of Samuel, by the priests, the sons of Eli. We are deeply convinced, also, that those who will retain their official position and self-importance will fail to prove, or provide a remedy for, this state which marks the last days of this period of unbounded grace. If we would see the remedy we must turn to God, and see what He did with the weaned child. For then, as judgment and destruction was at the doors, and the sons of Eli knew it not. The contrast to all this wickedness was very great in the weaned child. “But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year,” & c. Oh, where is the little weaned child of this day, clothed with divine righteousness, and constantly renewed by grace and mercy the little coat of practical righteousness? Happy contrast to the boasting official sons of Eli? Such as Samuel are they alone whom God will use.

Yes, the contrast is very sharp. These two families illustrate two principles. We may say the principle of the weak and weaned Philadelphian, in Revelation 3:1-22, and the boasting Laodicean. These two principles are so opposite that they will not mingle. The first is well pleasing to the Lord; the other is professing Christendom, become so loathsome to Christ that, He will utterly refuse it. (Revelation 3:1-22.)

Thus we get in Samuel the forecast of the days or century in which we live. But some will say, if a man keeps himself free from practising wickedness, it is no matter what he allows in others, with

whom he may be associated. Does not the case of the aged Eli speak out here? He was very old, but his age was no proof that the Lord approved his ways. And mark, he knew of the evil of his sons and all they did. It was the practice of sin. Again, the Spirit points to the little weaned child. It is not to any dignitary of israel. No, “And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.” (Ver. 21.) And again, “And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.” (Ver. 26.) This always marks the “little child” growth in that hidden wisdom before the Lord. And still to grow on in the knowledge of infinite wisdom and love. Many have found unspeakable blessedness in this growth, of which the official must remain in complete ignorance, and through ignorance will treat it with contempt. Will God never interfere with this state of things? Yes, He did then. “And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord.” Read what the Lord says to Eli. (Vers. 27-36.) What was the chief thing God had against the official Eli? Was it not just this one thing association with, and allowance of, the evil he condemned? And has not God raised up very specially, in this century, a testimony to this very principle? And it is very remarkable that every official in Christendom that has received that testimony has had to give up his position, and become a weaned little child. The substance of this testimony is in verse 30, “For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” Oh, weighty words! Do we understand them? He says, “Where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Do we honour Him? Do we honour Him as if we saw Him? or do we despise Him, and send for a man to help us to decide a difficult case? Or do we propose a man to preside over such a meeting and the Lord present? Did John propose that Peter should preside at the last paschal feast? Is Christ not despised? The reader will here observe that official appointment of a man must dishonour and despise the Lord, in many cases most ignorantly, no doubt. This is the question of to-day that must be faced by all the children of God. We would press the question, Do we honour the Lord as if we saw Him in our midst? It is the most grave question for those who profess to be gathered to His name, because He says, “There am I.” Let us not forget such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 14:29-33. To others we would also ask, Is it possible to honour the Lord, and set aside these inspired words for our guidance? And we must acknowledge that an ordained minister to preside over an assembly, must, of necessity, set aside these scriptures; and instead of honouring the Lord, sets Him aside. It is necessary to speak plain. The end of the age is upon us, just as the end of that which God had chosen to illustrate these days of the church was close upon them, in our history of Samuel. We shall, therefore, find much to help, both those professedly gathered to Christ, the true Shiloh, and also as to the camp of Christendom. Unsparing judgment was pronounced against the house of Eli, judgment that should sweep them from the earth.

Let us now turn to the child Samuel. Are we of that family, saved from going down into the pit — the very contrast of the house of Eli? “And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” Now, if the precious words of Jesus to the assembly at Philadelphia be our copy, then this is our path; and may this be our spirit, as a child dependent on the Holy Ghost ministering unto the Lord; seeking to please Him, to serve acceptably in His sight. Blessed occupation! even before Eli. That is, before the official ministry of this day, that allows the evil which it, in word, condemns. Our path is to go on: all true service is unto the Lord. Yes, whether before those who say they are outside the camp, and allow links with false doctrine, or before those in the camp, with all its last-days evil. The path of the little child is very simple; but its responsibilities are very great in these days, as we

shall soon see.

Another blessed mark of the child Samuel in this day also, to such as walk with God, is this: “The word of the Lord was precious in those days.” If this is not the case with you and me, we are not walking with God. You may say, I belong to a society that numbers its thousands and thousands. We do not read that there were thousands of Enochs, before the flood, that walked with God. Is the word of the Lord precious to you? The more that blessed word is attacked, is it still the more precious to you?

Night came on, and now darkness, gross darkness, is settling on the earth. And darkness of infidelity is preferred to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. And those who pretend to be the great lights of the church, are themselves darkness itself. What a picture of them was aged Eli. He lay down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see. Is it not so with official Christendom? Their eyes are dim, they cannot see. The Lord is speaking in His word now, but they cannot hear.

Mark what a solemn moment this was. It was “ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down.” (1 Samuel 3:3.) Is it not so at this moment? Christendom is refusing the truth in the love of it. And will the Holy Ghost remain and shine for ever? No. Oh, what will be the end of the hosts of infidel ministers, denying the Lord that bought them, and Christendom that loves to have it so? Paul says, “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned [or judged] who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12.)

Read also the testimony of the Holy Ghost in 2 Peter 2:1-3. But who hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the assembly? Eli had no ear to hear then. The Eli’s now have no ear to hear. Indeed, the Lord did not speak to Eli. He called the child. He spake to the child. It is remarkable: “Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord, yet revealed unto him.” (Ver. 7.) We might easily understand that the sons of Eli knew not the Lord. But what does this mean, that Samuel, the weaned child, did not yet know the Lord? Is it not that we may know Him as Saviour, long before we know Him as Lord; and as the Lord, speaking to us individually? In our own case it was so; and we believe there are many who have never known Him in that intimacy, so as to have actual communications from Him, and with Him. Where human arrangement has excluded the guidance of the Spirit, this is not to be expected. But even where there is the professed position of being gathered to Christ, this lesson of Samuel the child, and Eli the aged, demands our prayerful consideration. Did the Lord over thus speak to you? He did speak to the child. Let us carefully consider the message. The terrible judgment on the house of Eli is announced to the child. “And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle . . . For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” (1 Samuel 3:11-13.) And still further, mark these most solemn words: “And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.” (Ver. 14.) Can anything be more striking than the judgement of God on this principle, made so light of by men? the allowance of evil, even though you may be personally free from that evil; yet, if you are associated with those that practise sin, or hold false doctrine, you are clearly held as guilty of the very evil yourself. “Come out of her, my people, that

ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." "If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified [or separated], and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." "From such turn away." (Read Revelation 18:4; 2 Timothy 2:21; 2 Timothy 3:5.)

These scriptures cannot be ignored with impunity. The iniquity of Eli's house should not be purged with sacrifice or offering for ever. Yet this is the very principle defended by so many, who even profess to be gathered to Christ. Just as the house of Eli was, at the only place where the Lord had set His name. Nothing so hateful to them as holy separation from every link with false doctrine as to Christ. We cannot but dwell on this as a truth of the utmost importance. The judgment fell upon Shiloh for this very thing. And the little child must tell Eli every whit. "And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." However painful, the full truth must be told out. Mark, this was the only fault of Eli. "And he said, it is the Lord: let, him do what seemeth him good." (Ver. 18.) Now mark, if we are gathered to Christ, and in the little child spirit, there will be growth. "And Samuel grew." How oft this is repeated. And more, "And the Lord was with him." And have we not also seen the opposite? Those who do not in heart know the Lord do not grow. There is no spiritual advance in divine truth. There may be great excitement and activity, but the Lord is not with them. I have often said, If there be five meetings in a town, and only one truly gathered to the Lord, in heart owning and honouring His presence, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord; and if a humble little Samuel was taken blindfold into each, he would have no difficulty in discerning where the Lord was truly present. His presence is so different from every imitation. I am persuaded many have never known it in reality. But that does not alter the fact, "And the Lord was with him."

Another mark of the Lord's approval was this: "And did let none of his words fall to the ground." All knew the Lord was speaking by Samuel. It will be so now, just as we are little, and weakness itself, God will use His servants, and their words shall now be heard, far beyond Dan to Beer-Sheba.

If we compare this with Revelation 3:1-22, the address to Philadelphia, nothing could be more striking. There it is the blessed Lord Himself; what He is to those who have little strength. It is just the same here in our Samuel. It is the Lord, the true Shiloh, at Shiloh, "For the Lord revealed himself to Samuel, in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel." And this is the case now. Yes, and it will be until we see His face, who whispers, "I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Yes, blessed Lord, in the midst of all the tossings of these last of the last days, this is the holy peaceful retreat of safety, and the only one. Thou still revealest Thyself in the midst of the two or three gathered to Thy name. Yes, it is what Thou art to them. As thou didst weep over Jerusalem, well may we weep now. How few will allow Thee to gather them under the shelter of Thy presence. Well, soon the whole flock shall hear Thy voice, and rise to meet Thee in the air. No doubt the greatest hindrance in this day is the house of Eli. How many sheep have they met and hindered when seeking the shelter of that place where He reveals Himself. And not they alone. How many an aged saint, who may have been for long years in the place, but never in the state of Samuel; and may never have really owned Christ in the midst. We find it so to our sorrow. But is this a reason why we should give it up? Well might we say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" In 1 Samuel 4:1 we come to an entire change. Samuel is ignored, as it were, by Israel for more than twenty years! Whatever he may have done, or however he may have walked with God, or God may have spoken by him, we hear nothing of him for those years. For some time it has now been the same. There might not be a little company of believers

truly gathered to the Lord on this earth, for anything you would find of them in the religious papers or literature of this day. Not even where their words are copied most. Let us look at these twenty years, and see if they throw any light on the days in which we live.

“Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-Ezer, and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.” (1 Samuel 4:1.) The very names of the places have a voice. The children of Israel pitch in Eben-Ezer, “Stone of help,” and the Philistines pitch in Aphek, “Strength, vigour.” The Israelites are linked with the house of Eli, with allowed evil, and yet count on help, from whom?

Now whom do the Philistines illustrate in this day? They are in the land. It is not the power of Babylon, nor yet of Egypt, the world. They are like those who are in the professing church, get their living there, but are not of the church of God; if we may so say, not of the Israel of God. This vast army is divided into two immense wings. Just as the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel, so now. The right wing, like a dark cloud, Romish idolatry, is steadily advancing; the Ritual Clergy, no small skirmishing party, everywhere going before. The left wing, a black host of bold blasphemy and cruel infidelity. Their skirmishers, the infidel clergy, ever helping and covering the black mass behind. Such is the army of the modern Philistines, set in deadly array.

You notice, in this case, the children of Israel go out first against them, linked as they are with the house of Eli. Samuel, for the present, is out of sight. And who are the Israel, or who compose the army that is going out to confront the modern hosts of the Lords of Philistia? I think we may fairly take evangelical Christendom, as shown often on parade in Exeter Hall. Only observe, all that seek to tread in the steps of Samuel, at Shiloh, are out of sight — I trust many in prayer.

Dear brethren, take warning. “And when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines.” No one acquainted with the sword and its use, even the word of God, can help feeling it is handled feebly, and a trained ear would say, The trumpet, on most important foundation truth, gives an uncertain sound. Samuel would take no part there. We shall see him, and hear his words by-and-by.

Verse 3. The elders of Israel are greatly perplexed. They ask, “Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day, before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” There is no real humiliation before the Lord. No real looking to the Lord. They fetch the symbol of His presence from its true place, as they say “to us;” and it is that “it” may save them. And who were with the symbol. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas! Can the Lord associate His holy presence with allowed wickedness? Impossible. Oh, beloved children of God, this is the solemn question for our souls just now. We are all poor failing worms, but what is the remedy? “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.” But can He be with us if we allow wickedness? This question must come to the front. Is it not most true, and sad, that men’s abject regard for, and fear of, the priesthood (even the false one, assumed through the history of Christianity), has made them allow every wickedness under the sun? All this pleased deceived Israel well. “And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.” This is man. It may be seen, at times, in Exeter Hall, when thousands stand up, and wave handkerchiefs in wild acclamation. But is this the Spirit of God? This outburst of enthusiasm may make the Philistines, when they hear the shout,

say, “What meaneth the noise of this great shout?” And, for the moment, they were afraid. They said, “God is come into the camp; and they sad, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.” But they quickly arouse themselves, and say, “Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Quit yourselves like men, and fight.” But it may be said by those who now desire to make a hold stand against the infidel ministers in Christendom, We have not served them. Have you not? Have you not long known that they were infidels, fattening on the land amongst you, paid to preach the gospel, which they sought to destroy? Is not professing Christendom serving these modern Philistines? This present struggle will be no light matter. It will be found that the clergy will not be able to meet it. The waving of handkerchiefs, and making of speeches of uncertain sound, yea, shouting until the earth is made to ring with the noise, will not win the battle.

“And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled, every man, into his tent; and there was a very great slaughter.” And, still worse, “The ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.” Thus judgment fell upon the house of Eli. Poor Eli, his heart trembled for the ark of God. And the news came to the fine old man, whose eyes were dim that he could not see. He bore the news of the death of his wicked sons; but when the messenger made mention of the ark of God, “he fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died.” Where now is the shout of that great noise? Is it a light thing to reject the word of the Lord, and remain linked with evil? Remember, to receive one into your house, or even to salute him who brings false doctrine, or goes on in evolution or development, beyond the word of God, is to be a partaker of his evil deeds. (2 John 1:10-11.) Ichabod will as surely be written on Christendom, as it was on the house of Eli, at Shiloh. “And she said, the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.”

How deeply solemn is all this, after all the boasting and the shouting! Death and judgment are written on the whole scene. But assuredly, the type cannot exceed the antitype. What will be the end of boasting Christendom? He, who knows, says, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich,” & c. (Revelation 3:14-18.) The end of Christendom.

Rude Philistine hands were laid on the ark of God; and the Philistines took the ark. They bring it first to Ashdod, “a wild, open place, pillage, theft.” Rude Socialist infidel hands may be laid on the word of holy scripture, where God is revealed. It may be taken in triumph to adorn the temple of wild, red, robbing, latter-day blasphemous infidelity. But God can deal with such as He dealt with the men of Ashdod. It may then be sent to Gath, “wine-press.” Yes, that holy word may be made the song of the drunkard. Then it was sent to Ekron, “barrenness, torn away.” Yes, it may be sent to the poor know-nothings in their terrible barren land. But the hand of God is on every city that dares to profane the ark. Oh, ye infidels of this apostate Christendom, remember God is God. He can give you trouble and judgment in the deep secret of your minds and consciences, far worse than the emerods of the Philistines, for seven months. The ark is never brought back to Shiloh, the place which the Lord did choose. Terrible judgment also fell upon the men of Beth-Shemesh, “The house of the sun; or the house of service, or ministry,” because they looked into the ark. Yes, the house of the sun, or Baal worshippers, the ministry of idolatry, will surely be judged, though they be reckoned of Christianity, for all their prying, dissecting, reasoning on the word of God. Such,

then, is the end of the principles of the house of Eli. My reader may say, I am a wanderer. Long have I mourned for real communion with the Lord. The history and principles of the house of Eli do not help me; what will help, truly help the children of God? Thankful am I to say that is our next subject.

“And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-Jearim [‘a city of woods’], that the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” Oh, how many dwell there, just like men lost in interminable woods. They come to lanes, and crossings, but do not know which is right. Reader, do you dwell in the woods of religious confusion? Do you say, I mourn to know with certainty, the way of the Lord? Do you long to return to the Lord? Are you quite sure the ways of the house of Eli will not lead you there? Cannot the clergy lead you there? No. One says, This is the way, and another says, It is not. Can you show me the right way? Thank God, we have it here before us. Let us now return, after twenty years, to the ways of the little child, grown up a man of God, in secret. (See 1 Samuel 7:1-17.)

“And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying” — and thus would we speak to, the whole church of God: “If ye do return unto the Lord, with all your hearts.” Let us weigh every word. It is not, If ye return, or come to some sect, or party, or church government, or to Shiloh as a place. No, we must return from every sect, and from every man that takes the place of Christ; not in outward form merely, but unto the Lord, with all our hearts. It must be to Himself, all else is worth nothing. And what more? “Then put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroth, from among you.” Everything of heathenism; and, oh, how much has been introduced, and mingled with Christianity. All must be given up. “And prepare your hearts, and serve Him only.”

All this is intensely practical. If you are a true believer, born of God, nothing can satisfy Him, who died for you, but your heart. To serve Him only. This cannot be if you are connected with that which He condemns. How can you serve Him only, if you are serving a sect which He condemns? Surely we should seek to do His will, as He delighted to do the Father’s will that sent Him. Will you think of those words, “serve him only.” Lord, engrave them on our hearts.

“And he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines.” How simple! How sure! Many have proved its truth. To do this we must come out of the camp to Him, to serve Him only. There is no other way of escape from the woods of perplexity, and from the hosts of Philistines, led on by Satan and his myriad demon hosts. Are you weary in the woods? Jesus says, “Come unto me and rest.” But there must be the hearty giving up of whatever is inconsistent with serving Him alone. And mere talk will not do. “Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.” Such is the effect of true ministry. The ministry of the little child. What is so sad in this day is: Ministry still leaves souls mixed up with the world. Yes, mixed up with much that has come from Baal worship, and not from the word of God. What have you put away to serve the Lord only?

If we pursue this important chapter, we shall find the exact opposite to the effect of association with the house and sons of Eli, as seen in chapter 4. Samuel gathers all Israel together for prayer, not for shouting. He says, “I will pray for you unto the Lord.” It is not looking to the ark now, that it may save them, but, to the Lord Himself. Yes, in the one case it was enthusiasm and shouting, until the earth rang but linked with the evil allowed in the house of Eli. In the other, “They gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and

said there, We have sinned against the Lord." (Ver. 6.) Yes, Israel shouted until the earth rang. And when the thousands rose from their seats, they clapped hands, they waved handkerchiefs, they applauded in the fullest enthusiasm, until the place rang again. But if we are led into the very presence of the Lord, we shall be as water spilt on the ground. Beautiful figure of our true place at such a time as this. With the sins of Eli, Israel allowed the most fearful wickedness. With Samuel they fast, and confess their sins. To which of these companies do you belong, reader? There was no victory with identification with evil, but the most fearful discomfiture. The Philistines heard of all this, and how the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh; and the proud lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. Yes, there is one thing the modern lords of the Philistines cannot endure. They abhor the principle first seen in the church at the beginning, that Christians, as such, should be gathered together to Christ alone. What would be the case if, as all Israel then, all the sheep of Christ were to give up their own folds, and be gathered together to Christ? No doubt the Philistines, the whole apostate professing Christendom, would come up against them. This would be the so-called sect everywhere spoken against. This was not child's play. The children of Israel were afraid of the Philistines. No shouting now, but they said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." And what did Samuel do in this supreme moment of danger? He "took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." It is written of those taken up to heaven, who are there when Satan is let loose on the dwellers on earth, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death," & c. (Revelation 12:10-12.) This only ground of victory was thus shadowed forth by Samuel. Did not that offered lamb remind them of redemption from Egypt by the blood of the lamb? Their redemption was but a figure of ours. But they were redeemed by the blood of the lamb, brought out of one place, under Pharaoh, into another, to serve the Lord only.

Perhaps there is nothing so little understood in this day as redemption. Do we know that we have eternal redemption through the blood of God's Lamb? Not mans lamb, God's Lamb. "God will provide himself a lamb," said Abraham. God has provided Himself a Lamb. God is satisfied with the value of the blood of redemption. He needs no other. Is this the ground you stand on? Not on your condition improved a little, as a slave in Egypt; but redeemed to God for all eternity? Nothing to mere human reason could have looked more absurd. The proud lords of the Philistines advance with their serried ranks, as Samuel offers the lamb for a burnt offering. The burnt offering shows also how God sees us in all the perfections and sweet savour of Christ. There the soul can rest in all the unclouded favour and love of God, our Father. Oh, that every child of God knew this, his happy place, brought into favour in the Beloved. As to themselves, Israel does not give one shout now. Indeed, as to any strength of their own, they are afraid. They look only to God as the lamb is offered. Are they now overcome and smitten again, as the eye rests on the lamb, and the heart goes up to God? As linked once with the house and sins of the house of Eli, they shouted; but now "the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel." They were utterly subdued. Such is ever the path of faith. The type of the church, as shadowed forth in Shiloh and Samuel, may be said to close here. Beginning with redemption from Egypt, as pointed out in the tract, "From Egypt to Shiloh," these remarks may be read as a sequel to that tract. Indeed, they would scarcely be understood without first, reading that.

What follows in the book of Samuel illustrates the principles of the kingdom of God yet to be set up in heaven and on earth.

There is one subject we would look at a little before we close. We noticed that Samuel was of the family of Korah, which was spared, in pure sovereign grace, from going down into the pit. A short genealogy of Samuel is given, as the son of “Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph.” (1 Samuel 1:1.) If we compare this with 1 Chronicles 6:22-28, there we have the genealogy traced down from Korah to Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, and to Samuel and his sons, Vashni (called also Joel) and Abiah. Grace shines out in the history of Samuel from first to last. In 1 Samuel 8:1, we read, “When Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his first-born was Joel or (Vashni), and the name of his second, Abiah . . . And his sons walked not in his ways, they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.” Such is man. In Chronicles we look forward beyond this scene, to the kingdom and the glory. “And these are they whom David set over the service of song, in the house of the Lord, after the ark had rest, & c . . . And these are they that waited with their children: Of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman a singer, the son of Joel (or Vashni), the son of Shemuel (Samuel), the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham. And the genealogy is now traced downwards to Korah. Yes, the highly privileged Heman, the leader of the songs of the Lord, was grandson to Samuel. And we may read further of Heman and his brethren in 1 Chronicles 25:1-31, how David separated them to this happy service of praise, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthan. Here we read how they prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord. (Verses 2, 3.) And now are recounted the names of the great-grandsons of Samuel: “And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.” (Ver. 5.) All these were under the hands of their Father for song, in the house of God, according to the King’s order to Asaph, Jeduthan, and Heman.” The number of them is given in twice 144, that were instructed in the songs of the Lord. (Ver. 7.) Now of the sons of Heman, the grandson of Samuel, you will count sixteen, and each of their families counted twelve — or, in all, of this highest honoured family of praise, out of 288, there are 192 of the family of Samuel, of the family of Korah, saved from going down into the pit. (Num. 16 and 26: 9-11.).

Such is the history of Samuel, the child, the son of Hannah (“grace and mercy”) and Elkanah (“God hath redeemed”). From first to last, all is free grace, depths of mercy. Blessed figure, too, of that redemption which is wholly of God. This is but a feeble outline, but how full of instruction to us at this very moment. Who has not felt the peculiar sweetness of the songs, in the book-psalms of the sons of Korah, the family of the little weaned child Samuel, saved from going down to the pit? We might dwell with rapture on Psalms 44:1-26; Psalms 45:1-17; Psalms 46:1-11; Psalms 47:1-9, and, indeed, all the songs of the sons of the family of Samuel. And we feel sure, if we read them, expressing the joy of those saved from going down to the pit, they will speak to our hearts of the ineffable delight that awaits those now saved from going down alive into the pit. Yes, though the bodies of the rich man, and the very poor beggar, were dead and buried, yet they lived in all the realities of paradise, or unending torment. Yes, he was alive in the pit. Fellow believer, let us never forget we are like the sons of Korah. We have actually been saved from going down to the pit. You and I, but for grace, might have been there. When the ark had entered its rest, then sang the sons of Samuel, chief singers in the service of holy song. Soon the church will have entered into its rest, and seated around the throne, in the high kingdom of God. As surely as the days of Saul came to an end, so surely shall the days of the wicked one, the man of sin, come to an end. And as surely

as the failing kingdom of David and Solomon was set up, so surely shall the kingdom of the unfailing Holy, Holy, Holy One be set up. “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God,” & c. (Revelation 5:1-14.) A greater than David, a greater than Solomon, shall sit on the throne. The only worthy One. The very Lamb of God, blasphemed now here below, and kissed by those who pretend to be His ministers. There was but one Judas in the upper room, but now their name is legion.

“But there the whole triumphant throng Of blood bought saints on high, Shall sing the new eternal song, With Jesus ever nigh.”

Only one more word, Will you be there?

C. S.

084. Election

Election

"If Christ did not die for the sins of all men, how am I to know He died for me — that He was my Substitute? And how am I to know that my very sins are forgiven, to be remembered no more?"

"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Romans 9:15.

It is not, for the sake of controversy, or to examine or defend human opinions on this deeply interesting subject, that we take it up; but with a sincere desire to help perplexed souls. A few days ago we received a letter from such an one, and as it is a fair sample of the effect of mere doctrinal teaching, we will give extracts. The writer says, "I have been greatly distressed about 'election.' I know I am a sinner, and as such quite undone and lost, and that there is nothing in me to recommend me to God I want to be saved. I am often in great fear lest the Lord should come for His people, and leave me behind. I know that the Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, but I have heard it said, that it is not scriptural to say that Christ died for the sins of all men; and if He did not die for all, how can I believe He died for me? Because it is no use to believe — I could not believe without a firm foundation for faith to rest upon; I mean, if He did not die for me, how could I believe it? If you knew how very anxious I am, I think you would feel for me, and try to answer me What I want to know is this — how can persons know that the Lord Jesus Christ died for them personally, when there is nothing in them to make it likely? As I write, I feel how hopeless it is to try any more. I cannot help feeling in despair about it, because I have gone on so long, and have years ago professed to be a Christian I fear I am like the ground spoken of in Hebrews 6:1-20, that only bears 'thorns and briars.' If you think there is, any hope for me, do try and help me." Is it not most sad for a person to go on in this, state of perplexity year after year? It is not often we meet with the same depth of anxiety, but this letter truly expresses the perplexity of great numbers. We are convinced that the root of all this, confusion of mind and distress of soul, is occupancy with self. Here is evidently a quickened soul, finding nothing but thorns and briars in the flesh, or old self. Not one bit of good in self that could have been a motive for Christ to die for. However painful it may be, this lesson must be learnt; sooner or later the quickened soul must be brought to say, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." And there is no help found for the flesh in scripture; so we cannot help the writer of the letter; it is not, Who shall help me? but, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The Lord Jesus is not revealed as the helper of the flesh, but as the complete Deliverer, bringing us into a new creation, giving us eternal life, a new nature, and the Holy Ghost. (Compare Romans 7:18-24 with chapter 8:1-4.)

Before we look at the important subject of "Election," we feel it would be well to examine the difficulties of the writer. We believe it is a sure mark of the work of the Holy Spirit to be able truly to say, "I am a sinner, undone and lost." Can the reader say this, whether of sinful self or religious

self? Have you tried, until you are undone, lost? This is a fearful word, yet it was for such alone that Jesus died. He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The joy of Jesus is this, "I have found my sheep which was lost." If, then, the writer of the letter, or the reader of this paper, has discovered that he is lost, ungodly, without strength, then it is clear from scripture that Jesus died for you; He came to seek and to save you.

We will pass over for the moment "other things, such as strong Calvinists hold," which had always been such a hindrance. More of this by-and-by. Most assuredly the Lord Jesus is coming to take His people, and no pen can describe how terrible it will be to be left behind. With such a certainty, believing the scriptures which announce the coming of the Lord, we do not wonder at those words, "I want to be saved." These are not the words of the self-righteous, or of the careless professor, or the language of the infidel; clearly not. But, reader, can you say they are your words? The Lord is certainly coming quickly to take His people — He says so. Can you say, with the writer of the letter, "I want to be saved. I am often in great fear lest the Lord should come for His people, and leave me behind"? If you know you are saved, you cannot say so: your privilege is to wait for Him from heaven. Do you say, I do not know I am saved, and I do not want to be, and I am not afraid to be left behind? Then really you are self-righteous, careless, or an infidel. But to return to the letter. The writer says, "I know that the Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved." The scripture says this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:37.) It is not enough to know that the Bible says so; the devils know that well enough, and the infidel knows that. But does the writer know that God says so — that it is God speaking to us in the Bible? Now, if God says so, is it not true? Then if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as a lost sinner, God speaks to you; He says you shall be saved. Do you doubt Him? The jailor understood it to mean just what God said, and he was baptized at once. He raised no questions; "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." If he believed and rejoiced, why should you doubt?

"But," says the writer, "I have heard it said that it is not scriptural to say that Christ died for the sins of all men, and if He did not die for all, how can I believe He died for me?" &c. It is perfectly true the scriptures never speak of the death of Christ as the substitute, or for the sins of all men. Yet this was no hindrance to the apostles proclaiming the gospel of forgiveness of sins unto all, with the assurance of God that all who believe are justified from all things. There can be no question that this was the character of the gospel Paul preached. He so preached to the multitude at Antioch. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:38.) Here, then, is a distinct message, direct from God, of forgiveness of sins to all men, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And the question is simply this — Do you believe God? If so, it is most certain that you are justified from all things — you are accounted righteous before God. And you know it is so, for God says it. But you say, "How am I to know personally that Christ was the Substitute for my sins? If He were not the Substitute of all men, how am I to know that He was so for my sins?" We will tell you shortly; only mark first, if the scriptures did teach that He was the Substitute of all men, you would be far more uncertain; for it is evident many are not saved, and therefore, if He had been the Substitute of all, and yet many of these were for ever lost, then His dying for your sins would have been no security of your salvation, for after all you might be lost. Surely the scripture truth is better, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"

— "having obtained eternal redemption for us." And that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." God says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39.) Thus the scripture doctrine of the one sacrifice of Christ for the sins of many has secured for them eternal redemption, whilst the human doctrine that Christ was the substitute (or sacrifice) for the sins of all, secures nothing! And hence all the make-weights of sacramental and ritualistic religion of men.

Much of this doctrinal confusion arises from not seeing the order and distinction of propitiation and substitution. On the day of atonement the order was this: first, the blood sprinkled on the golden mercy-seat; then, afterwards, the sins of the people put upon the substitute. Propitiation first, then substitution; both, doubtless, pointing to the one sacrifice of Christ. But the first thing to be secured was the righteousness of God in shewing mercy. How could He be a just God and a Saviour? Now, as the victim must be killed, and its blood brought into the most holy, and sprinkled on the mercy-seat before God, so Jesus glorified God by His death. His blood was thus brought before God — sprinkled before Him. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [or mercy-seat], through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:25-26.) Now in this aspect Christ died for all; so that mercy and forgiveness is proclaimed to all. It is of immense importance to see this, "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all, them that believe, for there is no difference." (Romans 3:22.) This is important foundation truth. Such is the value of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, that the mercy-seat is open to all, without any difference; and God is just, and the Justifier of all that believe. The efficacy of that atonement, even the righteousness of God, is upon all who believe. God is righteous, is just, is glorified in meeting all, for there is no difference, at that propitiatory mercy-seat. There is no uncertainty about this as to the propitiation. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:2.)

Before, then, we go on to the death of the Lord Jesus as our Substitute, do we own the deep need of that atoning death, to maintain the glory and righteousness of God, in proclaiming mercy to all? And, further, this mercy-seat is open to all, without any difference — the propitiation for the whole world. These are the very words of Jesus: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." So far, then, all is clear: the righteousness of God is revealed in the glad tidings of God to every sinner on earth, for also as to them there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Is the writer of the letter a sinner? Then clearly the righteousness of God proclaims forgiveness of sins to you. Do you believe God? Has this amazing love of God in the gift of His Son, that death on the cross as the propitiation for the whole world, and pardon through that precious blood — oh, has this goodness of God led you to repentance? Have you come, as a lost, undone sinner, to that mercy-seat open to all? Do you believe God? Then God says you are "justified from all things." How simple! Are you a sinner? Then forgiveness is proclaimed to you. Do you believe it? If you believe God, you may now go on to the second aspect of the death of Christ, and there see Him, the Substitute of His people, bearing their sins in His body on the cross. This was typified by the people’s goat, the people’s substitute. Read Leviticus 16:20-22. The sins of the people are

transferred to the goat — all the iniquities of the children of Israel are laid on him — and the goat bears them away, to be remembered no more. Now it is clear that if the, Lord Jesus thus bore the sins of all men; or, if all the sins of all men were laid upon Him, and borne away, to be remembered no more, then all men would be saved. But the scripture never says so. As in the type the substitute bearing away sins was limited to the children of Israel, so the true substitution of Jesus is limited to those who believe and are saved. "He was wounded for ourtransgressions, he was bruised for ouriniquities." His "blood was shed for many." "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Thus, whilst the death of Christ, as the propitiation, is for the whole world, and God is infinitely glorified in proclaiming mercy to all, and there are no bounds to His love in the gift of His Son, that whosoever believeth should be saved; yet, as Substitute, the sins of all men were not laid on Him and therefore it does not follow that all will be saved.

We now take up the writer's inquiry, "If Christ did not die for the sins of all men, how am I to know He died for me — that He was my Substitute? And how am I to know that my very sins are forgiven, to be remembered no more?" This being settled, the way will be clear for the full consideration of the important subject of Election.

We have seen that on the day of atonement one goat typified the death of Christ, meeting the righteousness of God, and glorifying Him in shewing mercy to the whole world; and the other goat, Jesus, the Substitute of His people's sins. The glory of God has surely the first place, and then the sinner's need is fully and for ever met. The scriptures speak of Jesus as the propitiation for the whole world, and also the bearer of the sins of many; the righteousness of God set forth in that propitiation in Romans 3:21-26; the substitution of Jesus for His people's sins in Romans 4:24-25; and the effect of knowing and believing this in Romans 5:1-3. We have also seen that the mere human tradition that Jesus died for the sins of all men gives no comfort, for all men are not saved. Then the solemn inquiry is this — How am I to know that Jesus died for my sins? The answer is in these words, "But for us also, to whom it (righteousness) shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:24-25.)

Righteousness is declared to be imputed unto us, if we believe God, or, believing God, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. We observe, even here, it is God revealed to our souls to faith, God who raised up Jesus. We can never know that our sins are forgiven by looking at Jesus on the cross now: He is not now on the cross. If He be on the cross now, there is no forgiveness. Satan knows this, and therefore multiplies pictures and images of Jesus on the cross. He has died once on the cross, or there could be no salvation. But if He is not risen from the dead, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins. With a Christ on the cross there could be no salvation. Now, who gave His Son? God. Who provided the Lamb, the atoning propitiation? God. Who so loved the world? God. Who has accepted the one sacrifice? God. Who raised the Holy, Righteous One from the dead? God. Who proclaims forgiveness of sins through that glorified Christ? God. Who declares all that believe are justified? God. Who is the Justifier, that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead? God. If you believe God, then it is most certain that you are one whose sins Jesus bore on the cross once, but who can die and suffer for them no more. God has declared them put away as to any charge on you again, or on Him who bore them in His own body on the tree. If you believe God, then, you say, looking up at that Man in the glory, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Jesus, the Substitute; Jesus risen, the

Representative. As a believer you can now see your sins were transferred to Jesus when He was delivered for our offences, and as the goat bare them away no more to be brought back, so Jesus was raised from the dead, and our sins can no more be laid to our charge; thus, accounted righteous on the principle of faith, we have peace with God. The believer knows this is true of him individually, because it is true of all who believe God, and therefore must be true of him.

Some of our readers may say, This is hardly what we expected, it seems to us like setting aside Election. Indeed it is not. If, instead of reasoning, we simply bow to scripture, we shall find these two things run on together — man's responsibility and God's sovereignty. On God's part infinite wrath against sin, and infinite love to the sinner, have been revealed in the death of Jesus. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." (1 John 4:9-14. Read also John 3:14-16.) Is not God's love toward the world fully declared by the Lord Jesus? He must be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." These are the words of Him who cannot lie — who is the truth. This, then, was God's distinct purpose in the propitiation of the Lord Jesus. The bitten Israelite had not to inquire, How am I to know that Moses lifted up the serpent personally for me? No; for it came to pass that whosoever looked, lived. Is it not even so of Jesus, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life?

Now, would it not be most monstrous to say that man is not responsible to believe God? What, not to believe such revealed love, and forgiveness of sins preached through Jesus? But can the grace of God toward all men, and Election, both be true? Certainly, and equally true, because both are revealed in the word of God. The supper was a great supper, and many were bidden; all refused, and made their excuse — not one accepted; but all were not compelled to come in. Here is the whole question in this well-known parable. (Luke 14:16.) The fact is, man is so desperately wicked, that left to his own free choice, he will not believe God; he will not come to the great supper of God's salvation; he will not receive Christ as his Saviour. God did not make him so. Man's condition is the result of his own sin. He believed Satan, and disbelieved God. However light man may make of sin, his own condition of hatred to God is the proof of the terribleness of sin. It would enlarge our subject beyond our limits, or we might see how, when the world had become utterly corrupt before God, when left to itself, that but one family was saved in the ark. We might then see how man's free choice built its tower of Babel, and, though they were dispersed, they soon sank into idolatry and wickedness. Then, how God took out one man, and said, I will bless this man Abram. Neither would it be possible to deny that God made him the father of the elect nation of Israel. Strange to say, no one seems to deny this, or that there are elect angels. What men do so hate is the election of the predestined children of God.

We will come, then, to the teaching of the New Testament on this subject. As we said, man left to his own free, natural choice, will not have Christ. He must be born again. This was found to be so, even of Israel, in the most favourable circumstances. God sent His Son to His own elect nation, to those whose prophets had foretold Him; and what do we read? "He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons 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." (John 1:11-13.) Man has thus been tested. God was in Christ, inviting man reconciling, not imputing trespasses unto them, but they received him not.

Nay, from the manger to the cross, man's hatred and rejection grew worse and worse. And the new birth by the Spirit explains how any believed on Him, and were saved. By man's free, natural choice, not one received Him, though, on God's part, all was infinite love and grace.

Jesus, in the midst of rejection, had perfect rest of heart in the Father's will. What words are these? — "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." (John 6:3; John 6:7) Again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.?" "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." What calm repose in the midst of such billows of human hatred and rejection! He knew the righteous Father, and He knew that not one of those the Father had given Him would be lost. Are not both things, then, equally true — that all that the Father gives to Him shall come to Him, and also, he that cometh to Jesus shall in nowise be cast out? The gospel is thus freely preached to all — "That through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things," &c.; then we read, "and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:38-39; Acts 13:48.) Why should we take one of these truths, and not the other? or, why should we seek to alter either? Some would say, Do not preach the gospel to all, only to the elect. Paul preached it to all alike, and declared that all who believe are justified. Others would alter the latter, and say, As many as believe are then ordained to eternal life. But it is not so; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Surely we have no right to alter God's word to suit human opinions. And yet there is nothing to hinder a truly anxious soul, for forgiveness is preached to all, and all who believe are justified; and further, they have clearly been ordained to eternal life, for none else will believe — none else will come to Him that they might have life.

God now commands all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30.) Men will not either believe what God says, or repent. If God had therefore left the matter in uncertainty, so to speak, to man's free choice only, and man so desperately wicked that he will not have the salvation of God, then evidently none would have been saved. If we turn, however, to some verses expressly concerning God's elect, we shall find that this is not, and cannot be, the case.

Let us carefully note that it is not a question of persons merely, but that God had a most wonderful purpose. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Is not this wondrous, that out of a world which has killed the Holy One, and rejected the very mercy of God, and when He might justly have left all to perish everlastingly, that God has taken out of them those whom He foreknew, and predestinated them to such glory as to be conformed to the image of His Son? Surely this must astonish angels. Thus, after man's rejection, we have salvation absolutely of God. The source entirely of God. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30.) To accomplish this purpose of infinite grace He spared not His own Son. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." This amazing truth bows the heart in profound worship. What a golden chain — predestinated, called, justified, glorified! All of God — accomplished by the death and resurrection of His own Son. "Who is he that condemneth? It is

Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again," &c. What a joy to know that God is thus for us, and that He cannot change!

Nothing can separate us from His eternal love in Christ Jesus. But does not this imply that God has predestinated some to be lost? Certainly not. There is no such thought in scripture. The reason why some perish is their own deliberate rejection of the truth. Scripture is quite plain and clear on both these points.

First, as to them that perish, it is, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thessalonians 2:10, and read carefully the context.) Could words be plainer than these? If the reader shall perish everlastingly, then remember, it is because you received not the love of the truth. Yes, God is love, and you would not believe Him. You may ask, But if I am saved, is the reason as distinctly stated? Indeed it is; these are the words, "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13.) Thus all supposed merit is taken from man. If left to his own free choice, he deliberately rejects and despises the gospel of God; and the reason why any are saved, is the sovereign choice of God. Such is the distinct teaching of the word of God, whether we believe it or not.

We are very sorry that such dreadful things have been said as those the writer of the letter refers to. There is no such thought in scripture as that God had created some that He might be glorified in their destruction. As to such cases as, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart we will look at these presently, if the Lord will. No doubt very erroneous things are said about such scriptures. In the meantime we fail to see how the truth of God’s abounding, sovereign, electing grace can, for a moment, discourage an anxious thirsty soul, for to such the gospel of God’s free, present, and eternal forgiveness is preached. And God declares all that believe are justified from all things. The whole world still rejects Jesus, as they did at the Jews’ feast in John 7:1-53; but did He not, on the last day, that great day of the feast, stand up in the midst of the rejecters, and cry? Yes, Jesus "cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Yes, in the midst of the rejection of this day also, if there he only one man that thirsteth, there is the evidence; yes, if this is the reader’s case, there is the evidence of the Spirit’s work in your soul. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to create this thirst for Jesus. Come, then, to His bosom; oh, yes, Come to me, He says, and drink. And this is not all: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:3; John 7:8.)

We will now examine some scriptures concerning which strange mistakes have been made. (Romans 9:1-33; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 11:1-36.) These chapters are given to explain what appears like a contradiction. The present dispensation of the grace of God, which makes no difference between Jews and Gentiles, would seem to those ignorant of dispensational truth as a contradiction to the abounding national promises to Israel, in the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets. All are now found guilty, both Jews and Gentiles; and the righteousness of God is revealed to all alike in the gospel. These chapters explain that this is only for a time. And more, that God is now acting in sovereign, electing grace; and not only so, but that He has done so from the beginning. No one can deny that it was an act of sovereign choice when God called Abram, and said unto Him, I will bless thee. So again, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." God did choose Isaac; He did not choose Ishmael. These are undeniable facts. This is still more distinctly stated as

to Jacob and Esau. Let us read the verse carefully. It is sometimes said that it was written before they were born, that God hated Esau, and loved Jacob; but this is not so. "But when Rebekah also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth); it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." It was said unto her — unto Rebekah — The elder shall serve the younger. (See Genesis 25:23.) But it was more than thirteen hundred years after this that it was written, even in the very last prophet, Malachi, "as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Surely God's love to Jacob did not lessen the wickedness of Esau in despising his birthright. Now what is there for man to carp at here, except his own ignorance? How often has this scripture ignorantly (it may be) been misquoted as though it was written before Esau was born, that God hated him, but, when examined, it is found to be altogether different. This does not deny, or alter the fact, that all the natural seed of Abraham were not called to inherit the blessing. Ishmael was not chosen, Isaac was: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." So Jacob, being unborn, was elected to the blessing. These are simple facts, and to deny the sovereign right of choice to God, would be to set aside God altogether. Equally true is it that the Spirit of God, writing about these two men as men, and their posterity, hundreds of years after, one of whom greatly valued the blessing, and the other most shamefully despised it, says distinctly that God did not approve of or love these two men both alike.

"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Can anything be more blessed than this? Man will have no mercy on himself. Man goes marching to everlasting woe. Thousands around us may be seen doing this — old and young. It is a dreadful fact. What, that tottering old man, just about to pass for ever from this scene, with eternity before him, has he no compassion on himself? No, none. He spurns and rejects the love of God. He will have the world; he will have sin. His whole will is against God. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." This is grace, the free favour of God. He sheweth mercy to the man that has no mercy for himself. It is not man, the sinner, that chooses God, but God that chooses the sinner. There can be no question as to this, even as Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (John 15:16.) What a spring of everlasting joy to our souls then! It is God that showeth mercy. Dear christian reader, ponder this well. Thus in every way it is not what we are to God; neither is it our willing, or running, for our running is only to do evil. (Romans 3:10-19.) It is God that sheweth mercy to whom He will shew mercy, or all must perish. No man is found that has mercy on his own soul. God hath chosen those who never would have chosen Him. Oh, the riches of His grace! He hath chosen us when obstinate, ignorant, hell-deserving sinners; and as objects of His mercy, has brought us into His everlasting favour.

Yes, the objector may say, but this scripture not only says, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy," but it also says, "and whom he will he hardeneth." What about Pharaoh? As this is a butt against which the infidel knocks his poor head, let us carefully examine what is written concerning Pharaoh. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Who was this Pharaoh that was raised up to such world — wide

notoriety, and on whom fell so heavily the judgment of God? For it is indeed written of him that God hardened his heart; and whom He will He hardeneth. One verse of scripture will bring this man in his true character before us. "And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2.) Here, then, we have a bold infidel king who defies the living God, who lifts up his voice and puny arm to resist God in the deliverance of His chosen people. Was God unrighteous in punishing this daring rebel against His government and authority? Would it even be consistent for any earthly government to tolerate such a daring rebel? Now, what, sheer ignorance it is, to make a difficulty about the punishment of this blasphemer against God! And mark, the Pharaohs were the most cruel despot, the world ever saw. One was the wholesale murderer of babes. Oh, those cruel words of his! "If it be a son, then ye shall kill him." (Exodus 1:16.) Was it not in righteousness that God destroyed such human monsters? "God heard their groaning." "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them," &c. (Chap. 3:7.) What a record of the kindness of God in delivering from the cruel oppressor; and yet the natural man sees nothing in God to admire!

We are ashamed to give an illustration, the thing is so plain; but suppose an infidel blasphemer were to get such power in any country, that he openly defied the government of that country, and he and his followers went about slaying every male infant in the land; would there be loud complaint if that government destroyed such a monster? Not only did one murder the infants of Israel, but the other rejected the message of God. It is not a little remarkable that these are the exact sins also of many at this day. They too have given up the Lord Jesus to be crucified; and more, have rejected the message of God. They, too, are given up for the present to hardness of heart. It was not for that awful murder: for that cross which manifested man’s deepest wickedness, brought out God’s richest grace — free, full, everlasting forgiveness to those who had put to death the Lord Jesus. They would not believe the message of mercy. No, after such wickedness, they went about to establish their own righteousness!! But what is the meaning of God hardening the heart of Pharaoh? We shall understand this better by turning to another Pharaoh that is about to appear in this world, and to the certain doom of the many Pharaohs of that day; nay, do not such Pharaohs already abound? The daring wickedness of this coming wicked one will be terrible, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." (Read 2 Thessalonians 2:4-12.) Oh, how many shall be deceived by him! and just as Pharaoh rejected the message of God, so do these; and "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Thus God hardens the heart, gives it up to strong delusion; and why? Because His message of love has been rejected. This is a solemn question for the times in which we live. Are there not many would-be Pharaohs? Plainly this world is as guilty of the murder of Jesus as Pharaoh was guilty of the murder of the infants. Are there not many who are saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord." Is not this the very sin that marks these last days? Disputing the authority of the word of God; and this is equally true of the infidel and the professedly religious. The infidel so hates the truth, that he would destroy it if he could. And, oh, how many secretly say, Who is the Lord that I should obey His word? — we will not hear Him, but we will hear

what we call the church! We will not believe the free forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus. We will not believe that His one sacrifice for ever perfects those that are sanctified by His one offering; but we will have priests of our own, who shall again continually offer sacrifices that can never take away sins. Yes, all this terrible wickedness is after Pharaoh. Who is the Lord that we should hear His words? This religious rejection of the truth is growing stronger, and will end, as foretold, in everlasting destruction.

Thus not a sentence of God's word shall fail. It is most blessedly true that He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy; and it is also solemnly true that whom He will He hardeneth. Ah, should a careless despiser of His grace read this, beware lest He take you away with His stroke! Remember, it is not God electing you to be lost, but your own wilful, wicked determination to reject His truth. And before you lay down this paper, the church of God may be taken away, and you may be left to be given up to strong delusion to believe a lie. Nay, take care that you are not even now believing a lie. Oh, how long has God borne with the wilful wickedness of man in mercy! as it is written, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Thus the despising, defiant Pharaohs prepare themselves for everlasting woe, and God deals with them as they deserve in righteousness. If He dealt with all personally in righteousness, all must be lost. But He can, yes, does, exercise His blessed prerogative, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." And mark, it is not written that He makes one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour. It is an ignorant, if not worse, mistake to say so. What is written is this, that He is sovereign, that is, that He hath power to do so — hath right to do so. Now, is it not evident, as we are all by nature rebels, sinners, rejecters of God, and despisers of His grace, that if God left us all to our own free will, and dealt with us as we deserve in absolute righteousness, we should all have perished, and thus Christ would have died in vain? Surely, then, it should bow every believer's heart in worship, that "He hath mercy on whom he will." Oh, how blessed! when we should never have chosen God, God hath chosen us in Christ before the world began.

We now turn to the word of God, and our inquiry is this: To what hath the Father in eternity chosen us in Christ? To what is the church elected? That the election of the church was in the beginning in eternity is most certain from scripture. "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.)

Thus the ultimate purpose of God was, that these chosen ones should obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a salvation! What a purpose! Chosen from the beginning. The Holy Ghost, the blessed One by which they were sanctified, as to the new birth, separation to God, and growth in grace — "Through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

It may be asked, How could the apostle thus give thanks for these Thessalonian believers? How did he know their election of God? He tells us "Knowing brethren, beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6.) Further marks of their election

of God were found in that the word of the Lord was spread abroad by them, and they were turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven. Here were the proofs of their election of God. Beloved reader, can you say it is so with you? Has the gospel that Paul preached ever come with power to your soul? You will find the gospel that he preached to them in Acts 17:2-4. Has the Holy Ghost ever made known to you the deep need of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus? The blessed news that through Him is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins — that all who believe God are justified from all things? Have you received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost? Have you cast in your lot with the Lord's people, following the Lord as they did? Is that word of the Lord so precious to you, that it is your delight to be making it known all around? Have you been turned to God from all the idols to which your heart once clung, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven? If you can say, through the amazing grace of God, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, all this is true of you, then these are the same marks as those by which Paul knew their election of God.

All this is so entirely contrary to the natural man, that it must be of God. You would, like the world around, have refused to have received the love of the truth, that you might be saved, if God had not from the beginning chosen you to salvation. To God be all the praise; to you rest and peace. Before we look at the purpose of God expressly as to the church, we will turn to another scripture that may give strength and comfort to the individual believer.

We will take a scripture in that epistle which describes man's utterly lost and guilty condition before God, and also treats especially of the righteousness of God in the sinner's redemption through the blood of Jesus, and His complete justification by His resurrection from the dead.

Here it is found that man is saved and justified on the ground of the free favour of God. Now, from such a company, where all were alike guilty, what a revelation of infinite grace is this! "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." This was the predestined thought of God — I will have a company out of that world of vile sinners, who shall be like my Son. He shall be the first-born among them; yes, they shall be conformed to the image of my Son! (See Romans 8:29-39.) And let it not be surmised that this means that God predestined them after they believed the call, or because they believed it. No, that would be no predestination, as is further shewn in the next verse, that the predestination surely was before the call. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now bear in mind, that if God had dealt in righteousness personally with every one of these, they must, as enemies, ungodly, and despisers of God, have perished everlastingly. All, therefore, was pure grace to these. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." "What shall we say to these things; if God be for us, who can be against us?" Yes, if such a God as this be for us — "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died," &c. Let us pause, and contemplate God predestinating poor ungodly sinners to be conformed to the image of His Son — even now accounted righteous before Him without condemnation. To accomplish this in righteousness, He spared not His own Son. Nothing can separate us from such love as this. Shall we say it is dangerous for the believer to be acquainted with all this?

We will now turn to another epistle, where the church of God is especially revealed; and that, not only what it will be, but what it is even now, seen in its heavenly character. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3.) What a rebuke to unbelief is this statement! How clear, present, and certain! What a bright contrast with the dark human thought that we shall only get to know at the day of judgment whether we shall obtain such heavenly blessings! Yes, it is all ours now. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us thus in the heavenlies in Him. And mark, all this is according to plan and purpose. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Have you ever thought of these words? How far do they take us back? Are we chosen in Christ because of something in our own history or circumstances? No, farther back. We were chosen in Him before the formation of this world in its present state, and before the introduction of sin. Farther back still. When were the foundations of the world laid? We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." What vast ages this may have, been before the six days' formation of this earth for man, we know not. Men, with all their learning, can only measure time; they have no language to explain eternity: that laying of the foundations — that creation of the heaven and the earth — in that vast unknown, "in the beginning." Yet the heavenly blessing of the church is, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Men love to speculate about past ages, but here is no room for speculation, but the distinct revelation, that the church, that we who have redemption in Christ through His blood, were chosen in Him before those ages began.

Further, notice, this is not so much a question of the election of persons, though it surely is that, for what would the church, the body of Christ, be, without persons, individual members of that one body? But this wondrous epistle reveals what God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in eternity chose us to and for.

"That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love," none but God could have conceived such a thought, yet was it His pleasure in eternity! How soon will it be realised in all its fulness by us, even as we are seen by Him now in the Beloved! "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." Surely every sentence is full of infinite love. What a contrast to the blessing of Israel as a nation on earth! We were thus predestinated to the higher relationship "of children." Do our souls enter into this, that God would have us in the blessed relationship of children, and "according to the good pleasure of his will"? How sweet it was to Jesus to reveal the Father's joy in receiving His long-lost son, in that precious parable of the prodigal son! Oh, that this short paper may be used, to lead the "children" to meditate on every sentence of this chapter. Think that the place given us is "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Yes, when God is known, then we see how suited to Him is the infinite extent of His grace. The free favour of God, in every sense, is altogether beyond all human thought. We can only understand it by seeing where Christ is, and what is His future glory; and then the overwhelming thought that we are in Him, and all is ours. Yes, all is so suited, so worthy of God. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Timothy 2:9.) Oh, do we believe these weighty, soul-sustaining words? Let not Satan be listened to for a

moment that if we believe these plain statements of God’s blessed word that we have been predestinated to such unspeakable blessings in Christ before the world began, then it implies that others have been predestinated to be damned. No, no, there is not such a thought in the holy word of God: we have seen that their everlasting judgment is "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." This is as clear as that our salvation, vast and wonderful as it is, is "because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-13.)

Oh, how sad that so many should deny the grace of God, the free, unmerited favour of God, in thus choosing us in Christ from eternity! Be it remembered, that if He had left us to our own free choice, all must have been lost, since all in their natural state reject the grace of God. Man in his natural unbelief will seek to be saved by his own works, will gladly accept any false religion of ritualism and ceremonies. He will seek and go about to establish his own righteousness when he has none. But if the writer of the letter, or the reader of this paper, has been led, as a lost and guilty sinner, to accept Christ, and to believe God, who raised Him from among the dead, then rest assured that you were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy, and without blame before Him in love. Thus may our hearts rest in the eternal love of God in Christ, from which nothing can separate us.

C.S.

Chapter 83

085. From Egypt to Shiloh

From Egypt to Shiloh "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first." — Jeremiah 7:12.

"For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." — Matthew 18:20.

Before we can understand the instruction given to us in these last days, contained in the deeply interesting subject of Shiloh, we must take a brief view of the dealings of God with His people Israel, to whom He appointed Shiloh as the only place where He set His name. Their history, written for our instruction, is a type or figure of each believer's history, and salvation.

"God is love."

If we read Exodus 2:23; Exodus 3:1-10, we see the condition of the people in cruel bondage and slavery, an exact picture of our condition under the cruel bondage of sin and Satan. Their cries and groans came up unto God. Do you remember the time when it was thus with you? Think of the slave that can by no means escape from bondage. Such is the condition by nature of every man, whether he knows it or not. And mark, the source of their deliverance was not in themselves. The source of our salvation is the love of God. God is love. He came down to deliver. He sent Moses to deliver. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Yes, God sent Moses — God sent His Son. God is love. They believed Moses. "Then they bowed their heads and worshipped." (Exodus 4:31.) This, then, is the first mark of a quickened soul. Have you believed the love of God in sending His Son? This bows your head, and you worship. The next stop is the earnest desire to be gone, to escape from the slavery of Satan and sin. Did they escape through believing the love of God alone? No. Have you? No. Their case became worse as to experience. So has yours. So did mine. They were now put on the principle of more work — to make bricks without straw. They could not, and were beaten because they did not. And you, were you not put under the law of God? They had no straw, and you had no strength. And you found that word true, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And you had no strength to do them. Paul describes all this in Romans 7:14-24. Poor, wretched Israel! Moses said, "Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." (Exodus 5:22-23.) And you have believed the love of God, and tried to keep the law of God, but are you delivered from sin? What do you say? "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" The next or third thing we find in this picture is the promises of God. (Read Exodus 6:1-9.) Do read them. Could God give more precious promises? No. Did the promises deliver? Not in the least; "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and cruel bondage:" and you have tried to lay hold of the promises. Have they delivered you? No. You say, They do not comfort me. Why? I am such a sinner, such a slave. And this makes you unspeakably miserable.

Now the fourth thing in this picture is the wondrous kindness of God in His providential care of Israel during the plagues of Egypt. From chapter 7-11 we have the most tender care in sparing His people. But they were all still in cruel slavery.

What is to be done? We too have believed the love of God; we have tried to keep the law of God; we have tried to lay hold of the promises, and to trust the providence of God; and yet no real deliverance from sin — from the cruel slavery of doing what we hate. We are at our wits' end — we have come to the end. We do not know what to do. Thank God, we have got to the end of ourselves; we can do no more.

All now is of God, we will see what He has done. What do we get in this picture? A Lamb. Every man's need is met by a lamb. The lamb must now be put forth; the lamb must be killed; blood must be sprinkled; the lamb must be eaten; God must see the blood. God says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Oh, how little redemption is understood. Such is sin in God's sight; He must send His Son, the Lamb of God. He must be killed, His blood must be shed. And it is what God sees in that blood, it is God's estimate of that blood, which shelters from judgment. We must have redemption through that blood. There is no other means of pardon and eternal salvation.

Now many reach this point who never go beyond, and are utter strangers to all the teaching of Shiloh. Yea, they are not even delivered from Egypt; they have not yet understood the Red Sea. Until Israel had passed through the waters of the Red Sea, they were sorely troubled about Pharaoh and the host of the Egyptians behind them. (Exodus 14:1-31.) It is so with you, if you have only been brought so far, on as being sheltered by the blood. Often you are sorely troubled about past sins, especially sins since you believed the love of God. Does not Satan bring them after you like the armies of Egypt? A Christian can never really sing in his heart until he knows he is brought out of his old state through death — death written upon him and all his past. Ah, then the Egyptians are all dead on the shore. It is a wonderful thing to reckon ourselves dead with Christ. But before we reach Shiloh there are two things that must be known — "out of" and "into." We learn what we are brought out of at the Red Sea. We get the picture of what we are brought into, when we have crossed the Jordan. Now between these lies the wilderness with all its lessons and experiences. But in the wilderness there is not a word about Shiloh. Let it be borne in mind, none can enter into the lessons of Shiloh but those who have not only been brought out of the old creation, typified by Egypt, but also brought into the new creation, into the heavens, as typified by the passage of the Jordan.

It is most needed to learn the lessons of God's provision for us in the wilderness, by the offerings, &c., of Leviticus. How every failure has been met by the one offering of Christ; yea, how all the claims of divine righteousness have been met to the glory of God. He who came to do the will of God, could say, "I have glorified thee."

If we now read carefully Deuteronomy 12:1-32, beginning at chapter 11:31, we shall see the immense change that would take place, when they had crossed the Jordan, and were in actual possession of the land, and had rest in all that God had given them. All idolatry was to be destroyed. Then God would choose out a place. "But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes, to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come." To that place they were to bring all their offerings. There they were to worship and eat, and rejoice before the Lord. All this is solemnly repeated. They were not to do

there as they had done in the wilderness. "Every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes, for ye are not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety: then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there," &c.

What is the antitype or answer to all this? Can you say, It is true of me; after all my struggles in Egyptian bondage to sin and Satan, God brought me out by the blood of the Lamb? Through Pharaoh's overthrow I see now, he that had the power of death is destroyed. Can you say, I am dead with Christ? Can you say, God has secured His own glory, and provided for all my needs, by the offering of Christ? Can you say, As to my conscience, the whole question of my sins is settled for eternity: I have eternal redemption; He hath by His one offering perfected me for ever, in unchanging continuance? And much more. Now take the epistles. Look at Ephesians 1:1-23. Look at the heavenly land, so to speak, our God and our Father hath given us. Here you see the believer clean over Jordan; that is, brought into the land God hath given him in Christ, in the heavenlies — out of Egypt, as you may read in Colossians 1:12-14, but into the heavenlies in Christ, in Ephesians. In the one case really across Jordan; dead with Christ, and risen with Him. (Colossians 2:1-23; Colossians 3:1-25.) In Ephesians, right up in the heavenlies in the Beloved. In the same favour in the Beloved. Can you say, All this is true of me? Is God so good to you? In His free grace has He given you all this to enjoy in His own love in Christ? Oh, have you taken possession? Have you rest in the unbounded love of God, as thus revealed? Mark, until this is the case, you will be like Israel before they crossed the Jordan: as to all church matters, you will do what seemeth good in your own eyes. You look abroad, and you see many places that men have built, and placed their names, and you will choose for yourself, and not knowing the Lord's mind, you will do what you think best, in what is called liberty of conscience. We will now pass on to Shiloh, Joshua 18:1-10. The land had now rest from war. Israel were in the land. The Jordan had been crossed, the victory had been won. Surely this points to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He was risen from the river, from among the dead, but all believers are risen with Him, as all Israel passed over dry shod. It is as risen with Christ that we are in possession of the heavenlies, the true Canaan. The risen Christ is Shiloh. The meaning of the word Shiloh. In scripture this word "Shiloh" has two meanings. It is the name of a person in Genesis 49:10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." The meaning of "Shiloh" here as applied to a person is "whose it is," or "whose right it is." Surely that person is Christ the Lord. It was when He had accomplished the work of redemption, when God had raised Him from the dead, He was the One, the only One, "whose right it is" to gather to Himself. Whether we look at the church of God, or the future gathering of Israel and the millennial nations, or we look up to heaven in Revelation 5:1-14, and see one in the midst of the throne, there is only one whose name is Shiloh; to Him, "whose it is," shall the gathering of the people be. He alone is the Shiloh. He alone is worthy. Worthy is the Lamb. Oh, let us never forget His words — what meaning they have — "For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) And this bring us to Shiloh as a place. The Lord, the true Shiloh, first gathered to Himself, or formed the assembly, by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-47.) Thus Joshua 18:1-28 is a type of Pentecost. The meaning of "Shiloh" as a place is "peaceful tranquillity;" the Lord's own place, the place of peaceful tranquillity. What was it but this when He arose from the dead? What were the

first words of the risen Shiloh to His disciples assembled together? "Peace be unto you." And He shewed them His hands and His side. He had finished the work; He had made peace by His blood — eternal, perfect peace — it is His right to speak peace. Have you heard His voice speaking to you?

Shiloh was the place where Jehovah was pleased to place His name at the first. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there." What a picture of Pentecost! The true One, "whose right it is," was come, and all believers were gathered unto Him. They were not gathered to Peter, but to the Lord. Peter was the preacher, but Christ, the exalted Lord, was the Shiloh to whom all were gathered.

Thus in the beginning all was done at Shiloh, before the Lord. True there were many who had not as yet received their inheritance, but Joshua, was not indifferent: he says, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you." Missionaries were sent out, so that all might enjoy their possession. They went out from Shiloh, and returned to Shiloh, and the land was given to them at Shiloh. "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto, you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Thus He sent them out as missionaries to make known peace and forgiveness of sins. And it is only as we drink in His precious peace, into our own souls, and enjoy in peaceful tranquillity the certainty of sins forgiven; yea, that we are accepted in the favour of the beloved One — that we can expect to be used in bringing others into the possession of that present enjoyment of the inheritance which God our Father has given us in Christ. Oh, to go out from His peaceful presence, as He came forth from the Father.

It would be most blessed to dwell more on this, Shiloh as a picture of what the church was as built by Christ. We shall find the future history of Shiloh, a true picture of the sad history of the church. During the days of Joshua and those that overlived Joshua, Israel served the Lord. His words are very striking: he says, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served, on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:14-15.) What a word to us now! Every form of idolatry in which we trusted, whether in Egypt or in the wilderness, must be put away. If we are dead with Christ and risen with Him, what need have we for all those things in which we trusted? All are now "beggarly elements." If we now look at The Book of Judges, we shall there see a most striking picture of the history of Christendom. In chapter 2 we have repeated how "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and in the days of the elders that outlived Joshua." Joshua then died, and all that generation. "And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord." Then the sad history how they did evil and served other gods. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth; and for hundreds of years you do not hear a word of Shiloh, the place where the Lord had set His name at first.

Yet God did not forsake His people, but raised up judges; and though some of them were strange men, yet God did care for and deliver His people. There were Deborahs, and Gideons, and Jephthahs, and Samsons; but not one of these ever names Shiloh.

It was exactly so after the death of Paul and all that generation. There arose another generation that knew not the Lord and His ways, as at the beginning. Then did the devil teach the doctrine of

development. But the Lord in His tender care, raised up individuals, and through them delivered the church from utter ruin, by the loss of all truth. But for centuries Christ is never again known and owned as the true Shiloh. Nay, a man is blasphemously put in His place as the centre and head of the church. And even at the Reformation none of the reformers, so far as we have any record, ever recovered the long lost and only true position of the church as gathered to Him "whose it is!" They did escape from much of paganism, but never knew Christ as the only true centre, around which the two or three should be gathered in perfect tranquillity. For the most part they retained the worldly nationalism, or Babylonian principle, of confusing the church with the world. It is remarkable, that the very same idolatry has prevailed in Christendom, as in Israel during its centuries of darkness. Observance of days, turning to the east, worship of the queen of heaven, images of saints, as formerly Jupiter, Ashtaroth, &c.; monks, nuns, candles, holy water, &c. &c.; all these are real paganism — idolatry, so denounced in the word of God. But during those centuries of Israel's history, did not the true Shiloh exist? Yes, indeed it did, and God surely remained the same. One verse proves this. "And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." (Judges 18:31.) Has it not been so during the dark history of Christendom? All the time they set up their altars and images which they made; all that time, it was still true that the only true church principle was, Christ in the midst, the true Shiloh, the only One whose right it is to gather His redeemed to Himself on earth, as it shall be in heaven. And no doubt a few of the unknown hidden ones may, in unknown places, have enjoyed the peaceful tranquillity of His blessed presence. This is sure, the Lord remained the same, though the true place of Shiloh was as little known in Christendom, as in the type in Israel.

There is a most sad history of the one man going to the house of the Lord, as he says, "And there is no man that receiveth me to house." (Judges 19:8.) But so great had been the neglect of Shiloh during these centuries, that few knew the way; indeed, it required the most minute description how to find it! "Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly, in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah." (Chap. 21:19.) Would it not have been the same for centuries: if a man had inquired where was the true place, the true Shiloh, where saints were gathered to Christ, as in the Acts, could any have told him the place or the way to it? Reader, could you tell it even now?

Yet there was such a place then, and even from which a Benjamite might get a wife; and there is such a place now, where many a preacher may get a sermon, though he neither lives there nor ever gives it a good word. "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Last words of Judges. Words also which describe the whole history of Christendom, perhaps the cause of every evil division is just that — the want of the true owning of the Lordship and authority of Christ, in the fear of the Lord. Where this is not, every man is sure to do that which is right in his own eyes — his own will.

We now come to the first three chapters of 1 Samuel. The Revival of Shiloh.

It is striking that that which introduces this is a beautiful glimpse of the bride of Christ, in the type of Ruth. This brings us to the present century of Christendom in figure. At the beginning of this century the Holy Ghost brought again before us the bride of the heavenly Boaz, and the glorious truth of eternal redemption, to be completed in resurrection. And now after Shiloh had been almost

forgotten, all at once we have more in these three chapters as to Shiloh, than in the whole word or history of Israel before.

1 Samuel 1:1-28; 1 Samuel 2:1-36; 1 Samuel 3:1-21.

It would be well now to read carefully these three chapters, so full of our subject, and compare them with Revelation 3:7-22. In the one case we have the closing scenes of Shiloh, in the other the closing scenes of Christendom. In both we are close on judgment. May the Holy Ghost open our eyes to see the solemn application to the very circumstances of this day.

Here then in 1 Samuel we have two families, both at Shiloh, the place where the Lord set His name at first. In one family there is nothing that God condemns; in the other, there is nothing that He approves. In the closing days of Christendom there is not one thing the Lord condemns in Philadelphia. (Revelation 3:7-13.) In Laodicea there is not one thing that He approves. (Revelation 3:14-19.) The very names of the two families at Shiloh are most significant; and in their meaning, and all else recorded respectively of them, we learn that it is not enough to be, as is said, on true ground, that is, professedly gathered to Christ, whose right it is, the true Shiloh, the true and only place He approves; but also, what is the real state of soul of those who outwardly are so gathered.

There is then the family of Elkanah, and the family of Eli. Both are at Shiloh. Everything said in these chapters is about them at Shiloh. No one can deny or fail to admit there has been a most remarkable revival of this very truth, as to the only true place of worship and service of Christians, gathered to Christ, the true Shiloh, in these last fifty years [Written inthe second half of the XIXth century]. As Elkanah is named first, we will first take his name. Elkanah is, "God has redeemed," "possession of God," "whom God created." In this name all is of God. Redemption is an accomplished thing, God has redeemed us to Himself; we are His, and none shall pluck us out of His hand. We are His possession, we are not our own. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation;" and that new creation is wholly of God. This very name Elkanah indicates the blessed truths God has restored in these last days. And the name "Hannah" is equally characteristic. "Grace and mercy." Oh, the freeness of His favour, and the depths of His mercy! In contrast with all this, Eli means "a foster son," "adopted of the Lord;" and it is very remarkable that in Greek the word "Diotrophes" means a similar thing! All this points out officialism, in place of the enjoyed relationship of a child born of God. Is there not a difference between God adopting the flesh, and imparting the divine nature as born of God? The names of the sons of Eli are equally characteristic of that which is not approved of God.

Hophni means "Boxer, pugilist." In Arabic, "To fill both hands full."

Phinehas, "Mouth of brass." This boldness may be for good, as in the case of another Phinehas; but what one sees and deplores in some who have taken a place at Shiloh, that is, professedly gathered to Christ, is just what answers to these names. Instead of seeking to help and feed the whole church of God, wherever found, with the blessed truths of a full and eternal redemption — God’s unceasing love and care for His saints as His own possession — and that every believer is God’s new creation; instead of unfolding the riches of His grace and the depths of His mercy; instead of these things, nothing suits their nature more than to go into a village, or a town, and fight everybody and every sect like a boxing pugilist, with a mouth of brass that knows no shame. Such then are the names of the two families, both at Shiloh. And even in the family of Elkanah,

Peninnah the prosperous and faithful, was not so approved as Hannah, the feeble, yet daughter of grace and mercy. What warnings and divine teaching for us.

Let us now look at Hannah, for the Holy Ghost brings her out the most prominent. We see her at Shiloh, provoked by her adversary, because of her barrenness. She lays all before the Lord at Shiloh. There she weeps in the bitterness of her soul. It may be, my reader, you are barren and unfruitful in the things of the Lord. Have you ever wept in bitterness over this? She wept sore; have we? She asked at Shiloh for a man child, and she asked for this for Shiloh. Eli, the aged priest, knew nothing of all this; he saw, but did not understand; he thought she was drunken. Yes, there may be two parties at Shiloh, and they do not understand each other. Eli sits on a post, and Hannah weeps sore. But the request of the weeper is granted. She had poured out her soul at Shiloh before the Lord, and He had heard, and answered. Jesus says to His feeble, weeping Hannahs, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (John 16:23.)

He for whom she had asked was born. "She bare a son, and called his name Samuel [asked of God], saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord."

Men delight in what is great and showy; not so the Lord. He says, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Is this because thou art become great and strong, and hast done many mighty things? No; "for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Is not this what the Lord approves in these very last days? Philadelphia (Revelation 3:8) is the answer. In our lovely picture of the true Philadelphian, there are four things. Samuel is a little child. Jesus tells us there is no way of entrance but "as a little child." (Luke 18:17.) The second thing is, Samuel is weaned before he is brought to Shiloh. What sorrow in the assembly caused by persons being brought in before they are weaned from the world! There was more weaning forty years ago [Written inthe second half of the XIXth century]. The third thing was, Samuel was dedicated through death, the death of a bullock. And the fourth mark of this true Philadelphian, was that he was a worshipper at Shiloh; "and he worshipped the Lord there." No doubt two parties, the approved and the disapproved, may both be at Shiloh; that is, both take the ground of their meeting, to be gathered to the Lord. How am I to know which is right? Here are four things to guide me: little, weaned, dedicated, and a worshipper. Do, these marks answer to the state of our souls, or rather, does our state answer to these marks? Are we really little in our own eyes? If not, we are not the children of Hannah, grace and mercy. Are we weaned from the world? If not, it would be better to go to the church of the world, than bring the world to the Shiloh of God. Are we really dedicated by the death of Christ, of which the bullock was a type? Think of being crucified with Him. And lastly, Are we true worshippers in spirit and in truth? Do we delight in God, joy in God? What is the love of God to you? Is it so shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you, that in return you adore Him in holy peace? Oh, that these marks did more abound wherever souls are gathered to Him, whose right alone it is, the blessed Shiloh, and in that only place of peace and tranquillity of soul.

Before we go on to the further characteristics of the two families at Shiloh, shewing so distinctly what is pleasing to God at this very time, and what is not, let us ask ourselves, Are we real worshippers? can we sing the song of Shiloh? Yes, The Song of Shiloh.

Sing, you say, how can we sing, and the church in such a state, and judgment close at hand? It was exactly the same when Hannah sang that song of Shiloh; she was like a lark. You might say to the lark, How can you sing? do you not see what a fog there is on the ground? This way I sing, the lark would say, higher and higher, far above the fog, in the heavenly blue above. Thus sang Hannah, higher, and higher still. Is there a higher swell of joy in the whole scriptures? As the sun fills the sky of the lark, so the Lord Himself was before her soul.

She did not rejoice in Shiloh, as a place, but in the Lord who is the Shiloh. It is the person who makes the place. "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord because I rejoice in thy salvation!" In the spirit of Revelation 3:1-22, as a Philadelphian, she says, "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee." How soon we may slip away from this; how soon get occupied with men! Such was the Person of the holy one, to her, that He exceeded all others. What an exclusion, and what a song! Is Jesus the Shiloh thus before our souls? If so, how could we leave Him? "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Do our actions shew that He is enough, and we cannot allow any beside Him? "And by him actions are weighed." The mighty men, and the weak, are all made known in His presence. His wonderful ways are known at Shiloh. Read every sentence. How needed to the children of God now at Shiloh! "He bringeth low and lifteth up." Could anything, prove more distinctly the inspiration of the Holy Ghost than this song at Shiloh? Hannah's faith and song rises to a theme utterly unknown at that time. The church, of which this is a picture, full of typical instruction, was as yet hidden. (Ephesians 3:9.)

Mark the order of verses 8, 9, 10, in Hannah's song. She sees humanity a dunghill! Out of that dunghill, God lifteth up or raiseth up the beggar, "To set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Is not that exactly what God is doing now? Oh, have you been taken as a lost beggar out of the dunghill, as Paul? and is God determined that you shall be set amongst princes, and that you shall, as part of the body of Christ, inherit the throne of glory? Yes; He has no lower thought or purpose for us. But does it in some way depend on my holding fast? May I not turn aside, though a true saint, and after all be lost?

Nothing of the kind, says Hannah: "He will keep the feet of his saints." True, she says, "And the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail." Cheer up, my soul! these are weighty words — they are the words of this day of grace, during which God is gathering the church for the throne of glory in the heavens.

Then in verse 10. The next thing is the time of tribulation: "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces, out of heaven shall he thunder upon them." Then the judgment of the quick: "The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth." After this, the reign of Christ on earth. "And he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed."

It was simply impossible for any one to have invented this very order, then utterly unknown to man; but now become the well-known order, and purpose of God. First, the taking out the church for the throne of glory, kept for that purpose by the power of God. Secondly, the day of the Lord, ending with the judgment of the living nations. And, thirdly, the setting up Christ as the true Shiloh, Messiah, King on earth. Let the sceptic tell me how it came to pass, that Hannah sang of all this, in type, more than a thousand years before it was revealed? This amazing song of Shiloh is an unanswerable proof, then, of divine inspiration. It is the very theme at this moment of the songs of those gathered to Him the only Shiloh. Oh that we were more like Hannah, instead of being

crushed with the state of things in Christendom, and even at the very place or position that answers now to Shiloh, as a place, the place in His presence, of peaceful tranquillity. Yes, instead of looking at the state of things until our hearts sink within us, may we, like Hannah, and like the lark, thus rise above them, and rejoice only in the Lord.

We have noticed that there were two families at the only true place — Shiloh. One is approved, the other disapproved. What was the difference? This may help us to discern the Lord's mind now, especially where there may be two companies, both declaring they are gathered to the Lord. The words are very plain. "The child did minister unto the Lord, before Eli the priest." This is the first test. Are we ministering unto the Lord, or to self and self-importance? Which is it? Do not evade this question.

"Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." Yet they were the officials of Shiloh! Is it possible to be so now? We do not ask, is it possible for a true Christian to fail, to fall? Alas! every true Christian knows and owns it is. But is it possible for evil to be practised by those who are in the true place, on true ground, as they say, and that by those who know not the Lord? Yea, and for the very same motive as that of the sons of Eli. Ah! it is what they can get. It is "the pan, or kettle, or cauldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook, brought, up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh," &c. (Ver. 14.) Wickedness was practised at the very doors of the tabernacle at Shiloh.

"Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." This is the root, the practice of evil by those who know not the Lord. Mark again the contrast: "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." Ah, my brethren, this is the remedy for all the evil at Shiloh, to really minister before the Lord, girded with practical righteousness. Do weigh this. The Lord now sends a messenger, a man of God, to Shiloh. (Ver. 27.) God makes known the coming judgments on the house of Eli. He, now makes known to us the coming, judgment on Christendom, on Laodicea. But what was the marked failure of Eli? It was the allowance of evil. He seems to have been an amiable old man himself; but whilst himself condemning the evil, he was loose in allowing and going on with it. And what he allows, he is reckoned as a partaker of. And did this bring down the judgment of God on his house, and on Shiloh, where He placed His holy name at first? It certainly did, according to the word of the man of God. And has there been no man of God in these days who faithfully warned the house of the amiable Eli, who allowed and went on with what he condemned? Is it not astonishing what light these three chapters throw on our very path in these days? Surely we can thus discern what God approves, and what He condemns. No doubt all the world may condemn the exclusion of evil, and all who bring and practise it. Nothing has been so hated and misjudged in these days, as faithful exclusion of known evil, especially evil doctrine against the Person of Christ. But does God misjudge, like man, or disapprove? Read the message of the man of God to Eli. May we all read it in the fear of the Lord. He says, "But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (Ver. 30.) This is a most important word to us. We may be too much occupied with the authority of the assembly; with questions of united judgment, or a majority, &c. &c.; but do we know the real presence of the Lord? Do we really know Him as we should if we saw Him? This is the point. Do we really own Him present, and seek His mind? Who would rail and question the decision of a few thus gathered in His presence? Is He not really present to faith? He says it; and it will be found wherever He is truly

owned. These He will honour and preserve. It has been so in every case. But we must hasten on to Chapter 3.

"And the child Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days: there was no open vision." It is so now. It is only as we are as little children, we can really serve the Lord. And though there is no open vision, no further development, yet cannot we say that the word of God is precious in these last, closing days of Christendom, as in those closing days of Shiloh? The eyes of Eli began to wax dim that he could not see. It is so wherever known evil is allowed or palliated. Dimness of perception of divine truth is sure to be the result. "And ere the lamp of God went out." Is it not a solemn thought that the bright testimony of the Holy Ghost will soon cease to shine in this poor world, ere God shall give the rejecters up to dark and strong delusion? The night grows dark, already pagan ritualism covers the land with many a rite of Baal. Is this a time for indifference? Are the Elis and Samuels to lie down to dream, being neither cold nor hot? No, the voice of the Lord is heard, but not by Eli: "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." But he who allows the evil he condemns, has no ear to hear. Eli heard not that voice, though it had to say to him.

Samuel, the little, weaned, dedicated worshipper, heard. His ear was open, but at first, he did not understand. Do we hear the Spirit say, Give out such a hymn; read such a portion of the word; or lead the assembly in prayer or worship? Well does the writer remember the first time the Spirit said to him, Read the first chapter of 2 Corinthians, and the thoughts that were then impressed on his heart, though much over forty years ago. Like Samuel, he did not, then know the Lord after this manner. Yes; if really waiting before the Lord, it is our privilege to be unmistakeably guided by the Spirit, ever present with the saints on earth. But if we allow evil, this cannot be; and the official priesthood never thus hear the voice. Nay, in poor, fallen Christendom, the real guidance of the Holy Ghost, as to what shall be done when gathered together, is never thought of. Oh, to be a little child, and with Samuel say, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

Now is it not most remarkable that the doom and judgment on the house of Eli is communicated, to the child Samuel? And what is the sin that brings down this terrible judgment? Is it not repeated again, as we have seen, this one thing — the allowance of sin which he condemned? "And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." Very affecting are the words of the aged Eli: "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me." "And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." Yes; in many respects, this seems to have been an amiable, aged priest. Was it not even human kindness, or parental kindness? He might call it love, as many have done in this day. They have called it love to allow and pander to the false doctrine and evil they condemn. Have they not even slandered those who have sought to exclude the evil and give it no shelter? Oh let us all take this solemn lesson of Eli’s house to heart! Remember, brethren in Christ, judgment will begin at the house of God, as it swept away the house of Eli, at the close of the history of Shiloh.

We thus learn it is not enough to be at Shiloh. We must have the spirit of Samuel the little. Mark these results: "Samuel grew." (Ver. 19.) Where there is the suited condition of soul, suited to Shiloh, there will be real growth. "And the Lord was with him." Are you quite sure the Lord is with you? It is no Shiloh if He is not, for He is the true Shiloh. "And did let none of his words fall to the

ground." It is so now, and will be to the end (See Revelation 3:9.) Yes, all shall know this, "And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord." Nothing could be more cheering to the true Samuels in this day, though just at the end. Yes, up to the end, as at the beginning, the Lord will reveal Himself in Shiloh, in the place that He hath chosen. Wherever two or three are gathered to His name, there He will be, there He is. It is not where there is a splendid cathedral, or a splendid organ, or a gorgeous ritual, or priestly robes of cost! Not where riches and fashion are displayed. No, all this is Laodicean, and where that is, He reveals not Himself, but stands outside and knocks. (Revelation 3:1-22.)

Hold fast, then, this blessed fact: that to the very end, as the Lord appeared to Samuel in Shiloh, as He revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord, so He will now to the end. Let the house of Eli rail and misrepresent you, the Lord's dear presence is enough the mind and heart to fill. The house of Eli may often say, "Ebenezer," hitherto the Lord hath helped us. There is much of such boasting in Christendom. It is the spirit of Laodicea. Do not forget that the Philistines are not far off the same place. The Philistines, those who are in the land, but not of it, are gathering and preparing their forces. Shiloh was destroyed; Shiloh as a place came to an end. Samuel went to Ramah, his home — Ramah, "the high places." Christendom will indeed be destroyed; but the church of God — Samuel, so to speak — will be caught up to the high places, and be seated around the throne of God in glory. From Ramah Samuel judged Israel. (Chap. 7:17.) Paul says, "Do ye not know that, the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2.) We will close these brief remarks with a short review.

1. A redeemed people, not only sheltered by the blood, but brought out of Egypt.

2. They must also be brought in, through the Jordan, into the land.

3. Then, when they had rest and possession, the Lord placed His name in Shiloh.

4. For centuries Shiloh was almost forgotten.

5. The great revival of Shiloh in 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 1 Samuel 2:1-36; 1 Samuel 3:1-21. To pursue the type, we have Ruth, the bride before the reign. Then Saul, head and shoulders above the rest. Then follows the reign of David.

Thus also the church is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Brought out of darkness and slavery, and blest in Christ in the heavenlies. All this must be known ere church position can be understood. The church, or even two or three, are now gathered to the risen Christ, the true Shiloh, He "whose it is."

Blessed place of peaceful tranquillity. This was practically lost and unknown for centuries. Then, as Shiloh was so remarkably revived in 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 1 Samuel 2:1-36; 1 Samuel 3:1-21, so in these last few years, the true principle of gathering together has been restored. That is, to Himself, the only One whose right it is. As there were two parties, or families, then, so again now. One who has allowed the evil they condemned, the other desiring to exclude all evil, in separation to Christ, the only Shiloh. May the Lord apply His truth to us all. May Hannah's song be ours, however reviled as exclusive. May we learn in this lesson what is pleasing to the Lord! May we know the Shiloh, Emmanuel, "He whose it is." May we honour Him, cleave to Him, glorify Him, for He alone is worthy. "Worthy, O Lamb of God, art thou." In the midst of the redeemed in glory, Thou shalt be

the Shiloh. When Thou shalt come to this poor, sad earth, Thou, whose it is, shall have the glory. All nations shall worship Thee. Thine be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

C.S.

Chapter 84

086. Cleansed by Blood, and washed by Water.

Cleansed by Blood, and washed by Water. In Psalms 51:1-19 you will find the deep need of a soul that has found itself ruined and vile, utterly without power in the hour of temptation. How deep the sense of guilt and sin; and yet the cry for mercy according to what God is! "Have mercy upon me, O God according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash, me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit." These are the earnest desires of a sin-burthened soul — the groans of a broken heart that longs for holiness and purity. For cleansing and purging: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." And much more: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Guilty, guilty, oh, wash me whiter than snow! Here is full unreserved confession to God and faith looks only to Him. Here is man’s need — your need and mine, as God sees it — our very condition by nature.

Now if we turn to that day when God shall gather His ancient people from all countries, we find an answer to every cry and desire in this psalm. "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 the Lord, saith the Lord God, 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 he 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 an 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. 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 God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God: 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." (Ezekiel 36:23-31.) "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you."

All help comes from God: cleansing, a new heart, and the Holy Ghost. This is the purpose of God for His name's sake. How precious the "I wills" of God! "I will take you." Yes, from His own heart's free grace He will do all this for Israel. And is He not the same blessed God now? Poor helpless, sin-burthened soul, He says, I will cleanse thee, and thou shalt be clean. How very striking are the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again [or wholly afresh] he cannot see the kingdom of God." And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There must be a pure and holy new creation. And this is the work of God, entirely of God. "I will cleanse," "I will give a new heart." There must be a holy new nature. Only, mark, this does not alter the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This solemn distinction of the two natures is our blessed Lord's first elementary lesson. If this lesson is not learnt, nothing can be clearly known. Truly the new quickening birth is by the Holy Ghost — "born of the Spirit." And the thing signified by water is the word: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23.) But it is important to inquire why our blessed Lord used the term 'water.' "Except a man be born of water." Does it not express the holy requirements of God? There must be a nature suited to Himself.

Now let us look at a few of the types, where water was used for cleansing: indeed, let us notice the relative place in these figures of water, the blood, and oil. Suppose we look at Christ and believers, in the figures of Aaron and his sons in the day of their consecration. In Leviticus 8:6 : "Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water." Then from verse 7-12 it is all Aaron alone. And he put upon him the coat and girded him And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him. Thus, if we look at Jesus alone in this type, it is the water and the oil; the washing in water, then the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He was the sinless One, the washing with water marked His intrinsic purity. He needed no atoning blood. It was this that so surprised John — that the Holy One should come to be baptized. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. And John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh, us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17.) He fulfilled this beautiful type of the law. He was baptized with water: and at this John might well marvel. But immediately he was anointed with the Holy Ghost. And God bore witness that He was the Holy One: "my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." From His pierced side there flowed blood and water — blood to atone, and water to cleanse. But you notice He was in His own essential being all that God, could require — the Beloved Son. This gives great force to the expression, "Except a man be born of water." He must have a wholly new nature — the very nature of the Beloved Son, the second Adam.

Turn back to Leviticus 8:1-36. If Aaron typifies the holy, holy One, who needed no sin-offering, the One on whom the Father could look with perfect delight, and on whom the Holy Ghost could descend; then when Aaron and his sons present Christ and believers, a sin-offering must be offered. Until the cross He, the corn of wheat, remained alone. Then He became sin for us. The

holy, holy One, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Look at Jesus in that figure; Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the sin-offering; and all this bearing the wrath due to our sins, in order that we might be one with Him in all the sweet savour to God of the burnt offering. For again, in the next place, the ram of burnt offering is brought; and Aaron and his sons all lay their hands upon its head. Now look at Jesus the accepted of God; and then meditate on the wondrous fact, that all believers are perfectly identified with Him in all His acceptance before God. Nay, still more, the Lamb of consecration is now brought, and Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the head of it also. Oh, look again at Jesus consecrated to the Father: and are we perfectly identified with Him in His consecration? It is even so. By what power, or value, or merit can we possibly be thus identified with Him in His consecration to God? By the power, the value, the merit of His blood. The blood of consecration was first put upon Aaron's right ear, thumb, and great toe; and then put upon his sons. To have His eternally-loved many brethren He must pass through death. And the power, the value, the merit of His blood must be upon them; yes, is upon us. As the blood was put upon all the sons of Aaron, so the value of the blood is reckoned to all believers.

Now, mark, this consecration was never repeated; and if the infinite value of the blood of Christ be upon us, our consecration can never cease and can never therefore be repeated.

Then follows the anointing oil, or rather the oil and the blood, sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons. Thus all believers are anointed with the Holy Ghost, the distinguishing mark of Christianity. Blessed abiding witness of the value of the blood of Jesus! Thus we have the divine order: the water, the blood, the oil. It is our complete consecration. Born of water and Spirit, the Holy Ghost using the word to quicken us — to give us an entirely fresh, new nature, and to wash us from all defilement by the washing of water by the word. Then the infinite value of the precious death, the blood, of Jesus put upon us once and for ever. Then the anointing with the Holy Ghost. In the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14:1-57 the divine order is very striking. There is first the ground on which the leper can be cleansed. There are two birds; the one is killed over running water, the other is dipped in the blood of the dead bird, and that blood sprinkled on the leper. Precious figure! Jesus must die, and must rise again, and His resurrection applies the value of His blood, as the only basis on which the sinner can be cleansed. But now mark the order of the cleansing. Read verse 8 to 20. Again we find, first the water, then the blood, then the oil. Twice is he to be washed with water. The holy pure requirements of God are thus confirmed in the type. Then the precious offerings that set forth the perfections of Christ are taken, and he is presented with the whole value of these before the Lord. Stay, how far have we got? The believer, thus typified, is to be washed with water; he must be cleansed from all defilement. He must be presented to God with all the perfections of the work and person of Christ. Yea, we are thus presented.

Then the blood is to be put upon his right ear, thumb, and toe. The value of the atoning blood of Jesus put upon him. And then the oil is to be put upon the blood. Thus again the type sets before us the water, the blood, and the Holy Ghost. Oh, meditate on the completeness of this wondrous type! And now look through this Book of Leviticus, and you will find every possible defilement must be washed by water. Even so every possible defilement to the believer must be met by the washing of water by the word.

Read also in Numbers 19:1-22, the water of purification. What a lesson of washing by water! Blessed fact, that water derives all its virtue from death. So the water of the word derives all its value from the death of Christ. "In the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." (Colossians 1:22.) We now turn to another scripture of great moment — Leviticus 16:1-34 — the great day of atonement.

Even here the priest that brings the blood within the veil must first wash in water. Nay, more, "He shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil, and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." Yes; such must he be who should come and offer himself without spot to God. He must be pure and holy. Yea, from the fire of the altar he must be the sweet savour, unto God. The cloud — emblem of the divine presence — must cover the mercy-seat. Oh, what wondrous shadows of Christ!

I want my reader to fix his thoughts on two things specially in this chapter. The value of the blood before God, or propitiation, and the transfer of the believer's sins to Christ, or substitution. There are two goats to set forth these two things. One is offered as a sin-offering, and its blood is sprinkled on the golden mercy-seat before the eye of God.

We have seen, and fully admit as proved, that there are repeated washings of water. Now our solemn inquiry is, Are there, or can there be, repeated applications of the blood? How long does that blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat remain? The last verse of this chapter answers the question: "An atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." Then there required a fresh application of the blood of the goat once every year? Certainly.

Mark, there is no transfer of sins to the sin-offering of propitiation here. No hand of identification was laid upon its head. In propitiation it is what the blood is to God, turning the throne of righteous judgment into the mercy-seat. God meets a world in righteous mercy. Jesus is a propitiation, for our sins, and not only so, but for the whole world.

Now look at the other goat — the azazel — the live goat. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited."

Nothing could more distinctly set before us the transfer of all our sins to Christ, the Substitute. This is substitution. There is perhaps not a more fatal mistake in modern theology than the confounding of these two truths together. It deceives those who have not faith, and it robs the true believer of the overwhelming comfort this fact gives, namely, that all his sins and guilt were transferred to Christ and borne away, never to be remembered against him for ever. But to say that Christ bore the sins of the world — that the sins of all men were transferred to Christ — is to imply that all men therefore must be saved; or that His death has been in vain. I need not say that scripture never makes such a mistake. Scripture presents Christ as the propitiation of the whole world, so that God in divine righteousness proclaims mercy and forgiveness to every man. But the transfer of sins is never applied in scripture except to those who believe, where, so to speak, the hand of faith

is laid on His precious head, as the hand was laid upon the goat. I make these remarks, so that shortly we may have the full unhindered testimony of God's word to our souls.

One word more. Had this transfer of all the sins of Israel to be repeated? It had to be repeated once every year. And in cases of individual sins, had thereto be a fresh sin-offering? Undoubtedly, as Leviticus 5:1-19 fully states.

Then would not all this prove, one may ask, that the modern thought of constant fresh applications of the blood of Christ is correct and scriptural?

Let us turn to the New Testament and inquire. Will you read Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39? First, it is fully admitted that under the law there was this constant repetition, a remembrance of sins once every year; and the reason why is given: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

Now, do these chapters present the sacrifice of Christ in comparison, or in contrast, with the offerings of the law? If in comparison, then clearly there must be frequent applications of the blood of Christ to the believer, and for precisely the same reason. It is like saying, For it is impossible that the blood of Christ should take away sins! Indeed, this is exactly what Satan and unbelief are saying. But nothing can be more clear than that these chapters present the one sacrifice of Christ in direct contrast with the often repeated sacrifices of the law. The offerings of old could never bring man into the presence of God. The veil shut him out; the Holy Ghost signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. Now the veil is rent, and we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Then the sacrifices of the law could not really take away sins even for a year. Now the one offering of Christ hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.

Look at the sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat of old. Twelve months pass over, and it loses its value; there must be a fresh application of blood. But let faith look at the blood of Jesus before God; now say, twelve months pass over, has it lost its value? Twelve years, twelve thousand, twelve millions, eternity — has it lost its value? Must there be a fresh application of blood before God? Oh, my soul, wilt thou give up the everlasting efficacy of that precious blood? I may need to come boldly again and again to that throne of grace, but to say there needs or can be a fresh application of the blood of Christ is to overthrow the very foundation of Christianity. No! the one offering perfects in perpetuity all that are sanctified.

Let us now look at Jesus as the believer's substitute. As all the sins of Israel were confessed over and laid upon the azazel — the scape-goat, we now see Christ once offered to bear the sins of many. What a wondrous reality this is! All my sins and iniquities transferred to Christ, borne away by Him, never to be remembered against me! All this is made true to my soul the moment by faith I lay my hand on that dear head of Thine. Is this true for twelve months? Does this work of my Jesus substitute then fail? and then require a fresh work, a fresh application? Oh! my reader, would you thus deny the everlasting value of the blood of Jesus? A fresh application of the substitution of Christ bearing all or any of our sins transferred to him! The thing is impossible. It would make His death of no more value than the blood of a goat! Again and again may the word be applied to my heart and conscience, revealing to my soul, the all-stupendous fact that all my sins were transferred to my holy Substitute on the cross. Oh, soul-sustaining truth!

We have then two things certain and everlasting: the blood of Jesus before God, never, never losing its efficacy — never, never needing repetition; and the sins of believers once transferred to Him put away for ever. In all the believer's sins being transferred to Christ the Substitute, the blood must be as perfect and everlasting in its efficacy for us as it is before God; and if all our sins have thus been transferred, there remains none for which there can be a fresh death or application. And now, whether in the cleansing of the leper, or the consecration of the priest, where the blood was put upon the person, there was not repetition. The oil was put upon the blood. This is a third important aspect of the blood of Jesus. In the first, it was before God; in the second, it is for us, in our stead; in the third, it is upon us, the whole value of the blood is put upon us: placed to our account. Now if the blood of Jesus never can lose its value before God, nor for us in our stead; neither can it lose its value upon us. And if it can never lose its value, there need be, there can be, no fresh application of it. A fresh application implies it has lost its value. To doubt this is to doubt the infinite perfections of the person and value of the work of Christ. This is very wonderful; yes, so wonderful that, it must be entirely of God. The believer, then, must be clean every whit in God's sight. That is just what he is, and he need not wash, save his feet. The blood is ever before God: therefore we can come boldly to the mercy-seat. All our sins have been transferred, laid on Christ, borne away. God has put the same blood upon us, the infinite value of the sacrifice of Christ upon us. As to the believer who sees this, and understands these three aspects of the death of Christ, he must know that, though all unworthy sinner in himself, yet cleansed by the blood of Christ, he is whiter than snow in God's sight — without spot, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. No doubt this was the faith once delivered to the saints a long time ago. Oh, if believers were but in that light now, clear and bright! A change now from Christendom to Christianity, is almost as great as it was of old from Judaism to Christ. In the blessed Lord's commission to Paul we read — "He was sent to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receiver the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18.) Oh, how much of that light, the true knowledge of God, has been obscured by the traditions of men! There was then the complete turning from ignorance to God, to the full knowledge of God in Christ, and of the believer's standing in Him. Thus one can give "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," &c. (Colossians 1:12.) All this could not possibly be, if we were imperfectly cleansed from sins, and needed further applications of the blood of Christ. And that this is a present thing is evident: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises [or virtues] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.)

Much depends on whether my reader enjoys that marvellous light, in all its clear brightness, or not. If you do, if you have God's thoughts as to the blood of Christ before Him on the mercy-seat, and His thought of that sacrifice as the Substitute for you, you must see all your sins have been transferred to Christ, and for ever gone; and more, His thought about the whole value of that precious blood upon you for ever. Then you must see in this wondrous light that all your sins are gone as to their guilt, and that that blood thus cleanses you from all sin. And if so, there can be no repetition, or fresh application, of the blood of Christ. And to this agree the words of the Spirit through John: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (John 1:7.) Must it not be so? The

blood before God; the blood for us; the blood on us; the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. God sees the blood, and sins cannot be reckoned to us; they have been borne by Jesus. That blood — ever the same in infinite value; ever on us; ever before God — "cleanseth us from all sin." It cleanseth, in the sense that we are perfected for ever, in perpetuity, by that one offering. To make this a matter of work or attainment on our art would be to deny the work of Christ. He hath perfected in perpetuity. It is the abstract statement of the value of His blood, in the light. And if we are there, in the light, walking in it, we shall have this blessed certainty. But perhaps my reader will say, I have been told that verse means this — that if "a believer sins, he must come to God again, as he came at first, for a fresh application of the blood of Christ; and it will cleanse him again from his sins."

Now read the verse carefully. There is no question here of "if we sin," that is, if we do not walk in the light; but "if we walk in the light." We will look at that question, "if we sin," shortly. It is of all moment rightly to divide the word of God.

If I said, "The gas lights this room," [Written in the second half of the XIXth century] this would not mean it is gone out, and needs a fresh application, needs lighting again. If I said, "The sun shines in the heavens, dispelling all darkness," this would not mean there needs a fresh application of the sun’s light to do so. Nay, such has been the misuse of this precious verse that some have fallen into the fatal error, that if a believer sins he is no longer a child of God. But more of this presently. A blind man could not see that the gas lit the room, or that the sun lights the heavens.

If a man is in darkness, he cannot see this wondrous truth, that the blood of Jesus puts away sins, cleanses from all sin. As "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited." Even so have all our sins been transferred to Jesus. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-11.) "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Oh, if in the light we see Him there by faith; His work done, never to, be repeated. "For by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." In this full, complete, everlasting sense, if we are in the light, if we walk in the light, we have fellowship in this one with another; and the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. But my reader may say, This wondrous work was accomplished before we were born.

Yes. Then all our iniquities, from our birth to our departure from this sinful world, wore transferred to Jesus on the cross. To the believer this is surely true, or who can be saved? And when is all this made true to the believer? As the hand of Aaron was laid, in identification, on the head of the goat, so the moment the Holy Ghost imparts faith to the soul, there is complete identification with Christ. Then we receive, in living power in our souls, the blessed fact that all our sins have been transferred to Christ, never, never again to be laid to our charge. Nay, much more than this? we are reckoned dead with Christ, and risen with Him. And as all our iniquities have been transferred to Him on the cross, so now we are accepted in Him, identified with Him in all that He is, the risen Christ, at God’s right hand. The doctrine of a fresh application of the blood — a doctrine nowhere taught in scripture, but taught by men — sets all this aside, and reduces ancient Christianity into modern Judaism.

Neither must we read "cleanseth from all sin" as if it meant an unfinished continuous process, like a woman washing a garment, or a man scouring a pack of wool. This is the Romish view of the work of Christ. if that woman is still washing the spots of dirt out of the garment, then she hath not really perfected it. This error robs Christ of the glory of His finished work, and needs for the Romanist a purgatory hereafter, and for others a purgatory here. An anxious soul, that cannot say, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," if he cannot say this, in the light, then he must be in purgatory, in the dark. Oh, my reader, if in the dark, you are tormented with uncertainty as to your sins. If in the light, you know the blood of Jesus Christ has washed them all away; they are all gone. Which is it? This is the true standing of every believer in the light before God, washed in the blood whiter than snow.

Perhaps my reader will say, I had thought these verses in 1 John very difficult.

Indeed, tell me your difficulties.

Well, am I to understand by the blood of Jesus cleansing us from all sin, that therefore we have no longer a sinful nature? That we have here below a pure sinless nature, our old sinful nature changed, or sin eradicated?

How could you have had such a thought? Do you not see verse 8 expressly corrects that mistake? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Do you not find these words to be truth? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh:" and again, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." (John 3:6; Galatians 5:7.) But how can we be for ever perfected, if there is still a sinful nature?

Because that sinful nature has been fully judged: "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin], condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3.)

Then we may, fully own the truth, as to the unchanged old nature, sin in the flesh; knowing that all this has been judged on the cross?

Certainly, and instead of difficulty, this gives blessed relief to the soul.

Well, one more, indeed the great difficulty to many. If the Christian should sin, does he then lose all this wondrous value of the blood of Christ? is he no longer a child of God? has the blood of Christ to be applied afresh?

Why these very verses answer with the utmost clearness each of these questions. And mark, these truths are not given that we may sin; and God forbid that I should write one line that we may be careless in our walk: "My children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Even in this extreme case there is no thought of a fresh application of the blood. If the believer sins, does he lose the value of the blood? Oh no, He who died for our sins is our advocate, patron, solicitor — the One who undertakes the whole case of our restoration; as we see in that beautiful figure, when He took the basin and poured water, and washed His disciples' feet. But it does not say Advocate with God, but with the FATHER. Oh, what this speaks! The relationship is still there. Not a sinner before God, to be saved again; but a fallen child, to be restored to the Father; and by Jesus Christ the righteous? Yes, He is still thy subsisting righteousness with the Father, and He is — not He must die again to

be — He is the propitiation for our sins. This for ever decides the question of a fresh application of the blood. He is the propitiation. With the Jew the blood of the goat was needed once a year to be repeated on the propitiatory mercy-seat. Not so the blood of His Son; once shed, it is for ever before God. Have you sinned? Come boldly to that propitiatory, that throne of grace. Oh, the claims of that blood for us before God! Fearful is the error of admitting for a moment the thought that there needs a fresh application of blood. What! was that sin, which breaks your heart in sorrow and contrition, transferred to Christ on the cross? Is that precious blood on the mercy-seat before the eye of God? Is that blood also on you as we saw in the cleansing of the leper? Need you more? Need you a fresh application of blood? Does God need more than the death of His Son? Will He deny the claims of that precious blood? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Yes, whatever dishonouring thoughts we may have had of the blood of Christ, God is faithful to its infinite value and unchanging claims. Therefore sins confessed are sins forgiven. Thus, through confession, the believer is restored to communion; not through a fresh application of the blood, but because the blood is ever before God. And surely God is faithful to forgive the sins which have been once transferred to Christ, and borne by Him. Oh, my soul, what a provision God has made in His own Son!

Well, my reader may say, all this is very different from what I have been taught. I have been told that to walk in the light was a very great attainment, in fact only attained by very few; and that those few were so cleansed by the blood of Jesus that they were sinless, sin in some way being eradicated. Now I see that to walk in the light is the normal or true place of every child of God; and that the blood of Jesus presents him before God whiter than snow. Though in himself he still finds sin, yea, needs one in the presence of God to be his patron or advocate when he sins, the righteous One, the propitiation; and all he needs he has in Christ. Well, the fact is I am amazed and filled with comfort. Christ is the rock; and the soul built on Him, evidently, never can be moved. But I should like to name some other difficulties that have been presented to me. I would now briefly refer to the Romanist’s view of salvation through Christ. The way to heaven is thus described: "Suppose a traveller, going towards a magnificent city where his family and a brilliant fortune await him, between him and the city there is a fathomless abyss, and impervious darkness covers his way. This traveller has neither guide nor light; over this abyss there is only a small plank, narrow and very unsteady, and there is no other way by which he can reach the city." Then follows the use of the Decalogue to help the poor souls across*. What a picture! Is it true? Is the Romanist in impervious darkness, without a guide, without light, and to him Christ a narrow unsteady plank across the bottomless abyss?

* ["The way to heaven" recommended by the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.]

Well, you say, I have not been brought up exactly in that impervious darkness. But really, I must say, not much better. The sum of the preaching I have heard is this: salvation by Christ is a sand-bank; to-day it is high above water mark, and all is safe; to-morrow the waves of temptation and dark billows of sin may have swept it away, and I, poor soul, may sink in the unfathomable depths of perdition. And I have been taught to regard as the most dangerous error the doctrine of the believer as a stone built on Christ the immovable rock. Now for the strengthening of my faith in Christ, and the value of His precious blood, I will put out some of my old difficulties, and, I may say,

the present difficulties of thousands I love and believe to be Christians. This is one. I have known many most zealous members of the professing church, who appeared, so far as one could see, to be sincere Christians; yet at last they have been found to be practising sins, have fallen away, given up all profession, and have never, to their dying day, been restored. Does not this look like the Roman Catholic unsteady plank, or with some Protestants the shifting sand-bank? How is this?

Let the same Epistle answer: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:19.) The parable of the sower also shews the same thing. Out of four parts that appear to receive the truth, only one receives it in the prepared heart; and, understanding it, brings forth fruit. It is not the assent of the intellect, but the reception of Christ in the heart by faith. Have you thus received Christ? If you have, you will no doubt continue; if you have not, you will sooner or later fall away. How plain the truth of God! Will you now turn to 1 John 3:1-24? In chapter 2 we have seen the remedy and provision if any man sin. Most comforting to my soul! Now we, read: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not He that committeth sin is of the devil Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." Now these passages not only take away the comfort of the former, but they terribly affright many a sincere soul. I have sinned, therefore I am not a Christian at all, I am of the devil. This terror of soul arises from two mistakes; the not seeing the two natures. The new nature, that which is born of God, surely sinneth not. And again, a mistranslation in these verses. It should be, "He that practiseth sin is of the devil." In each case it is "practiseth sin." And there were those Nicolaitanes, who were openly practising sin, and yet pretending to be Christians. In the very twelve, we have a notable instance of the difference. Judas practised sin; he sought opportunity to betray Christ; and he was of the devil. When Peter sinned, sad as it was, yet did that look of Jesus say, There Peter, you have denied Me; you may go; you are of the devil now? What a contrast! Just such a contrast is there betwixt the believer if he sins in chapter 2, and the practiser of sin in chapter 3. It is not a difficulty, but a solemn heart-searching truth. Will you now turn to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27? Does this not look like the unsteady plank, or the moving sand-bank? What! a man may be a preacher to others, and yet himself a castaway.

Terrible as this is, doubtless there are instances all around. But notice this chapter, and this Epistle, is not so much about salvation, but service, ministry, and church order. And surely the Holy Ghost well knew what the future clergy would be. One of the most godly of the reformers said of the clergy in his day, "Whose god was their belly, and whose religion was the kitchen." I trust there is much change for the better. Perhaps no class of men have pampered the body more than the clergy; so that there is not a solemn warning of scripture more needed than this. But because the Holy Ghost foresaw the worldliness of a hired clergy, and forewarned the godly minister of Christ of the need of keeping the body under, I cannot see for a moment that this touches the security of the true Christian, having eternal redemption through the blood of Christ. It does prove this, that preaching to others is no security. Judas again may be cited in proof. He was of the devil, and became reprobate.

Well, I confess I do not see anything here to shake the confidence of the believer in the blood ever before God for him; and the certainty that all his sins were transferred to Christ; and that the blood is upon him; and the Holy Ghost bearing witness, not to his feelings, but to the efficacy of that

blood, in putting away all sins; and more, that if he sins, Jesus the righteous One is his Advocate on high; and that, he having eternal life, God is still his Father. Will you now turn to Hebrews 6:1-6? "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Oh, the darkness, and difficulty many have through misuse of these verses! Surely then they must misunderstand them altogether. Now, clearly, if these verses mean that a believer, who has eternal life, and is for ever perfected by the one offering of Christ, may nevertheless fall away; then they also prove the impossibility of such an one ever being restored to repentance. Now this would prove too much, both for the men of the unsteady plank, and the men of the moving sand-bank; but what do they mean? If you look at the context you learn in the end of chapter 5 that the believing Hebrews had not gone on to perfection, or full mature christian truth. They were still occupied with truths known by them as Jews, such as repeatedly laying again the foundation of repentance, like the yearly day of atonement; of the doctrine of baptisms or frequent washings of water, as the priests, and believing priests, were still practising; the laying on of hands on the head of goats and bullocks, &c. Remember, the temple was still standing, and the multitude of them that believed more or less were practising its rites and occupied with its doctrines. As for resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, all these had had their place; but now believers were to go on to perfection, to the full developed christian truth. And this the apostle does in this Epistle, shewing that christian truth is in direct contrast with the old shadows of the law. And in these very verses the contrast is sharp and striking. The very plan of Judaism, or the law, was constant renewals. If a man sinned, he must bring a fresh victim. His hand must be laid upon it; it must be killed. There must be a fresh application of blood, and his relationship with God (such as it was) is renewed or restored. For a man to leave the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, and go back to the offerings of the law for restoration in case of sin or defilement, nothing could be more certain than that such restoration was now impossible. There was great temptation to do so whilst the temple was standing. No doubt some who had been brought into all the outward privileges of the ministry of the Holy Ghost in the christian church did so go back. Repetition was quite right before the one sacrifice had been offered; but now, to give up Christ — and not only, give Him up but to go back to the very murderers of Jesus, to account Him an impostor as they did — and again to seek renewals by the offerings and rites of the law, was to crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and to put Him to an open shame. I fail to see the trace of a contradiction here to the precious truths we have been considering in 1 John.

You say you have been greatly troubled about this scripture: tell me, Does it apply to you? Have you given up the one offering of Christ and gone back to the offerings of the law? Have you laid your hand on the bead of a goat or a bullock? True, you may have had all the advantages of a christian education; yes, some eye may rest on this paper, who has wilfully given up the one sacrifice of Christ, and gone to infidelity or ritualism. Oh! have you thus closed your eyes and

refused the truth as it is in Jesus? If this is the case, no words can describe your dreadful condition. I think I hear you say, I never understood it a bit; I have been totally misled about it. The apostle now goes on to contrast fully developed christian truth with Judaism; imperfect priesthood with the perfect priesthood of Christ; the imperfect offerings of the law, which could never take away sins, with the one offering of Jesus, which for ever perfects all that are sanctified by it.

Oh! stay; this brings us to that other scripture, such a terror to many: "If we sin wilfully." (Hebrews 10:26-31.)

Now, what is this wilful sin? Is it not this: As he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment is he worthy, who hath trodden under-foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood or the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing? Is not this again the Hebrew who, by professed faith in the blood of the Son of God, had been outwardly separated from the Jewish sacrifices to Christ, and who now wilfully despises the sacrifice of the Son of God, and by going back to open sin tramples Him under-foot? Can there be anything but vengeance for such an one? Have you done this? Have you gone from Christ? Do you despise and trample under-foot the Son of God? Undoubtedly, to give up Christ and go after flesh, and the world, is the same thing in principle now.

I grant that the ritualist, in going to the Mass, is doing as much so as he can. But the sin of apostasy, wilfully rejecting and despising Christ, cannot be the sin of a believer, who clings to Him as his Advocate with the Father. Therefore this sin of the apostate Jew, or the modern despiser of Christ, has nothing to say to the security of the believer, as a stone built on the immovable Rock, and that rock is Christ. Where have been my eyes, my reader may say? I fear in the dark; and darkness and light make all the difference in reading the word of God.

I will only bring one more scripture — 2 Peter 2:20; 2 Peter 2:22. Now here it seems evident that there are some who had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And they have known the way of righteousness, yet the latter end with them is worse than the beginning. This is a very solemn chapter. But "there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you," &c. Their character is described at full length. For a time these false teachers had escaped the corruptions of the world, as we have seen. This must be so. They would not have been received into the professing church if they had not been outwardly moral. "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Now is it not sad to use this scripture which thus so solemnly describes false teachers as dogs and swine, who thus return to their own evil ways, as if it described true Christians, the sheep of Christ? This wresting of scripture, however, will not shake the foundation of the believer, and that foundation is Christ the rock. Surely no person who thus misuses this scripture can have read the first and last verses of the chapter. Nay; read the whole chapter. Oh! poor soul, tossed by false teaching, look up! the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin. Thy sins have all been transferred to Him. God is thy justifier. Nothing shall separate thee from the love of Christ.

But, to return, What is the meaning of "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness?" This brings us to the washing of water by the word. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Ephesians 5:25.) "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Is it not remarkable that we rarely hear a single reference

to this washing of water by the word? If we remember how the types abound with the washing of water, surely there must be truth of great practical importance signified in them. Let us then inquire what is the meaning of the washing of water that preceded the blood, as in the consecration of the priest; and the frequent washings after the blood was put upon him. God had no purpose of restoring man's fallen sinful nature, as we have seen, but giving him a wholly new nature, pure and holy. The Lord announced this fact to Nicodemus, that man must be born wholly anew. And hence water is used as the express figure of this needed purity of the new birth, or new nature. Only the Lord carefully excludes the idea that water imparts this new life: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." You could not say, That which is born of water is water.

There is no ground in the scriptures for the modern error, that water is the instrument used by the Spirit to effect this new life. The word of God leaves no possibility of mistake as to this. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23.) Are we born by the water of baptism? No! By what then? By the word of God. Even as Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." Could words be more plain, or more certain? Study this verse well, and then tell me, is it not sad for men to alter all this, and to say baptism and water do all that? I will not copy the dreadful words that even christian men try to justify in their catechisms. Oh, let us return to the word of God. A careful examination of John 3:1-36 will convince you that there is no direct reference to baptism in the words, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Nicodemus had not the remotest idea of christian baptism, or its meaning; and yet, if he had only remembered Ezekiel 36:22-36, he would have well understood that, when God shall bring his nation into the kingdom or reign of God, the very things that Jesus had now said to him wore distinctly foretold there. "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," &c.

It is quite true that baptism, as a figure, gives a deeper and fuller meaning to the wondrous truth of salvation by Christ's death. As Jesus said, "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." He must die. We must be identified with Him in that death; that the new life must be wholly new to us, even the life of the risen Christ. This is beautifully set forth in baptism; see Romans 6:1-23 and Colossians 2:1-23. Have you ever felt the joy of knowing that the eternal life given to you is the eternal life of that risen Man in the glory of God? Oh, how safe your life, hid with Christ in God! and because He lives, we live also. Can He die again? Once He died to put away our sins; but now He lives evermore.

We will now consider the washing with water after the blood. We have seen the washing of water before the blood was put upon the leper or the priest, shewing the absolute need of purification from all defilement. But after this, and the blood was put upon the priest, and the holy anointing oil was put upon the blood, then, even after this holy consecration, the sanctified priest, or priests, must wash their hands and feet whenever they go into the tabernacle or near the altar; they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not. (Exodus 30:17-20.) The purification must be maintained or continued; and is not this the washing of the feet in John 13:1-38? And if we read through Leviticus, we find that for every possible defilement there must be washing with water. Most profitable would it be to examine all this in detail, but this would require a volume instead of a

tract. [This has been done. See "Notes on Leviticus," on Studies and Commentaries page.]

Now what is the voice of the Spirit to us in this washing by water after the precious blood of Christ has for ever perfected us; our sins transferred to Him; and the infinite value of His blood transferred to us, put upon us; and we sealed, anointed, by the Holy Ghost?

You will find, that just as there was the appointed washing, from every variety of uncleanness, to Israel; so there is a precept for every possible failure or defilement of the Christian. What water is to the body, the word is to our spiritual walk. Israel were called to this ceremonial cleansing and holiness, as the redeemed of Jehovah, from Egypt, because he was Holy. (Leviticus 11:44-45.) So speaketh the word to us, "But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:5); quoting this very text from Leviticus 11:1-47.

Thus sanctification by the word, washing of water by the word, is to be to us what literal water was to them. What simple figures our God has been pleased to give us! What a marked difference the us of water makes! You see a poor neglected child, washed, perhaps, once a month, and poorly fed. See another one clean, and well nourished with food. What a difference frequent washing and nutritious food make! Have you seen the photograph of a lost child, taken from the streets, before and after a couple of years' washing, and feeding? It scarcely looks like the same. Are you aware there would he as striking, a difference in many a Christian if he were brought to the constant application of the water of the word, at the same time the soul feeding on Christ in the word?

You see a Christian plunged in business, worldliness, and politics — perhaps once a month a little washing for a sacrament — so full of the world, that there is little room for Christ. He gets more and more wretched, scarce knows whether he is saved or not. Suppose the word of Christ comes with power to his soul. He does not doubt the atonement. He does rest in Christ. But all the spiritual life is stunted and drooping. Let the spirit of Christ apply such a word as this — "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15.) He awakes to the fact that he is loving the world, and linking himself with it: and all the while that world hates Christ! Ah never did a London Arab need water more than he finds he needs the word. Thus the water of the word sanctifies him, cleanses him, from the inconsistent associations and spirit of this world. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Oh, how we all need this long-forgotten washing of water by the word! To be clean every whit, may we now yield our feet to he washed with water by the precious Lord. The blood can never lose its efficacy, can never be repeated, or freshly applied. Such a thought is Judaism. But for practical righteousness. For consistency of walk, we need the water of the word at every step. There is no holiness of walk without it. And yet many who teach a kind of holiness seem to know nothing of the washing of water; yea, even put the blood in the place of the water of the word, and so deny the finished work of Christy the full value of that one offering by which He hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. It is because we are for ever perfected by that one offering, that we are now called to walk as He walked. The priest had to wash his own feet; the Lord of glory is girded to wash ours. Shall we refuse Him? Lord, apply Thy word to our walk and ways. When we read that word in His presence, every verse is as water to cleanse us from the defilements by the way.

I thank God our Father that many are yearning more after holiness; but let them seek to be sanctified by the word of truth. Satan will take care to bring false teachers into that holiness-movement, teachers that will call sin holiness. Mark ye, much that is highly esteemed is condemned by the word. I would note sectarianism. (See 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.) Yet it is not long since a teacher of holiness rejoiced that his teaching had never led a single soul to give up this carnality — the sin of sectarianism. Not one through his teaching had given up the sin or his sect. Yea, at a large "holiness" convention an anti-Holy Ghost meeting was to be held each night; a committee was to take care that the Holy Ghost should not have liberty to use whom He would in the assembly, according to the word or God. (2 Corinthians 12:1-21.) None were to speak but those permitted by the anti-Holy Ghost committee. Oh, beware of such holiness as this! No one can conceive the rubbish and defilement that needs washing away by the water of the word. The blood is still before God; the believer is accepted in Christ. Nothing can touch that. But oh, our ways! Fellow Christians, awake! awake! Let everything be tried and cleansed by the water of the word. Remember the yearning claim of Christ, "Sanctify them by thy word; thy word is truth." Is anything more needed at this moment than the washing of water by the word?

I press this on my own soul, I press it on my brethren in Christ. Whilst rejoicing in the one offering by which we are for ever perfected are not in danger of neglecting the precepts of the word? The Lord bring every line with power our souls, and to Him be all praise!

C.S.

Chapter 85

087. Vol 06

Volume 06

Chapter 86

088. You will never make your peace with God

You will never make your peace with God The Grace of God to a Collier with a Broken Leg.

C. Stanley.

“There is nothing betwixt my soul and god; the blood of Jesus has put it all away.” A few months ago the writer of this paper received a letter from a person at Hoyland, stating that a very dear friend, a collier, had had a most serious accident from a fall off a roof. His leg was broken in three places: and so badly crushed he was not expected to live. The writer of the letter felt assured that this accident was permitted for his dear friend’s salvation, and further, that the writer of this little paper would be used in blessing to him. He felt it was a question of life and death, nay of eternity; and immediately drove to Harley. There lay Aaron Hoyland, on that bed from which he was to rise no more. A few hours before, he was a strong, able-bodied man. He had been a steady, sober, industrious man; had a well-furnished house, and was greatly respected by all who knew him. The writer had been giving lectures lately at the Public Hall, Hoyland, and at once remembered the remarkably attentive face of this now lame man.

He had been greatly interested, if not awakened, by the Spirit of God. But as yet he was a stranger to the present, perfect, and eternal salvation in Christ Jesus. This may be the reader’s condition. If laid on a bed from which you may never rise in health again, is it not an awful thing to be a stranger to God, because a stranger to Christ? However respected by friends and family, is that enough to enable you to face death, and after death the judgment? The conversion of Aaron Hoyland was very similar to that of Lydia. The Lord opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken. There he lay utterly helpless. His poor leg sadly broken and crushed. Little or no hope of recovery. He was too much shattered to have his leg amputated, until this was the last possible alternative. The quiet reading of the Word of God was what the Holy Spirit chiefly used in his bright and blessed conversion. He was shown that the message of God from heaven was no less than the forgiveness of sins, through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. These words were read slowly to him — “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.” (Acts 13:38-39.) He heard God speaking to his soul in these words. He had heard the words before, but never heard God speaking in them to him as a lost, guilty sinner.

Very simple was the childlike faith with which he thus believed God. The certainty that God meant what He said broke in upon his soul. Jesus had glorified God on the cross in bearing the full judgment due to sins. God had raised that Holy Sin-bearer from the dead, and now every barrier was removed. God in righteousness proclaimed forgiveness of sins, and all that believe were, yea are, justified from all things. He believed God with his heart: that is, it was a message he needed, it concerned him, and he believed it; so that as sure as God speaks truth, he was justified from all things.

Then there was another scripture equally blest to him. These words gave him a threefold certainty. His heart was opened to hear them as the precious words of Jesus. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24.) He never seemed for a moment to doubt the very truth of what Jesus said in these words. He believed God, and therefore knew his sins were forgiven. He knew he was justified from all things; accounted righteous before God. God said so. And now he heard the words of Jesus. He believed God that sent Him; and he knew that he had everlasting life. Jesus said so. He knew he should never come into judgment. Jesus said so. He knew he was passed from death unto life. Jesus said so; and he did not need anyone else to say so. The word of Jesus was enough for Aaron Hoyland. Oh that it might be enough for the reader of this paper! Think of the love of God in sending His Son! Surely that love must be infinite to poor sinners, that spared not His Son, but freely gave Him up: who also gave Himself, in voluntary love to us, to bear our sins on the shameful tree. Being justified by faith, he had perfect peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He never doubted that that peace which Jesus had made through the blood of His cross must be perfect. Another scripture was very sweet to his soul for his blessed Jesus had said it. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out.” (John 6:37.) His soul could adore the God of all grace who had given him to Christ, and now had used this terrible accident in bringing him to know Jesus. And it was so sweet to rest in that love that says, “I will in nowise cast out.” And now he was looking for Jesus, not as an angry judge (this indeed He will be to all who reject Him now); but Aaron loved to meditate on that blessed moment when “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.) Yes, during those six weeks of great bodily pain, he loved to dwell on that blessed moment, the coming of the Lord to take His own, whether sleeping in Jesus, or alive and remaining. He would ask about the change in his body at the first resurrection: and when shown that just as he had borne the image of the earthy, so also should he bear the image of the heavenly: that he would be like the Lord in glory and have the same incorruptible body, as is shown in 1 Corinthians 15:42-56 : and that when Jesus came in glory he certainly would come with Him — then his soul seemed full of light, and joy, and peace.

It was beautiful to see how he drank in those words of Jesus, “Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also.” (John 14:1-3.) Never once did he doubt the reality and certainty of these precious words of love.

They must fill the soul with unspeakable joy, if we believe Jesus. Just think, as surely as He died for us, as surely as He is gone to prepare a place for us, so surely will He come and receive us to Himself. Oh! wait my soul for the coming of thy precious, loving Lord.

What would an infidel have thought of that sight? The poor leg as black as a coal. Very offensive; decomposition, we suppose, had already, set in. But that dear face, as calm as the deep blue sky of heaven. Never shall we forget those few words he spoke, which express so much. — “There is nothing betwixt my soul and God, the blood of Jesus has put it all away!” Yes, the precious blood

of Jesus was more to Him than ten thousand worlds. Nothing in heaven or earth can give this divine, calm, intelligent certainty, in the immediate prospect of death, or the coming of the Lord, but the blood of Jesus. He had entered in some measure by the teaching of the Holy Spirit into the depth of those words, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7.) He could say, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Revelation 1:5.) “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14.) Thus, believing these divine statements of God’s Word, he could say with peaceful confidence, “There is nothing betwixt my soul and God, the blood of Jesus has put it all away!” Thus he had boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. It was very blessed to witness the heavenly peace the precious blood gave to his conscience. He believed God that such was the value of the one sacrifice of Christ for those whose sins He bore, that God says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 10:17.) This contrast also gave great comfort to his soul.

“And it is appointed unto men (not all men) once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin, unto salvation.”

All his lifetime he had been taught to believe in a general resurrection of judgment; now he saw that all his sins had been laid on Jesus to be remembered against him no more. And now he could look for the very Jesus who bore his sins and their full judgment on the cross. Yes, when Jesus comes He will be the very one who bore his sins on the cross.

Thus justified from all things by His precious blood: and sin, (the root) condemned by the one sacrifice for sin, he believed what God said, that “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1-3.) There was no excitement, but the calm rest of the soul in God.

Aaron believed God, as a little child believes a mother’s word, a mother’s love.

After some weeks, the doctor decided to amputate the dead limb. The broken bones could not be set. When that trying moment came, there was no fear of death, nor of pain. It was however a great stroke to the shattered system. He did not survive long. Lock-jaw ensued in eight days. His sufferings were now so great he could scarcely be seen; but his peace flowed like a river, until that moment when he was “absent from the body, present with the Lord.”

He was a man of few words: but those few, and the way in which they were said, will never be forgotten by the writer of these lines. “There is nothing betwixt my soul and God: the blood of Jesus has put it all away.”

Oh, reader, canst thou say so? Are the sins of thy youth put away? Are the sins of middle life put away? It may be of old age? If called suddenly away, canst thou say There is nothing betwixt my soul and God? Hast thou tried by fasting, and prayers, and penance, to put them away? Are they put away? Darest thou die trusting to thy prayers of repentance, or penance? Has God said He will forgive for these things? Repentance will be inseparably connected with faith in the atoning death of Jesus, and produce the full acknowledgement of thy sins to God, in confession and self-abhorrence; but far greater was the price given before the sinner could be saved.

It was not at the beginning, but at the end of Job's long history, that he truly repented. The Ninevites believed God, and then repented. And so the Jews at Pentecost. And often when the soul is brought to the lowest point, like Hezekiah, when he cried, "O Lord I am oppressed; undertake for me." Ah, it is just then full deliverance comes. What is your state at this moment? Can you say in perfect peace, There is nothing betwixt my soul and God? or do you say I have tried to give up my sins: have tried to serve God: I have tried to repent and tried to pray: but oh my sins: O Lord I am oppressed; undertake for me? Yes, when brought to this: guilty, lost, without power, or strength to be better: and unless God undertakes for me I am lost for ever. "What shall I say?" says Hezekiah; "He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it." (Isaiah 38:14.) Is this true? It is not, will He speak to me? Will He undertake for me? No it is this; He hath spoken to me in His blessed Word. He hath undertaken for me: He hath done it! Oh what a fact, the eternal Son of God hath undertaken the lost, guilty, helpless sinner's redemption; and He hath done it! "Sing O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it." (Isaiah 44:23.) It is not He will: He hath done it! "It is finished." "Peace unto you." Go over this paper again; the same word spoken to Aaron Hoyland, is now spoken to you. He Himself hath done it. "Be it known unto you . . . that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified." He that believeth hath everlasting life. Do you say I do believe God: will He now forgive my sins, even mine? Yea, if you believe God, He hath spoken unto you, and Himself hath done it. To the poor woman at Jesus' feet believing Him, He did not say pray, and thy sins shall be forgiven. No! He said "Thy sins are forgiven thee: thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." (Luke 7:48-50.) Do you believe this point? You cannot separate faith and forgiveness. Faith links us with the infinite value of the blood of Christ. Nothing is left between our souls and God; the blood of Christ has put it all away. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto Me for I have redeemed thee. Sing O ye heaven; for the Lord hath done it." (Isaiah 44:22.) Thus will the Lord speak to Israel in mercy in days yet to come. And thus may He speak to the reader now, It is the earnest prayer of the writer that as God spoke peace to Aaron Hoyland through these portions, and others of His Word, so He may speak to the reader. Why should you doubt God? Why should you turn a deaf ear? Ponder these questions. Can anyone give me this calm peace with God; this boldness to enter His presence but the blood of Christ? Blessed be God! "Sing O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it." C. S.

Chapter 87

089. "You will never make your peace with God."

"You will never make your peace with God." The Grace of God to the Collier with the Broken Back.

C. Stanley. A few weeks ago we were sent for to Elsecar, to see a collier who had met with a serious accident. His back was broken: and it was thought he had but a very short time to live. We had about eight miles to drive to see him, and therefore time to realize the serious importance of speaking to one just about to enter upon eternity. We called on a friend who had been to see him, but who found him suffering so much, that he could not bear even to hear the Word of God read to him. After a few sentences as to his terrible accident, we said, “You have only a very short time to live.” “No,” he said, “I am quite aware of it.” We looked at him, and said, “You may indeed have only a very short time to live, and you will never make your peace with God. No, never!” Suddenly the man looked greatly alarmed. We solemnly repeated the words. “You will never make your peace with God. You have been a great sinner before God and you never can make your peace with God. If you had a thousand years to live, you never could make your peace with God.” Just look at that man with a broken back. The sins of a lifetime behind; eternity before him; and the impossibility of making his peace with God! Do you say it was enough to drive him to despair? It was. Thank God it did. If you had heard that groan, not only a broken back, but a broken heart crushed beneath the sense of sin; and the sudden despair of never being able to make his peace with God. Death and judgment were before him. Oh! reader, you may never have given such a groan: such tears of despair may have never run down your cheeks. You think there is time enough yet. You have no such gloomy thoughts. Oh dear no: you are not so bad: you have no doubt you will be able to make your peace with God. At least you hope so, don’t you?

What we said to him, we solemnly say to you. You will never, no never, make your peace with God. No! until you despair of doing it, you are not in a fit state to hear the glad tidings, that peace has been made, as it is written, by the blood of the cross. The imploring looks of poor Eaden, for that is his name, seemed to say, what can you mean? He might well be surprised at this plain speaking; for do you know, reader, how often the dying are deceived by those who visit them? They tell them to make their peace with God, some by repentance: some by prayers. Repentance and prayers are blessed accompaniments of salvation. But put them both together, and they would be a plank, far too short to reach across the wide gulf that separates man from God. Something more than man could do must be done. We waited a little while. He then felt in some measure the meaning of that word, lost: a lost sinner, who cannot make his peace with God: of course if he can, he is not lost. If he awakes to the truth, a sinner before God, then he knows he is lost.

Such was the condition of the collier, with the broken back.

We now turned to the Word of God and quietly read, “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” (Colossians 1:21.) “For He is our peace . . . and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and

came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." (Ephesians 2:13-17.) We said, thus you see, that which you cannot possibly do has been done long ago. Jesus must needs suffer. Nothing but His precious blood could atone for sins, and make peace with God. Yes, He made peace by the blood of His cross; and now God sends peace to you. This is the only true ground of peace. Believing God that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification; we are accounted righteous. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 4:24-25; Romans 5:1.) Yes, on the cross Jesus said, "It is finished." Now He says "Peace unto you." Ah, it is giving up all thoughts of making our peace with God; and accepting the peace made by the blood of the cross of Christ. A friend with us who often visits the dying colliers, now said, "Yes, it is giving up everything of self, and trusting Christ, resting in what He has done without a bit of our own." And looking kindly at him he said, "Could you walk upstairs if you wanted?" He was laid in the little parlour downstairs. "Walk upstairs!" he said, and placing his hand on the middle of his body, he sorrowfully added, "Walk upstairs, why I am dead up to here." (Such was the case as to all sensation, or feeling, as the spinal cord was broken.) "Well," said my friend, showing him a pair of strong arms; "I could just put my arms under you, and carry you upstairs, like a child, and lay you on the bed. You would have to make no effort of your own: but just give yourself up into my arms. Now do you see it? It is just giving yourself up like that to Christ. Leaving yourself entirely in His hands." At that moment, we believe, he passed from death unto life, from looking at self to Christ; from trying to make his peace with God; to resting for ever, in that peace made by his precious Saviour long ago. Resting in Jesus, what a contrast to human effort and works! God, who opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken unto her, opened also the heart of this man with a broken back, to attend to the Word of God spoken to him.

There was repentance, and there was prayer, but not to make his peace with God. When Israel had sinned against the Lord, and were bitten by fiery serpents, there was suffering and pain; but the suffering and pain did not heal them. The brazen serpent must be lifted up. "And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten a man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (Numbers 21:9.) And Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14.) Has He not been lifted up on the accursed tree? Has He not made propitiation for sins? Has He not made peace through the blood of the cross? Hasn't He who cannot lie, said, "It is finished"? Yes, He has died the just for the unjust to bring us to God. He has been (believers can say), "delivered for our iniquities." He has been raised from among the dead for our justification. Believing God, we are justified from all things; and have peace with God. We have not to make our peace with God, we have peace with God; not through anything we have done, or can do, but through Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, by faith, believing God: for God has raised Him from the dead, who bare our sins in His own body on the tree. And God says "all that believe are justified from all things." Oh blessed certainty, God says it. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

What a difference there is between having peace with God, and trying to make peace! The judge makes a terrible mistake, when he tells the poor trembling criminal, as he passes sentence of death upon him, that he has only a few days to live; he strongly recommends him to use those few days, in making his peace with God. It would be far better to tell him the truth. Better say, "You are

proved guilty: yea have only a fortnight to live; and you can never make your peace with God. No, never. There is no escape from endless woe for you, but accepting the free forgiveness of God, through Jesus Christ the Lord." Or, you see that poor soldier, just about to be slain by the pursuing enemy. He was fast asleep, and knew not his danger. Suddenly he awakes to his real condition. He seeks to escape for dear life: but there is a deep, dark, rapid river before him. He is told by one to make haste, and make a bridge; to use his utmost efforts. The least delay, and he is a dead man. True, he has two short planks, but both put together are still far too short to reach across that fearfully dark stream. "My friend," says another, "You can never make a bridge across that wide and dark stream: you have neither materials, nor power, to make a bridge." The poor soldier's heart sinks in despair, and in a moment realizes his lost condition. "Oh," says his friend, "I am thankful you now own the true state of things. Cheer up, friend, I have good news: there is a new bridge there you have never seen; and anxious, awakened soul, that bridge is Christ!" But why suppose an illustration? Whether you have a broken back or not: or whether you are under the sentence of death convicted by your country's jury, (and this tract will be read by such,) whether you are laid on a sick bed, and have but a few days to live, how many there are in this very condition! Or, whether you are in health. Yet, if unsaved, what are the facts of your case? Are you not like the poor soldier asleep, spiritually shutting your eyes to this fact, that all the world, Jews or Gentiles, are under sentence of death, found guilty, and under judgment? "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Read Romans 3:19-26.

If not a believer, then mark those words of Jesus, "He that believeth not is condemned already." If all the world are guilty before God, then you are, for you are clearly a part of the world. You may shut your eyes to these facts a little longer, but not long; compared with eternity you have but a few days at most to live. Oh, may God by this little paper awaken you to the real facts of your case. You cannot deny you are guilty; not only of a life of sins, as we said to dear Eaden; you have been a sinful man, and you cannot make your peace with God. Yea, you may even have despised the bridge, and spent long years trying to fasten your own planks together. Have you not? Works for salvation will do very well for men to preach and boast about in this world; but you must go out of it. May be you have only a few hours to live. Now look across that dark stream of death: and after death! How are you going to cross? How are you going to meet the Judge? There is no escape but one — only one bridge there. Satan and all your sins behind: death and judgment before. Don't talk of making your own bridge. Don't talk of making your peace with God. Would not this be to despise the work of God, the Designer; and Maker of that only bridge? Oh, are you awake? Do you own your guilty condition? Your lost and helpless state, in sin and death? Do not mistake: God must have the truth owned. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Can you now give all up into the hands of Christ? — to be carried to heaven like a little child. Do you see the bridge that you never saw before? Not our making our peace with God; but peace made by the blood of Jesus. Simple rest in Jesus. Those arms will never fail: that bridge will never give way. It will bear your weight, nay, He has been made sin for us. He has borne the full weight of the judgment due to us. May you without an effort trust Him. Do you say, "I do believe God sent Jesus to bear our sins on the tree. I do believe God has raised Him from the dead. I do believe peace is made by His blood. I do utterly renounce all thought of making my peace with God. But how am I to know personally for myself that I have life eternal, and shall not come into condemnation, for my sins?" We point you to the bridge. And now we will tell you a wonderful thing: Jesus has said it, on purpose for your everlasting comfort. These

are His own words to you — “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24.)

Perhaps you never saw this before. Now is this true that you hear the words of Jesus: that you believe God that sent Him? Then do you see not only the bridge; but you have crossed it. You have everlasting life, you shall not come into condemnation. You have crossed the bridge, you have passed from death unto life. Must it be so? Jesus says it.

Just a few words more as to dear Eaden with the broken back. He still lives, as we write this. A monument of sovereign grace. Helpless as to the poor body. His little children around his bed. It grieves my heart to say there is frequently no provision for the need of these great sufferers; but God has lifted him up, superior to all circumstances. Filled with joy in Christ — waiting His will; and waiting His return from heaven. The following lines have been a source of great enjoyment to him. And with these words we must close our short paper on the Grace of God to the Collier with the Broken Back.

Fast now wears the weary night, The night of sin and sorrow;

Soon shall break in glory bright The long expected morrow.

Wake, awake, and sleep no more, Farewell to the long, long night;

Turn from earth, and upward soar, Watch to see the glory bright!

Brighter far than midday sun, Sudden as the flash of light.

Hark the sound, the victory’s won, Millions rise in glory bright! Not a spot of sin is there;

All are clothed in purest white;

Now they meet Him in the air, Meet their Lord in glory bright!

Set on thrones, with crowns of gold, What a rapturous, wondrous sight!

How shall all Thy praise be told? —

Jesus, come in glory bright!

We, shall see Thee as Thou art, We shall know, in heavenly light, All Thy love, and never part;

Come, dear Lord, in glory bright!

C. S.

090. A Great Supper,

A Great Supper, what it cost, what it is, who are the welcome guests and, who are engaged in bringing them to supper?

We want to talk with you a little about the wonderful parables of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is one of them. Jesus said, "A certain man made a great supper and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." (Luke 14:16-24.) This great supper is a picture of God's great salvation. When you are invited to supper by a friend, do you expect that you will have to pay for it? Or will you be expected to provide it? Or take any part of it to your friend's house? Of course not. Would you not simply have to sit down and receive it? Just so. You would merely be a guest. All would have to be done by someone else before you could receive it. A great deal would have to be done before the servant could say all things are now ready: the supper is on the table. This is the peculiarity of the Gospel. Not so when man was under law. Then the law made known the righteous demands of God. That was more like the landlord coming to your house for the rent, when you can't pay it; can't pay it when you would. This great supper is not like that. All is provided, all is given.

Why don't you like to think about God? Don't you think He demands something from you, something that you find you have not to give? Yes, you do. You think you have to become good, holy, righteous, religious. God demands all this from you, and you cannot give it Him. Is not that what you think? Have you not often tried to bring all this to God, and still you find you fail to do it. And yet you think if you do not bring something to God, according to the demands of His law, you never can be saved. The Lord Jesus will show you in this picture that you are quite mistaken, that this is not God's present plan at all. God provides and gives everything. He does not expect you to bring, but to receive, just as you would at your friend's great supper. Do you see that this great supper is in direct contrast with the demands of the law? The law says thou shalt love God. This supper shows how God has loved you.

What is a great supper? If half-a-dozen men were invited to a supper that cost one shilling, that would not be called a great supper, would it? A supper is great according to what it costs. What would you think, if a nobleman sold all he had, and made a great supper for the poor? That would be a supper to talk about. A great supper indeed. If a supper is great according to what it costs:

and if God is the provider of this great supper: this great salvation: let us then inquire

What it Cost

It is not now God in law demanding: but God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. Have you read of Him in the prophet Isaiah? "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of host." (Isaiah 6:1-3.) This is Jesus Jehovah! "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him." (John 12:41.) "Unto the Son, he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever." "Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thine hands." (Hebrews 1:1-14.) "For by Him were all things created." "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:15-17.) He became flesh and dwelt amongst us. Born of a poor maid of Nazareth; in a stable: laid in a manger. Oh! read His wondrous life of sorrow, of sympathy, of divine love to sinners. And now turn back and see Him in the glory, too bright for highest creature gaze: see seraphim veil their faces, and cry Holy, holy, holy! Now turn to another scene. See Him in dark Gethsemane — His soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. See Him sweating as it were great drops of blood! No human heart to sympathize. His loved disciples asleep! At that moment one of His disciples and the chief priests of His nation were planning to betray Him and put Him to death. He says, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me." (Psalms 142:3.) Oh, see the Creator of the universe become lowly man, and giving Himself into the hands of wicked men. See Him bound; see Him led to Caiaphas; see Him delivered to Pilate. "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe." Ah, they mocked Him; they spit upon Him. But see Him thrown down. See His hands and His feet nailed to the accursed tree. See Him hanging by those painful wounds! "He was wounded for our transgressions: bruised for our iniquities." His soul was made an offering for sin. And now the heavens grew dark. Made sin for us, He was forsaken of God. Oh, listen to that cry! "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" Hearken again: "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." This was the price of the great supper: the great salvation of God. This is what it cost. He must be lifted up on the cross, the sacrifice for sins. He must die or remain alone, and never have a guest at the supper. He must die: and rise again from amongst the dead, or all things could never be ready. There is no other supper for poor lost sinners. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

How long have you despised this great supper? It is said in Matthew, "They made light of it." Have you made light of it? So here in Luke they all made a polite excuse. The piece of ground — the oxen — the wife. Oh, is it so with you, your business, your work, your family: all right in themselves; but can you pay attention to these things, and neglect, nay refuse, the great supper; the great salvation? in this section we have been occupied with what it cost; in our next we hope to see what it is. The greatest feast ever made on earth just dwindles down to nothing compared to this. Of every feast that man, guilty man, can make, it is like Belshazzar’s feast, there is the writing of a man’s hand on the wall. But of this supper it is written, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." No other supper could ever pretend to this. At all the feasts on earth man eats and hungers again. But this great supper is everlasting.

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

Once made partakers of God’s great salvation we cannot desire another: there is no other. It was first spread in the midst of the city, even Jerusalem. There it was made light of, despised, and rejected. Free to accept it, all rejected. They would not believe the free grace of God. Have you tried the pleasures of this world? Do they ever satisfy? How can they, when death and judgment come after them? They only leave an aching void. The pleasures of sin deceive for a moment: this supper satisfies for ever. When we examine the supper in our next section, we shall find every need of the sinner met once and for ever. Let us remember we have nothing to do for it, nothing to give for it, nothing to bring to it; all is of God. All is done long ago. All things are ready. When the servant says supper is on the table, what have we to do but to sit down and receive it? The cost of this great salvation was the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cost, His precious blood. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

What it is!

We have seen in the former section that this beautiful parable of the great supper shows us that God is not demanding from man, on the principle of law, but giving, providing, in free grace. "A certain man made a great supper." Thus He provided everything, the guests brought nothing. What a new truth this was as to God and salvation, to men under the administration of the law, which did not give, but demanded. Then we found this supper was great because it cost the greatest price in the universe: the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The agony, the atoning suffering, of the cross, forsaken of God: that was the price of the supper. The price of the great salvation was His precious blood.

Nothing could be more striking than this picture. When you are invited to supper, and all things are ready, you have only to sit down and receive the rich provisions. And mark, this picture admits of no uncertainty. A person must know whether he receives his friend’s supper or refuses it. We now propose to examine what this great supper is. Let us continue the figure of the supper. Here then is a great supper spread out, all ready, warranted to meet the needs of every poor sinner brought to it, not only for a moment, but to satisfy for ever.

Pray, what is your need? Do you say deep indeed is my need. I am a guilty sinner. Death and judgment is before me, and I cannot escape; and I cannot undo what I have done; and I know very well in my sins I cannot enter heaven. Sit down here; this is what meets your case at the very head of the table, God speaks to you, "Be it known," — yes, all is certainty at the supper — "that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Yes, "To Him give all the prophets witness that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 13:38; Acts 10:43.) This is a wonderful part of the great supper. Immediate forgiveness of sins. And mark this is not through our feelings or doings; but through Jesus. And this is not only immediate forgiveness, but perfect and everlasting forgiveness. "And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Oh! do you believe God? This is the very first taste of blessedness at the great supper. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Yes, the moment you sit down in the light of that great supper — for there is no darkness there — then you immediately know that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Sins can no

more be reckoned to any at that great supper. They have been borne by Jesus, their Substitute; and can never be imputed to them.

Then all there are justified from all things? This is the very next thing on the table. "And all that believe are justified from all things." Why, this was the very thing that Jesus, after He had died for our sins, was raised from the dead for. "He was raised again for our justification." Just as the creditor puts the stamp on the bill that has been paid, for full evidence of settlement, so God has raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead, to be the everlasting receipt — the full evidence of settlement — for that debt paid in His precious blood. Perfect and infinite sacrifice: perfect and everlasting justification, must give perfect and everlasting peace with God. And so all at the supper enjoy this? If they believe God they do. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the happy position of all at the great supper. "Being justified." That is always so. Always we have perfect peace with God. It must be so, the supper is always the same, always through Jesus Christ our Lord. The justification could not be more complete. It was God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead for our justification. Who shall lay anything to the charge of those at the great supper. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again from the dead." Oh, reader, do you believe God? Have you sat down at the supper?

Now we will look a little further, and see what God hath made and provided at this great supper. Christ Jesus, still meeting our needs, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness; and sanctification, and redemption." Just as you could look at the various dishes on your friend's table, all provided for you: not brought by you. So here, at the great supper; God's great salvation. Do you say, I am so ignorant, I greatly need wisdom. Sit down and contemplate Christ Jesus made unto you wisdom. The philosopher may study the stones and the stars, but at this supper, you know Him who made them all, from everlasting to everlasting. Do you say before I can be quite sure I am saved at the great supper: must I not be righteous in all my ways before God and man? Can God possibly justify me before that is the case? Fatal mistake if you have to bring righteousness to the supper: at that supper you can never be: for you are guilty, and fail at every point. Was not this the fatal mistake of the Jews? Is it not the fatal mistake of the ritualists? They are vainly trying by works to bring that to the supper which God has made Christ Jesus to be to every one that sits at the great supper. But says another, must I not attain to higher christian life, must I not bring holiness to God? Here is the same mistake again: that is exactly what you find at the great supper, not what you bring. Christ Jesus made unto us sanctification. Well, says another, I need redemption, how may I be sure that I have got it? That again is exactly what all have at the great supper. Yes, God has provided all. Jesus Christ: infinite wisdom: everlasting righteousness. "By one offering He has perfected for ever all that are sanctified." Eternal redemption. The great mistake we make is in supposing we have to bring some of these, instead of sitting down, in perfect peace, and finding all we need, and all ours for evermore. If we are still on the ground of God's righteous demands from us, we are lost, for if He deals with us in righteousness He must condemn us. The blood of propitiation for our sins has been shed. God in His righteousness has raised the believer's substitute from the dead. God thus proclaims forgiveness of sins to us, and all that believe God are justified. They sit at the great supper in perfect peace with God. Christ is their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. And they hunger no more. They need no other righteousness before God; no other sanctification; no other redemption. But what is

there in this great supper to provide for righteousness before men? Just everything. Being justified by faith before God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost dwells in them, and thus walking in the Spirit, practical righteousness is fulfilled in them.

Here comes one with trembling desire to sit in perfect peace at the great supper. Well, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me." Pray, what do you ask for at the supper? Is this what you long to know? When all the sorrows and storms of this sad life are past, I want to be quite sure of a home above. Oh, if you will sit down, and just take what is set before you, you will find three times more than you ask. This is the very thing He makes so certain. He says to you, poor trembling believer, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." (John 14:1-31.) Yes, He says, your home above with Me shall be as certain as that I am there. Could He say more? Yes, He does. He promised the Comforter, the Holy Ghost to be with you all the way. Yet more still — "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Certainty of home; the presence of the Comforter all the way, and His peace which is surely perfect. My section is finished, but it will take eternity to unfold the vastness of this great supper; the great salvation of God. Tell us, dear reader, how will you escape if you neglect it?

We now proceed to inquire — Who are the Welcome Guests?

We have seen that this great salvation is entirely of God; as the friend who invites you certainly provides the repast. We have seen that the cost of this great supper was the death of the Son of God. No other price could have bought it. We have seen that the great supper meets every need of the lost sinner. Forgiveness of sins; justification from all things; no condemnation to them that are in Christ, at the great supper. No separation from that festive feast of love. Christ Jesus their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Their home in the place prepared, secured. The Holy Ghost abiding with them. The peace of Christ their happy portion. All provided of God. Nothing to do, nothing to bring; all given, and given for ever.

Now, Who are the welcome guests?

Such a great supper, such a great salvation spread out before the multitude, hastening on to death and judgment and eternal woe. Surely, you would say, the whole world would at once accept so great salvation. No, it is not so. With all man's boast of freedom, if left to his own choice, not one would sit down at the great supper. These are the words of Jesus: "They made light of it." "They all with one consent, began to make excuse!" Yes, profanely or politely, all refuse the salvation which is wholly of God's providing. Is not this a true and sad picture?

Tell a man to wash in the Ganges, he will do it. Tell him to give his body to be crushed by the wheels of the idol, he will do it. Tell him to lacerate his poor body, to put it to untold tortures, he will do it. Tell him to own the false prophet of Mecca, he will do it. Tell him to fast; to say long prayers; tell him to become an idolater, and worship a bit of bread, or the blessed virgin; tell him to shut himself up in a cell; — all these things, or anything, the million will do, to work out a righteousness of their own: to provide something to bring to God. But, spread out the accomplished salvation of God, not one of the human race will accept it. All make their polite excuse. Is this true? Look at

Jerusalem, nay, look at the cities and towns of highly-favoured England, for an answer. Nay, we don’t need go beyond the reader and the writer of these few thoughts.

Oh, is this so? Are you hastening on, day by day — every day a day nearer to death, judgment, the lake of fire — and yet every day rejecting the great salvation of God.

Blessed be God, even from Jerusalem, the city that killed the Holy One of God. From the lanes of that city the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, were brought to the great supper — three thousand in one day! Who are the welcome guests? The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind. "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." Yes, there is room; room for the writer, and room for the reader. Yet there is room! "And the Lord said unto His servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled!" This is the blessed work of God amongst the highways and hedges of the lost Gentile world. Is not this grace beyond all measure, beyond all human thought? Not only is this great supper spread, but the outcasts of the highways and hedges are compelled to come in. Oh, how they sing, ’Twas the same love that spread the feast, That sweetly forced me in;

Else I had still refused to taste, And perished in my sin.

We will take two persons as samples of the welcome guests. One from the Old Testament, which throws light, in picture, on this great supper. We ask your attention especially to the kindness of God, in fetching a welcome guest, lame on both his feet. This young man had fallen, and became utterly lame on the day of the death of his father. This is our condition through Adam’s sin; we are fallen and utterly lame without strength. David said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? There was one, this lame young man, in the house Machir, in Lo-debar. There he was hiding from David in the place of Lo-debar — that is, the place of no pasture — such a picture of our condition. Are you there, not only hiding from God, hasting on to endless woe, but nothing to satisfy all the way? David sent and fetched him from his hiding-place. And when he came he fell on his face. Then "David said, Mephibosheth! And he said, Behold thy servant. And David said unto him, Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake and thou, shalt eat bread at my table continually." Thus God fetches the poor hiding, guilty, helpless, lame sinner, and says, Fear not, I will surely show thee kindness, for Christ’s sake. Think of these words, Surely I will show thee kindness. Surely! What a feast; and to eat continually This kindness of God at once produces repentance. "And he bowed himself, and said, what is thy servant that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am." Has the kindness of God ever led you to this deep self-abhorrence?

All is given to this poor cripple. He is placed at the King’s table, as one of the King’s sons. The kindness of God gives this poor lame sinner the highest place of royal blessing. It was the will of the King. "As for Mephibosheth, said the King, he shall eat at my table, as one of the King’s sons. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he did eat continually at the King’s table; and was lame on both his feet." (2 Samuel 9:1-13.) Wonderful as is this picture of the kindness of God, yet the reality far exceeds the type. David deals with him for Jonathan’s sake. God deals with us for Christ’s sake. He sits at the feast as one of the King’s sons. But as to all who are brought to the great supper, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Very beautiful is the love of David to one of the house of Saul, his enemy. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

One scarcely knows which is the most wonderful, the grace of God in spreading such a feast, or the wickedness of man in despising it? What a text is that over the door of the feast, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to, Me I will in no wise cast out." Look at it again and again. Yes, the house shall be filled. There is a place for every guest; and every guest shall fill that place. The poor, the halt, the lame, the blind, are welcome. The chief of sinners He receives. The greatest sinner you know is welcome, and is not that yourself? Cast yourself on His own words, "Shall in no wise be cast out." Do you say, Oh, I am a christian without all that; I was baptized; I was confirmed; I say my prayers. Are you a christian? Are you at the great supper? Are your sins forgiven? Are you justified? Have you peace with God? Don't say I pray for these things. Many things we have to pray for. But the poor, halt, lame, blind, had not to pray for the great supper; it was all ready for them. To pray for a supper then, would have been to reject it. Don't say no man can know whether he is saved or not; it is like saying no man can tell whether he has had his supper or not. The great supper, remember, is the gift of God, and to doubt it is to make God a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." (1 John 5:13.) In our next section we hope to take up a sample case from the New Testament, and also to consider the persons engaged in bringing the guests to the great supper.

Don't forget those words of Jesus, "And shall in no wise be cast out!" Who are Engaged in Bringing Them to the Supper.

We have seen that this great supper, the great Salvation, is entirely of God. That it meets every possible need of the sinner. It is a great supper because of its great cost. That it lasts forever. "He that believeth hath everlasting life!" We have seen that the whole human race, left to their own choice, reject this great supper, We have seen a sample, how the guests have to be fetched to the supper, in the case of Mephibosheth, lame on both feet. The kindness of God shown unto him. The place given him at the table as a King's son. How God fetches the sinner that deserves everlasting judgment, and how God shows him everlasting kindness for Christ's sake.

Now we will look at another sample guest brought to the supper. And who, dear reader, do you think are the persons engaged in seeking this strange guest, and receiving him safe to the great supper? The ever blessed glorious persons of the one Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We shall soon see how.

If you read on in Luke 14:1-35 you will find one thing greatly overlooked. If you are brought to the great supper, and made a partaker of the great salvation, there must then be no half measures. Christ must be all; He must have the first and sole place. No claims of nature, of relations, or of your own life, must come betwixt you and Him. This beautiful parable had a wonderful effect: — "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." This is just what we want you now to do: listen to the words of Jesus. "And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." They who would be thought righteous, always murmur at this. But now in connection with the great supper, Jesus, who receiveth sinners, gave the following parable, in which is both shown who are engaged in bringing the guests to the table and also fully describes a sample of the guests.

Don’t forget it is Jesus, the Son of God, who speaks to us. The parable is divided into three parts. The man who seeks, finds, and brings the lost sheep. The woman who seeks diligently until she finds the lost piece of silver. The father who rejoices to find the lost son. In each case notice the word lost. Ah! if you knew the meaning in your own soul, lost! Will you notice the order of the parable, all to show how the lost sinner is brought to the supper.

First, the lost sheep. David sent to Lo-debar to fetch the poor cripple. Jesus came himself from the highest glory to bleed, and die for the lost one. Yes, the Good Shepherd must die: must be lifted up: must bear our sins on the cross, or never, never, have the joy of receiving the one lost sheep. He says, "I lay down My life for the sheep." It was not the lost sheep that sought the man, but the man that sought the sheep. It was all the man. He sought it, he found it, he carried it, he desired to have it safe, at home, and he never gave it up till he got it there. Such is the Man Christ Jesus. He came to seek the lost sinner. He died for him. He brings him safe home at last rejoicing. And all this the will of the Father. He says, "Therefore doth My Father love Me." If you know Him thus, it will fill your heart with repentance; fill His with joy.

There is the diligent seeking of the woman, who had lost the piece of silver. Thus next in order, when the Lord Jesus had finished the work given Him to do, and was ascended up on high, the Holy Ghost was sent down, and for eighteen hundred years [Writen in the XIXth century] has He been diligently seeking lost sinners, to bring them to the great supper. And what ever it is to the repenting sinner, it is joy to the Holy Spirit to find and to bring the lost. Is He not diligently seeking you? Oh, that by this little paper He may bring you to the happy feast. And now we will go to the third part of the parable. Jesus, the Son of God, having bowed His head, and cried, "It is finished;" God having raised Him from the dead for our justification; the Holy Ghost having found the sinner, and awakened his conscience, we will now dwell a little on the Father’s joy in receiving him.

There is the guest to be brought, far from his Father’s house. As to all good, dead in trespasses and sins. As to all that is bad, he wasted his substance with riotous living. Spent all in grossest sins, with harlots. Could sin satisfy him? When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land. Satan sends him to the swine. Poor fellow, he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. Oh, the dreadful slavery of sin! What wretchedness! And no man can give relief. And yet this very wretchedness and self abhorrence is what God is using to bring this poor prodigal to himself. He came to himself. Yes, is not the slavery of sin, rushing wilfully, madly, unto certain everlasting woe; is it not madness? He came to himself. Would you have thought that that wretched sinner was the sample guest the Lord Jesus selects as the one to be brought to the great supper? The moment he came to himself, the Father came to his mind, and bread enough and to spare in the Father’s house.

What of the Father? "But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Did you ever see anything like that? Words of Jesus revealing the Father, meeting the sin-oppressed lost prodigal. The work of Jesus, the beloved Son, has removed every barrier. Are you a wretched sin-confessed prodigal? Oh, see the Father’s compassion and kiss first, and then the prodigal’s confession second. The Father ran to meet him; the Father had compassion on him; the Father fell on his neck and kissed him. The kindness of God melts the heart in repentance and confession. It is not our repentance that melts the heart of God in kindness. Oh what precious lessons these are! "And the son said unto him,

Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." "But" yes, immediately sins are confessed all are forgiven. "But the Father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Thus is the one lost guest received. Thus is he clothed in righteousness divine: the best robe. Thus he receives the ring, golden pledge of everlasting love. And the shoes on his feet, power to walk and do the will of God. At once and for ever he is ready for the great supper. Nay, though the Father met him a great way off, yet at once he is at the supper. But we don't hear a word more from him, it is all the Father's joy. If thus brought to see and accept the grace of God, let us now forget ourselves, and be occupied with the Father's joy. He says, "And let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." The man rejoiced to find the lost sheep; the woman to find the lost silver; and the father rejoices to find the lost son! God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, God the Father. The three persons in one Godhead rejoice in seeking, saving, bringing, receiving, the lost sinner to the great supper. Such is the great salvation wholly of God.

Satan would tell you there must be long weary years of penance here, or purgatory hereafter, or both, or you must do something to bring a righteousness to God first; or you must do great works of repentance first, before God can love you or show you kindness; or you must spend a life of dismal ritualism first, and then hope, God will be merciful; at last. Satan is a liar. The Lord Jesus Christ shows us that on the ground of His own infinite sacrifice, by His death for the sinner that now the supper is spread, and now the unhindered kindness of God the Father, by the Holy Spirit, melts the heart of the vilest sinner to full repentance and confession of sins, and immediately all sins are forgiven, the sinner, covered in divine righteousness, is fitted and brought to the great supper, to sit down as a son, in the glory of God.

Oh, that this may be the reader's place, now and for ever more. Amen.

C.S.

091. "God so loved."

"God so loved."

John 3:16. The substance of a discourse first preached on Lord’s day, March 29th, 1835; and again, after fifty years, on March 29th, 1885.

We will read from verse 14: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Before we notice the wondrous revelation of God in these verses, it may be necessary, for some, to refer to a fatal mistake made by many in applying the doctrine of the new birth, as stated to Nicodemus, as though Christ meant, or taught, the new birth by water baptism. We must notice that the Lord was not speaking to a Christian about the church or Christianity, but to a ruler of the Jews; and He was speaking to him about the kingdom of God — that kingdom which God will assuredly set up on earth. And we must not confound the terrestrial glory of that kingdom with the celestial glory of the church. No doubt there are even important principles in common. Whether for the kingdom or the church, fallen man must be born again; but to suppose that the new birth is a priestly act of man, in the ordinance of baptism, is the most fatal heresy. It destroys the efficacy of the word, and faith. If a man can make a child or adult a member of Christ by water, there is no need for either faith or the word of God. But the Lord does not say one word about baptism in His discourse to Nicodemus. He evidently speaks of that which Nicodemus ought to have understood. Now turn, and see if this was not the case. In Ezekiel 36:22-37 we have a very complete account of what God will do when He gathers His people, Israel, again, and sets up His kingdom — that of which Jesus spoke. And when He has brought them to their own land, He says, "THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon 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 an 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." Water was the well-known emblem of purification. Thus will Israel be born again in that day, by the operation of the Spirit of God, no doubt applying the word, as in our case.

It is important to notice also the entire change as to the law, when God shall thus set up the millennial kingdom. Under the law God commanded, required everything. In the kingdom of God He produces everything by the new nature and the Spirit. Even repentance is produced after they are born again in the land. "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." (Ver. 31.) The law could not produce in man that which an absolutely holy God requires; but God will produce it in His people: "and cause you to walk in my statutes." This is very blessed. Well, there is not one word of christian baptism either here, or in the Lord’s words to Nicodemus.

Let us now look at these verses, John 3:14-16. We would call attention especially to three things in these precious words of Jesus: —

First, The atonement has the first place: "even so must the Son of man be lifted up;"

Secondly, Why was this, the death of Jesus on the cross? The answer is, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;"

Thirdly, What was the purpose of God in Christ being so lifted up — so given? "That whosoever [or, every one] that believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We must never fail to notice, that in the gospel the atonement has the first place. To exclude this, and preach what is called the Fatherhood of God, is the delusion of Satan. "So must the Son of man be lifted up." As Jesus said, on the way to Emmaus, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And again, to the disciples gathered in the upper room, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." And after this manner the apostles preached the gospel: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." (Acts 17:3.) "For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3.) "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (Chap. 3:18.) "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:25.)

Jesus assures us this must be: "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." The work of Christ on the cross is the only true foundation for the glad tidings of God; and His resurrection from the dead is God’s assurance to us of sins forgiven, and justification from all things. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:38.) But now, in the second place, why was this? Why did the eternal Son, by whom all things were made, and by whom all things subsist — why was He nailed to the cross? Why did He thus groan from beneath the load of our sins? Why must He thus die, the propitiation for our sins? Oh, wondrous answer! let heaven and earth hear it. For God so loved!

Let sinners hear it. The cause was the unfathomable, eternal love of God. For God so loved. Do not suppose that God loved us because Jesus died for us — that He then began to love us. Did He love Israel in Egypt because the blood was shed, and sprinkled on the doorposts? No, the blood was sprinkled as the token of His love. His purpose was to spare them. They were sinners, and thus the lamb must be killed, and the blood must be sprinkled, to shelter them from righteous judgment. Oh, wondrous grace! Christ lifted up on the cross was the manifestation of God’s eternal love to us.

You may say, How can this be? I am sure I never deserved such love as this, neither before, nor since, I have tried to be a Christian. How can God love me, since I hate myself, and only deserve to be cast out of His sight, or into hell? All this is really true, whether we know and own it, or not. But mark the contrast between the love of God and man’s love. Man loves that, or those, whom he thinks deserving of his love. Not so God. For whilst nothing can shew more distinctly God’s abhorrence of sin than the cross of Christ, yet it is even there that the love of God to the sinner

shone out in all its glory. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6; Romans 5:8.) And all this, when it had been fully proved that there were none that met, or could meet, by law, the righteous requirements of a holy God. All were guilty as to acts. All were also dead in sins, children of wrath. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins," &c. (Ephesians 2:4.) "God so loved." If sin had not come in, and Jesus had not been lifted up, the love of God could never have been known, and would never have been manifested. The telescope may reveal the great works of God, and the microscope the no less wonderful minute things of God; but no glass can be formed of sufficient power to manifest the love of God.

No, "In this was manifested the love of God, toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Here alone is the revelation of what God is to us, and what His love is to us. It is fully manifested. The sending of His Son manifests what He is: God is love. Surely we ought to love God. Man under law was required to love God. But looking within, or at himself, he could never say, I have found it, here is love. Has it not been fully proved that man, with every privilege of the law, only hated God? God was manifest in the flesh as Son of man. Did man love Him? He hated, only hated Him, and sought miserable satisfaction in killing Him, the Prince of life. No, it is not, if we love God, then God will love us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Do you not see, dear readers, it is not our love to God, but God’s love to us, when we deserved nothing but eternal wrath? Owning this honestly, that you only deserve wrath, can you say, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love"? Oh, do you so enjoy this love? Is it perfected in you? That is, do you so know and believe the love that God hath to you, that that love casteth out all fear? If we know that there is nothing but infinite, perfect love in God to us, how can we be afraid of Him? Nay, "because, as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." If you are afraid of God, you are thinking of your own love, and that is not perfect. If you are thinking of His love, how can you be afraid? for He has brought you to be as Christ is, even in this world. As Jesus said, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Oh, blessed position! — "As he is, so are we in this world." Do we not love God then? Oh, yes; but let us remember it is love produced. "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:6-19.) We thus see that we cannot possibly be under law, and grace. If we are on the ground of love to God as a requirement, we entirely set aside the gospel of the glad tidings by which love is produced. We will now pass on to the third thing we find in these precious words of Jesus. May the Lord open our understandings to understand the riches of His grace. The third thing we notice then in these verses is this. What was the purpose of God in Christ being so lifted up — so given?

"That whosoever [or every one] that believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We have seen that the propitiatory death of Christ must have the first — the foundation place in the Gospel of God. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." The cause of this, was, "God so loved." We now come to the purpose of God in all this. Surely this is a deep and wondrous theme. God has His own eternal purpose respecting us poor sinners. It was no after-thought when sin had come in, and surely no subsequent thought when Christ had died or we, had believed. No, the greatest gift ever given in the countless ages of eternity, the gift of His only begotten Son, was

according to purpose. "That whosoever believeth in him." Mark, this purpose was not limited now to Israel, as a nation. No, "whosoever believeth in him." This is a message for you, to you, because to every one that believeth. The only limit or distinction is faith, "That believeth in him."

Now the question is this, Do you believe in Him? Many would not deny there is such a person as Jesus, the Son of God. The demons were compelled to own that. We do not ask, Do you believe there is such a person as Jesus, once on the cross, now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens? but we ask, Do you believe in Him? Is He the object of your faith, and of your trust? The Waldenses fully admitted the existence of the church; but they would suffer martyrdom, in its most cruel form, rather than say they believed in the church, as an object of faith and trust. Is Jesus the object of your faith? Have you received Him as your Saviour, in whom you trust for present and eternal salvation? This faith is not the belief or demons, but it is the gift of God. We beg of you to answer the question in the presence of God. Have you this faith in Jesus? Can you abandon every hope in yourself, and rest in Him alone for eternal salvation? Do you say, I do believe in Jesus; but oh! my sins, and especially some of them, they so trouble me? It is all well, to abhor ourselves; but did not Jesus die for all the believer’s sins? Was He not lifted up on the cross for that very thing? Have we not seen that the atoning work is done? Can those sins be charged on Him now? Then, can they be charged on you who now believe in Him as your complete and eternal salvation?

God’s eternal purpose then was that every one that believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. If this purpose embraced every one that believeth in Him, and you believe in Him, then it surely means you — it embraces you. God is love, and what did He purpose concerning you? That, through the lifting up of the Son of man, you should not perish, but have eternal life. You may not yet know how good this news is, and how many there are that treat it as the greatest error. God grant you may believe it with an understanding heart.

What then is eternal life? Sometimes we understand what a thing is, by looking at what it is not, or in contrast. What then is temporal or mortal life? It is life that may cease to be. That is the life of all living creatures; as to the life even of man’s body, it may cease. It may be for a day, or a month, or a year, and then cease to be. Now many would admit that God had so loved as to give a life, not eternal, but temporal — a life that may be lost or cease to be — may be for a time, and then cease to be. Now eternal life is the opposite of all this; it is life that cannot cease; it is not the life of a creature, it is the life of the self-existent Son of God. Not temporal, but the self-existent, eternal life. And has God so loved, that, through the lifting up of the Son on the cross, we, every one that believeth in Him, should have the eternal life that cannot, that will not, cease to be — the life of the self-existent, eternal Son? This amazing fact is revealed by Jesus. In scripture, eternal life is spoken of in two ways. The one as to the believer’s future state as Matthew 25:46. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." See also Romans 2:7. It is also, as we shall see, spoken of as already the portion of the believer. These words of Jesus, "should not perish but have eternal life," do not necessarily imply present possession.

We will look at other passages which leave no uncertainty as to this. Even in this same chapter, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (Ver. 36.) Here are two things equally certain as to present position. The believer hath eternal life as a present thing, and on the unbeliever the wrath of God abides. As to the believer the Lord makes it most certain. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you,

he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal life, and shall not come into judgment, [it should be,] but is passed from death unto life." Have your ears been opened to hear the words of Jesus? Have you been brought, through grace, to believe God who sent His Son? Then the Lord Jesus assures you that you have eternal life; that you shall not come into judgment; that you have passed from death unto life. Why should you doubt Him? He further says, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day?" only there must be faith in His death, as well as in Him as the bread come down from heaven in His incarnation. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." Nothing can shew more ignorance of His word, or spirit and truth, than to pervert these words of Jesus as though He spake of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper. It is receiving the fact of His death, the shedding of His blood, for our salvation. Whoso does this hath eternal life. And mark, Jesus does not speak of life that may be lost, or that might be taken from you, or that could possibly cease to be: no, it would not in any such case be eternal life. It is as imperishable as Himself, as it is Himself, and it cannot be lost or taken away. He says, and to faith that is enough, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man [or one] is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29.)

Satan and unbelief would say, do not be so sure that God so loved you as to give His Son to be lifted up for you, that you might have such certainty as this. Has He said, that you shall never perish; that, as a believer, you not only have eternal life, but none can pluck you out of the Father's hand? "Oh!" Satan says, ever serpent-like, "He knows that if you should sin, you will lose all and pluck yourself from His hands, then where will your eternal life be?" What a liar the old serpent is! But we have the sure word of God, and has He not made full provision should the true follower of Christ in a moment of temptation fail or sin? Was not that sin borne by Jesus on the tree? What saith the scripture? "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins," &c. (1 John 2:1-2.) Yes, "God so loved." Sad indeed it is that so many will not believe that God so loved: they prefer to cling to the dark reasonings of unbelief. Is it then a light matter to disbelieve God as to this? "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Yes, God so loved. Is it dreadful heresy to believe what God so plainly tells us — His very record? And mark, eternal life is in His Son. Can the Son cease to be? can the life He is, then, cease to be? He is the eternal Son. It is not something apart from Himself that we may lose; "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." Do you ask, Is it the will of God that I may really know that I have this blessed portion in the Son, even eternal life? "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John 5:10-13.) Oh, how clear the record of God; but beware how you despise it or reason it away. This is the gospel God was pleased to give to a poor country boy to preach fifty years ago, and this is the same gospel God gave him to preach last night, and gives him now to lay before the reader. That gospel he received not from man. For weary months he was struggling under law, seeking to meet the requirements of the law, and ever failing. God the Giver, and God the Producer of all He requires was, as yet, utterly unknown to him. He was returning to his home, in a village near Laughton, weary and sorrowful even to despair. He was alone with God in the lane: he fell to the

ground in the middle of the road and groaned, "Oh Lord, I can do no more, I can go no farther," and he felt in his soul he was lost. It was there the Holy Spirit revealed to him the true blessed fact that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that, whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And oh, from that day, what mercy, depths of mercy! what failures and chastenings! But the writer has ever proved the truth of the words of Jesus — none, no one, has been able to pluck him out of His hands. Be there few or many days before we see the face of Him for whom we wait, may we never cease to proclaim the same glad tidings — that the moment a soul is, through grace, brought to truly believe God, he has eternal life, eternal salvation, is for ever perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ, and stands in the full unclouded favour of God in the Beloved. "For we are complete in him." May God, to whom all praise is due — God who so loved, bless these few words to all who read them.

C.S.

092. The First Resurrection.

The First Resurrection.

It is a mistake to suppose that the great truth of the first resurrection, or the resurrection from among the dead, rests on the interpretation of some difficult passage in the Book of Revelation. So far from this being the case, we shall find it to be the uniform teaching of the New Testament. Neither is it possible to find a single text to uphold the grave error of a general resurrection and judgment. And whilst the first resurrection is the full accomplishment of our salvation: a general judgment practically denies our redemption. The scriptures declare there is none righteous, no, not one; all have sinned: it therefore follows that if we have to come into judgment for our sins we must all be condemned. As it is written, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.” Is it not evident if we have to look forward to judgment, there must be everlasting wrath before us? thus salvation is impossible. This is a very solemn question for our souls, If you, and all the world, will rise together, and it is appointed unto you after death the judgment, tell me, how can you be saved? Is there a single promise of pardon at the judgment? Not one. Our subject then affects the very foundation truth of the gospel: yes, if the common error of a general resurrection, and judgment be true, there is no gospel: for none can be saved, all are guilty, and if judged, must be cast into the lake of fire. Is it not then a fearful thing to spend a whole life teaching such dreadful errors? How many do so, and refuse to hear the word of God! If you profess to bow to scripture, we ask your solemn attention to the following. The Sadducees, or Rationalists of that day, brought a supposed difficulty to the Lord. A woman had had seven husbands whose wife then would she be in the resurrection? Jesus answered, “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” (Luke 20:35-36.) Is not this a resurrection of great privilege? Will all be raised together equal to the angels, the children of God? How can there be a general resurrection, when Jesus speaks of those who shall be accounted worthy of the resurrection from the dead, or from among the dead? Rest not until you are assured that this is your privilege.

We will now notice how the Lord Jesus teaches there will be two distinct resurrections. The one of life, the other of judgment; and the blessed certainty that those who have eternal life shall not come into the judgment. He says that all judgment is committed to Him. That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father: and further, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life.” Do you notice that if you hear the words of Jesus, and believe God that sent Him, then even now, you have everlasting life. Surely you have not to wait until the judgment, to know if you shall have it. You both have everlasting life, and Jesus says you shall not come into judgment. The thing is settled now: you have passed from death unto life. Jesus, the very One who shall execute judgment, says these three things to every believer: you have everlasting life, you shall not come into judgment: you are passed from death unto life. Then

He says, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (or judgment). (John 5:21-29.) The word hour is used by John to denote a period, as, “The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit,” &c. (John 4:23; John 5:25.) Plainly “hour” here means the whole of this gospel period of more than eighteen hundred years. So there is a period coming in which there shall be two very distinct resurrections, of those who have everlasting life, the resurrection of life; those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment. Assuredly one of these must be yours and mine.

Now read John 6:37-40. Here a great privilege is made known for all whom the Father giveth to Christ. “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” And to show the value of this special resurrection the Father’s will, that Christ should raise them up, is repeated twice. Is it not evident that if there were a general resurrection there would be no meaning in these words? We shall further find that this first resurrection is at the coming of the Lord, to fetch His saints: and this accounts for the fact, that the resurrection of all given to Christ is so much on His, and on the Father’s heart. What tenderness of infinite love in those words as He went to the cross to bear our sins: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:1-2.) Oh the heart of Jesus! oh the Father’s will! what rest! what joy this gives. As the Jews held the doctrine of a general resurrection, at least of themselves, this blessed truth we are examining was very offensive to them, as preached by the apostles. “Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead [or which is from among the dead], And they laid hands on them,” &c. (Acts 4:1-3.) Do you not see here, the truth of a resurrection from among the dead is the very opposite of the Jewish doctrine of a general resurrection? Not only is it the joy of Christ to do the Father’s will in thus raising us from among the dead, but also this must take place because of the Spirit that dwelleth in us. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “But 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 by [or because of] his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Romans 8:11.) What a fact is this, we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Was He raised from among the dead? then we must be also, we must be like Him in all things. We are waiting for this the full effect of redemption. “Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” If the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, then you must be raised from the dead that He may dwell in you for ever. If a Christian, this must he your destiny. The resurrection of all that are in Christ, at His coming, is as certain as that all in Adam have died. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” But our question is when will those in Christ be raised? “Everyman in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end,” &c. (1 Corinthians 15:22-24.) Nothing could be more certain then, than that the resurrection of those that are Christ’s will be at His coming. Then cometh the end: we shall see in another scripture when the rest of the dead are judged at the end. But carefully note, that is not the resurrection spoken of here, to the end of this chapter. It is the first resurrection; those that are Christ’s. Will the resurrection of the wicked be in power — a spiritual body — in glory. Is it true of them, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the

heavenly"? Is not this the exclusive resurrection of those who are Christ's? The resurrection unto life from among the dead, the redemption of their bodies? When they see Christ they are like Him, they for ever bear the image of the heavenly. What a blessed event is their resurrection from among the dead! Equally blessed for "we who are alive and remain." "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. The apostle could not have had a thought of a general resurrection at the end of the world: when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption: for he says then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory," &c. If we turn to the prophet Isaiah 25:8, we find the Spirit is there describing not the end of the world, but the beginning of the millennium or kingdom of Christ on earth. Do not forget this; that 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 will not take place at the end of the world: but at the coming of Christ to take His saints, more than a thousand years before the judgment of the rest of the dead. For further proof of this further on. This was no mere doctrine with the apostle Paul. It was the prize at the end of his journey. For this he longed; he says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of [or from among] the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." (Php 3:11.) Yes, when this body shall be raised in glory, when we bear the image of the heavenly, then, not until then, shall we be perfected. For this we wait, "we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour; who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," &c. If there were a general resurrection, why should the apostle so earnestly long to arrive at the resurrection from the dead? Does not this imply that the saints will be raised first? Nay, had not this very fact been revealed by the Lord to His servant: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.) Thus the error of a general resurrection is in direct opposition to all scripture. There is not a thought of any being raised when the Lord comes, except the dead in Christ: or, as we have seen, they that are Christ's at His coming. And this coming is clearly for His saints: for when He comes in judgment they come with Him.

We will now look at what God has been pleased to give us, as His final revelation, on this subject. We shall here see what will take place at the beginning of the thousand years reign of Christ. Evidently this cannot possibly be a spiritual millennium as is so erroneously taught — a time when the great mass of the world will be converted by the gospel, and form the church. The church, as the bride of Christ, has been completed before this; in Revelation 19:1-21 the multitudes of heaven had said, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." And more, the marriage of the Lamb having taken place, the saints come with the Lord under the symbol of the armies which were in heaven. The then imperial head of the Roman empire, is judged, with the confederate kings of the earth. The terrible reign of terror, under the dragon, has been brought to a close. Yea Satan, the dragon, the old serpent, the devil, is cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. The saints who have come with Christ, are now no longer in conflict, but "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, &c . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Thus we see after the church is completed, and comes with Christ and sits on thrones joint-heirs with Christ, to judge the nations, and to inherit all things:

then the remnant also who have been faithful to Christ, during the great tribulation and slain: all these also are raised to partake of the blessedness of the first resurrection. “Blessed, and holy, is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” This completes the first resurrection. Now as to the rest of the dead, the wicked, we are distinctly told, they lived not again until the thousand years were finished. Then after the thousand years, “the dead small and great stand before God” to be judged. The dead were judged. “And they were judged every man according to their works.” And as is evident, every man that shall be judged must be for ever condemned.

Thus a thousand years separate the resurrection unto life, and the resurrection unto judgment.

We have thus gone over the teaching of scripture as to the first resurrection. And we ask where is there a thought of either a general resurrection, or that the Christian should he brought into judgment for his sins?

There are two scriptures carelessly relied on. Some one may ask, does not the gathering the sheep and the goats, imply a general resurrection? (Matthew 25:1-46.) But if we read that scripture carefully, we cannot find a word, or a thought, of any resurrection there. It is the judgment of the living nations, and they are dealt with according as they have treated the Jews, now owned as His brethren. At this judgment the Son of man is seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory: and all the tribes of the earth mourn. (Matthew 24:31.) “When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory and before him shall he gathered all nations,” &c. (Chap. 25.) Read from verse 31 to end. You observe this is the judgment of the quick at His coming: but not a word about the resurrection, of the judgment of the dead. Now let us compare this with the description of the last judgment after the thousand years, millennial rest, and blessing. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” (Revelation 20:11-12.) Thus at the morning of this millennial day, two things take place. The first resurrection is complete: and the judgment of the living nations takes place. The rest of the dead live not again until the evening of that thousand years: and then they are judged according to their works. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” At the one Judgment the Son of man is seen coming with the clouds of heaven: at the other judgment, He does not come at all, but the heavens and the earth fled away. Thus we have both the judgment of the quick and the dead: the one at His appearing, the other at His kingdom. “Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.” The other scripture, so often misquoted to uphold the great traditional error of a general resurrection and judgment, is this. You often hear these words as though they were scripture. It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after death the judgment. If this were so, who then could be saved? No living man could have peace with God, if the question had yet to be settled at the future judgment after death. Do you not see that this error strikes at the very foundation of the gospel? How can there be present enjoyed peace with God, if we and all men have to be judged for our sins? How can we possibly be now made meet for the inheritance of the saints: if the question has to be settled yet, after death? How can we be said to be justified from all things, if we have yet to be judged? This serious error of a general resurrection and judgment, has thrown all Christendom into confusion. Both things cannot be true: the gospel of the grace of God,

and the future judgment of all. Take a case: a criminal proved guilty, receives the glad tidings of her Majesty's free pardon, and that the crime shall never be laid to his charge again. Another official declares that he must go to judgment before the judge for his crime. Can both be true? The one is in flat contradiction to the other. So is the doctrine and all who preach it, of a general judgment, in flat contradiction of the gospel. Strange as this may appear to those who follow tradition, and pay little regard to scripture, yet it is true that no one who holds the error of a general judgment, either knows, or ever preaches, the gospel of God in its simplicity and fulness. Let us be candid, and come to close quarters. Do you hold that error, and thus you expect to die, and after death the judgment? "Error?" you say, "It is strange to me if that is not the truth: I shall be greatly mistaken if there is not such a scripture as that it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment."

We will see as to that shortly. But first, what is the effect of the doctrine on your own soul? Is it not that you hope it will be all right at last? You are not quite sure you are good enough yet to die, and go to judgment? Sometimes, as you forget this fatal error, you feel a little brighter, and then dreadful doubts, and uncertainty; if a preacher, you may be trying to keep up a fair appearance before others. But the blessedness of sins forgiven to be remembered no more: perfected for ever by the one offering of Christ: justified from all things: peace with God. All these you cannot enjoy if you have yet to be judged: for this very simple reason, that all have sinned, all are guilty, and therefore if all have to be judged, then all in righteousness must be condemned.

Now let us read that scripture, "And as it is appointed unto men [not all men] once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:27-28.) Does not this prove the very opposite of a general judgment? Just as it is the common lot of men to die, and after death the judgment: so Christ has borne the sins of many: therefore there can be no question of sin to them when He appears. Read the whole context, the very subject is the perfect and eternal redemption believers have through the one sacrifice of Christ. All of which falls to the ground if we have yet to be judged for our sins. It will not do to say it is the doctrine of our creeds, prayer books, and hymn books; is it found in scripture? That is the question, unless we are prepared to give up the word of God and trust in tradition, however false. As another has said, think of the childish absurdity of this tradition. Paul and thousands more have been with the Lord eighteen hundred years: have they still to be judged for their sins? The Lord Jesus assures the believer that he shall not come into judgment. (John 5:24.) And there is not and cannot be a single text to show that he will be judged in the proper sense of judgment for sins. That he will stand before, or he manifested before the beemah, or judgment-seat of Christ, and there be recompensed or rewarded according to his works, is a most blessed truth. And also that this will take place at the first resurrection is also plain. "And thou shalt be blessed . . . for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:14.) Sins are put away by His precious blood. Salvation is wholly of God. We shall be rewarded according to our works. What grace to find anything to reward! This is the clear doctrine of scripture. Two Christians may both build on Christ, the only foundation — one is rewarded for his works; all the works of the other be burned up, yet he himself saved so as by fire. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 : "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward: if any man's work shall he burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

It is blessed to know also that we shall not be rewarded according to man's judgment, but the Lord's. "Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come." On this very account we are not to judge or despise one another. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the [beemah] judgment-seat of Christ." (Romans 14:10.) There is another striking scripture on this subject, and mark, it is in connection with the believer's certainty as to his being with the Lord. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God," &c. "We have the earnest of the Spirit. We are always confident . . . it is God who hath wrought us for this selfsame thing," &c., no portion breathes more divine certainty. Yet he says, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear [or be manifested] before the [beemah] judgment-seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

Thus whilst we have the utmost certainty that if we die, it is to be absent from the body, present with the Lord; and also that this is not all, but we shall be clothed upon with our glorified body of power, incorruptible, in the image of the heavenly, like Christ: yet this should not make us careless, but diligent that we may be accepted of Him. That is, our works approved, not burnt up, and thus be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. To confound this with being judged before the great white throne, is like not seeing the difference between giving rewards at the break up of school, and the boys having to be brought up as criminals at the Town Hall. The apostle says, "But we are made manifest unto God." Yes we are made manifest unto God. Already we have taken our places as guilty, without a hope in ourselves. We are pardoned, justified, sanctified. Our sins have been judged and borne by our holy Substitute. Now pass on, first, our manifestation before that blessed One who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Surely angels may wonder at the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Now if all from our birth, to that moment when we are manifested in His glory, be brought out before the assembled myriads, yet will it not show the grace to "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." Yes, every saint will be to the praise of His glory. All this is unspeakably glorious to us, and think of being rewarded, recompensed, in that scene of glory, at the resurrection of the just!

How terrible the contrast in that scene, when the dead are judged! Every thought, motive, and act, all written in the books: every secret sin unconfessed, unforgiven — all, all, brought out into light. Vain the hope of pardon then. The day of mercy is past. The future, God has said it, is the lake of fire.

If a single believer could come into that judgment, then Christ would have died in vain. Oh rest my soul on the words of Jesus. "Shall not come into judgment." (John 5:24.) The sad error of a general resurrection, then, has taken away all the untold joy, and brightness of the first resurrection; yea, has robbed the Christian of the blessed hope altogether. So that many do not even know that there is a first resurrection. Is it possible that that for which the apostle so longed, and for which the church waited in the patience of Christ, has been lost and forgotten? It is too true. Had we space we should find, that the promise of God to Abraham could not be fulfilled, if there were no first resurrection. "And I will give unto thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." (See Genesis 13:14-15; Genesis 17:8.) Stephen tells us Abraham was a stranger, had no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his

foot on. It is plain if Abraham were not raised from among the dead until the heavens and the earth flee away, and he had to stand before the great white throne, then God would have broken His word to Abraham, which is impossible. By faith, they sojourned, and looked “that they might obtain a better resurrection.” (Hebrews 9:1-28.) No; they shall be raised from among the dead, whether it be Israel for earthly, or the church for the heavenly glory. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, and they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” This must be the reader’s portion, or the lake of fire. May the Lord deliver you from the fatal delusion of putting off your salvation to the judgment of the dead. C. S.

Chapter 91

093. The Young Convert's Enquiry as to where He should go.

The Young Convert’s Enquiry as to where He should go.

James. If you can spare a little time, I wish to speak with you on a subject of great importance to me. I have through the mercy of God been brought to know the Lord, and I am greatly perplexed to know where to go. Everybody seems to think himself right, but really I cannot find any sect or national church that I am quite sure is according to the word of God.

John. I shall be most ready to hear all your difficulties, and to help, as the Lord helps me to do so. I have sought to know the mind of the Lord on this I subject for many years. Why have you not joined some of the so-called churches? The church of Rome? the church of England? or some denomination

James. This is what puzzles me. I see so many centres. The Pope or the Conference, Wesley or Baptism. And then the world is called the church, with state, or worldly authority and a King or Queen as head and centre, so that really I do not know what is right.

John. But where do you see all these centres of sects? Not in the scripture, but amongst men. In the scripture there is only one church: the church of God. There is only one centre, and that is Christ. He is the only Head of the church. Now let us take fast hold of this great truth: even if it prove everything that is of man to be wrong. There is only one true centre — Christ. He says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20.)

James. Your statement that Christ is the only true centre to which Christians should be gathered, has caused me very serious thoughts. I find others beside myself are also exercised about these questions; and if you have no objection I shall be glad to state what difficulties have been raised: and I should much like to hear, if you have time, what you have to say from the word of God.

John. So far as this can be done to real profit, and not for mere controversy, nothing would give me greater pleasure. As I grow older, James, I have less and less desire for controversy. But where the truth of God is in question, one must not be silent.

James. Certainly not. Well, I find one objection, if not the chief one, against Christians being gathered to Christ the only Head and centre, is this: It is admitted there is much evil, many unconverted persons in the national churches (indeed it owns itself to be the world), and in denominations; but that is said to be no reason why Christians should separate from them, and be gathered only to Christ: as there was much evil in the professing church, even in the days when the epistles were written. There was carnality at Corinth, and gross evil; false doctrine leavening the assembly in Galatia: enemies of the cross named in the Epistle to the Philippians, &c. And yet the apostle never once exhorted the true Christians to separate from these assemblies, and form another one around a new centre. Yet surely if it had been right, the Holy Spirit would have guided them to do so. The difficulty is this, John: if it would have been wrong then, to have separated from

the church of God because evil had come in, can it be right now to separate from the various churches because of the evil that abounds?

John. Well put, James. It would not be very easy, however, for persons holding such a view of the matter, to tell us why they are not in the church of Rome. Let us put it thus: there was much evil in the professing church of God in the apostolic days, but it would have been wrong to separate from the church of God: true. There was much evil in the church of Rome, therefore it was wrong for the Reformers to separate from her, at the cost of their lives. Is it not such confusion as this, that is leading souls to Rome every day? I say, James, if it is wrong to separate from evil, why are not you and I in Rome? Anyway we should have evil enough there.

James. Really, John, I do not see through it, will you try to explain?

John. I think you will have seen that separation from evil alone is not sufficient to guide us in this matter. The above reasoning is based on the fallacy that supposes the church of God (as seen in scripture) and the church of Rome are equally right; and that therefore to separate from them would be equally wrong. The same fallacy would apply to the church of England, or any denomination.

Now what is the church of God, or assembly of God, as found in scripture? Who is its head; and who is its centre? Is it a nation? Nowhere. Or a number of nations? No. Who then were its members? Every believer on earth. Who its Head, and centre? Christ in heaven. This assembly is the joint body of Christ, whilst still on earth, gathered to the name of Christ, yet joined to Him by the Spirit, in heaven. As seen in the hands of man, evil and leaven and failure appeared. But whilst gathered to Christ it would have been wrong to separate from it, and form another body. That would evidently have been to separate from Christ. Whilst the true Christ was held as the true centre, there could not have been a thought of separation. We might just as soon talk of the members of the human body separating from the head, to form a new body. And more while Christ was thus owned as Head and Lord, there was His power to deal with evil in the assembly of God. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together . . . with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan,” &c. (1 Corinthians 5:4.) “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (Ver. 13.) Surely it would have been monstrous to separate from Christ because evil came in, and had to be dealt with in discipline, in the power of Christ.

James. Then why separate from Rome?

John. Why? Because, after some centuries, Rome set up another centre. The church having lost its heavenly character, became entirely earthly, and gradually owned another Head and centre of its own liking. It became an earthly institution with an earthly, human head and centre, the pope. And now for the first time in the seven stages of the church’s history, a distinct remnant is recognised by the Lord Jesus. (Revelation 2:24.) Now, James, is it not evident to you that to separate from the church of God was one thing; that is, it would have been utterly wrong: but to separate from the church of Rome is quite another thing? In the one case it would he to separate from Christ; in the other case it would be to separate from the pope, who has taken the place of Christ as head. The Holy Ghost did not set up another head: there is no pope at Rome to be found in scripture. Not the shadow of a thought either that Peter was ever at Rome, or that there was a

bishop of Rome. The two things are totally distinct. The church of Christ is not of this world. The church of Rome is of this world. The Head of the church of God is Christ in heaven. The head of the church of Rome is the pope at Rome. It would have been wrong to separate from Christ: it is perfectly right and most blessed to separate from the pope.

James. I do not think I ever saw the distinction before, of the two centres — Christ, and the pope.

John. There is no doubt we have been too much occupied with details of evil, instead of looking at the foundation principles. I trust there are many dear Christians in the church of Rome, but it is clear they are not gathered to Christ, the only Head and centre, as the church of God was in the beginning. It is a, very serious thing to displace the authority of Christ as Lord, acting by the Spirit.

James. There seems a very distinct reason for leaving Rome, and returning to the ground of the church of God, gathered by the Holy Spirit to Christ alone. But is there the same reason so to be gathered from the so-called evangelical churches?

John. It is painful to me to answer this question. But as so many are beginning to inquire into these things (and more, as the inquiry seems to lead many, even the professed ministers of Christ, to go back to Rome), I judge it will be real love to souls to look this matter fairly in the face. We have seen that whilst the church held Christ the true centre and Head, it was impossible to separate from it, without separating from Him. We have also seen that it was quite another thing when the church of Rome set up another centre. In this case, separation from Rome would be faithfulness to Christ as the only Lord. We might dwell on the awful wickedness of these popes. And certainly this would show the sin of owning such a centre, instead of the Holy, Holy One.

James. How then can a minister of the church of England go back to such a centre — to such a head?

John. I will tell you. He reflects; and he reads; and he sees in history, about three hundred years ago, this country owned the pope as head of the church, the centre around which a great part of Christendom was gathered. He finds a very wicked king in England, determined to be the head and centre of the so-called church of England. He says, can this be right for a man whom all history abhors as a wife-murderer, to be the head of the church? If any man refused to own this man as head of the church, he must be put to a cruel death as a traitor. He passes on to the daughters of this man. One is on the throne of England, head of the church, and death to all who refuse to own her the head of the church. Another queen is in Sheffield Castle, ever plotting with the most wicked men of the day, to invade England, and restore the pope as head of the church. I would not dwell on the end of this terrible struggle for earthly ambition, and headship of the church. The inquirer gets perplexed. His choice lies between a bishop or pope, and a king or queen: and no wonder he prefers the bishop and goes to Rome. He says, how can it be right for an earthly sovereign to be the head of the church? You notice, James, he has lost all knowledge of the only true Head and centre of the church; and he is perplexed with two false centres. It was a terrible struggle for the honoured Reformers: but we cannot overlook the fact, that they never got back to Christ, the Head and only centre. They saw the pope was a wrong centre, but set up another. Was not this fundamentally wrong? It is not a question then of separating from the evils in the church of England, and trying to form a true church: to write thus, shows total ignorance of what the church is. There is no such idea in scripture as “a church,” except in the sense that all believers in any

given place formed the assembly in that place. “One body.” “One Spirit.” “One Lord.” This is the language of scripture. It would be as scriptural to say the English Lord Jesus, as the church of England, or a church of any other kind. As truly as there is one Lord, so truly do all believers form the one body, the one assembly of God. Let this great foundation truth be seen, and all becomes simple.

James. How do you mean? I see clearly now from scripture, that there was only one Head and centre of the church in the beginning. Now I see two other earthly centres: the pope and the queen — long may she live and be increasingly honoured as queen! but it does seem a sad mistake to put her in the place of Christ as head of the church; and an earthly government to usurp the authority of Christ. What I should like to ask is, Is this true of all denominations?

John. Let everything be tested by the word of God. Let us cling to nothing that will not bear that test. Sectarianism cannot exist if Christ is owned as the centre, the only Head. “And he is the head of the body, the church [not a church], who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” (Colossians 1:18.) Yes, even to make Christ a centre amongst other centres, is condemned as carnality. “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas and I of Christ.” “For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:4.) If we thus discover that we have been utterly wrong in making churches: if it be unscriptural to say I am of Wesley, and I of Calvin, and I of Baptism, nay, if men have set up a hundred other centres, what is to be done? What is the path of every Christian on earth, but to own Christ, the only true centre?

James. I see this is quite another matter than merely separation from evil; important as that is: but if Christians will not give up their other centres, what is to be done then?

John. I hope you see it is the privilege of all believers to be gathered to Christ alone: just as it was at the beginning. He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Oh! that every perplexed Christian knew this, and returned to Him alone, from every sect! But if all will not obey Him, yet is it still most true, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” What can the heart that knows Him desire more? He, present as Lord, and acting by the Spirit. Yea, even at the very last, when Christendom has come to its worst, and is about to be utterly rejected, as a witness on earth; yet still He says, “Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20.)

James. Pardon me, John, just one more question on this subject. I now understand where the true Christ is owned as the only centre and Head, and there is His power to deal with evil; and therefore it would be wrong to separate from Him. I am young in the faith, but I am told that after God had by His Spirit gathered many believers together to the one centre — Christ; that some, yea, the bulk, separated from them, especially at Plymouth. Was this right? As you went through that struggle, will you explain it in keeping with all you have just now said?

John. I was just now thinking about it. If the Lord will, we will take up that wide-spread difficulty.

James. A do assure you it is very hindering to many young converts. They say, how can this be, that a something which happened before we were born, nearly forty years ago, should still separate Christians: yea, even Christians who have professedly separated from all the centres

that have been set up by men? And I assure you, John, I have heard those who have separated from their brethren spoken about with great bitterness.

John. I am sorry for that, that is indeed sad: we need to approach the sad subject with meekness and lowliness of mind, instead of bitterness and hatred, which is sin. To me, James, the whole question is most simple: and I desire to speak for the glory of Christ and the real good of all persons concerned. Bearing in mind what we have said, then, was it not long before we wore born (any of us) that Rome set up another centre, and head of the church? The pope in the place of Christ as head of the church? Was it not before we were born that England set up a king, or a queen, as head of a worldly system called the church? Yea, even so of a Wesley, &c., &c. Now because it happened before we were born, or converted, that the glorious pre-eminence of Christ, the Head of His church, was set aside, and His administration by the Holy Spirit also set aside, for the varied church governments of men: does it follow that we should also give up the holy and true centre of gathering, and join any of these, simply because the thing happened before we were born?

James. Stay, John, I fail to see what this has to do with the inquiry. Why are those separated who profess to have left all these false centres? Now do keep to the point. Why did you separate, for you were one of the many who did?

John. Quite true, James; and now in a few words I will tell you, and I think you will see its connection with all that has been said. Would you think it, James? Satan had succeeded in introducing amongst us at Plymouth not only a false centre, but a false Christ was that false centre! This was why God in His mercy separated us from that false centre; that we might still in these last days be gathered to Him that is holy, and Him that is true. We did not see this at first, but God did. We failed, many of us at least, both in spiritual discernment and action. God did not fail to separate us, and to gather us to Christ the Holy and the True. Now, where there is a true centre, Foundation, Head — even Christ, He acts by the Holy Ghost; and thus there is the liberty and action of the Spirit, seen in the assembly. On the other hand, wherever there is a false centre, and head, the action of the Spirit is never seen in the assembly, but clericalism displacing the Spirit, and resisting the full truth of the Lord’s return. I need not give the history in detail: but first the most determined clericalism appeared, resisting the action of the Holy Ghost. Then one, now with the Lord, to his deep grief discovered that a false Christ had been introduced into the teaching and writings. A Christ born at a distance from God, and having to make His way to God. In fact a Christ that needed a Saviour himself. From that false Christ, and therefore false centre, God separated many; and from those who preached or taught, or sympathised with those who held such a false centre.

James. Tell me how is it possible that any could hesitate. Why, there is nothing so bad as that amongst the evangelical sects. Is there? Do you think they who remained understood it?

John. I do not think they did, and many do not even now. Indeed, I trust if they did, they would give up their neutrality at once. There is not a single evangelical denomination that owns a false Christ as its centre. The foundations were gone. The danger was far greater than Unitarianism; there it is manifest that the Son of God is utterly denied. But at Plymouth as yet there was much precious truth; mixed up with a false Christ as the very centre. The truth is, James, if God had not come in, and separated His children from it, do you not see the present blessed testimony to the Lordship of

Christ, acting by the Spirit in the assembly, would have been impossible? Could the Holy Ghost have borne witness to a false Christ? And no one can deny that this was a false Christ. Thus long ago those separated from every false centre, and systems of men, would themselves have been far the worst system on earth, and gathered around the worst centre, a false Christ. Now, James, what do you say, if it be right to separate from the false centre of the pope, a king, and all the various centres of so many sects; and all the clericalism flowing from each of those false centres: would it not be sadly wrong to remain with a false Christ as a centre?

James, I am amazed that any did, or that any could talk of being neutral about it. How was it?

John. Many had not seen the blessed fact, that all Christians form the one body of Christ. They had never known Him as the Head of that one body, the assembly. They thought that, as they were independent assemblies, though Christ might be attacked at Plymouth, it did not affect them at a distance. They saw much evil in the sects, and they hoped to gather together and make something better. But that which produced such sad divisions was tolerating persons coming from under the teaching of a heretic.

James. Did you go through all this? It really shocks me. What is the remedy?

John. God brought me through it all in His mercy, I am sure of that. We are all poor things. But God is God, and Satan is Satan, and it is no little matter to know what is of God. The remedy is very simple, if we are only in a truly broken, humble state of soul. Let us have no bickering about details. Cannot all who desire the glory of Christ agree that it was a great mercy, that God was pleased to give grace to judge the evil, and to separate from the false Christ as a centre? If any have failed and used bitterness against those whom God did so separate, can they not confess this to God and to their brethren? If we are not led of the Spirit we shall be sure to err. Is it not most blessed to be gathered to Christ, the true centre, and truly own the action of the Holy Spirit in the assembly? If our brethren really desire this, why then do they not own their past mistake, and be with those who do? Why continue in this sad neutrality?

James. I think I now see how this was, many years ago; but many tell me that they abhor the doctrines then held by some, and that now they would not have fellowship with any coming from places where it is held, just as they would neither receive a Unitarian who denied the Lord, or one from the Unitarians, who maintained they did not deny the Lord, or His true atoning death. Why then are you still separate?

John. I am glad you put the case so simply and clearly. If this is true now, in uprightness and the fear of the Lord, they now judge this evil doctrine, and those linked with it, just as they would Unitarian infidelity, why not take their places with us at the table of the Lord? For this is exactly what we did forty years ago. Why continue to blame us for what they now see to be right to do themselves?

James. Surely that must be so, if it is right to judge such evil doctrine now, it must have been wrong to refuse to judge it then. It does seem to me that this refusal was the chief cause of so much division. They knew it to be poison, but would not allow it to be labelled poison.

John. Exactly so. Now the author of the fearful doctrine was, and still is, under the illusion that it is not poison. I saw a copy of a letter very lately, in which he declares he never held the very

doctrines that are in his tracts. Surely those who knew it was poison, and would not have it so labelled, were if possible more to blame than he was.

James. Oh what a mercy it would be, if they saw this and truly owned it, and instead of this long-continued division, so sad and grieving to the Lord, all came together who truly own the Lordship of Christ and the presence and unity of the Spirit.

John. The Lord grant it may be so; nothing is too hard for the Lord. I do not see why all who desire truly to own Christ the only Head and centre of the one church of God, should not even yet be together.

James. Just another word before we part. Is it true that amongst those who do desire truly to own Christ as the only centre, men arise amongst them seeking pre-eminence, and speaking perverse things to lead away disciples after them? Some trying to make a party about this, and others the opposite? I have been told this is the case.

John. Quite true at this very moment. Sorrowfully so, as bad or worse than it was in apostolic days. There is scarcely a thing by which Satan sought to mar and destroy the testimony then, that he is not trying now. But now in spite of all the devil could do, the only right thing on earth then, was to be gathered to Christ in dependence on the Holy Ghost. It is just equally so now, Can we not say with Peter, “Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” It is an amazing principle to be gathered to Christ as at the beginning. How little is it understood! Is there any marvel Satan should use every effort to destroy this testimony? feeble as it is, he hates it. Did the Lord promise that all should flow smoothly here, to those who are His? Was it so with the beloved and honoured apostle? Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. He could say, “But none of these things moved me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy,” &c. (Acts 20:24.) Truly we need the whole armour of God. What prayer, what watchfulness, what diligence! There may be constant conflict with false profession without, and false brethren within; but if we know what it is to be gathered to Christ, I do not see, James, that these things should move us.

James. I am thankful for this conversation. I see now the only right thing on this earth is to be gathered to Christ, owning Him the only true centre, and come what storms and tempests there may, it is still the only right thing. Every “ism” disappears if the glorious pre-eminence of Christ be truly owned. This was evidently the ground on which all believers were gathered in the beginning; it must therefore be the only basis on which all believers could be gathered now.

John. That certainly is so. And if you will search the scriptures, you will find that whilst the church owned Christ as the only Foundation, Head, and Lord, all ministry flowed from Him and was used by the Spirit as He would. (Ephesians 4:1-32; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40.) But if you examine the ecclesiastical organisation of all the so-called churches of this world, you will find them in direct contrast with the church of God as found in scripture. It is no use, however, trying to reform these: they would still be gathered to a false centre. There is no remedy possible in the present confusion and apostasy, but individual believers being gathered to Christ alone. Then if but two or three are gathered to Him, He is in their midst. Is not this enough? may not they count on Him? Oh! look to Him, to be taught by the Holy Spirit. Look not to the traditions of men, but to the word of God.

James. I thank you: surely my place is where “two or three are gathered” in His name. C. S.

094. The Great Tribulation;

The Great Tribulation; or, “the time of the end.”

C. Stanley. The end of this age. How much God has spoken about this, and how little attention man has paid to what God has said. As it would be impossible to understand the distance, and relation of different places on a map, without a correct scale, by which to measure those distances: so it is also impossible to understand the relation that one prophecy bears to another, unless we understand the scale of time which God was pleased to give to His servant Daniel. The Lord Jesus points to this when He says “whoso readeth let him understand.” (Matthew 24:15.)

It is important to notice that this discourse of the Lord Jesus was His own private explanation to His disciples. He explained the parable of the wheat and tares, privately to them in the house. So it would seem having discoursed in the Temple on these matters as recited in Luke 21:1-38. Now having left it for the last time, and only three days from His own death: these explanations are given in answer to His disciples questions’.

There is one sentence so badly translated that it quite hinders the simplicity of the discourse being understood. They say “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?” At the time when our translation was made the whole truth of the Lord’s coming, and the end of the age had been so lost: and the strange notion that the coming of the Lord meant the end of the world, so the translators put their own notion, not the translation of the sentence.

Surely it becomes us to examine with solemnity, that which occupied the heart of the Lord Jesus so near His death. We will now examine the scale of prophetic time.

Read — Daniel 9:24-27. There is God’s scale of time. Just as on a map it may be one inch to the mile: so here, it is one day to the year. “Seventy weeks are determined upon Thy people, and upon Thy holy city,” &c. During those seventy weeks, or 490 years, all these great events were to take place. The great work of reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, indeed their whole history up to the anointing of the most Holy. The scale of time is divided into seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. “And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have, nothing,” marginal reading. We will leave the last week, or seven years, for a moment. There can be no mistake about the sixty-nine thus marked on the scale, and actually fulfilled. There was the starting point “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” Which took place in the twentieth of Artaxerxes, and the sixty-nine weeks ended at the cross of Christ, when the Lord Jesus, having made reconciliation for iniquity, God raised Him from the dead in everlasting righteousness. But also equally true, though received up to glory, yet as Messiah He was actually rejected, cut off and had nothing.

Now as sixty-nine of the weeks of years have been so distinctly fulfilled, a day for a year, may we not expect the only one remaining week, or seven years, to be fulfilled in like manner? Why do we say one remaining week? You will find there is an indefinite period betwixt the end of the

threescore and two weeks, and the last, the one week. “The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” This agrees strictly with the teaching of the Lord Jesus in Luke 21:1-38. An indefinite period of desolations is foretold. Jerusalem should be compassed with armies and destroyed. “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Then follows the tribulation, distress of nations and the coming of the Son of Man, in the clouds with power and great glory. It is clear then, we are in that indefinite period which precedes the last week. The Romans were the people of that coming prince; as we all know they destroyed the city, and the sanctuary: and from that day the determined desolations have continued. It is impossible to deny this. And what has God been doing during this unmeasured period? Taking out from Jews and Gentiles the predestined Church. That church as we learn, not here in the Old Testament, but in the New, will be taken up to be with the Lord before the tribulation of which we are about to speak.

We will now look at the last week or seven years of the prophetic scale. “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, &c.” He, the coming prince of the people who destroyed the city, He shall confirm the Covenant with the many. All this supposes when this time of the end arrives, that the city and Temple are rebuilt; and Jewish sacrifices restored, and certainly this is so from many other scriptures. “And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.” (11: 31.) And mark this wicked one is a Jew. (5: 36-38.) This wicked one comes in his own name, and the many Jews restored to Jerusalem, receive him, and his action marks the last week on the scale: and still more distinctly the last half of that week — the three years and a half, the time of the end. Then the wicked one confirms a covenant with the Jews for seven years, then but not until then Jewish time will be reckoned again. The wicked flatterer goes on smoothly for half the week, or three years and a half: then the sure sign of the great tribulation is given, he causeth the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and sets up the idol of abomination in the holy place. Chap. 12 describes this time of the end. “And at that time 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 (the Jews) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end.” Thus we see these words will be sealed to the Jews unto the time of the end. This is repeated, read verses 9, 13, and mark the setting up of the abomination is the sure beacon, yea, marks the very day from which the Jews who believe God may count the very days from that event, to their deliverance and final blessing. “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” This is thirty days over the last half week: and still fuller blessing a little further on. “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

Now, as we have said, it is impossible to measure the distances on a map, unless those places are drawn to a correct scale, and also it is necessary that you understand that scale: just so is it impossible to understand correctly the prophetic periods, unless those prophecies are given on a correct uniform scale. There is no other scale of time given except this, and hence the importance of rightly understanding it. The scale then is this, seventy weeks, on the scale of a day to the year.

Sixty-nine have been certainly fulfilled. One only remains. Marked by a covenant for seven years with the Jews; the last half of the seven years, to be marked by the setting up of the idol in the holy place. It must be carefully noted, that if the scale is correct, and uniform, the dates of the period of the end or tribulation, three years and a half, 1260 days, or forty two months must be understood of the same scale; that is, each of these numbers will represent the last three and a half days, (or years as a day is for a year), on the scale. Many writers have made a strange mistake as to these last days of the one week. Not only a day for a year on the scale, the last week seven years, but they have also reckoned each of those literal days of the three years and half as meaning a year also. And also another mistake, they have applied the last three years and half of the Jewish tribulation, as though it described the events of this interval of unmeasured time betwixt the sixty-ninth, and seventieth week.

We trust the reader will understand this: as the Lord Jesus points this sign out to the Jews particularly. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whose readeth let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains” &c. (Matthew 24:15.)

How correctly the scale measures every prophetic scripture. Take this chapter, Matthew 24:1-51. In verse 2, Jesus speaks of the destruction of the temple or sanctuary. This we have seen marks the end of the sixty-ninth week; verses 4-14 describes the unmeasured interval of desolations and wars. Then the Lord takes up the distinct mark of the middle of the last week, or seven years. The Jews who believe are then to flee, &c . . . “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Daniel had given the days with a few added to the last three years and a half. The Lord shows as to the dreadful tribulation, those (not years but) days shall be shortened. And as these are the last days before the setting up of the kingdom, the Lord tells us that immediately after the tribulation of those (not years but) days: the Son of man cometh in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Now the Spirit of God is much occupied with those days, the last half of the last week, in the book of Revelation. It will be seen in chap. 10 that the unmeasured period comes to a close. The mighty angel does not swear “that there shall be no more time: ” this cannot be correct, as time did go on, and will for more than a thousand years. It is well known this should be, that time shall no longer be delayed. The Church has been taken to heaven. The unmeasured period has closed. Prophetic time, even the time of the end, now runs on. There is the temple again. It is measured. But the court which is without the Gentiles trample under foot, forty and two months: or three years and a half. So the witnesses also prophesy the same length of time. (11: 2, 3.) God has been pleased to give us many wonderful details, about this very time of the end, in Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18. Israel is brought before us, in the symbol of the woman that brought forth the man child. The man child has been caught up to God, as foretold by Micah 5:2. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Thus Jesus born in Bethlehem, rejected, cut off and having nothing on earth, has been caught up to God: and the heavens must retain Him until the times of restitution. (Acts 3:21.) And though man, He is the eternal God: and He is to be ruler in Israel. Here, as the man child He is revealed as the mystic Christ; the unmeasured interval completed. “And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God and His throne.”

Now the Church is associated with Christ in this, as it is written in Revelation 2:26. “And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end; to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron,” &c. And when Christ comes to exercise this judgment the Church comes with Him. (Revelation 19:14-15.) So that the full ascension of the man child is complete, when the Church, His body, is caught up to be with Him where He is: and to come with Him when He comes.

All this that we may understand where we are on the prophetic scale. This, and all that follows shows we shall have now passed the unmeasured interval, and have arrived at the very point marked as the beacon by the Lord: the beginning of the last half week, or three years and a half of the great tribulation. Did He not tell them to flee that very day, not even returning into the house for their clothes? (Matthew 24:16; Matthew 24:18.) So we read here, “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred and threescore days.” Just again the last three and half years. The saints having been caught up to the Lord (as revealed in Thess. 4), you may now read of the great war in heaven that will take place: and their great joy in heaven: and how they overcame the accuser. Then Satan the devil, the dragon, is cast down to the earth, and his angels. If there is great joy in heaven: there will be great woe on earth. This is the sure prospect of the dwellers on earth when the devil is come down unto you.

All this takes place, and a great deal more, during these last three years and a half of the prophetic scale. You will notice when the dragon is cast to the earth, he cannot persecute the Church, she is rejoicing in heaven. He therefore brings his whole power to persecute the woman that brought forth the man child. That is the regathered Jews. She has an astonishingly rapid flight. “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time (year) and times (two years) and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” The same three years and half the time of the end. Then you may read of the fearful wrath of the devil during those days against those Jews, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The prophecy of Daniel is to be sealed unto his people unto this time of the end. You may test this if you please: go to a Rabbi and ask him the meaning of Daniel 9:1-27 or 12. You will find, to him it is a sealed book. Not so when the time of the end arrives. It will then be unsealed. God can use this very little paper for this purpose if He please. When the remnant see the idol of abomination set up in their holy place, they will flee as here described.

Now if we turn to chap. 13 (Rev.) we shall read how these fearful judgments affect not only the Jews, but all that dwell upon the earth. We shall find however it is still the last three years and a half of the scale. Before we do this, we will notice one most serious mistake that many have made. It is something like this. Suppose a surveyor of a new line of railway, say 490 miles in length, draws a plan of the line on a scale of one inch to the mile. The last three and a half miles is a very difficult piece, and will require a vast amount of specifications. He gives them the plan of 486.5 miles. This part is to be completed first. He then gives the most elaborate survey of the last three and a half miles. It is on the same scale an inch to a mile: and therefore only three and a half inches on the scale and means three and a half miles. But as the work is so difficult he may describe it by the yard, or even by the inch. The clerk of the works makes this mistake: he supposes instead of the distance being only the three miles and a half which completes the line,

that every inch in the three miles and a half means a mile. This would stretch the three miles and half far far beyond the length of the whole line. More indeed than seventy thousand miles; whilst the whole length of the line is only 490 miles.

Strange as it may seem, this is just the mistake often made. The whole length of the prophetic time is seventy weeks, or 490 years, the unmeasured period before the last week not being counted. Now the last half week, or three years and a half, of this prophetic time is so tremendous in its character, that it is described in times, in months, in days: each of these making the correct scale three years and a half. Now writers have, and do mistake these days, as if they meant years, and thus calling them 1260 years! Not noticing that this is far longer than the wholescale of time 490 years. These 490 years close with the anointing the most Holy. And as we have seen immediately after the tribulation of those days, He shall be seen coming with power and great glory. All sorts of fancies have been invented for the fulfilment of these 1260 years. I well remember American adventists, alarming great numbers, by proving that Christ would come in, I think it was 1843. I will tell you how they did this, or how Satan did this by them in order, after it was past, to drive the excited people to infidelity. A certain year was fixed on for the coming of Christ. They then counted backward and fixed on some event in history as a starting point. In their lectures they started in this way from 6 or 7 different points, and always of course arrived at the same year. Let us turn to the Word, and we shall find that there has nothing happened yet in this interval, at all like what will take place during those three years and a half. A beast is seen to rise out of the sea: and this beast answers to the old Roman Empire. (13: 1, 2.) That beast or imperial form of empire has been destroyed — wounded with the sword. But all the world is to wonder at this beast suddenly reappearing again. And all the world worships the dragon which gave power unto the beast. This has not taken place yet: it will be so during the last three and a half years. “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.” The exact last measure on the scale again. He can only blaspheme the Church gone to heaven, for ever with the Lord. But dreadful will be the condition of the poor Jews, for this short period of the end, on earth. “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given unto him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and all that dwell upon earth shall worship Him,” &c. And now the wicked one is revealed, the other beast, coming up out of the earth. What power of iniquity he will have, he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven. He uses one fearful power for evil, in compelling all men small and great, rich and poor, to receive the mark of the beast. Certainly this has not been fulfilled yet: Satan is trying it as a cruel power, for evil at this moment, and it is a new thing in the earth, and bears the name of a living man, one of its cruel victims. It is called Boycotting.

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and, poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might, buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Oh how terrible the state of the Roman Empire when this shall be its universal condition at the time of the end. Talk of 1260 years, if those days first named to Daniel were not shortened, no flesh could be saved.

What a trinity of evil! The dragon, the imperial head, and the wicked one, the man of sin — and this terrible engine of evil, of which we hear of its sad prelude oven now. But all compelled to worship the dragon, and the beast or be put to death. What a reign of terror! And who can say how soon

the Church may be taken, and it may begin?

It may be asked, how can these things be since the Roman Imperial Empire has been broken to pieces, by savage armies: and does not actually exist? This was answered before its destruction. The angel explained this to John in chap. 17. The beast or imperial head “was, and is not, and yet shall be.” What a surprise this will be to Europe — that terrible Empire suddenly appearing again. And Satan giving his power to the imperial head. It is perfectly childish to say this has been: either in the days of Napoleon, or at any other time. For not only is there the beast, the head: but there are to be also ten horns or “kings which have received no kingdom as yet: but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” No ten kings have done what these will do for they will give their power and strength unto the beast. This is entirely new: and will take place not now but at the time of the end.

It may be asked what then will become of the false professing church, when the true saints have been taken to be with the Lord, during this awful time of the end, the last three and a half years? She seems for a moment to swell to greater grandeur and iniquity than ever, as the great whore. She even sits on the blasphemous beast: and he carrieth her. This is only for a very short time: for he and the ten kings utterly destroy her. “And the ten horns which thou sawest and (not upon) the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” Her utter destruction is then described in chap. 18. Such then will be the reign of awful terror, the tribulation such as never was, and never shall be again: and then immediately the Son of man shall come, and every eye shall see Him: and all tribes of the earth shall mourn. Then shall take place the judgment of the quick: and the setting up of His kingdom on earth.

How strangely the Scriptures have been misunderstood on these subjects. Take this one. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” This has frequently been referred to as meaning Christianity. The least attention would have shown that those kings had not received their kingdoms when John wrote the Revelation: and as we have seen have not done so yet. No, it is at the end of the last three years and a half, in the very days of these kings, that God sets up His earthly kingdom. This may be further seen, when the terrible character of the fourth or Roman Empire is seen as foretold in Daniel 7:13. “I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven . . . and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people nations and languages, should serve Him, His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Then shall commence that glorious kingdom and reign of Christ on earth. Israel the centre of that kingdom and Jerusalem the holy metropolis of the whole world. We hope to look at those scriptures which speak of that millennial reign in another paper. God could not have given more clear and distinct warning: and the very world seems conscious that some terrible judgment is at hand. Oh, reader, are you ready to go in before the door is shut, are you ready to meet the Lord? To-morrow may be for ever too late. The unmeasured period of grace may close this day. To-morrow may be strong delusion, to believe a lie and to be damned. How Satan can deceive his poor dupes. May God enable you at this moment to flee from the wrath to come. What an end to human pride, and boasting, and progress! God’s word will be found true. All these things shall

surely come to pass. Men may cry peace and safety: but the sudden destruction shall come. No longer despise the word of God: No longer listen to the lies of men. O God awake men from their fatal sleep. Jesus says, “Surely I come quickly.” And hearken to these, His words. He says, “I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Revelation 21:6.) C.S.

095. The Riband of Blue and the Lace of Blue.

The Riband of Blue and the Lace of Blue.

Numbers 15:1-41; Exodus 28:1-43. In these two scriptures we have a remarkable contrast. The one, the riband of blue, is a symbol or sign of man fully tested under the most favourable circumstances: what man is to God. In the other, the lace of blue: what Christ is to man.

Let us remember both were of God. Man has been tested. Christ is our great High Priest. In turning, then, first, to the riband of blue, let us remark that the institution of the riband of blue was of God. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them . . . That ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the Lord your God.”

Thus the institution of the riband of blue was of God, and is very beautiful. It was not worn in Egypt whilst they were slaves to Pharaoh, but after God had brought them out by redemption. A riband of blue, worn by a slave of Pharaoh, or a slave of Satan, would be a contradiction, as blue is the heavenly colour, that which is of God.

Who, then, were to wear the riband of blue? The nation of Israel, and the stranger that came to dwell with them, to sojourn in the land. It was the outward visible sign of that one nation whom God had brought from Egypt, and to whom He had made known His laws and commandments. As circumcision was a mark before the eye of God, so the riband of blue was to be a constant sign of remembrance before their own eyes. “That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.” “And be holy unto your God.” It certainly was very striking: the blue on the fringe of their garments, almost touching the earth as they walked, with its heavenly colour, ever proclaiming the holy claims of God, He requiring men to walk in heavenly purity and holiness before Him. The context of the institution of the riband of blue will show that it was not a sign that Israel did thus walk in heavenly purity, but rather what a holy God must require. He must have a perfect obedience to all His commandments, if man is to stand on that ground before Him. The context is indeed remarkable. In chapter 14 we find Israel murmuring, in rebellion so fearfully, that had God dealt with them in judgment, they would have been destroyed. Then we have the intercession of Moses. The Lord hears and pardons. Still there is continued rebellion and sin. Then grace shines out in chapter 15, and also government. They had pledged themselves to do all the commandments of the Lord, in Exodus 19:1-25. Thus the riband of blue was a badge of the pledge they had taken to do all the commandments of Jehovah. The immediate context of this deeply interesting institution is still more remarkable. A man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath-day. If he had kept the law in every other point, yet he was guilty. “And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death.” The sabbath-day being a type of the rest of soul God gives through redemption, nothing could possibly be allowed on man’s part to pollute that

rest. God said to Israel, “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day.” (Deuteronomy 5:15.) Does not God still speak in this shadow? Peace with God and rest of soul is only to be found through the redemption we have in Christ Jesus. Hence, nothing can be allowed of our works to touch or pollute the perfect sabbath of rest we have in Christ. This will be seen in another scripture. Never was the observance of the sabbath more strictly enforced than when Moses was just about to receive the people’s contributions for the tabernacle. “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the sabbath-day.” (Exodus 35:2-3.) Does not God say to us in this, The first thing I desire is, that you may have perfect repose in my presence: then I am ready to receive your smallest works and offerings? And does not this explain why God could have no pleasure in those sacrifices which did not purge the conscience, or bring man into the holy presence of God? (See Hebrews 10:1-10.) Nay, was not this God’s eternal purpose to bring the sinner, perfectly purged from sins, into His holy presence in the perfect and eternal sabbath of rest? We can well see, then, why no work of man could be allowed to mar this rest. The man had not kindled the fire, but he had presumptuously gathered the sticks. And mark, that if a man is on the principle of law, of which the riband of blue was the outward sign, he is under the curse; for the least infraction of that law brings a curse. The gatherer of sticks, though he had not kindled the fire, must die. We shall find this fully confirmed in the New Testament.

We will now inquire what was the first thing that took place after the touching and beautiful institution of the riband of blue. The very first thing we find in the host of the riband of blue, is the sin and rebellion of Korah and his company.

How sad this is: instead of looking at the riband of blue, and keeping all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, to be holy unto the Lord, the very leaders, the ministers of the sanctuary, are chief in this fearful rebellion. This was the first act of the army of the riband of blue. Surely it demands our attention, and especially as we know this is one of the great sins of Christendom — the way of Core, or Korah. (Jude 1:11.) The sin was this: it was the ministers of God seeking also to usurp the priesthood. There was only one high priest in Israel, type of our only one great High Priest, passed into the heaven. Rebellion against Aaron was sin against the Lord. And what was the righteous judgment of the Lord on these wicked men? The earth was made to open its mouth, and swallow them up. They went down alive into the pit. Fire also came out from the Lord, and destroyed the two hundred and fifty princes, famous in the congregation, men of renown. And if it was so fearful to sin against Aaron, is it a light matter, O ye so-called priests, famous in the congregation, to sin now against Christ, by usurping the functions of priesthood? We earnestly entreat you to repent before the terrible judgment, now so near at hand, overtakes you.

There is but one great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens; what, then, will be the judgment on those who usurp his place as priests on earth?

Thus, at the institution of the riband of blue, man was placed on the principle he had accepted, to remember and do all the commandments of the Lord; but the gathering of sticks on the sabbath, and the sin of Korah and his company, prove, that the least presumptuous breach of that law must

be punished with death.

Then, further, what was the history of those marked out from the rest of the world by this badge of blue? Can we find one person, from Moses to Christ, that kept his pledge — that kept the holy principles of the riband of blue? No, not one; for “all have sinned, and come short of, the glory of God.” What a happy people would Israel have been, had they kept the holy walk of the riband of blue! But, alas! judges, priests, kings, people, all are proved, in God’s word, guilty before Him! Not one kept the pledge of the riband of blue!

It was to this very nation, who wore the riband of blue on the fringe of their garments, that God sent His Son. Did He find the riband of blue a true sign, that they remembered and did all the commandments of the Lord? Did He find them a holy people to Jehovah?

Hear what Jesus says: “All their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.” Yes, the eye of the Son of God saw that riband of blue on the fringe of their garments, as a mark of hypocrisy and self-righteousness. The two great commandments are — Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Now the Eternal God was made flesh, and dwelt among the company of the riband of blue. Did they love Him? He who created the universe was revealed in love, He had become their neighbour. Did the wearers of that heavenly-coloured riband love Him? They hated Him without a cause. They spat in His face. They demand that He should be crucified. And as He was offered up in divine love a sacrifice for sins, as He breathed those most tender words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” they gnashed their teeth with rage and hatred of Him, though every one of them may have worn the riband of blue. They were pledged by that riband to remember all the commands of that very Jehovah-Jesus, whom, with wicked hands, they crucified, and hanged on a tree.

We do solemnly ask the reader, Has not man been fully tested on the principle of law, of which the riband of blue was the outward sign? Man thus pledged himself to keep the law, but only to break it. Could the wearers of the blue have possibly been more guilty than they were, in murdering the Holy One of God? No doubt, as we shall see, God’s purpose of infinite grace shone out in all this. The effect of the blue riband principle and institution was simply this: sin abounded. Sin, man’s nature, abounded in open transgression. “Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” (Rom. 520.) There can be no doubt, then, of the utter break-down of the principle of the riband of blue. Man was pledged to keep the law, but all were guilty. The question, then, now is this — Would there be good or harm in combining the principle of the riband of blue with Christ? Would it be pleasing to God for a Christian to wear the riband of blue, and pledge himself to keep all the commandments of the Lord? As a principle, is it still in force, or, is it abolished? What does the Spirit say as to, all this in the inspired word?

We will look for a moment at the fairest specimen of man under law that over wore the riband of blue. Saul of Tarsus, surely, was that man. He says, speaking of the righteousness of the law, of which the blue riband was the sign, “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.” He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a chief wearer of the riband of blue. If any man could have been justified on that principle, certainly Saul was the man. Now hear him speak, after Christ in glory had appeared to him. He says, “But what things” — yes, blue riband, and all it represented —

“were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law.” He had sought to stand before God wearing the blue riband, so to speak; that is, in the righteousness of law, of which it was the outward sign; but now he counted all this as dung, compared with being found in Christ. Yes, Christ was everything to him now, and the blue riband nothing.

If you had seen him once, how different! — not wearing a little bit of riband, but with his broad fringe, and on it the riband of blue. Thus he went along the road to Damascus, with all good conscience, a blameless man, doing the will of God, as he thought. But what did that light from heaven reveal to him? A few words from Jesus, the Son of God, and the proud Pharisee was the convicted enemy of Christ. Yes, the wearer of the riband of blue was the greatest enemy of Christ on earth. The very first commandment of the Lord which that riband reminded him he should keep, was to love the Lord with all his heart. But he found, to his horror, that he was a hater and persecutor of that very Lord. Ah, well might he from that day count all that the riband represented to be loss and dung, for the excellency of Christ.

Beloved reader, have you ever, like Saul, discovered the deep hatred of the heart against Christ? And yet in that Man in the glory what grace and love! The blue riband persecutor was chosen to be the messenger of Christ, the apostle of the Gentiles. Ever after, to Paul the apostle, the difference between the gospel and that of which the blue riband was the outward sign, was as wide as the poles are apart. Do we hear some reader saying, How can this be? Was not the blue riband instituted by God? Was it not to remind the people under law that they were to do all the commandments of the Lord? And is not the law just, and holy, and good? Would it not be a great blessing to keep all the commandments of the Lord, to be sober, righteous, and holy? Most assuredly this would be the case, if such a person could be found. But not only did this, the most blameless wearer of the riband of blue, find himself to be the chief of sinners, the greatest enemy of Christ, but let us now hear what the Spirit of God says, by him, as to the whole human race.

First, he shows that those nations, the Gentiles, who, of course, were not under the law, as he shows, and therefore did not wear its sign, the riband of blue — all these were utterly sunk in the deepest lawlessness and depravity. (Romans 1:1-32.) Then he speaks of the one nation of the blue riband — Israel — who had received the law, but had not kept it, and proves from their own scriptures that they were as guilty as the Gentiles. Read his words, nay, the words of God. (Romans 3:1-31.) Thus, after fifteen hundred years’ trial of the riband of blue, all are proved guilty. This closed the trial of man in the flesh, and proved that, on that principle “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Apply all this to your own case. Suppose you say, I am a Jew, and I will wear the blue riband, the sign of it, that I may remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them. Now, if you are a guilty sinner — and can you say you are not? — what good in this case would there be in wearing the riband of blue?

No, we must not look for righteousness and justification on a totally new and different principle, “even the righteousness of God, which is by Jesus Christ”? It is thus Christ, or the blue riband. The accomplished righteousness of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, or man

working out a righteousness of his own by remembering all the commandments of the Lord, to do them.

It may now be asked, But what harm would there be in adopting both Christ and the principles signified in the institution of the riband of blue? Believe in Christ, and then wear the riband, as a pledge to keep all the commandments of the Lord — of course, praying to Him to help us to keep that pledge? Well, to the natural man, this looks very fair. But have we not an inspired epistle on this very subject? Did the Spirit of God not know that this would be the greatest danger that ever could assail the church of God? And on no subject is the apostle Paul so earnest and vehement.

If the reader would understand the danger of the Christian going back, or combining the principles of the riband of blue, though once instituted by God, with the gospel, let him most carefully study the Epistle to the Galatians. He will find that the very thing symbolised by the riband of blue, that is, righteousness by works of law, is the very leaven that the Judaising teachers wished to introduce, in order to neutralise the grace of Christ. Now mark, deliverance from sins, according to the will of God, is through our Lord Jesus Christ, “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father.” (Galatians 1:4.) This is all of grace, free favour. Well might the apostle marvel that they were so soon, and so easily, turned from the grace of Christ unto another gospel, “which was not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” If any man or angel did this he was to be accursed.

He had not received his gospel from man, or by man, but from the Lord. False brethren had come in, seeking to bring them again into bondage. Nay, in this very matter he had had to withstand Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. The gospel was endangered. Then the argument of the apostle is very striking; he says, “We who are Jews by nature” — the very people who wore the blue riband — “and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Thus the very wearers of the riband of blue had given up works of law for justification, that they might be justified by faith of Christ. Surely this exposed the folly of those who would persuade those justified by Christ to mix with Christ the principles of the riband of blue. Nay, the apostle says, if I do so, I make myself a transgressor. He says, “I am crucified with Christ.” Now a crucified person needs no blue riband as a sign that he is keeping the law. The old man who wore the blue riband no longer lives. It is now Christ: “but Christ liveth in me.” The life he now lives is not on the old principle at all, but entirely new. “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” This is not on the principle of the old man, the old I keeping the law. How can it be, if “I am crucified”? A dead man needs no riband of blue. To wear it again would be to frustrate the grace of God. I do not do that, Paul says. But if I am saved by Christ, may I not adopt the blue, and so seek righteousness before God by keeping the commandments? “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” The foolish Galatians were forgetting that the law (or riband of blue) had not been set before them, but “Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified among you.” Yes, it was by what He had done that they had received the Spirit of God. Think of their bodies being the temples of the Holy Ghost, and then so foolish as to seek perfection by works of law for that old man of the riband which had been crucified with Christ. We can only point out a few facts now.

Abraham lived long before the law, and the institution of the riband of blue. He believed God, and it was counted to him for justification, or righteousness. As many as are of the works of the law, the sign of which was the riband of blue, are under the curse (see Galatians 3:10), “for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Christ redeemed those who had been under the law. (Ver. 13.) The promise to Abraham was confirmed in the Seed, which is Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the law, or the blue riband. The scripture hath concluded all under sin. (Ver. 22.) We are now saved, not by the law, but by redemption. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Chap. 4: 5, 6.) To return back to the beggarly elements was enough to make the apostle doubt whether they had ever been truly converted. (Chap. 4: 9-11.)

Circumcision was one of the commandments under the institution of the riband of blue. “Behold I, Paul, say unto you, That if ye [the Galatians] be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Thus man has been tried, and found guilty, and, according to the institution of the riband of blue, he cannot be saved. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:1-26.) The whole Epistle to the Galatians is on this subject, as it was there especially that the false teachers sought to introduce the institution of the riband of blue, that is, righteousness by the law, and man in legal bondage to keep it. Let no examine the blessed contrast of the priesthood of Christ and The Lace of Blue.

We have seen man fully tested under law, as symbolised by the riband of blue, and found him only guilty. We have also seen that to go back to the institution of the riband of blue is to give up grace, and to make the death of Christ of none effect.

We now desire to consider the priesthood of Christ and the lace of blue. “And they shall, bind the breastplate by rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod. 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 the Lord 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 the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart continually. And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue.”

Here, in this chapter, all points to Christ, the great High Priest passed into the heavens. The riband of blue showed what we ought to have been to God, and were not; the lace of blue, what Christ is to us, having first glorified God on the cross.

Whatever excellencies and glories of Christ we see shadowed in the dress of the high priest, let us not forget that gold, the emblem of divine righteousness, has the first place. “Gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen.” He is all this for us. What Jesus was in the flesh was typified in the materials of the veil — as the royal Sufferer, as the Messiah, as the One in whom the Father delighted; all was perfect. But He was not a priest on earth; He must first suffer; the fine gold must pass through the fire. As our Substitute, He must bear the judgment due to us once, and then pass into heaven, our great High Priest. “Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

There is another fact of all-importance to Christians expressed in two words — “we have.” “We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” We have not to come and pray that He would be our Priest. Whatever tender sympathy, whatever security — all, all we see in our great High Priest — is ours, whether we know it, or not. (Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:21.)

It is, however, important not only to look at and learn the precious lessons set before us in the dress of the high priest, but also to seek to understand the contrasts between Aaron and Christ.

There were two places on which the names of the children of Israel were set in gold — on the shoulder, and on the heart. (Exodus 28:12; Exodus 28:29.) “Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.” Thus we see all Israel represented before the Lord on the two shoulders of the high priest. Is not this a striking picture of every child of God placed in security and strength, like the sheep that He laid on His shoulder? The priesthood of Christ is not to meet us when we sin, but rather to preserve us from sinning, our names being ever on His shoulders, and He having an abiding, unchangeable priesthood. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [evermore] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” What a contrast this is to putting ourselves under law, or taking the pledge, to save ourselves from sin! But not only were all Israel written, nay, engraved, on the shoulders of Aaron, we must pass on to the lace of blue and the breastplate of judgment. The names of all Israel must also be engraved like the engraving of a signet, and placed on precious stones in that breastplate of judgment on the heart of Aaron. Why did the Lord give such minute instructions as to the materials and the security of the breastplate? What a place gold has in all this! It is like the glad tidings of the revelation of the righteousness of God. What chains of gold and rings of gold! “And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the ephod with a lace of blue.” Blessed security! fastened on the heart of the high priest with a heavenly tie — the heavenly colour, blue. Thus, whilst the riband of blue reminded Israel of the heavenly, holy claims of God on them* — claims which they never met — the lace of blue points to those who are given by the Father, and ever accepted in the Son. And how secure the fastenings: “that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod.”

{*It may interest some of our readers to know that “riband of blue” and “lace of blue” are the same in the original. How useless, then, for man to be doing his best. If God declares what He requires from man, it cannot be less than what would suit heaven itself, where all is holy, just, and true — as truly “blue,” heavenly — as the lace on the forehead of our great High Priest.}

What a sight! Look at our great High Priest. Who are they engraved on His tender heart? Let us hear Him tell. He says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” Do you not see the lace of blue in all this? All, is of the Father’s will. Perhaps you say, How am I to know that the Father hath given me to Christ? Have you come to Him, or are you trusting in your own resolutions? He says, further, “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life,” &c. Have you by faith seen the Son of God, and believed on Him? Then rest assured you are bound on His heart with the lace of blue. It is the Father’s heavenly hand. Again, He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and

they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 6:1-71; John 10:1-42.) Thus have we the answer — all that the Father has given to Christ are placed in abiding security on His heart. Rings and chains of gold, and lace of blue — all, all are of God. Now read Romans 8:29-39. What a chain of pure gold! What rings of everlasting love! Predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Who shall condemn? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Yes, all is the lace of blue; all is of God — from eternity to eternal glory. Engraved like the engraving of a signet — bound with a lace of blue in everlasting security, that they be not loosed.

It may, indeed, be asked, How can such lost sinners as we be placed on the heart of Christ, never to be separated from His love? On what ground can this be in righteousness? For an answer to this question, we ask your careful attention to these words: "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 the Lord continually." (Exodus 28:29.) Still more: "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 the Lord: And Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually."

Here, then, is the ground of our security on the heart of Christ. He who bears our names on His heart has first borne the judgment due to us; yea, bore that judgment according to Urim and Thummim. He has met the claims of the light and perfection of God. Other foundation for my soul than this would I have none. Before He sat down in the radiance of the glory of God, He purged our sins. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was delivered for our iniquities. He made atonement for sins. Christ died for the sins of many. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Yea, if we turn to the epistle, on this subject, we shall find this pressed more than anything else. The infinite value of that one sacrifice, when He offered Himself as the ground of the immutable security and perfection, as to the conscience, of those sanctified unto God by that one offering. To return, then, to our chapter, and type of our great High Priest, two things are evidently set forth in that breastplate, bound by the lace of blue. Christ, the Substitute, bearing our judgment, and Christ, our Representative, in whom we are immutably accepted. In the principle of the riband of blue we see man tested, and proved utterly guilty, under judgment. In the principle of divine righteousness and grace, set forth in the lace of blue, we see the Substitute taking our place, bearing our judgment, both as to sins and sin, so that we can say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Now mark the order: "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Romans 8:34.) We say, how beautiful the order: first, He died on the cross; He bare our judgment; God has raised Him from among the dead for our justification. So that God is our Justifier! Then, next, He is even at the right hand of God. There we see Him our High Priest: He maketh intercession for us. So that all is removed that unfitted us, and we are accepted in the Beloved. We now see Him who was our Substitute, bearing the full judgment of God due to us, now our Representative, bearing our names upon His heart in the full light and perfection of God. Bound by a lace of blue, to be unloosed no more — engraved there, to be never effaced. The robe of the ephod all of blue. Yes, all this of God. If the riband of blue shows what we ought to have been, and failed; the lace of blue, and the robe all of blue, reveals what

God has made Christ to be to us. And He never fails.

We can only, in this short paper, dwell on one thing more. “And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings, of a signet, Holiness to the Lord. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre, upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.” Who is worthy, we ask — who in His own Person is worthy to wear the blue lace before the eye of God? It is that glorious, peerless Man who sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He whom God has made to be righteousness unto us. — He who has established the throne of God in righteousness, yet perfect grace to us. Oh, Holy, Holy, Holy One, Thou alone art Holiness to the Lord, Thou alone art worthy to wear the lace of blue. We bow and adore Thee, and cast the riband of blue at Thy feet. Thou hast borne the iniquity of the things of Thy people, and now they are accepted in Thee before the Lord.

What a wondrous picture! all the redeemed people of God accepted, and presented in the holiest, immutably on the heart of Christ, bound there by the lace of blue. In considering the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, as set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, let us bear in mind the remarkable place that gold had in the dress of the high priest. The names of Israel were set in gold on the shoulder, and fastened by rings of gold and the lace of blue to the heart of Aaron. That lace of blue, as we have seen, by its heavenly colour, speaks to us, and says, all is of God. We are given and fastened to the heart of our great High Priest by the loving hand of God. This epistle is in perfect harmony with these typical thoughts. It is God speaking to His people, not now by His prophets, as in the past, but God speaking in the Son. The glory of His Person introduces and crowns His finished work. The appointed Heir of all things, He, the eternal, self-existent Son, by whom the universe was made. He did not become, but, “who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Could any mere man, or creature, be the self-existent brightness of the glory of God? Could any mere creature be the upholder of all things? He is truly God! “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” And yet as truly perfect man. “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Thus is the Person of our great High Priest set before us. But mark, before He became our High Priest how completely His atoning work was finished; and, as we learn elsewhere, divine righteousness was accomplished! It was “when he had purged our sins.” He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This was in direct contrast with Aaron, or the high priest in Israel. He never had finished his work. He never could offer a sacrifice that purged our sins. He never, therefore, sat down. Scarcely need we say that the law, as symbolised by the riband of blue, knew nothing of this. Man did not keep all the commandments of the Lord, and the law could never purge our sins, but only curse, the transgressor. But the lace of blue points to a Priest who has first of all purged our sins by His own blood. “By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Having, then, by that one sacrifice opened the way for us into the holiest, even into heaven itself, and having obtained eternal redemption for us, it is evident we need no other sacrifice. Can anything be superior to eternal redemption? Can anything be additional to that which for ever perfects? Oh, the blasphemy of the

man that can pretend to be superior to Christ! — to pretend to offer sacrifices for the living and the dead. We ask you, reader, Have you eternal redemption through the blood of Christ? Then what other sacrifice can you need?

It is most important to be quite clear about this, that the one sacrifice of Christ is the ground of His Priesthood. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” God had no pleasure in those sacrifices which could never take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-9.) It was the blessed will of God that our sins should be so put away, that He in righteousness should remember them as against us no more. The Lord Jesus came to do that will. He has done it, and the Holy Ghost now bears witness that God will remember our sins no more. This brings ins back to the all-important fact that all this was accomplished before He sat down. “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.” Mark, He settled the whole question of the believer’s sins before He sat down; in this sense, that they never could, or would, be imputed to believers. The Priesthood of Christ begins there. But then, is not this the very opposite of all human ideas of priesthood? Of course it is. You see that poor woman, or rich one either. She is going to her priest. What is she going to him for? About her sins. She wants him to intercede for her with God — maybe to offer a sacrifice for her sins. She will pay him to do this. She knows nothing of eternal redemption, nothing of a purged conscience. Her sins, her sins, these drive her to the priest. Or she may have seen the dreadful wickedness of a man pretending to be a priest, and to have power, either to offer sacrifices for sins, or to forgive them. And she may try to come to Christ, that He may do something, as the only Priest, to relieve her. Centuries of false teaching as to priesthood have almost obliterated the truth, that the believer is for ever perfected. (Hebrews 10:14.) In ignorance of that fact, a person then looks to Christ to be his Priest when he has sinned, and to intercede with God for him; or to let him have a fresh application or sprinkling of blood; or do something to relieve the conscience as to sins. All this is entirely erroneous, and utterly contrary to the fact that all is done, and the worshipper once purged needs nothing more to perfect that one sacrifice by which he is immutably perfected as to the conscience.

Search through this epistle on the priesthood of Christ, and you will be struck with this — it is not priesthood before God if we sin. Should that be the case, He meets us as Advocate with the Father, not as Priest with God. (See 1 John 2:1-29.) But even then it is on the ground that He is our righteousness, having made propitiation for our sins. And mark as to that also, it is not if we repent and come to Him, that then, perhaps, He may be our Advocate, if we repent enough, and so merit His intercession. No, He is our Advocate. We have such an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. It is wholly of the Father — the lace of blue. We repent, utterly judge ourselves, because we have such an Advocate.

Peter sinned deeply, did he not? Had he to repent before Jesus prayed for him? Before Peter repented, yes, before he sinned, Jesus said, I have prayed for thee. Yes, whether it be as Advocate, with the Father, or as our great High Priest before the face of God, all is of God; it is the heavenly blue, the lace of blue. The Priesthood of Christ, then, is to “succour them that are tempted,” “to help in time of need.”

Let us now by faith look up, and see Jesus, our great High Priest, before the face of God for us. Let us dwell on the tenderness and glory set forth in the dress of the high priest. The gold is there. The righteousness of God is now accomplished. He is our subsisting righteousness. The purple is

there. As the altar was to be covered with purple, so was He, the royal Sufferer. Yes, the body prepared was once covered with purple. Scarlet was there: David's royal Son, now in heavenly glory. Fine-twined linen was there; the ever-righteous One.

Now look a little closer, if only a little child whose sins are forgiven; see your name engraved, and placed on His shoulder, set fast there in righteousness complete. Nay, look again, and never cease to look. Your name engraved, set upon His heart, in the light and perfection of the glory of God. Oh, that lace of blue! It is God the Father that has tied you fast with the heavenly lace of blue — no more to be separated, no more to be loosed. It is the heart of Him who has borne the judgment due to you; it is the heart of infinite, unchanging love. Oh, look at the Person of your great High Priest, blessed, only holy One, the plate of pure-gold righteousness before the face of God — holiness to Jehovah. Yes, and — blessed words! — we have such a High Priest. Consider our High Priest.

If it be the riband of blue, in our efforts and pledges to keep all the commandments, we have failed, and shall fail to keep them. But it is the lace of blue: Christ, our great High Priest, will never fail to keep us safe, to the end. Did He not pass by the angels, and take hold on our nature, that He might be a faithful and merciful High Priest? that He might first make reconciliation for our sins, and also, having suffered being tempted, He might succour us when tempted? We have not to do one thing that He may become our Priest; no, "we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." Sometimes we are so tempted, so tried, by the world, and still more by false brethren, that we wonder what will come next. He who watches over and cares for us never so wonders. "All things are naked and open unto his eyes." All is known to Him. He has trod every step of the way. As man He learnt His lesson perfectly. So that, being in that sense made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. Nothing, present or future, can ever loose us from that breastplate of light and perfection. Nothing can ever unloose those rings of gold and chains of love. Nothing can untie what God has tied, that lace of blue. God gave Him this blessed Priesthood, and God gave us to Him. Not a temptation can come, not a single need or trial, but He sees it all beforehand; and He is well able to help in time of need. Yes, He is all we need before the face of God, having borne our judgment once. Having once purged our sins, He is all we need in passing through this wilderness to succour and sustain. And we have such an High Priest whose priesthood is unchangeable. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Thus the riband of blue is a symbol of that which saves never. The lace of blue shows us fastened to Him who saves to the uttermost, even for ever. Have you seen the dignity of our great High Priest, the Son of God? Then, also, have you seen the wondrous dignity of those placed, through the riches of His grace, on the very heart of this great High Priest? Think of these words: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." How we have forgotten our heavenly calling! What has God purposed us to be? Or what the height of His eternal purpose, for such an High Priest to become us? Yes, through infinite grace, we too are to be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and finally with Him, for whom we wait, made higher than the heavens. (Ephesians 1:1-23.) Who but our great High Priest could thus save us to the end?

How much still remains to be unfolded of the priesthood of Christ in this epistle! However, this is the sum: "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the, Majesty in

the heavens;" and therefore we need no other. Such a High Priest excludes all others. If we believe His one sacrifice has put away all our sins from the sight of God, then such a sacrifice excludes all others. In like manner such a High Priest excludes all need of another. The priesthood of Israel made nothing perfect with its oft-repeated sacrifices and its annual day of atonement. These sacrifices could never take away sins. Man was still shut out of the holiest. The institution of the riband of blue made nothing perfect, for no one kept all the commandments of the Lord, to do them. All were guilty. What a contrast in Christ, our great High Priest! By His own blood He has entered in, having obtained eternal redemption for us. The veil is now rent from top to bottom. He ever bears our names upon His heart. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He ever appears in the presence of God for us. He is ever set down imperfect repose. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Now, if we believe this testimony of the Holy Ghost, we repeat, what need have we of the hosts of pretending, usurping priests?

If God thus spake by Moses, when men sought, to usurp the priesthood of Aaron: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men," what is the wickedness of those now in His sight who dare to usurp the priesthood of Christ, and deny the eternal efficacy of His one sacrifice, by offering false sacrifices of their own? May God, by the Holy Spirit, keep our hearts, true to Christ, and deliver His people from every form of deception in these last days. C. S.

096. The Confessional.

The Confessional.

We desire fairly to examine the argument in favour of the confessional: but if the reader expects sarcasm, or ridicule, we trust he will be disappointed. It is a subject of far too great importance, in our judgment, to be treated in that way. It affects the whole question of peace with God. It is held and practised, more or less, by more than 100,000,000 of the human race, and is sincerely believed by great numbers, as a practice that can be proved from scripture; yea, that it was established by Christ; first to His apostles, and then to their successors. As we write for plain earnest people who desire to know the truth on this subject, before entering more directly on the argument in favour of the confessional, we will call the attention of the reader to the Person, and words, of the Lord Jesus, in a few scriptures that bear on this question. 1st. Matthew 11:1-30, read verses 25 to 30. Are you heavy burdened with sins? What is His instruction to you? Is it that you must go to the priest to confess, and then the priest will give you rest? Very far from this: Jesus says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Is it not strange that millions will believe, and go to the priest, how very few really believe Jesus. Does He not say, “I will give you rest”? Do you believe Him? How few know Jesus, and His readiness, to give them rest. We shall find shortly that it is His joy to give rest.

2nd. In John 4:7-34. Here we have a sinner face to face with Jesus, God manifest in the flesh. Does He say to this woman at Samaria’s well, wait until Peter comes, and confess thy sins to him? Blessed Jesus! He says, “Give me to drink.” Yes, He would have the joy of her salvation. Did He not say to her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”? Is it possible for these words of Jesus, to mean anything else than His utmost readiness to meet the sinner? And mark, He says that which He gives shall satisfy for ever. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” None but Jesus can give that which satisfies for ever. The priest charges according to the weight of the burden: Jesus gives rest.

3rd. John 7:37-39. Now look at Jesus: and hearken to His gracious words. Yes, gracious words. The Pharisees and priests hated Him. Oh, think of these religious men, sending officers to take Jesus. In the midst of rejection, He stood and cried saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” No thought in His mind of sending them to the apostles first to confess. No, “Let him come unto me and drink.” Could the love of Jesus be more free. Still in His word He cries, “If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink.” But now carefully notice, there is something far more than this. Far more than only receiving, that which gives everlasting satisfaction to his own soul who comes to Jesus and drinks. What he receives, he shall communicate to others. “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet, glorified).” Mark, these words are not in any sense

spoken only to the apostles, or limited to them. They are spoken to whom? “If any man thirst.” This then is clear, that if a weary heavy laden sinner, thirsting for pardon, and rest, comes direct to Jesus: he not only receives perfect peace, and rest, but what is most important to know, that now the Holy Ghost has been given: he receives power to be a communicator of peace, and rest, like a river, to others. Is not this a happy privilege of every thirsty weary soul, that comes to Jesus Himself? Surely no one can deny this.

4th. John 20:19-23. We now come to the scripture, on which the argument is chiefly based for authority for confession to the priests. “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” It is assumed that these words were addressed to the apostles as such: and power thus given to them, as apostles: as the guardians of the church; and after them, to their successors. If this be so, the confessional is established beyond a doubt. If this is not so, the whole theory of the confessional is clearly a mistake, so far as this scripture goes. The question is this, who are meant, or included in the pronoun “ye.” “Whose soever sins ye remit,” &c. It is easy to assert anything, and common for those ignorant of the scripture to accept the assertion. We shall find the matter quite clear, if we carefully examine the context of the words of the Lord. The scene is now changed. The great work of redemption is accomplished. Jesus has died for the sins of many. He has uttered those wondrous words, “It is finished.” The spear has pierced His side, “and forthwith came out blood and water.” The atoning work is done. The body of Jesus has been laid in the sepulchre. The disciples of Jesus “knew not as yet the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.” A report had reached them, that Mary Magdalene had seen the risen Lord: that He was actually risen from among the dead; yea, that they were now in a totally new position. He had said, “Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.” They could not have been in this position and relationship, one with the risen Christ, before He died and rose again.

Well, the report had gathered them together in an upper room. Let us here carefully examine who were gathered in that upper room, before we look at the words spoken to them. We are not told here it was the eleven apostles, but simply “The doors were shut where the disciples were assembled,” &c.

It may be asked, but may not the word “disciples” mean only the eleven? No, that is not so, if we turn to Luke’s account of this same event. “And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.” (Luke 24:33-38.) This gathered company, with the apostles, is spoken of again: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women . . . And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty),” &c. Thus it is a gross mistake to limit this to the apostles. It was the gathered disciples, men and women: about one hundred and twenty gathered together by the report of the resurrection of the Lord.

Let us return and hear His words to the gathered disciples. Not yet the church, His body: for the Holy Ghost was not yet come down to baptise them into one body. But did not this assembly of disciples rather represent the whole church of God, than any order of separate priesthood? Apostles and disciples were all together, one company. What Jesus said to one, He said to all. And what He said to them, He says to the whole company of believers, from that day to this. That

is having made peace by the blood of the cross: having been delivered for their sins, and raised again for their justification. As once their sin bearer, so now their everlasting righteousness. His first blessed words to them were “Peace [be] unto you.” Oh wondrous words to the soul that believes them! Were they worthy in themselves of these words of peace? Far from that, they had all forsaken Him; yes, the very apostles: one had denied Him most sadly. No, they were words of pure, unmerited, free favour. “Peace be unto you.” He had made peace by His death on the cross. He did not point to one thing they had done. He could not; no, it was wholly what He had done. “And when he had so said he showed unto them his hands and his side.” In Luke He said, “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? behold my hands and my side.”

Now the company of disciples must be well grounded in this peace. They must know that there is nothing now between them and God, their Father. Sins all forgiven, unclouded peace. Therefore we read, “Then said Jesus to them again, peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” They must be deeply settled in His peace to fit them for what He is about to say. Even as He had foretold before His death for them. When He promised the Holy Ghost the Comforter: He also said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” But now having made peace as He shows them His hands and His side, He proclaims peace to them: to the whole company alike. Just think what an infinite meaning was contained in those few words. Peace unto you: and again repeated. No doubt we all find it is Satan’s one great effort to keep us from believing those words of Jesus, direct from Himself. But now He tells them a wonderful thing. Just as He had said: not only should the heavy-laden find rest who came to Him. And the thirsty that came to Him should drink, but also, “He that believeth on me . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Not only should he receive himself the living water, but should communicate it, like rivers, of living water, to others: so here. Jesus had been sent to them. And from Him they had received perfect peace. And also in the fulness of abounding grace, He says, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” As they had in mercy received the message of divine grace from Him: even so they were now to be sent by Him to be the communicators of the same peace to others. And this peace would be as solid as was their own. But in order to be the communicators of this peace or perfect forgiveness of sins, two things were needed. They must have eternal life themselves, and they must receive the Holy Ghost. “And when he had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Now, though the Holy Ghost when, He came, did chiefly use the apostles in this great privilege: yet we must admit that the commission was given to the assembled disciples: to every individual in that company.

If we turn to the Gospel of Luke we shall find a fuller explanation of this commission had been given: so John, writing after, just names the fact in a few striking words. It was the same occasion evidently: and having spoken peace to them (Luke 20:36-44), and confirmed that peace by the proofs of His resurrection, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Both these scriptures being spoken by the Lord to all the assembled disciples: do they not clearly mean that as they had received peace, all sins forgiven through the accomplished work of Jesus: so now they were by the power of the Holy

Ghost to preach forgiveness of sins to whosoever should believe the message? Jesus said, “And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

Thus if we take scripture, we do not find in this great commission of Christ, a word about confessing to a priest: but remission of sins through preaching the glad tidings.

It may be said, but the Fathers entirely disagree with all this. We axe sorry if they do; if the Fathers disagree with scripture, so much the worse for them. But further, the disciples did not tarry, until they were, at Pentecost, endued with power from on high. They were baptised by the Holy Ghost. How did they understand sins were to be remitted and retained? Their acts will answer. In Acts 2:1-47 we find they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And they began to speak in other tongues, &c. Peter’s sermon is recorded. He opened the scriptures to the multitudes, as Jesus had opened them to him. He preached the death, resurrection, and exaltation of the rejected Christ. Great numbers were pricked to the heart, and cried out, “What shall we do?” Did he say you must confess your sins to us, the apostles? He must have done so, had he so understood the words of Jesus. He did not: but in perfect keeping with the high commission of the Lord, he preached to them repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptised.” It is sad that the word “repentance” has been perverted to “do penance,” and this explained to be in part, confession of sins to a priest. They who do so, well know the Greek word can have no such meaning. God does not need such unrighteousness to uphold His truth. Repentance is evidently that self-judgment, and abhorrence of sins, which always accompanies salvation. This then is how Peter used the keys committed to him. In preaching, not by confession of sins to a priest, he opened the door into the kingdom to the Jews. We shall now see how he opened the door to the Gentiles. (Acts 10:1-48.) He was specially sent by a vision to do this, to him a very strange work. Here he takes up carefully the question of remission of sins. Cornelius was a devout man, but how often it is the case, the more devout, the deeper the need is felt for sins to be remitted, and also the desire for, peace with God. Cornelius says, “Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” If Peter therefore believed, in the confessional, as one of the things commanded him of God; nay the great thing to meet a burdened soul; Christ’s appointed means of remission: he must assuredly so instruct Cornelius and his company. Did he do so? Not a thought of it! What did he do? He opened his mouth and preached the word. “The word, which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: [He is Lord of all].” Just as he had received peace, and preached it to Israel, so now he preaches the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Can there be a question how he understood the gracious commission of Christ? Nay he explains how, “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify,” &c. But it may be asked whose sins does he remit? Hear his own answer, “To him [to Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Peter did not remit sins in his own name: neither is there a thought of coming first to the confessional, for, “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.” Is it not then sad to displace preaching forgiveness of sins by the confessional? And if we carefully compare every case in the Acts, we shall find it is through preaching the word that sins are remitted. Let us notice one more instance: Acts 13:1-52. We shall find Paul adopting precisely the same means, the preached word. Not an allusion as to confession to a priest. He first preached how God had sent

Jesus, His death and resurrection. Then he says, “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached [or proclaimed] unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” And as justification is the ground of peace, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Therefore Paul preaches peace to others, just as the Lord had proclaimed it to the gathered disciples. He declares distinctly whose sins are remitted, that is, that all who believe are justified. He thus communicated the peace he had received. And whose soever sins he thus declared remitted, were remitted, and they, all who believe, are justified. But does he as distinctly declare whose soever sins are retained? Yes, he says also, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish.” We invite the closest examination of every preaching in the Acts, and it will be found the same. Philip at Samaria. Paul at Philippi, or, at Thessalonica: not a thought of the confessional, but in every case the preached word. Is it not strange, if the confessional were the appointed means of forgiveness of sins, that the apostles should never have once thought of it?

We will now examine a scripture, often referred to, in proof of the confessional. Matthew 16:1-28. In contrast with the mere opinions of men as to who Christ was: Peter by faith confessed Jesus thus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The person of the Christ, the Son of the living God, was revealed by the Father, to Peter. The Lord Jesus in pronouncing him blessed, changes his name from Simon to Petros (a stone), He said, “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Petros [a stone], and upon this Petra [rock] I will build my church; and the gates of hell [or powers of death] shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”

If we compare Ephesians 2:20, we shall see that Christ did not intend to build His church on a loose stone like Petros: but to him a stone, in Himself, the rock. That is, the revelation of the Person of the Son, by the Father, is the foundation rock. Himself the rock. And, as another has shown, the keys were not given to Peter to build the church with. Christ builds the church, that which Satan who holds the power of death cannot prevail against. Distinctive power was given to Peter, as to the kingdom, not the church: he undoubtedly had the privilege of opening the doors both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, to take that new position on earth: in the place of the kingdom of Israel, now set aside: called the kingdom of heaven, whilst the king should be in heaven. It is all a mistake as to this scripture, to suppose that Peter had power to bind, or loose, in heaven. It is “on earth!” the sphere of his power was in the kingdom on earth. It may be asked, are not they the same, the kingdom of heaven and the church? Totally different in scripture. The powers of death cannot prevail against the church, that which Christ builds. Christ distinctly taught that Satan would prevail against the kingdom, and fill it with tares. And these continue in the kingdom unto the end. Have they not abounded in the kingdom, or Christendom, as we say, from that day to this? But that which Christ builds shall stand for ever. (Ephesians 5:1-33.)

Whatever power Peter had, then, was as to the kingdom, the new order of things on earth. By his preaching we have seen he loosed the door, for both Jews and Gentiles. And the unbelieving Jews have been bound in blindness of heart to this day.

Now as to binding and loosing, or the ordering of things on earth: is there any reference to its continuance, or a succession? There is a remarkable one, and this demands our close attention: Matthew 18:1-35, “Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Here then at least is the true apostolic succession. The very words spoken to Peter are given here. Who then are these two or three gathered to the name of Jesus? And what is it that they have power to do, the Lord Himself being in their midst? We find in this scripture, Jesus is teaching the lowliness that becomes those who enter the kingdom. And a forgiving, loving, seeking spirit is taught. A case is then supposed, of a brother trespassing against a brother: mark, it is not a matter of sins against God. Neither is there a thought of man having power to forgive such sins. The brother offended, is first to seek to gain his brother: failing this he is to take one or two more; if he still fails to win his brother he is to tell it to the church. He does not say the Church of Rome: or the Church of England, &c., but “tell it to the church.” In the beginning this was possible, Now it is not. Where is “the church”? Man has made many churches, but in the present state of division and confusion, what does the Lord consider to represent “the church”? He makes this quite clear: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Yes, that little gathering, which the priest might despise with disdain or persecute to the bitter death, is that to which Christ speaks the same words as He spake to Peter. But the binding and loosing here evidently refers to restoration of an offended brother in forgiveness and in love. Thus Peter understood it, as he says, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, until seven times?” Now is it not most sad to wrest such plain scriptures as these, and build upon them the terrible mistake that Christ has given power to forgive sins against God!

Confession of sins is of essential importance: and is connected in scripture with the blessedness of sins forgiven. But there is no uncertainty as to whom we should confess. “I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” (Psalms 33:1-22.) “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified,” &c. (Psalms 51:1-19.) And in the New Testament, speaking of Christians, we read, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9.) Is “He” God, or the priests? John wrote these words that we sin not. “And if any man sin.” Here we come to the very point. If a Christian should fall into sin, those who defend the confessional would say, he must confess to the priest, and in this way receive absolution. The scripture says, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins,” &c. Could you tell us of any two things more opposed than scripture and the confessional? In this paper we do not propose to speak a word about its abuse, but to show that in principle it is utterly opposed to the truth of God, and has not surely a single text to rest upon. We might refer to every word that came from the lips of Christ in proof. Take the parable of the prodigal. Would it not entirely falsify the true character of God, who had given His Son to die for the lost one, to say that before the Father could receive the lost son, he must first confess to the priest, and pay for his sins? “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Do you think such a Father needs a priest to soften His heart towards the returning sinner?

We do not for a moment question discipline in the assembly, as 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, but this is altogether a different matter from private confession to a priest. And if the Lord had a thought of this (discipline) even in John 20:23, we have seen it was spoken to the company of disciples. And as “the church” is no longer gathered together in separation from the world, the only thing that answers to it now, is that which the Lord still recognises. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The confessional proves how sadly men have lost the true knowledge of God. The apostle John said, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.” Is it possible to know God and then require a sinful man to stand between us and infinite love? C. S.

Chapter 95

097. What God does say to the Swearer?

What God does say to the Swearer?

"Hear the word of the Lord," do you say; "why what has the Lord to say to me? Certainly I do swear a bit, but what harm is there in that? I think nothing of it." Ah, that is just why we want you to hear the word of the Lord: we want you distinctly to understand what God thinks about it. God who hears every oath you utter. God says, "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn."

You say there is no harm in it. God hears you, and says you are linked with the liar, the murderer, the thief, the adulterer. Is not every oath you utter a prayer, that you and your friends, perhaps your very wife and children, may be damned? Will it be nothing when those awful prayers are answered for ever? And how soon those prayers may be answered! It is just a week this day as we write these lines, since a youth had been invited to come and hear the glad tidings of salvation. He came and listened a little while. He went out: perhaps he thought, "Cannot a young fellow do as he likes?" He went to his work in a coal-pit: had an accident; was taken out insensible; in two hours he was dead. There he was; the writer saw him go out. We would not limit the grace of God. We know not what took place in that dark pit. Do you think he would have gone out from the preached word of God, if he had known that the sun had set for the last time on him? that in twenty hours he would have been in eternity?

Oh, swearer! is earnest constant prayer going out of thy lips for damnation; if thou knewest that in twenty hours thy prayers would be answered, would thou still swear — pray on? Says the devil to thee, "Just put that tract on the fire; all bosh, my friend, swear on." Well does Satan know that every oath is another link in the long chain of sin, by which he is dragging thee down, down to endless woe.

God may spare thee in mercy more than twenty hours. But if for twenty years, what is that compared with eternity? A woman was listening to the good news of God’s forgiveness, to lost sinners, lately in Yorkshire. She became greatly alarmed about her soul. Two years after this, the same preacher was called to see a dying woman. She looked earnestly at him, and said, "Don’t you remember me?" "No, I cannot say that I do," said the preacher. "Ah," she said, "two years ago I was listening to you preach the Gospel in the Mechanics’ Hall. I became greatly alarmed about my soul. I felt I must decide at once for Christ, or go out of the Hall. I went out, and now I am dying; and it is so dark, so dark, so dark!" Never will that preacher forget that sight, or those words, "I am dying, and it is so dark!"

Oh! careless swearer, think of those words. "Shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Yes, those are the words of Him that is the Truth; of Him who cannot lie. Sad words on a dying bed, "It is so dark!" Is not swearing terrible even in this world? Linked with lying. Why does that young man swear? He knows his word is not to be relied on

without a profane oath. poor vain youth, does he suppose that taking the holy name of God in vain, will lead any one to trust his word? James says to the Jews, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not at all, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay: lest ye fall into condemnation." Do you ask, "what condemnation?" The very same as the liar, the thief, the murderer, the adulterer. In God's description of the eternal state there are these words, and they are the last words that describe that state: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone." And in Hosea, the swearer is linked with these. Oh, sin-convicted swearer, or liar, murderer, or adulterer, there is yet mercy — mercy yet for thee. Still we can tell how:

"God, in mercy, sent His Son, To a world by sin undone;

Jesus Christ was crucified, 'Twas for sinners Jesus died."

"He looketh upon men: and if any say I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not: He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." (Job 33:27.) It is quite true that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But, reader; have you ever been brought before God saying, I have sinned, I have sinned against Thee? If not, may this now be thy state, and place, in thorough self-abhorrence, before God. He hath found a ransom: the confessing sinner shall not go down to the pit. God is righteous through the redeeming blood of the Lamb, His own spotless Son, in proclaiming a full, free, present, and everlasting forgiveness of sins to thee. "Be it known, therefore, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:, and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." But oh! this day I beseech thee, beware of rejecting this message from God. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."(See Acts 13:38-41.) Yes, "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." (Job 36:18.) An infinite ransom had been given: through His death and resurrection, forgiveness of sins is preached. If thou despisest this great salvation; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Yes, how soon you may be taken away with His stroke, and then no deliverance; no ray of hope. May God now speak peace to your awakened soul, through the blood of Jesus. Do you say, This is very strange that God should proclaim forgiveness of all my sins, and wish me to know it. And really does God tell me that all that believe are justified from all things? This seems a very easy sort of salvation. Stay, my friend. Hearken to those words of Jesus, the Son of God: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:14.) There was no cure for the bitten Israelite, but a look at the brazen serpent lifted up. There is no salvation for you, but a look at Jesus lifted on the Cross. Have you ever looked at Jesus crucified? See the Holy One lifted up between two thieves! Nothing short of this could atone for sin. He must be lifted up. He was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities. He must be wounded. He must be bruised. He must bear our sins in His own body on the tree. Was this an easy sort of salvation for you? His blood must be shed or there could be no forgiveness for us. But, hark! the words of Jesus: "It is finished." God is glorified. God has raised Jesus from the dead. God so loved the world as to give His Son to die for us. The just for the unjust. Oh! poor swearer, God has borne long with thee. God has waited long for thee. Wilt

thou still despise His great salvation? Wilt thou still reject the forgiveness of all thy sins? Wilt thou still go on taking His holy name in vain? Wilt thou still go on madly calling for damnation on thyself and all around? Be not deceived any longer. But, thou sayest, It is the fashion! Oh! yes, let us look at that for a moment. It is the present fashion, in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Yes, a mark of a fast traveller down to hell. Great numbers of young men swear in the broad road. And wilt thou for fashion's sake go down to endless woe? It is written in the Word of God concerning the crowds on the broad road of rejection of Christ, in the last days, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.) Oh! wilt thou then longer despise the grace of God? May He bring thee, in repentance and confession of sins, to His feet, and there speak to thy soul, ere it be too late: "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" "Thy faith hath saved thee." "Go in peace!" The reader of this little book may say, "I am not a swearer, or a profane person." May I ask then are you a saved person? Have you passed from death unto life? What does God think about you at this moment and for ever? Does He see you accepted in Christ? Have you redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins? If you have, that redemption is eternal, and God says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." What a wonderful thing, for a once lost sinner to have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus! Do you believe God about that precious blood?

C.S.

Chapter 96

098. The Doctrines of the Salvation Army compared with Scripture.

The Doctrines of the Salvation Army compared with Scripture.

C. Stanley.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” — Isaiah 8:20.

Young christian. — Good morning, my aged friend, Evangelist. I am glad to see you, as I am thinking of joining the Salvation Army, and I should be very thankful of your judgment on this matter. I really desire to do the will of God; and especially I do wish to obtain the holiness they preach of so much.

Evangelist. — If I can, by the help of the Holy Spirit, aid you in reference to such a serious step, it will give me the greatest pleasure. What are their doctrines? What do they say of Christ? Do they teach you to believe implicitly His blessed words? Do they teach justification by faith? Do they believe in His finished work? Do they believe in the eternal redemption of all believers by His blood? Do they believe what Jesus says about eternal life? Do they believe the grace of God, the free, unmerited favour of God? Do they teach you to obey Christ? Do they believe the Lord Jesus, as to the necessity of the new birth?

Y. C. You astonish me, to ask such questions; surely they believe and teach all these, or it would be a bad look-out for me to join them. But here is the very book; see you! “The Doctrines and Discipline of the Salvation Army.” By the General. Head-quarters.

E. — That is the very book that will answer all these questions. Well, sit you down, and take the book in your hand; and I will sit down, with God’s word in my hand; and let us calmly, in the fear of the Lord, examine all these questions. Now read on, until we come to these important, vital questions.

Y. C. — Read section 1: “God.” Section 2: “Jesus Christ is God.” Section 3: “The fall: How we became sinners.” Have you anything to say as to all this?

E. — I am thankful to hear very much you have read. So far, I judge, even Roman Catholics would agree: indeed all Christians. The true divinity of Christ is of great, of all, importance, and also the true personality and Godhead of the Holy Ghost; only, if you look at page 3, the Holy Ghost is spoken of as an object of worship. I do not find that in the scriptures. What is your next section on?

Y. C. — Redemption is the next, page 15. I will read on. “1. What is the meaning of redemption? Redemption means to redeem, or deliver, from bondage by sacrifice. To get out of pawn by payment of a price. So Christ seeks to redeem our souls from the claims of the broken law and from sin, and Satan, and hell, by the payment of His own blood.” Is not this strictly according to scripture?

E. — I have not so read it. What I read is this: “but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” There is a great difference between Christ seeking to redeem us, and having obtained eternal redemption for us. My soul rests on the blessed fact that He came to do the Father’s will; and He has done it, never to be repeated. “Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others,” &c. Yes, the work is done, the will of God is done: “By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” He is not seeking to do it. “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.” It may well suit Rome to say He is seeking to do it, and thus make way, by-and-by, for the sacrifice of the Mass, in which He seems to be seeking to redeem us. No, He is not now seeking to redeem — the work is finished; He has sat down. According to Rome, it is not finished, but is repeated, or continued, in the sacrifice of the Mass. I am anxious we should see distinctly to which side the Salvation Army leans — to Rome, or to the finished work of Christ, unchanging and immutable. Yes, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Read Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39. May I ask, Do you find anything in the writings of the Army about eternal redemption, or being “perfected for ever”?

Y. C. — No, I cannot say that I do. But surely they fully accept the truth of the finished work of Christ! I will read on. 2. “What does God seek to accomplish for our race in the work of redemption?” Does the scripture speak of the redemption of our race, that is, all men?

E. — Certainly not. Only we must remember the difference between being bought and redeemed. A slave may be bought, and still be a slave. But to be redeemed, is to be not only bought, but actually brought out of slavery into freedom. Redemption of the race is again the doctrine of Rome, not of the scriptures. As the propitiation, Christ died for the world. God is glorified in proclaiming pardon to all (Romans 3:22), “unto all, and upon all, them that believe . . . being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:24.) Who are these — the race? Are they justified? “In whom we have [the saints in Christ at Colosse] redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7.) Can the race say this? Can any unconverted man say that he has redemption through the blood of Christ?

Y. C. — No, I see that: if all the world were redeemed, all would be delivered from the slavery of sin, and it is plain they are not. It seems almost to make redemption nothing to say the race is redeemed. It is a most blessed thing for a believer to know that he has eternal redemption. Somehow, I think I should not like to give that up. But what is this (page 16)? 6. “What is the meaning of the word Atonement” “The word means ‘at-one-ment,‘ and it signifies the way which Jesus Christ opened, in order that God aid man, now separated by sin, may be re-united, and made one again.” Is this so? It sounds strange.

E. — This is remarkable. Why it is the very doctrine of Rome again. I have just been reading it in Dr. Döllinger, perhaps the clearest writer the Church of Rome has. It really sets aside true expiation for sin. The word ‘atonement’ is never found in the New Testament, except once, and that is a mistranslation. (Romans 5:11.) We could not receive the atonement, but we do receive its effect — reconciliation. I could understand it, if a Roman Catholic had written this; but surely the writer knows that ‘at-one-ment’ is English, and that the Hebrew word is caphar. It is found ninety-eight times in the Old Testament. Get your Hebrew Concordance and find me one single

instance where it can mean ‘at-one-ment,’ or union of two persons, as God and man: It means, “to cover;” hence it is used in the covering of the ark. (Genesis 32:20.) But in its connections, as you may see in Exodus and Leviticus, it can only mean real expiation for sin; types of the expiatory death of Jesus putting away our sins — covering them by that death, to be seen no more. All these types were needed, to show the infinite value of that expiation. It is Christ on the cross, forsaken of God. See Daniel 9:24 : “To make reconciliation [the same word as is translated “atonement” elsewhere in the Old Testament] for iniquity.” Can this possibly mean ‘at-one-ment’? And so in many other cases. We are reconciled, brought back to God, as the effect of the atonement. But this is not sinful man at one with God; but his sins, borne in awful judgment on the cross, once.

Y. C. — But there are many scriptures quoted, and if the Army believes them, they must hold expiation.

E. — That looks so, but do you not see the false definition? ‘at-one-ment’ perverts every passage, as these scriptures do not mean that at all; just as the redemption of the race perverts its true meaning for those who are believers. There are many precious scriptures quoted, and much truth also, but so mixed up, exactly as it is in the records of the Council of Trent, and by Roman Catholic writers. I am astonished at the similarity in some cases.

Y. C. — Well, to return (see page 19). Why, a number of scriptures are given to prove that Christ is the Redeemer of the race! How are these perverted? I will read a few — those passages which are quoted of Christ as being the Redeemer of the race: — “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things,” &c. (1 Peter 1:18-19.) “For ye are bought with a price.” (1 Corinthians 6:20.) “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Ephesians 1:7.) “Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28;) “ For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people.” (Revelation 5:9.)

E. — Is it not most careless, or wilful misapplication of scripture, to say that these scriptures speak of the redemption of the race? Clearly each text, and its context, speaks of believers only — the church of God redeemed out of the race. And this is a specimen of the utter carelessness, or ignorance, with which the word of God is dealt with. No intelligent Christian will doubt for a moment that, by the propitiatory death of Christ, God was so glorified as to sin, that the mercy-seat was opened to the whole world, and pardon proclaimed, through Jesus, to every creature. But not one scripture can be found that speaks distinctly of substitution for sins, or redemption, that does not strictly refer only to believers. Read carefully Isaiah 53:5-6; Isaiah 53:8; Isaiah 53:11-12; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 9:27-28, and many others. Indeed, could there be worse confusion than to speak of the church of God as the human race? No doubt this is the principle on which Rome acts, and all who copy Rome. Hence the whole population is regarded as the church; not so by the word of God.

Y. C — Then, if I understand you, through the death of Jesus pardon is preached to all, and all who believe are surely pardoned and justified; and they only can say, “We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;” and they alone compose the church.

E. — Certainly; search through each epistle, and see if this is not so. Well, we now come to Election (page 27). Will you read through this article. It is exactly as might be expected, just what a

Romanist would write, word for word, except those awful words you read (page 34). Surely no Romanist would go so far. “We know He (God) hates sin, and we believe that He is doing His utmost to get people saved from committing it; and we know also that He fails, because He has such a wretched, cowardly set of soldiers to fight for Him. With true soldiers, and plenty of them, we have every reason to conclude that He would soon drive sin out of the world. Let us help Him.” I solemnly ask, Is this holy reverence of God, or is it dreadful profanity? God is represented as a poor thing, that fails to do what He wants to do, for want of a better army. And are you going to join this profanity? No wonder that the writer should sneer at Election, and mix it up with the supposed human doctrine of reprobation, which the evangelists, that he most opposes, do not teach. I do not feel it would be profitable to follow him in these perversions of holy scripture on this subject.

Y. C. — But what do evangelical Christians teach on this subject — what do you believe?

E. All that God has spoken — both that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16); and also that “God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world,” &c. (Ephesians 1:4.) The Arminian seems to believe only one of these truths; the Calvinist only the other; but, as a Christian, I surely believe both. As I have lately written a tract on “Election,” I would refer you to that small pamphlet. The gospel supper was ample, and all were invited, but all refused. Then infinite, sovereign grace compels some, even the most hell-deserving, to come in. Oh, the riches of His grace!

Y. C. — We will now read section 8, page 38 — The Holy Ghost.

E. — Do you not observe the same mistake again? It is to the race, not to the church; indeed the writer seems entirely ignorant of what Jesus said, when He promised to send the Holy Ghost — “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.” (John 14:17.) Neither does he seem to have the least idea that the Holy Ghost came, consequent on the finished work of redemption, to form the church, the body of Christ, on earth. (John 7:39; Acts 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13.) “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.” But, my young friend are you willing to give all this up?

Y. C. — Well, I must confess there is very much I do not yet understand as to the distinction between the church and the race, or world; and also as to the Holy Ghost.

X — I do not doubt that; but is that any reason why you should turn your back on the word of God, and plunge into such ignorance of its truths as this book displays?

Y. C. — But let us now come to a foundation question. I see we have omitted section 6 — “The Finished Work of Christ” — page 24. I will read it.

E. — Indeed the finished work of Christ — my precious Saviour, Jesus — is what my soul rests upon, for time and for eternity — my only foundation. Take away this, and I have nothing. “It is finished.” Jesus said it, and bowed His head, and gave up the Ghost. Yes, so finished is that work the Father gave Him to do, that He, “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Hebrews 1:3.) Yes, “Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:1.) God hath raised Him from the dead, in proof that His work is finished; so that He is raised for our justification. (See Romans 4:24-25.) And God says, “their sins

and iniquities will I remember no more." Read Hebrews 10:12-17. But as Rome throws a doubt on all this, I shall not be surprised if the writer does the same thing. With Rome, Christ offered an imperfect sacrifice, that still needed man's penance, and the repeated, or continued, sacrifices of the Mass. But read on.

Y. C. — I am almost ashamed to read such words, they really do seem to throw a slight on the finished work of Christ. 1. "You will sometimes hear people talk about the finished work of Christ. What is meant by it? That Christ, when He died on the cross, put Himself in the place of the sinner, and bore the exact amount of punishment which he deserved, thus actually paying the debt that the sinner owed divine justice. And if the sinner will only believe this, he is for ever free from the claims of the law, and can never be brought into condemnation, either here or hereafter. Is this so? We think not." Well, I must say, this seems to me dreadful.

E. — These words do not truthfully represent, the way in which the gospel is preached; or, if evangelists use the paying of a debt, it is used to illustrate our sins. Forgiveness of sins is preached to sinners: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things," &c. (Acts 13:38-39); stripped of such words as merely throw dust in the eyes, such as the "exact amount of punishment," words which no Christian should use of the infinite atonement of Christ. Let us, then, put it thus: I, as a sinner, deserving to be cast into hell, believe that God laid all my sins on Jesus; that He bare them in His own body on the tree; that for my sake, bearing my iniquities, He was forsaken of God. He bore the whole judgment and wrath of God due to me, in my stead. My sins were all transferred to Him, as in figure the sins of Israel were all transferred to the goat on the day of atonement. (Leviticus 16:1-34.) I am sure that God has accepted that one infinite sacrifice, in that He has raised up Jesus from the dead for the express purpose of my justification. Did He thus put Himself in my place on the cross? Is this so? The writer answers, "We think not." I do not believe him, nor all his Romish reasons for saying, "We think not." Believing God, I have peace with God. Believing the writer, I should sink into Romish darkness and despair. I say Romish, for there is not an argument used here on these foundation points that is not to be found in the records of the Council of Trent, or other Romish works.

There is not a Jesuit in England that will not be delighted thus to see the finished work of Christ set aside. Once receive the blessed testimony of scripture, that the believer is for ever perfected by the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, and the Church of Rome and the Salvation Army crumble to the dust. Again, I ask, will you give up the finished work of Christ to join the Salvation Army? I do not pursue the reasons why they reject the doctrine of "the literal payment of the sinner's debt;" or, in other words, the very real substitution of Christ for my sins. It is enough for me that it is the only scriptural foundation for my salvation.

Y. C. — Well, it is indeed terrible to set aside the real substitution of Christ for our sins, call them debts, or what you like; and certainly this is so. And yet, you see, on page 26 they speak of their "correct view of the atonement," that the sacrifice of Christ "did make it possible for the love and pity of God to flow out to man, by forgiving all those who repent, and return in confidence to Him," &c. And they still say, further, "The alone ground, or merit, of our salvation, from first to last, is to be ascribed to the love of God, as displayed in the work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

E. — All this looks very fair, but, as with Rome, it is entirely neutralised by other deadly errors. The sacrifice of Christ is said to be of infinite value; and then, instead of presenting the believer for ever perfected, as Hebrews 10:1-39, as we have seen, it reduces His sacrifice to the lowest possible value. It just, or barely, along with man's repentance, makes it possible for God to save the believer. It is the exact opposite of Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39. Then, again, the love of God, displayed in the sacrifice of Christ is not in scripture the alone ground, or merit, of our salvation; it is that atoning death, not merely displaying the love, but meeting also all the righteous claims of God on both our sin and sins! It is the mixture of truth with error that makes these doctrines so dangerous. You will see this, if we read Conditions of Salvation.

Y. C. — I will do so. Page 43.

E. — Is not much of this in direct contrast with scripture? And does not the writer take distinct side with Rome, and reject the blessed truth of justification by faith, as restored at the Reformation? Is not repentance put as the condition, or price, of salvation? Repentance is first; the blood of Christ, second (page 45): "A thorough repentance brings a complete forgiveness." (Page 47.) Thus repentance leads to the goodness of God and a man believing he has repented enough, may then believe he is saved; if thorough, God will forgive him. By this device of Satan, millions are kept in uncertainty.

Y. C. — But did not the apostles preach the same way?

E. — No, the very opposite. They taught that it is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance. (Romans 2:4.) Did Peter preach repentance first, or the goodness of God in sending Jesus — His death and resurrection? He preached that God had raised up from the dead that same Jesus whom they had rejected and crucified. "God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:1-47.) The Holy Ghost used this to convict them of the dreadful sin they had committed; and they said, "What shall we do?" After this repentance comes in its true place, or order. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . Then, they that gladly received his word were baptised." Now, is not this the order? The earth rejected Christ — the dead, risen, and ascended Saviour — first. Then the Holy Ghost, convicting of sin; this leads to repentance and confession of Christ in baptism. But their repentance was evidently a complete change of mind, and a judging of themselves, and all they had done: this will produce self-abhorrence, but also an entire change of mind about God. On the one hand, there was their own wickedness, which they looked at with horror; on the other, God's goodness in their forgiveness, which filled their hearts with gladness. But all this was not through feelings of their own, but by receiving his word. As Peter says, long after this: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," &c. (1 Peter 1:23.)

Y. C. — I never thought before of the order and place of repentance. Is the same order always observed by the apostles?

E. — Invariably it is so. Christ is preached first. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." (Acts 8:5.) And what wondrous effects were produced by that preaching! And mark, it is the one sinner who had professed to believe the gospel that is commanded to repent of his wickedness. So Philip to the eunuch: he "opened his mouth, and

began at the same scripture, and preached Jesus." He did not begin by preaching repentance as the price of salvation. So in Paul's conversion, Christ reveals Himself to him; repentance followed, no doubt. So to Cornelius and his company; Peter preaches Jesus to them, and then says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) Yet this is expressly declared to be how God granted to these Gentiles repentance unto life. (Chap. 11: 18.) Surely this is conclusive. Read also carefully Paul's celebrated preaching at Antioch. (Acts 13:1-52.) Again it is God sent Jesus — His rejection, death, and resurrection; then forgiveness of sins proclaimed to all, and all that believe declared to be justified from all things. (Vers. 38, 39.) Compare also his preaching at Philippi. (Chap. 16: 14, to the end.) Did he tell the jailer, that before he could preach Jesus to him, or forgiveness of sins, he must re pent first? No doubt he did repent, but the message from God was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But in chapter 17: 2, 3, the manner of Paul's preaching is distinctly named. Is it not reasoning with them out of the scriptures? — "Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and have risen from the dead; and that this Jesus [Saviour] whom I preach unto you is Christ." "And some of them believed." If we would see the effect of this manner of preaching Christ, we only need to read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10. See what repentance — what a change of mind! — "Turned to God from idols, to serve the living God; and to wait for his Son from heaven."

Y. C. — But do you mean that Paul did not preach repentance?

E. — Far from it. See the very chapter before us, He says to Athenian worshippers of idols, "but now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Chap. 17: 30.) But please notice, is this the beginning, or the end, of this discourse? Is it put as cause, or effect? Before he announces God's command to men to repent, he had so fully preached the gospel, as usual, that they said, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them [repentance? No, but first] Jesus and the resurrection."

Yes, this is the divine order — Jesus and the resurrection; forgiveness of sins through Jesus then God's command to all men to repent.

Y. C. — But what would you make of the great commission of Christ, in Luke 24:45-47? Were not the apostles to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem?

E. — I am thankful you have referred me to that scripture. If we follow this order, all is right; if we reverse it, as Rome and the Army by placing penance, or the penitent form, first, then all is wrong, as we shall be sure to try to rest in the sufficiency of our penance, or repentance, first, in order to believe in Christ. Now mark the order — it is the risen Christ that speaks: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." This is the first part of the commission — to show to souls what is written as to the necessity of the death; and not only the death, but the resurrection, of Jesus from the dead. This the Army never does first. Then the second part is — "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations," &c. Let this order be observed, and then we cannot press true repentance and forgiveness too much. But as Rome denies the free grace of God, by putting penance the first, as a condition of the favour of God; so the Army puts the penance, or penitent form. The result is, their faith rests, first, in their repentance; then, secondly, in the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus they

say, “The faith that saves a sinner speaks in this wise: God has promised to forgive those that repent, and come to Him, through the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. I repent, and come to Him, trusting only to the blood of Jesus Christ for mercy,” &c. I repent: this is the foundation; all that is said of Christ comes on this, or after this. And mark, this is not merely defended in a sentence or two; but perhaps there is not a more able or bitter denial of the free grace of God, in print, than an article bearing the name of Mrs. Booth: “Dealing with an Anxious Soul.” She speaks of the bitter consequences of directing a soul to Christ, as having paid their debt, and done everything for them. The conditions of salvation now are just the same as under law, the forsaking of all evil, turning the face toward God, and intensely desiring His favour and love, as to be willing to give up all evil, as a condition of attaining it. That Christ only “did His own work, not mine . . . but I nowhere read that He repented, and turned to God, and did works meet for repentance, and believed so for me. This He commands every soul to do for itself, or perish.” (Pages 76, 77.) Eternal salvation, is wrought on the cross, is entirely ignored. “And until a soul is willing to let Him save it from sin, He cannot save it.”

Mark Mrs. Booth’s “Conditions of Salvation: ” “Observe here what a deal has to be done in the soul before it can receive forgiveness of sins. Its eyes must be opened — to what? Its own sinfulness, and danger, and misery. Then, under the sight of this, it must be turned right round from the embrace or desire of evil, to the embrace or desire of righteousness (though yet powerless to do, it must choose and desire righteousness). The attitude of the will must change with respect to evil and good. It must turn round from the one to the other in purpose and desire. Then it must be turned from committal to the power of Satan unto God. It must abjure Satan as its rightful sovereign, and at least will to put itself under the power of God — and all this in order that it may receive forgiveness of sins.”

Y. C. — But does not all this take place at the new birth?

E. — Truly it does, The Holy Spirit using the preaching of Christ, as we find in the Acts and epistles. But mark the difference. The scriptures make all this the effect of the gospel by the Spirit. Mrs. Booth makes it the work of the dead sinner, and she actually adds, “This is made an absolute condition of its receiving forgiveness of sins.” (Page 80.) Further, in her attack on justification by faith, she says, “Therefore, when Paul speaks of faith only being necessary to a sinner’s justification, he must always assume that these conditions are complied with.” And when a soul is turned from darkness to light, then it is to be the privilege and joy to point him to the Lamb of God!! And we are to beware of the opposite of this, as, “with this untempered slime of the old serpent half the superstructure of the professing church is joined together.” (Page 79.) I can only understand this article as hatred to the gospel of the free grace of God. But to return to your book — “Doctrines of the Salvation Army.”

Y. C. — Yes, I shall be glad if you will turn to page 46. You have expressed the thought that these doctrines are essentially the same as those of Rome. Can you prove it?

E. — If you look carefully at that page, you find three-fourths to be sugar, that the deadly poison of Rome, at the bottom, may be swallowed unperceived. In No. 13, the death of Christ is the only ground of faith for a sinner before God. Very sweet, and also its answer. Then (No. 14) what is the meaning, of the passage, “faith is counted [or] imputed to him for righteousness”? (Romans 4:5; Romans 4:22.) I suppose few Protestants would care to object to the answer: “These expressions

simply mean that, being without any righteousness in which to appear before God, He accepts our faith in Christ instead. That is, that as God treated Christ as the sinner for our sakes, so He treats those who believe on Him as though they were righteous, for His sake." This is not, however, as scripture puts this great question. In this explanation it is something of our own — "our faith" — that God accepts. In the word it is not so; but God has accepted Christ, and the work He has accomplished; and it is believing that. It is believing, in this case, not Christ, but believing God, "that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." It is thus we are justified, or accounted, reckoned, righteous before God; and on this ground we have peace. (Romans 4:24-25.) God raising Christ from the dead for our justification, is a very different thing from accepting our faith.

Y. C. — That is very important. If Christ was raised from the dead for our justification, it is strange that that is entirely omitted in their doctrine. But now for the poison.

E. — You will now read No. 15, page 46. "Is there not another higher meaning than this? Yes. These, (Romans 5:5), and kindred passages also teach that faith is counted for righteousness, because it is God's means of making us actually righteous. In this sense we are justified, that is, made just by faith." This is the exact doctrine of Rome: "The sole formal cause is the justice (righteousness) of God; not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He maketh us just." (Council of Trent, sess. 6., chap. 7.) Thus the doctrine of the Army and of Rome is identical. Now compare this with Romans 3:19-24. Here we are all guilty; and the righteousness of God is what

He is, through and by the redemption and propitiation of Christ. God is righteous in justifying us freely, not by any conditions imposed on us, but by His free, unmerited favour. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24.) Could there be a more flat contradiction to the word of God? The scripture says the righteousness of God is what He is, and how He is just, and the Justifier. Rome and the Army say the opposite. It is not what God is, but what we are, "made just." And mark, everything in Rome and the Army rests on this setting aside the true doctrine of justification by faith.

Y. C. — You surprise me. Do you mean to say that they deny that beautiful definition of justification in the Thirty-nine Articles?

E. — Entirely. There it is truly said, "We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith," &c. They say we are made just, and if you read Romans 4:1-25 you will see which is the truth, not one word about our being made just. There is a singular audacity in this book of doctrine. Scripture is quoted to prove the very opposite of its plain meaning. Study carefully this text, which is said to mean, "We are justified, that is, made just." "But to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Then read the full proof of this. Abraham and David believed God. Faith was reckoned for righteousness. Abraham believed the promise of God. Righteousness was reckoned unto him. We believe the promise of God has been fulfilled. We believe God has raised up from the dead the very One, Jesus our Lord, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Righteousness is reckoned to us — that is, we are accounted righteous before God. This being the case, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus faith rests in God, through the finished work of Christ. Nothing of the kind, say Rome and the Army; and they practically set aside this blessed truth, so fully set forth in this scripture, by teaching it is not at

all what Christ is to us, but God's way of actually making us righteous. In this sense we are justified, not made just by faith. Thus the eye of faith is directed to self, as the higher meaning of justification. But the absurdity of this doctrine will be seen in the next section. The Forgiveness of Sins (page 47).

Y. C. — I will read it.

1. "What is justification? The act wherein God, for Christ's sake, pardons our sins, and receives us into His favour. 2. Do pardon and justification mean the same blessing? Yes, always in the Bible, when used in reference to our salvation," &c.

E. — Here, observe, all is confusion, and contradiction to what has gone before. Is forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake the same as being made actually righteous, made just, by faith? Neither is it at all true that pardon and justification always mean the same thing, as stated here. Justification includes pardon, but goes beyond it. Read how David describes it: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." But is that all? No; he goes on: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Romans 4:7-8.) And again, what is justification of life? (Romans 5:18.) Though our life has been forfeited through sin, as explained in verse 12, yet now we have another life, a justified life, even the eternal life of the risen Christ — the same life as that risen Man seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and to every believer, looked at as in Him, there is no condemnation. In Him, nothing to forgive, nothing to condemn. (Romans 8:1.) Justification reaches up to that point. It must be perfect, for whatever is of God must be perfect, and it is God that justifieth. Oh, the riches of His grace — free, unmerited grace! I shall not be surprised to find in this book, as with Rome, that justification is an imperfect thing, and may greatly be improved by our own holiness just as we find it in the Council of Trent.

Y. C. — But do we not fail? May not a believer, in a moment of temptation, even commit sin.

E. — Indeed he may; that we know, as to our walk, to our deep sorrow. But the question is this: Has that sin still to be condemned, judged on us; or has it been judged, condemned, and borne by Jesus, our propitiation? Our justification is of God. The risen Christ is our righteousness — nothing can ever touch that. As to our walk and communion, and our Father's discipline, we need constant confession and forgiveness; and, through the intercession of our Advocate with the Father, this will always be the case, if we sin. (1 John 2:1-2.) But this must not be confounded with the believer's complete justification in the risen Christ. How little the difference between these two things is understood — our acceptance in Christ, and our walking acceptably to Him!

Y. C. — What, in a word, is the difference, then, on the subject of salvation between the Army and the word of God?

E. — The scriptures represent the grace of God bringing salvation to all men, and grace teaches godliness, &c. (Titus 2:11-12.) The Army teaches, as we have seen, an act of their own will, their own repentance brings salvation. "A thorough repentance brings a complete forgiveness." (Page 47.)

Y. C. — Well, I hope to search the scripture's on this most important subject. I will now read the section on Conversion, page 49. Do you think they are sound and scriptural as to the new birth?

E. — I am compelled, in faithfulness, to say, on the new birth they are most unsound; indeed, though they quote the very scriptures that speak of it, yet they misunderstand, or misapply, them. With them, as with Rome, again, there is no new birth, no real new creation, but a change of the old man. “He makes him a new creature.” “It is like being made over again; like becoming a new creature; like being born again . . . It is very imperfect.” “Regeneration is the change of our nature . . . is a change in our character,” &c. Yet all, bear in mind, very imperfect, sin still left hanging about the soul. (Page 50.) Y. C. — Well, what, then, is the scripture truth as to this foundation doctrine of the new birth?

E. — We will take the very first scripture they quote. (2 Corinthians 5:17.) “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” And notice the next words, which they do not quote — “and all things are of God.” Is this like being made over again &c., and very imperfect? It is charging imperfection on God! for whatever the new birth, or new creation, is, it is wholly of God. If I take an old watch to the first firm in Liverpool, and I say, I want a new watch; and they, instead of this, make the old watch up over again and give it a new start, if even a new cover; that would be the old made over again. They might give it a good polish, but would that be wholly a new watch, a new creation, or the old thing, still very imperfect? It might be like a new one, like the new birth, as they say. Would it not be a disgrace to the firm? Is it not, then, a disgrace to any man thus to misrepresent God? The new birth is that which is born of the Spirit. Is that imperfect? It is not the old watch made over again, the flesh made over again. Read the words of Jesus: “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” (John 3:6.) Not a thought of the flesh being changed, but an entirely new birth of the Spirit. A new heart, as in the scripture plainly referred to. (Ezekiel 36:26.) And so, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, is it the old watch made over again? The old things are passed away, like an old watch that will not go, and behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God. No; the patchwork, the imperfect work, of the Army, being like a new creation is utterly false. It is the old watch made over again, that will not go. But the most serious thing is, that it so dishonours God. Can He do that which is imperfect? It is God who has begotten us again. (1 Peter 1:3.) And again, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (Chap. 5: 23.) Satan may say, “Do not believe it is of God, and so incorruptible. No, it is corruptible, imperfect, sin hangs about it, and you may soon loose it.” Am I to believe Satan? God forbid. The new creation, or new birth, is of God, and therefore perfect. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” (James 1:18.) It is not the will of the flesh, the will of man, turning itself to God; it is not of man, and imperfect. No, the sons of God are those “which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of many but of God.” (John 1:13.)

Indeed, the patchwork, like being born again of the Army, is as opposed to scripture as darkness is to light. It is darkness; and I grant, how great and how common in this day is that darkness! How few in this day hold the true scriptural doctrine, that the new birth is not the improvement of the old nature, the flesh, but a wholly new creation, and that of God; and therefore the child partakes of the divine nature. One would think that every Christian would see that the child always has the nature of the parent. How fully this is brought out in John’s first epistle (chap. 3: 9): “Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin [or practise sin]; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” This could have positively no meaning whatever, if the new birth is not of God, but of man’s will, and therefore imperfect. But, oh, how blessed, looked at as the new

creation, wholly of God, born of God, having the divine nature. What a motive for holiness is here given! The Father is holy — it would surely be blasphemy to say He could practise sin. Thus, as born of Him, we have His nature, and as such cannot practise sin; and therefore, they who practise sin are not born of God. Many other scriptures show the believer to be a responsible person, who has yet to contend with the flesh in him, and to gain the victory through faith.

Y. C. — That just brings us to the question I desire to be clear upon above all others — “holiness,” as taught by the Salvation Army. But perhaps, before we enter upon it, we might stop here for the present. I should like prayerfully to consider all you have brought before me. It certainly seems very serious to put repentance before Christ, and forgiveness of sins and faith — the very reverse of scripture; and then to explain away true justification by faith in God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. According to this, a sinner is only justified so far as he is actually righteous. And then to say that the new birth, or new creation, is “very imperfect.” It certainly seems like taking away all that is essentially christian on these points. I am therefore most anxious to know if their teaching on holiness is scriptural, or not.

E. — As to all that has come before us, I only ask you to compare the doctrine of the Army with the word of God, even with the texts they themselves quote, or misquote. I have said I will not go over their profane way of handling the scriptures on Election. The same method of perversion would enable them to prove anything, or disprove every truth of God’s holy word. For the present, then, farewell. In our next conversation, if the Lord will, we will compare their teaching on “Holiness” with the word of God. We hope also, to examine other doctrines — such as their denial of the two natures, or the fact of the old nature remaining in the believer; eternal life as the present possession of the believer, &c. In all things may our God give us, by the Holy Ghost, unfeigned subjection to His word.

Holiness.

Evangelist. — Good morning, my young friend. I hope you have well and prayerfully considered the great truths on which we conversed lately — especially the important truths of justification by faith, the finished work of Christ, and the true doctrine of the new birth. I do not forget your desire for holiness, and that was your chief object in thinking to join the Salvation Army; but I am sure, if we have not right views of these foundation truths, we shall never have right thoughts of holiness.

Young Christian. — I am glad to have the opportunity of freely conversing with you again; and more so, because I see your object is not to attack the Salvation Army, but to defend the truth from the attacks of the Army.

E. — It is exactly so. I assure you I desire, by the help of the Lord, to keep you from the fatal mistakes and false teaching of the Army on almost every revealed truth. Then let us understand: I trust you have believed God, as we have seen in Romans 4:24-25; Acts 13:38-39, and that you know you are, on the testimony of God, justified from all things; and being justified, accounted righteous before God, you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Have these glad tidings been applied to your soul by the Holy Ghost?

Y. C. — Yes, yes, bless God, they have, or I should not be a Christian — should I?

E. — Quite true. Then it would not be a light matter for you to give up simple faith in the finished work of Christ; His actual, infinite substitution for your very sins, and His actual resurrection for your justification. For my part I rest on this for eternity.

Y. C. — And so do I; and I am sure God, as you said, is my Justifier, and therefore my justification is perfect. Oh, what blessed peace!

E. — I rejoice to hear you thus speak. My reason for asking these questions is this: it is no use going on to the question of Holiness, or Sanctification, until you are quite sure you are a saved Christian. This being settled, and quite sure, then the first, or next, question is this: What is a Christian — holy, or unholy?

Y. C. — What is that? Holy, or unholy? I want to be holy in my walk.

E. — Surely you do, and so does every Christian. But I will illustrate what I mean. You say, I am quite sure I am an Englishman — I was born, as to my nationality an Englishman. But could you then say, I am most anxious to be an Englishman; I am thinking of joining some society to be an Englishman? Or take another illustration. A man says, I know with certainty that I am a soldier — I know the day I was enlisted; I wear the uniform: but, oh, I do so long to be a soldier. Would not the desire to be an Englishman, or a soldier, be a total mistake? If the one said, I long to acquit myself as an Englishman; or, I wish, said the other, to be an efficient soldier of Her Majesty's army — very, very good. This, my young friend, was the mistake of the early earnest Jesuits. This is the mistake of the Salvation Army. They do not know what a Christian is; they are like the man longing to be a soldier, when he is one. They first charge God with effecting a very imperfect work in regeneration. (Page 50.) They then try to ridicule the scriptural doctrine of the two natures (pages 51 to 56); and then, from page 59 to 91, they tell you what Holiness, or Sanctification, is, and how it is to be obtained. The whole thing is as great a mistake as the soldier seeking how he may get to be a soldier.

Y. C. — I do assure you this is very new to me; do try to make it as plain as you can. Is not a Christian called to be holy?

E. — Just as a soldier is called to be an efficient soldier. But he must be, and is, a soldier by calling or enlistment first. Just as the Englishman is called to act — as an Englishman; but he must be an Englishman first by birth or adoption. Let us now turn to scripture. We will take the apostleship of Paul to explain this matter. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." (Romans 1:1.) Do you notice the words, "to be," are in italics; that is, they are not in the original. The literal translation is this — "an apostle by calling," just like the soldier, "a soldier by enlistment, or calling." Paul was not enlisted by the Lord to attain to apostleship at some future time, but he was there and then constituted an apostle. Surely he was called to act as such. Now look at Romans 1:7 : "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called [to be] saints," &c. It is the same here in the original; that is, just as with Paul being an apostle by calling — not called to attain to it; so here they were saints, "holy ones," — for that is the meaning of "saints" — by calling. Thus, then when God calls or separates a sinner to Himself, He constitutes him there and then a holy one by that very act of separation. An Englishman, then, is so by birth. A Christian is holy by the new birth. In neither case is this a matter of attainment; and you will find the same truth in many other scriptures. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth,

to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." It should be, "saints (holy ones), by calling." This must be so, as they are sanctified in Christ Jesus. (1 Corinthians 1:2.) "With all the saints [holy ones] which are in all Achaia." (2 Corinthians 1:1.) "To the holy ones which are at Ephesus." So at Philippi, at Colosse, &c.

Y. C. — I begin to see it. They — that is, all Christians — are looked at as in Christ. Tell me, is this perfection in which they stand as sanctified in Christ Jesus so complete as to fit them for heaven? And is this true of all Christians?

E. — It is written, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Colossians 1:12.) "And you . . . hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight." (Vers. 21, 22.) "And ye are complete in him." (Chap. 2: 10.) Such is the standing of every regenerate soul in Christ, although the General calls it "very imperfect." The dying thief did not find it very imperfect, "To-day," says Jesus to him, "shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Y. C. — What is the difference, then, between the scriptures and the Salvation Army?

E. — In the scriptures all Christians are born of God, and are made the partakers of the divine nature. And because they are born of God, they must have a standard of walk, or practical holiness, suited to their new holy nature. With the Army, both the nature and the standard is imperfect. We have seen, regeneration, though of God, is very imperfect, they say. And now I ask you to read their standard of holiness. (Page 63.) Y. C. — I will begin with this question:

"What is sinless perfection? Such a state as that of Adam before his fall, wherein, he being a perfect creature, was enabled to render a perfect obedience to the perfect law of God. Is it possible to attain to sinless perfection in this life? No! An imperfect creature cannot perfectly obey a perfect law, and man being imperfect, both in body and in mind, is plainly unable to keep the perfect law of God. Does God require obedience to a law, the keeping of which He knows to be utterly impossible? No. We cannot imagine a benevolent Being requiring from us that which is impossible, and then condemning us for not doing it, &c.

What, then, is the law that He expects us to keep? The law of love, as laid down and described by Jesus Christ, when He said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;' or, in other words, love and serve God according to your knowledge and ability, and He will be satisfied." (Page 63.)

E. — I ask you, did you ever read anything more contrary to scripture than this? And this the vaunted holiness of the Army! God is too good to expect anybody to keep the law. Yes, a standard lower than the law. What would the apostle James say to this? And a man doing the best he could, and God would be satisfied? Would he not say, If he offend in one point, he is guilty of all? (James 2:10.) The finished work of Christ is thus set aside, that which presents the believer holy and unblameable before God. And what have you instead of this? — a man doing his best, and God will be satisfied! Dare you trust your salvation to such teaching as this?

Y. C. — Indeed I dare not. But tell me, since the Christian is born of God, and has the nature of God his Father, and is meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, what is his standard of practical holiness?

E. — Turn with me to a few scriptures, and you will see that the standard to a Christian who is born of God is far higher than the law. In Matthew 5:1-48 you will find the standard of the law fully explained, up to verse 43. Then the Lord Jesus says, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,” &c . . . “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.” Thus grace is seen to be a much higher standard than law. The law was a righteous rule for man in the flesh, but grace is the display of the Father. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Oh, compare this with God not even expecting man to keep the law, but doing the best he can, and God will be satisfied! Again, “As obedient children . . . But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy; and if ye call on the Father,” &c. (1 Peter 1:14-16.) “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ, also hath loved us.” (Ephesians 5:1.) Look where you will, it is the relationship that gives the responsibility and the standard of obedience. And the power for that holy obedience is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2-4.)

Surely it is not worth while to wade through all this reasoning how to obtain this sanctification; such a holiness, that is even below the standard of the law, is not worth having.

Y. C. — But whilst they take so low a standard here — the lowest I over heard of, except the Jesuits — yet they speak in other parts as if sanctification meant the very eradication of sin from the old nature. Do they not quote very blessed scriptures?

E. — The scriptures are surely all right; but it is what they say about them that is all wrong. Their doctrine is the restoration of man to his Adam state. As in many places, page 77 is occupied in showing how man may get back to that state. They seem to have no knowledge of the infinitely superior place the believer has in Christ. (See Ephesians 1:1-12.)

You will also notice that most scriptures they quote, as describing a sanctification to be attained to is the sanctified condition of all believers, such as Romans 6:6-11; Ephesians 5:25-27. Do not these scriptures describe the blessed position of all believers? Are not all believers addressed, “Elect of God, holy and beloved”? and every exhortation to practical holiness is on the ground that they “have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” (Colossians 3:9-12.)

Y. C. — But would you not say that the Holy Ghost is a seal, or witness, to our devotedness and perfect love to God?

E. — Nowhere in scripture. No, He is a witness of the finished work of Christ, and that by it we are for ever perfected. (Hebrews 10:12-15.) If I, then, seek for the Holy Spirit to bear witness to my self-righteousness, or my devotedness, I must set aside the infinite and eternal value of the one sacrifice of Christ. And this is the tendency of all this self-occupancy, called entire sanctification. And finding, when thus occupied with self, still much imperfection — indeed, nothing else in the flesh — then, as we have seen, the standard of holiness must be lowered — yes, even below the law!

Y. C. — Really it would seem as if the whole thing was a system of error. A very imperfect regeneration; an imperfect justification; the finished, infinite, all-sufficient work of Christ set aside; and, as with Rome, only justified as far as we are made just. But now, granted that the scripture doctrine is the opposite of all this — born of God; partakers of the divine nature; reckoned righteous before God, through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, by grace, and not by works; sealed by the Holy Ghost, He dwelling in us what should be the character of our obedience?

E. — Just that to which we are sanctified, or set apart: “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.” (1 Peter 1:2.) Thus the Spirit separates us, all believers, to the obedience of Christ. Now the obedience of Christ, surely, was not like the obedience of the Army, to a lower standard than the law: it was the obedience of delight to do, the will of God; not merely doing the will of God, but delighting to do it. And, oh, what that will involve! Is this your standard of holiness — delighting to do the will of the Father, your Father? You may live to have three children. Let us say, John delights to do your will, you are so dear to him. James barely does your will, because of your authority. Peter says it is a matter of indifference, and yet is constantly talking of his great goodness, devotedness, and sacrifice. Now which is most like the obedience of our blessed Lord? And which is most unlike Him?

Y. C. — Certainly John is most like Jesus, in all His delight of heart to His Father’s will, and Peter most unlike Him. But what has this to do with the Salvation Army? Do they not teach the most implicit obedience?

E. — Yes, they teach in these books sent to me unquestioning, absolute obedience. But to whom — to Christ, or to the General? If the General orders a sanctified officer from one place to another, he must instantly obey. If he orders him to a town, he must not preach until he gets orders from head-quarters. He or she must not marry without the consent of the General. Obedience to this man must be absolute, exactly after the model of the Jesuits. But with all this talk about entire sanctification, or holiness, what is the measure of obedience to be rendered by the Army to Christ in His word? I crave your attention to that question. No one who reads with reverence the word of God can question that baptism is commanded by the Lord.

Now mark section 26. “3. Does the Army consider Baptism as a duty that must be performed?

Decidedly not. The Army only considers one baptism essential to salvation, and that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.” Think of this, dear young Christian. Are you to obey Christ? “Decidedly not.” You are to act as the Army considers, treating Christ with indifference! If this be their holiness, the less of it you have the better.

Y. C. — You must misunderstand them. How could any person having the least pretension to Christianity speak in this manner? Can you give another instance of such disrespect for Christ?

E. — I am sorry to say the whole thing is in direct opposition to the express teaching of Christ. Did He not forbid His disciples to act as the kingdoms of this world, in taking the place of lordship over one another? Jesus said, “It shall not be so among you.” The General says it shall be so, and obedience to this unscriptural, forbidden lordship over a vast Army shall be a great fruit of your entire sanctification. Here you have pages of instruction of obedience to the antichristian lordship of the General.

Now we will compare this with the way the Lord's dying request is treated. Was there not one request, above all others, that our precious Jesus gave, a few hours before He died for our sins? Oh, how tender the love that said, "Do, this in remembrance of me." Now read section 26. 8. "What is the teaching of the Army on the subject of the Lord's Supper? When such an ordinance is helpful to the faith of our soldiers, we recommend its adoption." Is there anything in print to surpass this for wickedness? The audacity for a mere man to tell his soldiers that when it is helpful to obey Christ, he recommends them to do it!"

" 7. Is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper essential to membership of the Army, or salvation? Certainly not," &c. Put this plainly. Is loving obedience to the tender request of Jesus necessary to membership in the Army? Certainly not! Is it not evident, with such awful principles as these, the quotation of scriptures that speak of real holiness is only a blind?

Y. C. — I must say that is dreadful; and, just think, I was about to join all this. How different from the obedience of Christ! That is a precious thought, or rather scripture. It is beautiful to have Christ as our copy and example. But now, tell me, do we not often fail? Nay, in our obedience, do we ever come up to our copy? Like a child writing a copy, can we say we are like Him, then, if we fail?

E. — Oh, how perfect is the word of God! You notice, we are not only sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience of Christ, but also unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The heart delights in holiness, delights to do the will of Christ. But we fail; and mark, as the sprinkled blood of the type was on the mercy-seat a year, so the blood of Jesus, sprinkled on the mercy-seat, is ever there; and we know, that our failings and sins were met by that blood. Yes if we are in the light, we know that the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

Y. C. — I am glad you refer to that scripture. Does it mean, if we sin, the blood cleanses us again; or does it mean a certain class of holy persons, and the blood of Christ has eradicated all sin from them, even from their flesh, or old nature?

E. — Let us read it carefully. Mark, it does not say, if we sin, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) Clearly it is not a question of cleansing us afresh if we sin — that thought is not in the text at all; but if we are in the light of God, this fact is then known in happy fellowship. The glorious characteristic of the blood of Jesus Christ, is, that all sin is gone, that is, is not imputed to us. The very next verse proves it cannot mean that sin is eradicated from our old nature. It is, however, judged, even the sin of our nature, so as never to be reckoned to us; as is distinctly taught in Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21. But you will see the Spirit distinctly guards against the false doctrine of our having sin eradicated from our nature, in the very next verse: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Y. C. — I will read you what is said (page 86) on this very verse. He describes the folly of those who believe their sins were imputed to Christ — then says, "By this they mean that, no matter how worldly, selfish, or even devilish, they may actually be, their sins were so dealt with by Christ, that they are not imputed to them, and that, therefore, while full of sin, they are without sin.

Actually, this doctrine is known as perfection in Christ; and it states that when God looks at His children, He looks at them through His Son, and cannot, or does not, or will not, see their sins . . . Now John says in this text, to those who hold these views [mark, he says John says], 'If any man

say he has no sin, when he is actually committing sin . . . he is deceiving himself, and the truth is not in him.'"

E. — It is very sad for me to have to ask, but really is not this intentional perversion of scripture? John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The writer knew that the beloved John did not practise sin every day, as the result of believing the love of God in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. No, John declares that such as practise sin are of the devil. Yet John does say, If we say we are without sin. But the writer does not scruple to alter the text of holy scripture, and make John say, "If any man say he has no sin, he deceives himself," &c. I do not remember reading a more shocking perversion of scripture. It is a difficulty which none of the teachers of this doctrine can get over — that John should put himself in this place. Surely any Christian who knows the plague of his own heart will say the same thing. The whole passage is a most deadly attack on the solemn truth that our sins were borne by Jesus. He implies that to believe this, is to lead people to practise sin. It is the charge the haters of the grace of God have ever made.

Y. C. — I certainly can have no confidence in the reasonings of a man that can pervert scripture in that manner. It is quite plain now, that, whilst our sins are cleansed, so as never to be laid to our charge, by the blood of Jesus once shed, once sprinkled; yet, if we boast of ourselves as though we had no sin left to watch against in our old nature, it is simply to deceive ourselves. I am afraid I am taking up too much time. But there is just one more subject I should like us to look at, and that is Eternal Life — eternal life as the gift of God. Can it be possessed here now in this world? The preachers of the gospel I have heard always told me that Jesus meant what He said. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting [eternal] life." "He that believeth on the Son, hath eternal life." (John 3:16-36.) Then, again, Jesus speaks so plainly and assuringly: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) Over and over again Jesus says so. (John 6:47.) "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish," &c. (Chap. 10: 28.) He says to the Father, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John 17:2.) And the Holy Ghost tells us, that to doubt this word of God is to make Him a liar. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John 5:10-13.)

E. — Well, all this is plain enough, is it not? Jesus assures us of all this. How can we doubt the blessed fact? And mark, it is whilst He is away that He says, "because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19.) "The gift of God is eternal life." Yes, it is His gift, in free, unmerited grace. We do not deserve it, or merit it, but we have it on the double testimony — the word Jesus, and the record of God; and all is written that we may know we have eternal life. The life of the risen Jesus must be eternal, and He is the eternal life we have. But does the Army deny this?

Y. C. — Well, will you look at section 22? What do you think this means? "and that He gives these faithful followers eternal life when this short life is over, and that they shall never perish.

God may agree to give eternal life to those who are His sheep, who are faithful, who persevere."

E. — I see it is most sad; the true grace of God is entirely set aside, and the record of God is entirely denied; as John says, they make God a liar by denying the present possession of eternal life. Nothing can be more blessed than to believe Jesus, and thus know that we have not a life that may be lost, or perish, in a day; but eternal life. And they try to make it appear that those who do believe God, think that by believing they perform an act that secures to them eternal life. This is not so. For instance, if you, out of pure kindness, give a poor man a hundred pound note, and you assure him its value is a hundred pounds — he believes your word. Would his believing you be the performing of an act that secured the note, and its value? It is true he believes you once and for ever, and begins to enjoy it. It is also true, that if he did not believe you, but some one persuaded him it was a fictitious note, he would then have rejected it. I know many who call themselves Christians would try to persuade you, so to speak, that the note was not worth half so much as it says. They would say, No, it is not eternal life; that you may have in heaven, if you deserve it by faithfulness. Jesus says it is eternal; they say it is not, it is only temporal, and may be lost at any time.

Y. C. — Stay; I think I have seen a tract, written by an Admiral for the Army, sent out from head-quarters, in which eternal life is spoken of as fictitious life!

E. — Is it possible? I never heard of such a thing; it is often explained away, to the great loss of souls. But let us look at your tract.

Y. C. — Here is the tract: “An Answer to a Question by Admiral Fishbourne.” (Page 7.) He says, “The greatest crimes and sins that have scandalised the reformed church, have been enacted under cover of this fictitious eternal life.” Again, speaking of “tens of thousands . . . who are living in gross sin, seeking to shelter themselves under the idea of this fictitious eternal life.” (Page 13.)

E. — Let me read the connection. It seems that the Admiral feels quite sure that those who believe the record of God, and the words of Jesus, and know that they have eternal life, which he calls fictitious eternal life, live in gross sin. Now, even amongst Christians, there are comparatively few that fully believe Jesus as to this one point, and know that they have eternal life. And I would ask the Admiral, did he ever know one that was living in gross sin that enjoyed the blessed certainty that he had eternal life? Oh, let us flee from these defiling errors, and cling, in childlike simplicity, to the teaching and words of Christ: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal life.” Blessed Jesus, I rest on Thy precious words. I do not think there would be any profit in following further the various wanderings of the Army’s doctrine — their setting aside all that God has been pleased to restore to His people, in these days, as to the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His saints, &c. If the Lord will, you will find papers in “Things New and Old” 1884. on the connection there is between true practical holiness and the second coming of Christ, as connected in scripture. I know it is often said the Army is doing a great deal of good, and many souls are converted through them. I can only say, I have made many inquiries, and have not found them, but who would limit the grace of God with them, or in Rome? Outward reformation there may be, but can the soul rest on that? Was there not this amongst the Jesuits? Indeed, there is a great similarity between them, both in doctrine and practice. After three hundred years, they have succeeded in filling the country again with flags, and banners, and processions. And where have the Romanists opposed them? It is a vast confederacy under military organisation, and may one day prove itself a powerful ally of Rome.

Y. C. — I can only thank you for pointing out to me these great and dangerous errors, but more especially for leading me to Christ. I do desire to know more and more of that “obedience of Christ;” to delight to do the will of God, and ever to rest in the finished work of Christ, whoever may set it aside. To think that I was about to give up the only sure foundation! I thank God for His deliverance. C. S.

099. Vol 07

Volume 07

100. On the Epistle to the Romans

On the Epistle to the Romans by Charles Stanley.

London: G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square.

1885.

Introduction. The writer of these notes would strongly recommend a close, prayerful study of this epistle, as the groundwork of all scriptural knowledge. Well does he remember the benefit he derived, for nearly two years, in laying aside all other reading, and studying this epistle, with a few others, when young, about forty years ago.

We cannot be surprised that it should contain such solid foundation-truth, when we bear in mind that it was written to the assembly in the then Metropolis of the whole world.

It is important, and really helpful, in reading any of the precious epistles or books of holy scripture, to observe the character and design of each book, and also the order and divisions in the same. The object the Spirit had in this epistle, then, was evidently to reveal the relationship of God to man, and man to God — the way God could be righteous in justifying man. Thus it is the foundation of all truth. The careful reader will at once see the three divisions of the epistle. Romans 1:1-32; Romans 2:1-29; Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25; Romans 8:1-39 reveal God, the Justifier; the gospel of God to Jews and Gentiles alike — the same grace to each. Romans 9:1-33; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 11:1-36 show that God has not forgotten His promises to Israel, but that, at the appointed time, all shall be fulfilled to them as a nation. Romans 12:1-21 to the end contain the preceptive part.

There is, however, a subdivision in the first eight chapters of great importance. Up to Romans 5:11 it is the question of justification from sins; then, on to the end of Romans 8:1-39, it is more the question of justification and deliverance from sin. We will now turn to chapter 1.

Romans 1:1-32.

“Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ.” He was not a bond servant of any society or party, but of Jesus Christ. How few can follow Paul in these seven words, and yet how important it should be so, if service is to be acceptable to Christ! Have you thought of this as to the whole course of your life and service? It will make all the difference in the day of reward. “Called to be an apostle” should be, “an apostle by calling.” When the Lord Jesus called him, it was not that he might go to the other apostles, and be educated, or prepared, or ordained to be an apostle; no, he was constituted an apostle at once, and without any human authority whatever; he was called to act and preach as an apostle because he was one, not that he might be one. (Compare Acts 26:15-19; Galatians 1:10-16). Thus Paul was “separated unto the gospel of God.” Well did the Holy Ghost know how all this would be entirely reversed in that very Rome. Yes, this very first verse is of the utmost moment to us, if we would do the will of God. Remember, Paul had been an apostle for some time when the Holy Ghost separated him, and sent him to a special tour of

service, with the approval of the elders, in Acts 13:1-4.

Here, then, we see Paul a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, an apostle by calling, separated unto the gospel of God. Now this word, “separated,” goes a great way. Separated from the world, and from the law, from Judaism, unto the glorious good news of God. It is not the subject of the church in this epistle, but the gospel of God. The church was not the subject of promise, but the gospel was. (“Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.”) Yes, the scriptures, from Genesis 3:1-24, contain abundant promises of the gospel of God, “concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Every promise thus looked on to the seed, which is Christ. It will be well to lay hold of this. The gospel is not concerning, our feelings or doings, but “concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” May that blessed One be ever the beginning and the end of the gospel of God which we preach!

There are just two parts, then, in the true gospel: the work accomplished by Jesus in the flesh; and His resurrection from the dead. “Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” In Him, as Son of David, all promise was fulfilled. What a manifestation of the love of God — the Holy One to be made flesh, to become truly man — to come down from His own eternal glory into the midst of a fallen, guilty race, under sin and judgment, and in that state of sinless humanity to go on to the cross!— Himself all pure, and yet to be made sin, to bear its utmost judgment unto death; yea, to go down into death itself, and deliver us from its rightful power — to be delivered for our iniquities. This we shall find to be one great theme of our epistle — the atoning death of Jesus, in its double aspect of propitiation and substitution. But though made man in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet not Himself in fallen humanity or sinful humanity — not Himself defiled. He was ever the Holy One of God, and was thus determined, or “declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Let us, then, behold the Son of God, pure and undefiled all along His path below; not only His blessed acts, but His nature, holy, according to the Spirit of holiness. Thus, though in the midst of evil, come there in love; for us entering in sympathy into all the sorrow sin has brought; and tempted from without in all points as we are, but in Himself, His holy nature was entirely apart from sin. All this was declared in that, having accomplished our redemption, God raised Him from among the dead. Personally death had no Claim on Him — He could not be holden by it. Since He was according to the Spirit of holiness. God in righteousness must raise Him from among the dead, and receive Him to glory. He had glorified God in human nature, and as man He is now raised from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness; and there is now in heaven the Man who has glorified God. It is well to be clear as to what He is in Himself, and then we shall better understand what He has done for us, and what He is for us raised from the dead. These truths we hope to notice more fully further on. From this Holy One raised from the dead, Paul had “received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.” It is important to notice this; whatever he was as an apostle, it was all grace received. Did not the Lord shine across his path, in pure, free favour, at the very moment he was mad — yea, exceeding mad — against Christ? Did He not call him, and make him His chosen apostle to the Gentiles at once, in free, unmerited favour? Is it not the same in principle in every case? Whatever service we may have for Christ, is it not the same grace, the same free favour? Thus the apostle looked upon the saints at Rome. The same grace had been shown to them. “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.” Thus grace shines out in all its fulness. He who met Saul on his way to Damascus, even

Jesus Christ as Lord, had also called every believer in Rome. “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The two little words introduced by the translators, “called to be saints,” completely changes the meaning of this important scripture, and has been the cause of serious mistakes in the question of holiness. It is the same word as is used in the first verse, “called an apostle;” or, “an apostle by calling.” As the word, saint, means holy one, so the words mean, “holy ones by calling.” Not called to seek to attain to holiness — the common mistake — but just as Paul was constituted an apostle by the Lord who called him, so all believers in Rome were constituted holy ones by calling. This was the ground on which they were exhorted to walk in accordance with what they were. Every believer is a saint by calling, holy by calling. He is born of God, partaker of the divine nature, which is holy. By new birth he is holy. He is dead with Christ, risen in Christ — yea, Christ who has passed through death, and is the resurrection and the life, is his life. “He that hath the Son, hath life.” Now, if he has the life of the Holy One of God, that life of which he is now a partaker is as holy as it is eternal. All believers have eternal life, therefore all believers have a holy life. To seek by any means to attain to one or the other for acceptance, is to totally misunderstand our calling and high privileges.

All scripture bears out this truth. The exhortation to be holy is on this principle: “As obedient children . . . as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:14.) Yes, it is because they are begotten again unto a lively hope: kept by the power of God, because they are born of God; as children, having purified their souls in obeying the truth. In a word, as they were holy by calling and nature, and having the Holy Ghost, they were to give all diligence to be holy in life and conversation.

John brings out the holiness of the new nature as born of God. He that is born of God does not practise sin. In each epistle the holy calling will be found first, and holy walk, as the result, follows. (Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1, with chap. 5: 23.) It is important to notice the place the word has, applied by the Holy Ghost, both as to the new birth, and also in practical holiness. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” (James 1:18) “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” How sad it is in this day to see all this set aside, and men by thousands seeking to be holy by sacraments and ceremonies; and not only they, but many who write and teach on holiness entirely overlook what every Christian is constituted by calling and new birth, and the indwelling of the Spirit. There is no doubt this is the cause of great weakness and mistake and low walk.

Let us not lightly pass over those other precious words: “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” What a change from Judaism!— the free favour of God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and peace to all the beloved of God in Rome. Do our souls enter into this? Instead of law justly requiring perfect obedience from man, now we have perfect peace with God, on the principle of free, unmerited favour. Israel, if faithful, could only have known God as Jehovah; we know Him as Father. We shall see in this epistle how His grace and peace can flow out to us unhindered in perfect righteousness. As this epistle reveals the ground of a sinner’s standing before God, we notice that the first thing for which the apostle gives thanks to God, through Jesus Christ, for them all, is this: “Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” Thus faith has the first place. Beloved reader, is your faith well known, or is it doubtful whether you really believe God? This is the first point to be settled; all will follow in order after that. We shall find that if you believe God, then you can say, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we

have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Can you with confidence say so? Then drink of that stream of grace and peace ever flowing from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What real heart work it was with Paul! He says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my Prayers." What deep love to those he had never seen! This was no more outward service, but "with my spirit." All done to God in the gospel of His Son. Is it so with us, or mere cold imitation? Was not this the secret of Paul's success? If lacking with us, must there not be failure? Paul greatly longed to see the saints at Rome, but hitherto he had been hindered. We see here proof of the wisdom and foreknowledge of God. Had Paul or Peter founded the assembly at Rome, what a plea this would have been for so-called apostolic succession! There is no evidence as to whom the Holy Ghost used in the forming of that important assembly. No evidence that any apostle had been there at this time, though the faith of this assembly, or rather of all the called saints, was thus spoken of and well known. It is also remarkable, they are not addressed as the church at Rome, as in other epistles.

Paul desired to have mutual fellowship with them, and to bear some fruit amongst them, whether this might be in the conversion of souls, or in the imparting of some spiritual gift to those already brought to Christ. Having so great a treasure committed to him as the gospel, he felt himself a debtor to impart it to all, both Jews and Gentiles. He could say, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." What entire readiness, yet the most real dependence on God alone. Had he been the servant of men, he might have needed a call from them to preach at Rome, or have a human appointment of some sort: but there is no such thought. Why should it not be so now? If we had more divine energy it would be so. Paul could say, "I am ready." Yes, yes, the world behind his back: "I am ready as soon as my God shall open the way." Oh, where are Paul's successors? May our God awaken us by the consideration of the path of this devoted bond-slave of God.

We now begin to approach the question as to what the gospel is. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The reason why he is not ashamed of the gospel is stated clearly. The law commanded, but had no power to deliver from sin; nay, it was given that, not sin, but the offence might abound. But, in direct contrast, the gospel is the power (not of man, but) of God unto salvation. There is a vast meaning in this. We will seek to make this plain to our young readers by a few illustrations.

You may have read and heard much that undermines this truth; for there is much preaching that tells the sinner that he must give up his sins, and forsake them before he can come to God and get forgiveness of sins and salvation. This looks very reasonable and plausible. Take this illustration. Let us take our stand a little above the Niagara falls. How calmly the mighty river flows on! smooth as glass to look at, and the nearer the falls the smoother it flows along. A boat is seen gliding down amid stream. There are two men in it. They hear the every-moment increasing roar of the fearful falls. One is awake to his danger: a few minutes and the boat must be over. The other seems stupefied. Both are alike helpless; both in the same boat rushing on so smoothly to utter destruction. Now hail them; try the gospel of man. Tell them to forsake that boat; to give up that mighty river; to come to the bank or shore before they are over, and you will help them! Man, you

tell them to do the impossible. Is it not only to mock them? Is it not cruel thus to mock them? One, two minutes and they are over. What is needed is power to save them. Is not the sinner on the stream of time, hasting to far worse destruction? Yes, he says, The power of sin carries me along. He awakes to his danger, death and judgment close at hand. He bears the roar; but can he save himself? Can he leave the river? If he can, he does not need a saviour. It would be glad tidings to that man, gliding on the fatal stream, to hail him and assure him there was One ready and able to save him to the uttermost. Yes, and thus God speaks to the helpless, guilty, perishing sinner, as we shall find further on: “For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall he saved.”

Take another illustration. You bear the sudden cry of Fire, fire! You have not proceeded more than a few yards, and you see a house on fire. Flames issue from all the windows on the lower basement. There are some persons known to be in the fourth story, and they are either asleep or stupefied with smoke. If they have power to escape, there is no need of the fire escape. The ladder is placed against the upper window. Now watch that bold and able fireman. What does he do? Does he merely tell the inmates that they must first leave the burning house, and then he will save them? He mounts the ladder, breaks in the window, and enters the scene of danger. He brings them out: they are saved. It is the same in a storm at sea. The helpless wreck is drifting fast to utter destruction, carrying its helpless crew. What would be the use of a life-boat, if the captain remained on shore, telling the perishing men that they must first leave and give up the wreck, and come to shore, and then the life-boat would save them? Such is the gospel of man. Man must save himself; and then Christ will save him. And strange to say, men love and accept such folly as this. Now the gospel of God is the very opposite of this: He sent His beloved Son to seek and to save that which was lost. Yes, lost, as those even in the boat, so near the roaring falls of the river. Lost, as the inmates in a burning house. Lost, as those sailors drifting on the wreck. Yes, if men only knew, and owned their lost and helpless condition, they must then own that gospel to be utter folly that bids them save themselves, and that then God will save them.

Take only one more illustration. A man has been tried and found guilty. He is under judgment, locked up securely in the condemned cell. Would you tell him to come out of that cell; to give up his sins and his chains, and the prison, and the sentence already passed on him; and then, but not till then, would he be pardoned? Would it not be cruel mockery to a man in his condition? This is the sinner’s real condition, and therefore “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” The question to one who discovers he is gliding helplessly on to the falls, or the rocks, or is a guilty sinner under judgment, without strength, to such, the question is this, How can I be saved? How can I, a condemned sinner, be justified? This then is the very question taken up and explained in this first section of the Epistle. Yea, the very reason why Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. “For THEREIN is the righteousness of God revealed from faith [or, on the principle of faith] to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” It is not righteousness of man, for he has none. How can he have any if he is guilty — under judgment? And if he had, it would he righteousness of man, not of God.

We shall find the righteousness of God to be in direct contrast to righteousness of man. Neither can it be by law, for God cannot be under the law. He was the law-giver. Had it said “the righteousness of Christ,” that would have been another truth. But it is righteousness of God revealed, in the gospel, on the principle of faith, to faith. It was announced repeatedly in the Old Testament, but now explained, or revealed. “And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a

Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isaiah 45:21-24.) "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalms 89:16.)

Let it be noticed that the righteousness of God is the first and great question in our epistle. It is the first subject, and then the love of God. For the love of God will not meet the wrath of God. The question of righteousness is at once raised. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. That wrath is not yet executed, but there can be no doubt of the wrath of God against all the wickedness of men — against sin. It was seen at the flood; in the destruction of Sodom; and on the Holy One made sin for us. It is also revealed that He is coming in judgment, taking vengeance. The wicked will surely be cast into the lake of fire. And am I a guilty sinner? Then what would the love of God alone avail me in the day of righteous wrath against all ungodliness? It must then be evident that the first great question is the righteousness of God in justifying him that believeth. How can God be righteous in accounting such a sinner as I righteous before Him? What a question! This question, the righteousness of God, is taken up again in chapter 3: 21. What then is the object of the Spirit in this large portion of scripture, from chapter 1: 17 to 3: 21? Is it not chiefly, in utterly setting aside all pretension of righteousness in man, whether without law, or under law? This must be done for man will cling to nothing like the efforts to establish his own righteousness. Therefore every claim of man is examined. The eternal power of God was manifested in creation, and again in the flood. God was certainly known to Noah and his descendants. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." In a word, they sank into idolatry. They apostatised from God until God gave them up. This is repeated thrice. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness," etc. (ver. 24); "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections" (ver. 26); "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind," etc. (Ver. 28) Read the terrible catalogue of wickedness into which the whole Gentile world sank. Where then was righteousness of man? To be given up is the act of God in judicial judgment. He thus gave up the Gentiles, and we see what man became. We also know that when the Jews had fully rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, God gave them up, for the present, as a people. Such also will be the end of professing Christendom, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:10.) The fact then that God gave up the Gentiles to the fearful lusts of their hearts, proves their utter apostasy from God. And all profane history corroborates this inspired description of human wickedness.

It may be asked, but were there not rulers, kings, and magistrates, who made laws against wickedness, and punished crime? "Who knowing the judgments of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Thus then, as now, the greatest wickedness in found in the rulers or chiefs. For proof we have only to read any of the ancient historians. If man is left to himself, the greater power he has, the greater is his wickedness. It is overwhelming to contemplate the cruelty and dreadful wickedness of heathenism. Such was that world to whom God in mercy sent His Son. In the Gentile world righteousness was not to be found. Multitudes rushed together in amphitheatres to feast their eyes

on cruel wickedness.

Romans 2:1-29.

Conscience leaves man without excuse. There is in man a sense of responsibility, and, through the fall, a knowledge of good and evil. The fact that one man judges another is a proof of this: “For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things?” How true this is, whether of Jew, Gentile, or professing Christian! And man cannot deceive God. “But we are sure the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” What a solemn question! We may judge and punish others for wicked acts in this world, but if we ourselves have to be brought, with all our sins, into judgment — and judgment in sure to come, and be according to truth — how are we to escape? The punishment of evil amongst all nations proves that we admit that evil ought to be punished. The righteous government of God demands, then, that after death there shall he the judgment. Do look at this question. Reader, dost thou think thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” How many are doing this? Indeed, the way in which repentance is preached tends to lead men to despise and ignore the wondrous grace of God altogether. Many preach repentance as works for salvation, as preceding faith in the riches of the goodness of God. Now it is as we know and believe the goodness of God in sending His beloved Son to die for our sins, that this leads us to, produces in us, repentance — indeed, we can only know the depths of our sin and guilt by knowing the depths into which He had to descend to save us. Thus the goodness of God leads to an entire change of mind; the full judgment of ourselves, in deep abhorrence of our sins, and full confession of them to God; and, at the same time, an entire change of mind about God. Thus, the difference between truth and error is this: it in not our repentance that leads to, or causes, the goodness of God to us, but it is the goodness of God that leads to, and causes, repentance in us. Oh, beware lost thou shouldst so despise the grace of God, and, “after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Mark, it must be either the goodness of God now, and repentance here, or the righteous judgment of God in that coming day of wrath hereafter.

Some have had difficulty in understanding chapter 2: 6-29; others have perverted these statements, as though they taught salvation by works. This would be in direct contradiction of the whole teaching of the epistle. What, then, do we learn here?

First, the righteousness of God, in His reward to the Jew under law, or the Gentile not under law. This is distinctly and fully stated. Then, secondly, the inquiry, Are there any Jews or Gentiles who answer to these requirements of God, and can thus be rewarded?

We start, then, with the certainty that, in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, He “will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life,” etc. Also, in like manner, in that day, “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil,” etc. This, then, is the

basis of righteous judgment on which God will act: “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” The police go about the streets, and arrest men, and take them to be judged for public crimes; but is it not equally true that Death goes about the streets as God’s policeman, to take men, who, after death, shall have every secret thing judged they have done? Can you stand in that searching judgment? God will judge in righteousness. “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” And all brought out — every hidden thing!

It is well to dwell on this. From that righteous judgment there will then be no escape. Man, when left to himself, sank into doing evil continually; as we have seen, the whole Gentile world had sunk into the grossest sin. What, then, of the Jew, the religious man? Yes, the religious man, is he not superior every way? He rests in the law, boasts of God — the only true God. He knows His will, is instructed, and is an instructor, a confident guide of the blind. Now, if he known the will of God, and does it, and has the law, and keeps it, will not this give him boldness in the day of righteous judgment? But if he is not a doer of good, if he is a breaker of the law, what better is he than the Gentile who has not the law? Nay, he is even found to be worse. How, then, can the Jew under law meet God in judgment?

And, reader, if this is your position — a religious man under law, desiring most earnestly to keep it, and yet breaking it; knowing the will of God, and not doing it — how can you meet God in righteous judgment, and, however religious before men, to have every secret brought out in judgment? Do all your efforts give you confidence in looking forward to the day of certain judgment? The Jew had great advantage every way.

Romans 3:1-31.

He had the oracles of God; so have you. What an advantage to have the very inspired word of God! And the oracles of God were committed to them.

Verse 8. Let us notice here how remarkably faith is introduced again. Righteousness of God had always been on the principle of faith. “For what, if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” However the bulk of the nation had disbelieved, yet their unbelief and unrighteousness had not changed God — He remained the same; He remains true to the unchangeable principles of right and wrong; otherwise, how shall He judge the world? In setting aside the law as a means of acquiring righteousness, this might be perverted, as some did, and affirmed that the apostle taught that we might thus do evil that good might come. This is strongly condemned, the righteousness of God having been maintained in the judgment of all evil-doers. The apostle now appeals to the Jews’ own scriptures, and from them proves that all are guilty: “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God.”

Verse 19. We cannot deny that these words were written to those under the law. What a terrible description of man under law! Every mouth is thus stopped, and all the world stands guilty before God. Yes, mark, this is not what man is before his fellow-men, but what he is before God. And if all under law, and all not under law, are guilty, what can the law do for the guilty? Its very perfection as a perfect rule for man, can only condemn the breaker of the law. If a man has got false weights in his shop, what could the test of standard weights do but condemn him? The standard weights

would show how far he was short; but if short, could not show that they were just weights. The law just did this, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Since, then, all are guilty, it is evident, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.”

Verse 21. Man is thus set aside, and all his efforts and pretensions to righteousness by works of law. “But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” This is altogether new, and distinct from everything that is of man. It is not the righteousness of man, for he has none. What a fact, that in all this world there was not one found righteous! No, not one. It is the righteousness of God, entirely and apart from the law what God is in Himself, and what He is for man. Now God could not be righteous in justifying man by the law, for the law could only condemn man. He was guilty. God was surely always righteous in his dealings with man — perfectly consistent with His own glory. But this is now manifested apart from law, though witnessed by law and prophets. This, then, is the revelation, “even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all, them that believe; for there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

How distinctly faith of Jesus Christ now takes the place of law, and this unto all, both Jews and Gentiles! The righteousness of God, then, is what He is in Himself, and what He is to us. It is apart from law; for there was, and could be, no law or command to God. All is absolutely of God. He so loved; He so gave His beloved Son that, through His sacrifice on the cross, He might be eternally righteous in justifying us, or accounting us righteous.

Verse 24. “Being justified freely by his grace.” Yes, accounted righteous freely, without anything on our part, except believing Him — and even faith is the gift of God — it is by His free favour, grace. But how is God righteous in justifying us freely by His free favour, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”? Not merely — blessed as that is — justified from every charge of sins; not merely sheltered from judgment, like Israel in Egypt, by the blood of the Lamb; but redeemed, fully delivered — redemption through His precious blood.

Well, you may say, that is all very blessed, but how am I to know that I have a share in it? How am I to be assured that it applies to me?

Well, since God is righteous in freely justifying us, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, let us inquire what that redemption is, and how you may know it is unto you, and applies to you. What is redemption? The emancipation, or redemption, of all the slaves in the West Indies, some years ago, will illustrate what redemption is. A vast sum was given, voted by the English government, for the complete redemption of the slaves. They were, so to speak, redeemed for ever — for ever emancipated, delivered from the wretchedness of slavery.

Now, when the proclamation, or glad tidings, of their redemption arrived in the West Indies, how were they to know it applied to them? Suppose an aged slave, with many a scar of whip and chain upon him, had inquired, in the following words: “Yes, I have no doubt so many millions have been paid — I have no doubt the proclamation of redemption, emancipation, everlasting deliverance, is good and glorious — but how am I to know it applies to me?” What would you have said? “Why, are you not a slave; are not those scars a proof of it? Were you not born a slave? If you were a free man, it could not apply to you, but since you are a slave, it must, it does, apply to you; the proclamation is to you. Believing the proclamation, this moment you are, in perfect righteousness,

for ever free." Would you not say so?

Ah, if we took our true place, and owned our true condition as born slaves, conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, then all difficulty would soon vanish as to seeing how redemption applies to us. Have you ever owned, do you own, that by nature you were the bond-slave of sin — sold under sin? The poor West Indian slave might possibly escape from his master, but have you not found yourself utterly without power to escape from Satan and sin? Have you any ugly scars of sin? If you think, bad as you are, that God will help you to keep the law, and so at last you hope to get to heaven; then you do not know your need of redemption. If the English government voted so much in the council of Parliament, what did God vote in the councils of eternity? Was it to give silver or gold for your redemption? It was to give His well-beloved Son. Yes, He is the One "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Poor helpless slave of sin, that redemption is unto you. If you are such, then it must be unto you. Yes, the slave that believed the proclamation was that moment for ever free. It is just so with you. God grant it to thousands who read this paper.

Dear young believer, it is most important to understand this: that you are not only justified freely (all sins being forgiven, God sees no iniquity), but you are also redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Yes, delivered from that state of slavery for ever. If that great sum of gold set the slaves free for ever, has not the infinite propitiation of Christ set us free, redeemed us for ever? Shall we allow a shadow of a doubt? No; He gave Himself for us — all free, unmerited favour. Not one thing did we do for our redemption; it was all accomplished before we had one desire or thought of redemption. And now we bear the glad tidings unto us poor slaves of sin; we believe, and are for ever free.

Glory, glory everlasting, Be to Him who bore the cross. But we must further inquire how the righteousness of God is affected by all this.

Verses 25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

You notice God hath set forth the propitiation of Christ to declare two things. His righteousness needed to be revealed in these two things. His passing over, in forbearance, sins that are past; and that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Here we would warn our readers of a serious mistake, often found, as to "sins that are past," as though it meant sins that have been committed before our conversion to God; that sins up to that time are pardoned, or remitted, through the propitiation of Christ; that God would therefore be righteous, through the death of Christ, in thus pardoning past sins before conversion. This error leaves the believer in utter perplexity as to sins, should they be committed after conversion; indeed, this view leaves the Christian worse off than the Jew, as he had another day of atonement every year. But if the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ only met our sins, or atoned for sins, up to conversion, then there remains no sacrifice, no remedy, for sins after conversion. For "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Hebrews 10:1-39.) On this finite view of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who could be saved? The one infinite sacrifice must have met all the sins of a

finite, sinner, from first to last. What, then, does this scripture mean? Simply this: God had passed over, in forbearance, past sins, the sins of all believers before Christ died; and now He was the Justifier of all that believe, reckoned them as righteous, as though they had never sinned. But the great question was this: How could God be righteous in doing both these things? How could this be revealed, declared, explained? Without an answer to this inquiry, how can any soul have peace with God?

If all had been guilty, how could God be righteous in passing over the sins of those who believed, whether Jews or Gentiles? And if all are proved guilty now — if you are proved guilty — how can God declare of you, like Israel of old, that He hath not beheld, and does not behold, iniquity in you? Clearly He could not be righteous on account of anything in us, or done by us, under law, or not under law. Here the eye of faith must rest solely on the blood of Jesus — "a, propitiation, through faith in his blood." This alone explains, declares, the righteousness of God, both as to the sins of past believers, and ours now. Let us, however, remember, that on the propitiatory mercy-seat the blood was placed before the eye of God! "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." (Leviticus 16:14.) This had to be done again; the blood of a bullock had to be sprinkled before God on that golden mercy-seat once every year. And blood of other victims had often to be shed. Not so the blood of Christ; that blood, once shed and sprinkled, can never be shed or sprinkled again.

Oh, my soul, think what that blood is for all thy sins before the eye of God! The blood, sprinkled on the gold, shows what the blood of Christ is, as meeting, upholding, declaring the righteousness of God. Yes, He was righteous in justifying David a thousand years before the blood was shed; just as He is righteous in justifying us eighteen hundred years after. Jesus must needs suffer for both.

Thus we see, the great mistake of those who say, "The righteousness of God is that by which He maketh us righteous." No; the righteousness of God is that by which He Himself is righteous, in reckoning us poor sinners righteous. The difference is immense. If the voice of what calls itself the church says one thing, and the word of God says another thing, which must I believe? Doubtless the latter.

"Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Dwell on each sentence. Is it not the righteousness of God that He might be just? Do You believe in Jesus — that He has thus glorified God by His expiatory sacrifice — that now, at this time, through that death, He is in righteousness able to justify all that believe? Is God thus revealed to your soul just in reckoning you righteous?

Since righteousness therefore is wholly of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, "where is boasting then?" Is it on the principle of works that we have done? No, such a thought is excluded. "By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." For we have seen faith finds righteousness in God. I cannot, then, boast of having been, or being, righteous in myself, since we are proved guilty, and know it to be true, and, on the principle of works or law, we can only be condemned. Justification cannot be on that ground, however we may struggle to make it so.

Justification, then, must he on another principle. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.” What else could scripture conclude, since all are guilty, and justification is not what we are to God, but what He is to as, set forth in Christ? Do not mix these two things together. Let your salvation be entirely on the principle of faith — what God is to you. To be justified by faith is what God is to us through Christ. Deeds of the law are on the principle of what we are to God. Amazing grace! we are justified by the one, without the other. And in this the “no difference” doctrine is fully maintained. The same righteousness of God to all, Jews or Gentiles, on the principle of faith, and by means of faith.

Those who maintain that we are still under the law, make it void, because it curses those under it, because they do not keep it. Those who were under it once had to be redeemed from its curse by the death of Jesus. Thus, if scripture put us under it again, then Jesus would need to die again to redeem us from its curse. (See Galatians 3:10-13; Galatians 4:4-5) “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish law.” Jesus revealed to the eye of faith, bearing the curse of the broken law for those that wore under it — if this does not establish the claims of the law of God, what could do so? But if we were put under it again, then its claims would have to be established again, or it would be made void.

Romans 4:1-25.

We must bear in mind that we are not on the subject here of righteousness before men. On that subject we must turn to James. There we should find the question of justification from an entirely different point of view. A man is not justified before his fellow-men by faith, but by works, proving the genuineness of his faith. (See James 2:18-26.)

It may now be fairly asked, If the whole human race has been found guilty before God — Jews and Gentiles — on what principle could any have been justified? Clearly, on the principle of law, that which condemns the guilty, none could have been justified, and two of the most remarkable cases are cited in proof. No less persons than Abraham, the very father of the Jews; and David, the sweet singer of Israel. The one was justified four hundred and thirty years before the law was given; the other, about five hundred years after, and that when he had merited its curse by fearful transgression. As to Abraham, if any one could be justified by works, surely he could; and if he were before men, as in James, he had to glory, “but not before God.” It is still the solemn question of man before God. Well, what saith the scripture about this man, before the law was given to any one, even to him? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.” This is the scripture answer and principle how a man can be justified without the deeds of the law. Abraham believed God, and it (his faith) was reckoned as, not for, righteousness. Very much depends on the true meaning of the word, translated “imputed,” “reckoned,” and “counted,” in this chapter, the same word in the original. It means reckoned as such, or esteemed so; it is not the word which is used to mean simply imputed, or set to the account of a person; that word is only found twice in the New Testament, in Romans 5:13 : “But sin is not imputed when there is no law.” It is, not placed to the account of a person as transgression of law, when no law has been given which could thus be transgressed. It is more fully and correctly translated in Philemon 1:18 : “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that to my account,” impute it to me. Let us illustrate the two words. We say, Such a person has paid into a bank £500 to the account of another; it is set to his account. In the other case, a nobleman marries a poor woman. Is she reckoned poor

after that? She has not a penny of her own right, but she is reckoned as rich as her husband, judicially accounted so, or reckoned so. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned as righteousness. This may also be seen confirmed in Abel. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts,” etc. In both cases the principle of faith is the same. Abel believed God, and brought the sacrifice. Abraham believed God. Both were reckoned as righteous. And this is not on the principle of works, not on the ground of what Abraham or Abel was to God, but God reckoned faith to them as righteousness. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”

I met an aged man the other day, with hair as white as snow, and said to him, “You have made a profession of Christ, more or less, for many years, and yet you do not know that you have eternal life, you are not sure you are justified, and if you should die, you have not the certainty that you would depart, and be with Christ.” The poor aged countenance fell; he said, “It is all true.” “Let me, then, tell you the reason of this. You have never yet seen God’s starting-point. You have been striving all these years, more or less, to be godly, believing that God justifies the godly. You have never yet believed that God justified the ungodly; there is the starting-point. Godliness will come after. ‘But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.’”

“I never saw that before,” said the aged man. We ask you, reader, solemnly, Have you ever really seen this, and believed God that justifieth the ungodly? You may have striven long to take the place of a godly man before God by ordinances of men, and so-called good works, trying hard to falsify this scripture. Yes, it often takes a long life of failure to bring a soul to this true starting-place of grace. Certainly it must be on a different principle from law that God can justify the ungodly. To him that worketh not, but believeth.

Now let us have David’s inspired explanation of this matter. “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin;” or, “to whom the Lord shall not at all reckon sin.” It is not that they are reckoned righteous because they have never sinned, for all have sinned; but whose sins have been covered, whose iniquities have been forgiven. It is not, however, that their past sins only have been covered by the atoning death of Christ, but there is this further statement of infinite grace, and that in perfect righteousness, “The Lord shall not at all reckon sin.” This is indeed marvellous, but in perfect harmony with all scripture.

Such is the efficacy of that one sacrifice, the value of the blood of Jesus, that it cleanseth from all sin. There needs no more sacrifice for sins — there is none; and God remembereth their sins, who are once purged, no more. (Hebrews 10:1-39; 1 John 1:7.)

Thus, as to the reckoning of guilt, or sins, to the justified, they are reckoned righteous, as righteous as though they never had, and never did, sin. As to his standing before God, sin is not at all reckoned to the justified man; he is thus truly and continuously blessed. Will such love and righteousness as this, such eternal salvation, make the enjoyer of the blessing careless, and say, Let us, then, continue in sin that grace may abound? We shall see, as to that, further on. But is not this the very truth revealed here? It was utterly impossible for God to have justified the ungodly in

this way, on the principle of law; but the propitiation, through the blood of God's eternal Son, explains the righteousness of God in thus not reckoning sins unto him that believeth.

It may, however, fairly be asked, Does that propitiation apply to the future as well as to past sins? That is exactly what scripture does teach, and, strange as it may seem, the knowledge of this very fact is made known to us that we may not sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not: and if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2:1-2.) And in another place, speaking of believers: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," etc. (1 Peter 2:24). And again: "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3). Oh, wondrous grace — free grace! "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." He will not, He cannot, in righteousness reckon them to us. We shall see this still more fully explained as we go on. Reader, do you really believe God? Yes, the question is this, as we read these pages of the riches of His grace, Do we believe God? Remember we are yet only on the entrance ground, the very beginning of the gospel of God. Does then this blessedness come upon those under law only, that is the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised? Well, it was an undeniable fact, which the Jews at Rome could not deny, that faith was reckoned as righteousness to Abraham when he was uncircumcised long before the law was given. What an overwhelming argument then, that it must be all of grace and not of the law at all! And mark, he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being uncircumcised. That is, circumcision was a mark of his separation to God: he was the first person, the father of it; but mark, it had nothing to do with justifying him — he was reckoned righteous first, entirely apart from all works or circumcision. Is it not so with every believer? His separation to God and a holy life, are a sign that he has been reckoned righteous first, apart from law or works. But God calls him and justifies him whilst ungodly. That is, it is there where God begins with man. Has He so begun with you, or are you seeking to be justified by works when you become godly?

Now another principle of great importance is brought out. Promise, clearly depended alone on God, and this was given to Abraham long before the law; therefore it could not be through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. The covenant of Sinai was in direct contrast with promise: there the blessing depended on man's obedience, and he utterly failed to keep the covenant. Man could fail under covenant, and thus forfeit all claim on the ground of works; and he did fail. But God could not fail, therefore the promise still standeth sure, to all who believe. "Therefore [again] it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed," etc.

Thus Abraham believed the promise of God, because God could not fail. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was reckoned to him as righteousness?" He considered not his own body, etc. Now, such confidence as this in a covenant of works would have been confidence in himself, which would not have been faith, but presumption. His faith has unbounded confidence in God alone: in the promise of God. Therefore faith was reckoned as righteousness. He, even Abraham, was justified by faith, reckoned righteous before God. This was written after Abraham, even for us. For blessed as this was to Abraham to believe the promise of God, there is something still more blessed, "for us also, to whom it shall be reckoned, if we believe [or, believing] on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Abraham believed the promise of God. We believe these two facts of God: the promise is fulfilled. We are thus reckoned righteous before God. But it may be asked, Do not many still rest their soul's salvation on the promises? What would you say if a wife rested on the former promise of her husband for evidence, that she was his wife? Would not this show that she was doubtful as to whether the marriage had really been accomplished or was valid; or, to say the least, that she did not understand it? Is it not something like this, when we try to rest on the promises? There must be some doubt or misunderstanding about these two accomplished facts before us. Doubtless there are many precious promises on which we do well to rest. But this is not now a promise! Righteousness is reckoned to us, believing on Him, that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is reckoned to us: that is not a promise. No, if we are believers the righteousness of God is upon us. We are reckoned righteous. Then the resurrection of our Lord is not now a matter of promise. God has raised Him from the dead. If not, there is no gospel, and we are yet in our sins. (See 1 Corinthians 15:14-17).

Let us then proceed very carefully here. Only let us note there is a change in the language. It is not now the propitiatory view of the death of Christ, as in chapter 3: 22-26. There, that death has first glorified God. The blood before Him, His righteousness is maintained, established on His throne, the mercy-seat; and thus mercy toward all without infringing on the righteousness of God. But here (chap. 4: 24, 25) Christ is the Substitute of His people, answering to the second goat of atonement. The sins of Israel were transferred to that goat — laid on it and borne away. Just so here. "Who was delivered for our offences." Was He delivered for the sins of the whole world as their Substitute, to bear them away? Then clearly they would have been borne away; for God has accepted the Substitute. This is certain, for He has raised Him from the dead. This would teach the fatal error of universal redemption. Hence the need of carefully noting that these words are distinctly limited to believers. "If we believe" or "believing." Abraham believed God, and that was reckoned to him as righteousness. We believe God that "He hath raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." The next chapter will also show that this must be limited to believers. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." To apply these words then to all, is to destroy their effect to all, or to teach, what is false on the face of it, that all will be saved.

Let us, then, take the facts in their order. God is speaking to us here. Do we believe Him, that He hath raised up Jesus from among the dead? That alone would not be enough, the devils know that that is so, and many an unconverted man does not doubt that. But mark the next fact: "who was delivered for our offences." Had it said, "our transgressions," it would not have taken in Gentiles, who were not under law; but this is a word that takes in all our sins — under law as transgressions, or sinners without law. Now, do you really believe that Jesus was delivered up to the cruel hands of men, yea, nailed to the cross, and there to bear, and did bear, the wrath of God due to your very sins? Before you read another line, we entreat you to answer that question in the presence of God. Can you look back, and see the Holy One of God bearing your sins, as truly as if there was not another whose sins He bore on the cross? Oh, what a sight, and your Substitute!

And, if we may use the word, not only did His death make the infinite payment that infinite justice demanded, but He "was raised again for our justification." Thus God has shown His acceptance of the ransom — the death of our Substitute; but He could in no way more distinctly have shown our everlasting discharge, than by raising up the Substitute for our justification. Oh, how wondrous! He

was raised up from among the dead, that, believing God, we might justly be reckoned, accounted, righteous before God; our sins as truly borne away, never to be reckoned to us, as though we had never sinned — justified, reckoned righteous before and by God our Father. Thus we have more than promise — all is accomplished fact. All our sins — for they were all alike future then — have been borne by Jesus. “Who was delivered for our offences.” God has raised Him again for our justification. Believing God, we axe justified, reckoned righteous. Mark, “raised again for our justification” cannot possibly mean because we were justified; this thought entirely sets aside faith. It is evidently “for,” in the sense of, for the purpose of our justification; that is, when, through grace, we believe. “Therefore, being justified by faith”— being reckoned righteous on the principle of faith — “we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Chap. 5: 1). Many souls are perplexed as to whether they have the right faith — “justified by faith.” If we separate this verse from the end of the previous chapter, we get occupied with faith as an abstract matter; and indeed we make faith that which, somehow, merits justification, and very soon it becomes a question of examining our own feelings. It may be said, But did not “many believe in his name when they saw the miracles which he did; but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men”? (John 2:23). Just so; but what did they believe? No doubt they believed in Him as the Messiah, when they saw the miracles that He did. But that was quite a different matter from what we have before us here. “Well,” you say, “I am sure I long to have peace with God, but I am not sure I have got it. How is this? You say, Partly because I ask myself, Have I the right faith? but the fact is, my horrid sins and iniquities rise up before me, and press me, until I am almost ready to conclude I have no part in Christ. Conscience also says it is all true.” Was not Jesus, the Holy, Holy One, delivered for those very iniquities? Do you believe God has raised Him from the dead — He “who was delivered for our offences”? This is a very different affair from miracles, important as they are in their place. Mark, this is real substitution — Christ, the delivered Substitute of His people, of the believer. We must not confound this with the propitiation, which was not only for us, but for the whole world. God is glorified about sin, so that free pardon is preached to every creature — to all men.

Let us take a picture, or type, of this; indeed this scripture seems to refer to it. After the blood of one goat had been sprinkled on the golden mercy-seat before God, showing the righteousness of God met by the blood of Jesus, before the eye of God — then “he shall bring the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his bands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away, by the hand of a fit man, into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.” (Leviticus 16:21). Now compare this with another scripture: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . And he bare the sin of many.” (Isaiah 53:5-12). The scriptures do not teach that He bare the sins of all; but, as the Substitute, the sins of many; and this in contrast with the doom of those who reject Him and must therefore be judged. Yes, mark the contrast. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:27-28.)

Now faith is not believing that I feel, or that I do believe. But do you believe this amazing fact, that God hath raised Him from the dead who has been thus, as your Substitute, delivered for your offences? This is the first question as to all your iniquities. Were they transferred to Christ, laid on Him? Not the sins of one year, like Israel on the day of atonement, but all your sins and iniquities before you were born. Did He take the whole responsibility of them, according to the righteous claims of God? Did He come, and was He delivered for this very purpose? Was it bearing the wrath of God against your sins, that made Him cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Oh, love beyond all words or thought! Did He fail? Nay; hear His words: “It is finished.” Yes, that work He came to do is finished. God is glorified. Our iniquities have been laid on Him, transferred to Him, borne by Him; not some of our sins, but all our iniquities, were laid on Him. The Lord Jehovah laid them on Him. And it is finished. Oh, my soul, ponder this well — “It is finished!” He hath made thy peace with God by His own blood. And now what does He say to thee? “Peace unto you.” Dost thou say, But, oh, my horrid sins! He replies, They were all laid on me; “peace to thee.” He shows His hands and His side. But I have denied Thee, Lord, when I ought to have confessed Thee. “Peace unto you.”

Now God, having judged our sins, all our iniquities, on His Son, can He again in righteousness judge them on us? Do you say, “I do not for a moment doubt Jesus died on the cross as my Substitute, and bore my sins in His own body on the tree; still, I have not the blessed certainty that I am justified, and have peace with God; I do not experience that happiness I ought.” Does this scripture, or any other, say we are either justified, or have peace, by experience? Does it say that we are to look at our feelings for evidence that we are justified? God has done a certain thing, to give to faith the certainty of our justification, and that one thing, which He has done for this very purpose, has been greatly overlooked. Jesus not only was delivered for our offences, but we read, “and was raised again for our justification.” Yes, God raised Him from among the dead, not because we were justified, but for the express purpose that, believing Him, we might be justified. Thus, if Christ be not raised, we are deceived, and yet in our sins. (1 Corinthians 15:17) But He is raised; the whole question is settled to faith. Do you say, “But must not I accept the atonement of my Substitute?” Nay, in this case it is God that has shown to us that He has accepted the one sacrifice for our sins, by raising Jesus from the dead, and giving Him a place above all heavens. And now, as to your sins, fellow-believer — where are they? They have been transferred to your Substitute. Well, they could not be on you, and on Him. No. Where are they then? Are they on Christ? No. But they must be on Him, if on any one, as He has taken the whole responsibility of them before His God. They are not on Him. Then they cannot be on you. Oh, wondrous grace! God says He will remember them no more. If He did, He must remember them as against Christ, and this is impossible. Christ is in the unclouded presence of God in light. Then so are you justified from all things — not hoping to be so. Could anything be more certain than this resting on the very words of God? Did not God give His beloved Son for this very purpose, that we might have unclouded peace with Him? Why should we doubt Him?

Romans 5:1-21.

Connecting, then, this verse — indeed the first eleven verses — with the last verse in chapter 4, we have three things made sure to us. Being justified, accounted righteous, before God, we have, as to all our sins, peace with God, yet fully recognising His holiness and righteousness; and this, not through anything we have done, but through our Lord Jesus Christ; peace resulting from the

blessed knowledge by faith that all our sins have been put away by the blood of Jesus, so that God can have no charge of guilt against us. We have peace, with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. As to the past, all is cleared away.

Then, in the second place: “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” We enter by faith into the full, unclouded favour of God. This grace implies the free favour revealed in the redemption we have, being justified freely. This is our happy, abiding place. There we stand. What a wondrous, present peace! We need not say this cannot, be enjoyed if we are walking carelessly, or allowing sin in any way. And in the third place, as to the future, we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” We do not hope to be justified, or to have peace — these we have — but we hope, with rejoicing, for the glory of God. Is it not joy to our hearts to know that we shall soon be in the scene where all is to the glory of God, all suited to Him; all pure within and without? Yes, sinless purity suited to Him, when He who has redeemed us has come, and taken us to Himself. Can anything give our hearts such joy as this, to be with Him, and like Him?

Verses 3-5. “And not only so,” not only have we peace with God, present access into the free favour of God, and the longing hope for His glory, but this enables us to glory in present tribulations also. “Knowing, that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

We must notice a very common mistake as to these verses. They are often read as meaning the exact opposite of what they say, as though we must have this experience in order that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts; and if we pray much, and are very diligent in patience, experience, and hope, that then we may hope that the Holy Spirit will be given us. No words can tell how utterly wrong all this is. The Holy Ghost is given to us because Jesus has finished the work of redemption; and He being now glorified, we are sealed by the Spirit, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Thus, to suppose that the Holy Ghost will be given because of any efforts, or experience, or devotedness of our own, is to set aside the perfect work of Christ. No, it is the very opposite; all this blessed patient experience is because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.

Now just suppose you are invited to dine with her Majesty the Queen, and she shows you every possible attention and kindness; and, instead of enjoying that kindness, you propose to those present that you shall pray earnestly that you may have a queen, and a queen that will show you kindness; what would she — what would any one — think of such conduct? Blind and deaf persons alone could make such a mistake. No doubt those who know such a Queen best are most loyal; and those who know that the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them, will love Him most, and have this blessed experience because of the very fact.

What shall we say of the blind and deaf who see nothing of God’s love to us, or its being shed abroad in our hearts; but, turning this precious scripture into legality, think and say that God win love us only as long as we love Him? The more we love God, the more He will love us! This thought is at the root of a great amount of spurious effort of holiness in man. Many would be startled to see it in plain dress. What would you say to striving to make the flesh holy, in order that God might love it? Are not thousands doing so? Is not this the very thing you have been doing?

Have we not practically said the old “I” must be holy, in order that God may love me? Truly, the flesh must be subdued, but not even that, that God may love me, but because, He has. We will now consider how He has loved us, and in what state we were when He loved us.

Verses 6-11. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Have our hearts been bowed down to this fact? Not only were we guilty, but we had no strength, were without strength to be better. Whilst we were in that very state, infinite love to us was displayed, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” There was no other means possible for God to justify the ungodly, but by His Son dying for the ungodly. Yea, it is in this very thing the love of God shines out to us. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Was this on the principle, that the more we love God, the more He will love us? Can there be a greater display of His love than, “Christ died for us”? Impossible! But this was while we were yet sinners.

Oh, pause and dwell on the love of God to us. Yes, not our love of God first. Not that we loved God, but that He thus loved us. The more this takes possession of our souls, the more shall we love Him. Do you say, All this may be quite true as to the past; but may we not fail in the future, and then will not God cease to love us? Nay, having known the love of God, may we not at last be left to everlasting wrath? Let us hear the answer of the Holy Ghost to this most solemn question. If God has thus commended His love to us that when we were sinners, Christ died for us, “much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Mark, being justified by His blood is always immutably the same; it is not having been justified once by His blood, we need to be again, but, being justified, it ever stands. His blood is ever the same before God, having atoned for all our sins. Therefore we are ever justified by His blood. There is no change. Then, not only we are, but “we shall be, saved from wrath through him.” Oh, precious, infinite grace! And there is still more: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Oh, what pains our Father takes to convince us of His everlasting, unchanging love! Just think — the whole atoning work of reconciling us to God was done by the death of His Son. God was glorified; our sins, all our sins, were transferred to Christ, and borne by Him, when we were enemies! And now we are justified from all things, redeemed to God, made His children. He who reconciled us by His death lives to serve, to wash our feet, to save to the end, by His priesthood and advocacy, should we fail. “Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Now this certainty as to the future removes every hindrance to the heart’s full joy in God. Not only have we this certainty of being saved to the end by His life, “but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.” This ends the whole question as to our sins. God is absolutely righteous in the way in which He has put them away by the death of His Son. They have been laid on the atoning Substitute, in infinite love to us, when we were enemies, without strength. He who once bare them in His own body is raised from the dead for our justification. We are justified, and we have peace with God. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. The love of God and the righteousness of God are fully revealed and displayed in reconciling us to Himself by the death of His Son. Our future practical deliverance and salvation from wrath are absolutely certain. We have received in our souls the full effect of all this as to our sins. And, oh, wondrous privilege! as to all our sins, we have now unhindered joy in God! Salvation is entirely of God, and we know Him, so as to have joy in God, according to all that

He is. We need not say this could not be through the law. If even the law could have justified from past sins — which was impossible — who could stand on his own responsibility as to the future, and joy in God? No, it is all through our Lord Jesus Christ, from first to last. Let us beware of letting slip this perfect grace, of letting in the least bit of confidence in the flesh. It is Christ in the future, as Christ in the past. This verse 11, then, closes the question of sins. The question of sin will come before us presently, if the Lord will. May the Holy Ghost deepen in all our souls a sense of the infinite grace of our God, so that we may continually joy in Him.

Verse 12. We now come to the question of sin, or the two heads of the two families: the one head, Adam, by whom sin entered into the world; the other head, Christ, by whom grace has abounded over sin.

Many souls are greatly perplexed who find, though they believe their sins are forgiven, yet they find the root, sin, in the flesh. Much of this confusion arises from want of carefully noticing the distinction between sins and sin, as in this epistle. As we have seen, verse 11 closes the question of sins. Verse 12 takes up sin. “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Thus there are two proofs of the origin of evil: sin entered into the world by one man. Of the whole race of mankind, all sin, and all die. What absolute consistency in the word of God, and with facts! And this has been found to be the case, whether man was placed under law, or without law. After sin had come in, and man fell, the law was not given for two thousand five hundred years. “For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed [or, put to account] when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression who is the figure of him that was to come.” (Vers. 13, 14) That is, they had not transgressed a given law; yet there was death, the proof that sin was there. Sin and death then came into the world by its head, Adam. Death, then, is not merely the penalty of a broken law; but sin having once come in, death is its result; or, as expressed in the word, “The wages of sin is death.” Now, in contrast with what came in by the creature’s sin, the first head — sin and death — God is pleased to reveal to us what has come in for a new race by the gift of His own Son — righteousness and life. Only the infinite gift must abound over the finite, dreadful as has been the result of that creature’s sin. God could not, in His free favour to us, give a gift that would come short of our need. Hence, the care of the Holy Ghost to show us how that gift of free favour has abounded over the sin; the root of evil, and death, that came in by Adam. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift [the act of favour]. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man — Jesus Christ — hath abounded unto many.” (Ver. 15.) No doubt the effect of the offence of Adam’s sin on the many, even all his posterity, is great and terrible; and we all belonged to that “many.” Death passed upon all men. Yet if we have passed from death unto life in the risen Head of the new creation, we have now to see how the grace of God, and the gift, by grace, by One — Jesus Christ — hath abounded unto the many in Him.

Verse 16. “And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.” In Adam we see one sin, and the consequences that have flowed from it in judgment. Now look at the free gift. See Jesus, our Substitute: all our iniquities have been made to meet on Him, and this for the very purpose, that we might by faith be justified from them all. And, much more than this, not only justified from all our

iniquities by His blood, but He, having died for our offences, was raised again for our justification.

Let us dwell now on this great fact — the resurrection of Jesus from the dead — and this for the express purpose of our justification — of our complete, abounding justification. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He took to Himself that holy life He had, and was. He could assume it in perfect righteousness, having glorified God; and having redeemed “the many,” according to that glory, He could now communicate to them, to us, that same and eternal life, a justified life, in righteousness, unchanging, ever-subsisting. It will be very blessed if our souls understand this reigning, subsisting justification of life, though fully admitting that our life, as children of Adam, was forfeited.

Verse 17. “For if by one offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one — Jesus Christ.” This is the close of the parenthesis from verse 13. Can any one deny that death reigns over Adam’s race through sin? Where is the physician that can stay the reign of death? And Jesus says of His many, “and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Death has positively no claim on those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. They reign in life by One — Jesus Christ. Nothing can stay its course; none can pluck them out of His hand.

Verse 18. “Therefore, as by the offence of one [or, one offence], judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one [or, by one act of righteousness], the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” The true sense of this verse is, as by one offence judgment toward all men; so, by one act of righteousness, the free gift toward all unto justification of life. That is, as in verse 19, the effect of the two acts — Adam’s sin, and Christ’s obedience unto death on the two “manys”— the two families. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.” It is, however, of the utmost importance to see that this justification of life is connected with, and results from, His resurrection from the dead. It is not written that He kept the law for our justification, but that God raised Him from the dead for that very purpose — for our justification. It is not, and could not be, our life in the flesh under the law that is justified; that could not he in any way. It is judged, and set aside. The life that we have now before God is the life of one that has passed through death for us; and everything that the righteous claims of God had against us is fully met by that one death of our Substitute. Christ is our life. Can there be a charge against Him, even as our Substitute? We have, then, through the abounding of grace, a life against which there is, and can be, no charge — therefore a justified life.

If in Adam, or in the flesh, under law, nothing can justify us, or that sinful life. Death and judgment are written upon it. If in Christ, we have a life that reigns, a life completely justified, that nothing can condemn. As to our sins, we are accounted righteous — faith is reckoned as righteousness, and, being justified, we have peace with God. As to our sinful Adam nature, life, and standing, we are no longer in it, but in Christ raised from the dead; and the eternal life we have in Him is justified life — in Him, how completely justified! It is of the utmost importance to lay fast hold of this; completely justified from our sins by Him; and, as in the new creation, completely justified in Him raised from the dead. In both cases it is wholly of God, both by and in Christ Jesus.

Dear young believer, do you know that you are no longer in Adam, or connected with the old things that belong to him? The great point for you to see is this “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away behold all things are become new; and all things are of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:17.) What a sad mistake would you make to go back, or cling to, the old things — law and a sinful nature — and suppose that anything would improve the one, or justify you under the other, now passed away! And now mark, your righteousness and life is to you all new, and all of God. What is of God must be perfect. Thus we are perfectly and for ever justified in the risen Christ.

Verses 20, 21. Oh, marvellous free favour of God! Do you ask, Why was the law given, if man cannot be justified by it, or if it cannot give a justified life? “The law entered that the offence might abound.” It may even have been so in your past experience. It may have entered with killing power, and the more you have struggled to keep it, the more the offence has abounded. How you may have struggled to make the flesh holy and the more you have struggled, the more you have failed. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Do you believe God as to this? Can you now cease from works, and rest in the boundless, free favour of God? “that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign” — yes, and that “through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is not grace alone that reigneth — that would be indifference to sin; neither righteousness alone, or the sinner must be condemned; but grace, through righteousness. Yes, it reigns on, on, unto eternal life. But if we are constituted righteous by and in Christ, entirely apart from any works of our own, sins being forgiven, and sin not reckoned to us — a question is then raised as to practical righteousness — Shall we continue in the practice of sin? The enemies of the grace of God always raise this question, or put it as a charge, that those who hold the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God, imply that they live in sin that grace may abound. The charge is as common in this day, as it was by the Pharisees in that day, against the apostle. In the next chapter we have his inspired answer to the usual calumny. But rest assured, nothing short of this abounding grace can give rest to the soul.

Romans 6:1-23. This then, is the question, if grace has abounded over sins and sin — over all our iniquities which we have committed, and over the sin we have inherited, and where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded — is it true, then, that abounding grace leads to continuance in the practice of sin? From that day to this, the rejecters of the gospel have always said it is so. If you are completely justified, not by your own works, but in and by the subsisting, unchanging righteousness of God in Jesus Christ our Lord raised from the dead — then that implies you hold that you may be careless, and indeed may practise sin!

Now what says the Holy Ghost by the apostle as to this? “What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Far be the thought; “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” Here, then, is that principle of deliverance from sin so greatly ridiculed — deliverance from sin by death. Neither shall we find any other deliverance from sin in the word of God. For centuries, many sincere souls sought deliverance by fastings, and seclusion in monasteries. Many sincere souls now seek it by efforts after a false perfection of the flesh. But here is the full truth of God — deliverance from sin by death.

Only mark, it is not the future death of our bodies, should we die, but this — “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” What does this mean, “we that are dead to sin”? Do you say,

“It may mean those who have attained to perfection?” Is there such a thought? Nay, in order to show how assuredly this applies to all Christians, the apostle says, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Ver. 3.) So that he is careful to show that this principle of deliverance from sin by death applies to all who have been truly baptised unto the death of Christ. Nothing could be more plain, and yet nothing is less known. It ought surely to be well understood, for the apostle says, “Know ye not?” Do you understand, reader, this great practical truth of deliverance from sin? Do you say, as an authorised teacher said to us a few days ago? “We are all sinners, and unfit for heaven; we must seek in every way to improve our sinful nature; but I fear it will never, in this world, be quite fit for heaven.” Fit for heaven! Is a corpse fit for heaven? It is dead, it is too loathsome for heaven or earth. It must be buried. Do you bury it, to make it suddenly, or gradually, perfect? It is a mass of corruption; there is no life in it, not a particle, nor can there be, until the putting forth of the power of God in resurrection. Is it not so as to our whole moral being? Our neighbour, sincere as he is, is spending his life in seeking to improve himself — the flesh, by sacraments and ritual, he fears he will never he able to do it so as to be fit for heaven. How blind to that which even his baptism should teach him. The fact is, we do not believe God, that we are as bad as He says we are; so bad, so vile, so loathsome, so offensive, so dead to all that is good, in the flesh as children of Adam. Have you ever said, “I am only fit to be buried out of sight. Yes, bury me, bury me out of sight. I am not fit for heaven, I am not fit for earth. Oh, bury me out of the sight of God, and out of my own sight”? Here is water, said the eunuch, what doth hinder?

Mark well, then, the deliverance from sin is not the improvement of self, or an evil nature — the flesh, but “we are buried with him by baptism into death.” We are not baptised unto the work of the Spirit in us, but unto His death, who died for us, and rose again. The death, then, that delivers from sin is not a death unto sin we attain to, but the death of Christ on the cross, and our identification with it — “buried with him.” And you will notice, there is no thought of baptism communicating life. Baptism is unto death, and life in the risen Christ is beyond it. For Christ not only died, was actually dead, but He is “raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” How glorious the new creation! Christ, the beginning of that new creation, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. “Even so we should walk in newness of life.” Not only old things are passed away, and all become new, but we are in that new creation by the glory of the Father. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” The resurrection side of this subject is brought out more fully in Colossians 2:1-23, only here let us note, that baptism unto His death is the chief point to show what all Christians should know — the truth of deliverance by death.

Verse 6. “Knowing this, that our old man is [or, has been] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed [or, justified] from sin.” Now the question is this: Is the old man crucified when the believer attains to perfection, as it is called — that then the old nature ceases to exist, or is all turned good? There is no thought in this text of its being a state peculiar to some Christians, and not the state of others. It is the very truth of our christian position. Knowing this that our old man has been crucified. When? In our experience? That is not the thought here, but, “has been crucified with him.” Surely

that was on the cross. Not only He, in infinite love, bare our sins on the cross, but our old man was fully judged there too. It is indeed made good to our souls' experience when we become identified with this crucified Jesus, of which baptism is a figure. Are we thus identified with the death of Jesus? Not the improvement or restoration of our old nature, but can we look back to the cross, and say There I was crucified with Christ? All that of which I might boast had to be crucified. Most assuredly this was so, that the body of sin might be annulled, made powerless; for a dead man is powerless, or he would not be dead.

We have seen how God justifies His people from their sins by the blood of Jesus. Now we see how He justifies them from sin, the root, or nature. "For he that is dead is justified from sin" (margin). Sins are forgiven, and now sin cannot be imputed to him that is dead, he is justified from sin. But there would he no power for a holy life in merely being dead to sin. What true power, is we shall find when we reach Romans 8:2; only we must carefully notice, that we are as truly identified with Christ risen, or more so, than we were identified with Him in death.

Verses 8-10. "Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." The one follows the other. And this for ever. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." He has nothing more to say to sin, or sin to Him; He was here once, and bore its utmost curse; He was made sin, or a sin-offering. What sin? His own? He had none. Sin, our sin, has nothing more to say to Him, or He to it. It is all gone from the sight of God. He who was once under it, even unto death, now liveth to God. Oh, precious, soul-sustaining truth! And sin can have no more to say to Him, and no more to say to us. Once identified with Him in death — yea, more than identified, alive in Him for evermore. Oh, my soul, dost not thou believe God?

Verse 11. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." Is it, then, that the old nature, or sin, is eradicated, dead? Does it no longer exist in the believer? There is no such thought here. If it were really so, really dead, we should have no need to reckon it so. Did you ever hear that a corpse was reckoned dead? We are so identified with Christ, that God wishes us to reckon ourselves dead with Him, and alive in Him. He wishes us to treat the old nature as if it were dead unto sin, and we alive in Christ risen from the dead; only, as we said, the latter ever goes beyond the former. For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (the word "through," in this verse 11, should be "in"). We have peace with God, as to our sins, through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But God, who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ, has also raised us up in Him; so that we are alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, nothing suits Satan's purpose more than to set all this aside; both the finished work of Christ, by which we are justified from our sins — our identification with His death unto sin, and also the work of God, in raising us up in Christ, and thus delivering us from sin, alive unto God. Yes, instead of the plain truth of this scripture, deliverance from sin has been held out as a future attainment of the believer, attained only by some. This is the root of self-righteous perfection in the flesh.

Just what God says to us in these verses gives the only principle of deliverance from sin. All other methods are mere deception. But you say, "I find my old nature is not dead as to fact." Just so; but you are to reckon yourself dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Much that follows we shall find to be the unfolding of this all-important principle. It will affect every step of our walk in this world. How ought we to walk to show our identification with a crucified Christ? Yea, we

are crucified with Him. You may know many who walk as if they were dead to the things of God and His Christ, and fully alive to the world that crucified Jesus. May God, use, these solemn truths in sanctifying power to our souls!

Verse 12. “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Far be the thought that ye should practise sin, that grace may abound. To live in sin is the very opposite of death to sin, as seen above; dead with Christ, as professed in baptism, is surely not to live in sin. And now, also, alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord. “Let not, therefore, sin reign in your mortal body.” He does not say sin no longer exists. He does not say you are to reckon it extirpated. If an enemy no longer existed in a country, there would be no need to say, Do not let that enemy reign.

Neither could you say, “that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,” if there were no sinful lusts to subdue and to resist. But we are not to yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, “but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead,” etc. Yes, the very principle of a holy walk is our death with Christ, and our being alive unto God. It is not for a moment to attain unto this state; but, reckoning ourselves thus dead, and alive again, we are so to walk. Conflict is clearly recognised, but there is deliverance.

Verse 14. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace.”

Thus, having life in Christ, we can now look at sin, at our old sinful self, as an enemy, but an enemy that shall not have dominion. What a deliverance this is! To one that knows the utter vileness of the old nature, no words can sufficiently express the greatness of deliverance from the reign of sin. There may be sudden temptation — yea, failure — but sin shall not have dominion — it shall not reign. But why shall not sin reign? “For ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The whole history of Christendom, and the history of every individual believer, proves the truth of this statement, and also its opposite. Just in proportion as the free favour of God, through Christ Jesus, is known and enjoyed, is the deliverance from the slavery of sin, and we can live a holy life. The law can give no power to those under it, but can only curse them. The moment you make the favour of God to be conditional, whether it be concerning the law of Moses, or the precepts of the gospel, you begin at the wrong end, and will soon find nothing but misery and doubt. You will say, I do not keep the commands of God as I ought; or, I do not love Christ as I ought; am I a Christian at all? Now, is all that law, or grace? Clearly it is law. And the word says, sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under that principle, but under grace. There surely can be no holiness of life, unless the heart be perfectly free, in the unbounded, free, unconditional favour of God. Has He taken me up, an ungodly sinner, who deserved bell? Has He, in pure, unmerited love, given His Son to die for our sins? Has He raised Him from the dead for our justification? Has He given us eternal redemption through His blood? Have we thus peace with God, according to all that God is? Are we identified with Christ in all the merit of His death; and more, alive in Him to God? And all this absolute, free grace, the grace of Him who changes not? And now I am alive to God, I can reckon myself, my old man, dead. And thus I am delivered from myself, to live to God. And all unchanging grace to me, then I am not on the ground of law, or conditions for life, or salvation, or deliverance, but absolutely under grace, free and eternal. Oh, now I am free to serve the Lord, in real separation from, and abhorrence of, evil. Oh, glorious truth! sin shall not have dominion. No

doubt, dear young believer, many will tell you that such doctrine as that will lead you to sin as your old nature likes. “What, then? shall we sing because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid,” or, far be the thought. They who talk so have never known what the grace of God is, or what true liberty is — not liberty to sin, but liberty from sin. Mark, these words are not to such as are trying to experience that they are dead to sin, or dead with Christ, and alive to God. They have made the profession in baptism that they are dead and buried with Christ, identified with Him in death. They reckon themselves dead unto sin, and thus are justified from sin, and alive to God. Oh, wondrous, almost forgotten, truth! Death to sin — the only deliverance from sin. But what deliverance would there be without life in Christ to God? How can you walk in newness of life, if you have not got newness of life? If your old nature were placed under law, then, surely, sin would have dominion. But because God has given you a new life — and that His free gift — and now placed you in His own unchanging, boundless grace, “What, then, shall we sin — [that is, practise sin] because we are not under law, but under grace?” Far be the thought.

We are quite sure all who would put you under law, have never yet truly known what the grace of God is. And do not forget that all this shows the connection there is between grace and practical holiness, or righteousness of walk. This is clear in the next verse.

Verse 16. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

Once we were the slaves of sin — “without strength.” Sin, as a slave-owner, was complete master. We have been redeemed freely from that condition, and delivered, by the death of Jesus, from that old master. It was then sin unto death. Which master do we obey, sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness? Are we alive to God, that we should obey the old slave-master, sin? Is that the purpose of the grace of God? Far from it. Now, can you apply verse 17 to yourself? Can you, with thankfulness, own the full truth, “that ye were the slaves of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you?” Now, do not shirk this point. A slave in compelled to do what his owner bids him. He has no power to resist him, though he may hate the thing, he cannot refuse to do it. Have you known this awful slavery of sin? Had sin the mastery? Did you do the things you hated, and had you no power to escape that cruel master? God be thanked, we can own it was so; and, God be thanked, He met us there. And what is that form of doctrine to which we were, delivered? Was it not death with Jesus, as our baptism typified? Have you obeyed it? Identification with Christ in death, and in Him alive, from the dead. Then the answer is this:

Verse 18. “Being, then, made free from sin, ye became the servants [or, slaves] of righteousness.”

Yes, this is how you changed masters, through death, from sin to righteousness; and all this in perfect grace. Whilst under sin, free from righteousness; now servants of righteousness, and free from the slavery of sin. Yes, sin and righteousness are looked at as two masters. The Christian is perfectly free from the old tyrant. “So now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.”

It is quite true man used the very law which God gave to prove his guilt, to set up his own self-righteousness. And others may abuse the grace of God as license to sin. Yet it is most clear, that the object the Holy Ghost has in unfolding these truths of infinite grace, is, that we may, as

alive to God, yield our members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.

Verse 20. “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”

Yes, that was our condition — slaves of sin. And, oh, how deep the shame upon us in all the terrible fruits of that slavery. But what a change!

Verse 22. “But now, being made free from sin [that is, from the slavery, not from conflict], and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

We must carefully note, there is no thought here, either of improvement of the sinful nature, or of perfection of that nature. No, death is not improvement. But the greatest of all mistakes about this chapter, is, to suppose that freedom from sin is a matter of attainment. It is by death — the death of Christ — and that is not our attainment. And reckoning ourselves dead with Him is not attainment. It is not then by serving God that we become free from sin; that would be human merit. Is it not the exact opposite?, Read the words carefully: “But now, being made free from sin, and become the servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness,” etc.

Thus every Christian is made free from sin, and, “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Ver. 18.) It does not say, Ye became the servants of righteousness, and then ye were made free from sin. There can be no true fruit unto holiness until we are made free from sin. These great truths will occupy us, if the Lord will, in chapter 7. In the meantime these are true, solemn facts!

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, in Jesus Christ our Lord.” What a gift! Oh, how few believe this! We have no hand in meriting this, or it would not be the gift of God.

Romans 7:1-25.

We have now in detail that from which we have been delivered in chapter 6. And it is impossible to understand this chapter unless we see this order. The truth of chapter 6 must have its full place before we attempt to understand chapter 7. The apostle had said, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” This is a very important statement, and the apostle now explains how we have (that is, those who were under it) been delivered. He then describes the condition of a quickened soul under law before deliverance. This he does very fully, and finally takes up with joy the theme of deliverance, thus leading on to chapter 8.

First, then, how were those under law delivered from it? “Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?” This fact shows the importance of the truth already brought out — identification with the death of Christ; reckoning ourselves dead with Him, and alive to God. For if those once alive under it were still alive under it, they must be responsible to fulfil its every jot and tittle, or it must curse them. Thus Christianity in that case would be valueless. Man would be still under the curse. The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth. His responsibility to law only ends in death. The law as to marriage proves this: death alone dissolves the tie of responsibility. Whilst one husband lives the wife cannot be married to another. She would be an adulteress. This was self-evident to all who knew the law. In like manner the believer cannot, so to speak, have two husbands. He cannot be alive in the flesh, married to the law (under law), and also be married to Christ. No doubt men

say this must be so, that you must have both the law and Christ; but we are not explaining what men say, but scripture. God tells us we cannot have Christ and law. And as a wife is only delivered from the old husband by death, so we can only be delivered from the old husband, the principle of law, by death. Now whilst it is true we have not actually died, yet mark the importance of the truth we have learnt in chapter 6 to reckon ourselves dead, identified with Christ in death. Only now this is seen in its special bearing on law in the first place.

Verse 4. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Thus they wore as dead to the law by the body of Christ as though they had actually died. They pass from under its dominion into another entirely new state. They have no more to say to the old husband; but enter into a new relationship, married to a new husband, to one raised up from among the dead, even Christ. But would not great teachers tell you this is antinomianism, to be dead to the law, to have no more to say to it, or it to you? this would lead to bring forth fruit unto sin. It would be dreadful, say they. But what does God say as to this? He says all this is “that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” This is perfectly in keeping with what has gone before. “For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” To be under the law, is to be under its curse, for all are proved guilty. (Chap. 3.) But now we are one with the risen Christ, all sins forgiven, sin judged, that we may bring forth fruit unto God.

Verse 5. “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.” This verse determines the character of the teaching that follows. You cannot say, When we were in the flesh, unless you have been delivered from that state. You could not say, When we were in London unless you have left it. It is very important to understand this. It is often asked, Is this part of chapter 7 the proper experience of a Christian? Certainly not, or it would not have said, When we were in the flesh. Yet it is, as we shall soon see, the experience through which most, if not all, Christians have passed. Then again, it is said to be the experience of the unconverted. Neither can this be; for they do not delight in the law of God after the inward man. (Ver. 22.) It is evidently the experience of a quickened soul, born of God, having a new nature that delights in the law of God after the inward man; but one who is still under law, and has not yet learned what deliverance by death is.

It would be true to say, the experience described from verse 5 to 24 is the wretched experience of every person born of God, if put under law. And when we remember how many Christians are in that very condition, there is no wonder that so many are thus miserable. We must understand then the words, “For when we were in the flesh,” to mean whilst we were under the first husband, the law. The law can only have to say to man as alive. It so regarded man, and commanded and required obedience, as regarding the one under it alive in the flesh. Once dead, all commands and requirements cease. You cannot tell a dead man either to love God or his neighbour; but being alive in a nature which can only sin, the command can only bring out transgression. The law might require righteousness; but as man was not righteous but guilty, it became thus a ministration of judgment and death. The christian position however is this, to reckon himself dead us to the flesh, and alive to God. A wholly new life to God. The whole subject will be greatly simplified if we keep these two things distinct: the old life or old nature, called the flesh — the ground on which man was tested under law; and, the new life, or the new nature, which the believer has, even the very eternal life of the risen Christ. We have seen how we have been delivered from the slavery of sin

by being dead to the one and alive in the other. It is not that sin is eradicated, but we are dead to it.

Verse 6. Now it is this same principle of death, and resurrection-life in Christ, applied to the question of law. It is not that the law is dead, or abolished in itself, but we are dead to it: “But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” The law did produce all this truly miserable experience, but now we are delivered from the law. Can you truthfully say so? It is most important to have this question settled before we examine that wretchedness from which we have been delivered. By the death and resurrection or Christ we are not only fully justified from our sins, but we have passed from one condition of sin and death, into an entirely new condition; yea, new creation of life and righteousness. From what we were to what Christ is. We stood with Adam in sin and death; we now stand united, one with Christ in resurrection, where He is and what He is. “As he is, so are we in this world.” (1 John 4:17). His very life is communicated to us. This is as real to faith now, as it will be shortly to sight. A new creation in Christ Jesus.

It must be seen that this is full, complete justification from sins and sin, and deliverance from all claims of law. Again we ask, Are you thus delivered? There must be this complete deliverance to serve in newness of life. Have you thus passed from the flesh — the Adam state, to Christ? Can you say, Yes, it is now all Christ? Do you say, The flesh is still there, and it is sin? That is true. And the law is still there. Quite true. And I have sinned. Yes, that also is true. But what did Christ die for? Was it not for both your sins and sin? And are you sinning now, or delivered from sin? We shall, however, see all this more fully brought out in chapter 8. We only press this point: it is a delivered soul that can understand the awful experience described in what follows. The unconverted or the deceived Pharisee knows nothing of this bitter experience. It is even when the new, holy nature has been implanted, and with it the deep soul-longing for true holiness; and then to find no power in the flesh to do that which we long to do. Yea, the law of sin and death is like a slave master, and there is no power to escape. And the more we attempt to keep the law, addressed to men as alive in the flesh, the deeper the wretchedness of doing the very things the new and holy nature hates. Yes, that which would give no trouble to one unconverted, or rather to one not born of God, fills the quickened soul with intense misery. Is this your state? If quickened and under law, we are sure it is in some degree. Oh, how much of the excitement and effort of this day is to drown and help you to forget this your misery. Well, do not despair; we believe every one born of God passes more or less through this; and often those who pass through the deepest are those chosen to glorify God the most. We do not question that both equally mistake the chapter, who make it the experience of an unconverted sinner, and on the other hand, the proper experience of a Christian. Let us then look at it carefully.

Verse 7. If left to ourselves, even when there is the new life, the new, holy nature implanted, we should naturally turn to the law, and place ourselves under it. This is always the case where the Holy Ghost is not known. And it is remarkable, in these verses, that the Holy Spirit is not once named. As we have said, there are few that do not now pass through this experience; and those who have got deliverance can look back, and we the great profit they derived from this exercise of heart. The first thing, then, we learn is this — that the law is not sin; it is by it we learn what sin is. The law found the root. “For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” When the new nature was given, the spirituality of the law was felt. A man without, the new nature would say, Lust is not sin, unless you commit the very sin in transgression. But when the law

comes home into the conscience, it detects the lust, and I say, Why, that is sin. Yes, the very lust is sin; that is, the nature is sin.

Verse 8. And that nature, being sin, takes occasion by the commandment to work in me all manner of desire for that which is forbidden. “For, without the law, sin was dead.” It was inactive. Forbid a child to go into the garden, at once he desires to go; and, if will he at work, he goes. Now, not only may the nature be inactive, but,

Verse 9, “For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” You never met a person, before he was quickened, but that person thought he was alive, and could do, and live. Yes, he says, I thought I was alive without the law once. Ask a natural man, Are you saved? He will reply, I do not know; I hope so. I attend my place of worship, and I am doing the best I can, and I hope I shall be in heaven at last. Oh, yes, he says, I am alive. There is not a thought in his soul that he is lost. Not a word does he confess of the least need of a Substitute on the cross. And if you will but ask, even professing Christians, you will get, where you least expect it, such an answer.

Now, the moment a soul is born of God, all this is changed. Why, he says, how is this — I have a nature that desires the very thing God forbids? He turns to the word of God’s law, and he dies to all hope of being in the flesh what he thought he was. “And I died.” Yes, now we have the hard death of the old “I”. He longs for holiness, turns to the commandments ordained to life: those who do it shall live in it (see Ezekiel 20:11), but he finds it unto death. He finds sin has the mastery, and uses the very commandment to slay him. Do not forget that this is “when we were in the flesh.” How the last hope of goodness in the flesh was driven out of us!

Verse 12. The law was of God; it was not bad, or sin; it was “holy, and just, and good.” It was not death to me; but sin, that it might appear sin. Oh, to find that I — my nature — as a child of Adam, was only sin, and that by the commandment it, might, and did, become exceeding sinful.

Verse 14. Deeper still. “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” Yes, the law justly demands righteousness. And what do I find in me? “I am carnal, sold under sin.” Do you know this? Have: you learnt it as a helpless slave of sin?’ That is all that the old “I,”’ the flesh, is — to hate the thing I do; to find I have no power to do the thing I would; and all the while to own that the law is good, and only requires of me what is good.

Verse 17. “Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” This is a discovery. I learn that there is a nature, sin, whilst in me, yet I can look upon it as distinct from myself, the new “I.” Well, I say, What, then, is there in that old nature, the old “I”? There is not a bit of good in me, that is, my flesh, or old nature.

Verse 18. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) there dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.” This is very humbling, to find in myself, as a child of Adam, no power whatever to do good — yea, the very opposite. “For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that do I.” This in the true character of the old nature, even when the new nature desires to do good, and to be holy — yea, when the new nature is holy, as born of God. So that it is not the new nature, the new “I” that does evil, as the old nature is doing the very thing the new nature condemns.

Verse 20. “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it” — no longer what I am, as a new creature — “but sin that dwelleth in me.” Then there are two principles, or natures, in the man born of God. The principle of the old depraved nature is called a law.

Verse 21. “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” This is the fixed principle of the old nature — “when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Yes, you say, that is just what I have found, to my deep sorrow; indeed, it has made me almost conclude that I cannot have been born of God at all. Those who are not born of God never discover themselves to be half as bad as you find your old self to be. But do not the very next words prove that you are born of God — that is, that you have a new “I,” or new nature?

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Surely this proves, beyond a doubt, that there are two natures; for how could the old nature, which is sin, delight in the law of God? But it is so. “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Well, you say, it seems like a contradiction. That is exactly what the two natures are to each other; yes, in direct contradiction to that inward man which delights in the law of God. It says:

Verse 23. “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” Thus, to deny the two natures in a man born again, is to deny the plain teaching of the word of God. Did not Jesus say, “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit”? Thus it is a wholly new birth, new nature, new creation, that is of the Spirit, and is spirit. That which is born of a sinful flesh, or nature, is, remains what it is — flesh or sin. And here we learn, if under law — that is, if we are on the ground of the flesh, under law for its improvement, as thousands are — then we find, in the war of the two natures, that we are brought into “captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” It is a terrible fact, but the utter badness of our old nature must be learnt practically, if we do not believe what God says about it. But if all this be the case, a man born of God, under law, not knowing the distinction of the two natures, must be extremely wretched, if sincere, and earnestly longing for holiness and righteousness of life. That is just what we find.

Verse 24. “O wretched man that I am.” And it is now no longer, Who shall help me to improve the flesh? but, “who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Yes, self, the old man, the body of this death, must be given up. We must have a Deliverer, and that Deliverer is Christ.

Verse 25. “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Few words, but, oh, what a glorious deliverance and victory! After arriving at the full discovery of my utter helplessness, and the unchangeable badness of the old nature, the eye is now lifted up to Christ, and the heart swells up in the full joy of thankfulness. This deliverance will be more fully explained in the next chapter.

There is one mistake often made here, against which we must most carefully guard. It is often said, or implied, that what we have seen as to the old nature, the flesh, the law of sin in the members, is all quite true of a believer before be gets deliverance; but after that, it is changed, or eradicated — at all events, greatly improved, suddenly or gradually sanctified, etc., and that there is no such evil nature left in the delivered, or sanctified, saints. Is this so, or is it not so? Let the very next words, after our deliverance and thanksgiving, determine this important question.

Verse 25. “So, then, with, the mind [or, new man] I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [the old nature], the law of sin.” We are no longer on the ground of the flesh, as alive under law,

seeking to improve the flesh — no longer in the flesh. But that the flesh remains in the delivered saint is stated in the strongest possible way — in the very person who, with the new mind, or nature, serves the law of God. But the flesh, and the law of sin, still remain in me. We may cavil, and reason, and ridicule, but here is the truth of scripture, and what every believer finds to be true. So that we need preserving, spirit, soul, and body, blameless.

Place that old nature under law, try to find some good in it, and immediately our experience will be, as here described.

One question more, before we leave this subject. How is it that so many Christians are in this experience? Simply because, though born of God, they are, through false teaching, or defective teaching, placed under law, and have never known the true character of deliverance. Let us, then, in the next place, inquire what that deliverance is.

Romans 8:1-39.

Verse 1. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” What a wonderful statement! It is not a question merely of what will be the justification of the believer when manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, but “now” there is nothing to condemn to those who are in Christ Jesus. If I look at myself in the flesh, it is, “O wretched man that I am!” If I look at what I am in Christ Jesus, there is now no condemnation. Dead to all that I am, as a child of Adam — dead to sin, dead to law, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Thus, being in and to another, to Christ Jesus raised from the dead, it is not only to bring forth fruit unto God, but “there is therefore now no condemnation.” Do you get hold of this? Is there any condemnation possible to that risen Christ in the glory of God? Then, if you are in Him, how can there be condemnation to you? The next words, “who walk not after the flesh, but after, the Spirit,” are omitted in the best translations; we shall find them, however, as a result, in verse 4. Here they have at some time been inserted as a condition, or guard. We would, however, linger over and press this verse as the very foundation of deliverance. No soul ever can know real deliverance from the power of sin that does not first know the unclouded favour of God in Christ. How marvellous, after such a chapter of bitter experience, after coming to the utter end of all hope of good in self, the old nature, to find that, as dead with Christ, and alive from the dead in Christ, we are in the unclouded favour of God, without condemnation! What perfect peace! Nothing to disturb, nothing to condemn. And it is God that speaks the word “No condemnation.”

Dear young believer, is this the solid foundation on which, and in which, you stand? Then we will now look at

Verse 2. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” We have seen the terrible law, or power of sin; have we not also known and felt it? But what new law, or power, or principle, is this? Is it the power of my new nature as born of God? No; though, as such, I did delight in the law of God; but that did not make me free from the law of sin, as we have seen. But this does — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is God the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; it is not now death, but the Spirit of life. Thus, as we have seen, we have a justified life. Now we have power — the law of the Spirit of life. Elsewhere we learn that the life we now have is eternal, and the Spirit is eternal. Thus the power we have is eternal. We have seen that the flesh, or sin, is still in us — that which is born of the flesh; but here is deliverance from its

power: made free from the law of sin and death; made free by infinite, eternal power, the law of the Spirit of life. It is not “will”’ do, but, “hath made me free.” So terrible is our depraved old sinful nature, that, though born of God, and I delighted in the law of God, longed to keep it; yet the law of sin in my members brought me into captivity. Has it not been so? But now we are made free from its power, by a greater power — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Oh, for more simple faith in the word of God; yea, and also in the Holy Ghost dwelling in us! This verse sums up the whole of chapter 6. It is the principle of reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ, applied by the power of the Spirit.

Still, many a young reader may have this difficulty in passing through the experience of the utter badness of the flesh, as described in chapter 7. He may say, “I see how my sins were forgiven me; but to find since that, the old nature I have is so utterly bad; to have found no power in trying to keep the law of God, however much I desired to do so; to find, to my surprise, an evil nature, a law of sin, that held me captive; the law I longed to keep could only curse me; my very nature — sin in the flesh — only did that which I hated and condemned. How, then, can you tell me there is no condemnation?” We will look at the next verse for an answer.

Verse 3. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Here is what the law could not do, and what God has done. The law could not deliver from either the guilt or power of sin. It was weak either to deliver or help man in the flesh, for the flesh was sin; and if it acted under law, it could only transgress, even in one quickened and longing for deliverance.

Now just here arises this question: Is deliverance a matter of apprehension of truth, or mere knowledge of truth? Deliverance from Egypt answers that question. Like a quickened soul, they believed the word of God through Moses and Aaron (Ex. 3: 7-10; 4: 31, 32), and they longed for deliverance (chap. 5: 1-3), and they, as it were, passed through the Romans (chap. 7) in the brick-kilns of Egypt, and became more wretched than ever, and not delivered at all. Was it, then, increase of knowledge, or apprehension, that delivered them? Did the knowledge of the promises in Exodus 6:1-30 deliver them? Did the further knowledge of the providential favour of God deliver them, in chapters 7 to 11? Not in the least. They were delivered truly on the ground of redemption, but it was by the power of God.

Now there was no power in the holy law of God to deliver, its only prerogative was to curse the guilty. In Romans 8:2, then, we have the power that has set me free from the law of sin and death. In verse 3 we have the helplessness of the law to deliver through the weakness of the flesh, and then how God has delivered, and the ground on which deliverance is wrought. This part also answers your difficulty — How can there be no condemnation to me, seeing the flesh is so utterly vile? “God sending his own Son.” Just as when all had failed to deliver from Egypt, then the lamb is to be put up, and slain; the Israelite, though not yet delivered, was completely sheltered by the blood. So the ground of deliverance here, is “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or, a sacrifice for sin] condemned sin in the flesh.” Not only delivered for our iniquities, and raised again for our justification, as we have already seen; but the atoning death of the sent Son of God for sin — the very root. Thus now, both sins and sin having been condemned,

judged, there is therefore nothing, positively nothing, left to condemn. Thus, on the ground of the atoning work of the Son, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus gives complete deliverance. And as deliverance from Egypt was being brought out of one place, or condition, in bondage, into another in liberty; so the believer is, by the Spirit of life, brought out of one place, or condition, called “in the flesh,” into another place, or condition, called “in Christ;” sin having been perfectly judged, by the Holy Son of God being made sin for us. And this, not that we should continue in bondage, but be free, delivered, that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Israel were in bondage then, now they were free, delivered, to serve Jehovah. So we, after we were quickened, were still in bondage to the flesh, or under law. Now we have learnt the utter badness of the flesh, and our powerlessness, and no longer seek its improvement. We are no longer in it, but in Christ, made free by the Spirit. We are now to walk after the Spirit, and the Spirit will act in us in power, on the ground of the work of Christ. The flesh is given up by those “who walk not after the flesh.” Another position is taken by those who walk “after the Spirit.” There are, so to speak, two parties. (Ver. 5.) “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” The one is death, the other is life. And, further, the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Ver. 7.) Then it follows that they that are on that ground, they that are in the flesh, cannot please God. Have you, dear young believer, come to that conclusion — that your old nature, the flesh, sin, is utterly incapable of pleasing God? It is a root that only bears evil, however you seek to improve it. It is only enmity against God. Do not listen to that abominable sentiment, that lust is not sin, unless you commit it in act. Sin is the very root of lust, as we see in chapter 7: 8. No, this very root had to be judged, and the infinite sacrifice was for sin. “For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21). On this ground alone we are delivered from the guilt and condemnation due to our sin, the flesh; and on this ground we are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, Here comes in a deeply interesting question. When, and how, may we conclude, or know, that we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? This in a very important question for both young and old believers. Let no look at it most carefully.

There is no doubt, nay, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Yet there are different stages of the work of God in the soul, as we have wen typified in Israel’s redemption.

Verse 9. This verse will answer the important question — When may we conclude we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Then, plainly, if the Spirit of God dwell in you, you may safely conclude you are not in the flesh. Is there, then, a distinct stage between the quickening, or new birth, of a soul, and the dwelling of the Spirit of God in us? Be it long or short, scripture bears out the fact in every case. Yes, in the case, of Cornelius and his company, as well as in the baptised believers at Samaria, who did not receive the Holy Ghost until the apostles came down from Jerusalem.

Cornelius was evidently a quickened soul, and all his house (Acts 10:2), but not delivered, and hence it was that he was in the flesh, until the word came with the power of the Holy Ghost, and then the Holy Ghost Himself (Ver. 44.) This, then, is the question — “Have ye received the Holy

Ghost?" If not, though quickened, you are still in the flesh, seeking its improvement — it may he by works of law. Cornelius could not be said to be a Christian until he received the Holy Ghost; neither can you, in the full sense of the word, until you have received the Spirit. "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

We met an aged man, the other day, who said he had been in Egypt thirty years. Where are you, reader, in bondage, or delivered?— In the flesh, or in the Spirit? This is not a question to be trifled with.

Verse 10. This does not imply sin eradicated, or the evil nature improved. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." If the doctrine of perfection in the flesh were true, the body could neither he dead, nor could it die, for by sin came death. We see the effect of sin in the body, even death. "But the Spirit is life, because of righteousness." There is death, on account of, sin; there is life, on account of righteousness — not ours, but the righteousness of God, accomplished by the death of His Son for us. Is the body, then, to remain dead because of sin? No. (Ver. 11.) "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from among the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." How complete the victory of Christ! The redemption of our bodies is thus certain. Does the Spirit of God dwell in us? Then the quickening of our mortal bodies is certain.

We are not, then, in the flesh, though it is in us; but we are not debtors to it, to live after it. The end of sin, or flesh, is death. It is ever ready, we find, to our sorrow, to act in the body. "But if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." If our old nature was not still left ready to act, We should not need to mortify the deeds of the body. It is not mortifying the body, but the deeds of the body. The great thing to see, is, that it is through the Spirit. This is fully brought out in Galatians 5:16-25.

Verse 14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Jesus said, "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever." (John 8:35). We are not in bondage, but in the wondrous liberty and privileges of the Son. Was not this His first message by Mary, in resurrection? "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:1-31; John 17:1-26). "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." (1 John 1:3). And what is the proof of all this? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It is also said, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law." (Galatians 5:18). Assuredly the Spirit cannot lead us under that ministration of law which is done away. (See 2 Corinthians 3:7-18) As we have seen all along, for, a believer to be placed under, or led under, law, is to be under the ministration of death and the curse. The Spirit will ever lead us to behold the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into the same glory. The Spirit gives liberty, not bondage. Which is your portion — the liberty of the sons of God, or the bondage of the servant, the slave? And the sons do not cease to be sons, and become slaves again.

Verse 15. "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Can a son cease to be a son? Can Christ, the Son, cease to be the Son? Have we not heard from His lips that God is our Father, even as He is His Father? That relation can never change, can never cease to be. Oh, the riches of His grace! We, who are conscious that we only deserved His eternal wrath, to be brought into such an

unchanging relationship — the sons of God. One spirit with the Son. No bondage or fear again, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby do we cry, as sinners, far from God, Have mercy upon us? No; but, Abba, Father. And mark, this is the very special witness of the Spirit.

Verses 16, 17. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so he that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Yea, the two great facts of which the Spirit bears witness, are these, in this scripture, to our abiding sonship, heirship; and in Hebrews 10:1-39 he bears witness that we are perfected for ever, continuously, by the one sacrifice of Christ; so that God will not remember our sins any more. Nothing is more frequently denied, or, at least, doubted, than these two blessed facts.

Yes, it is a fact, that we, if believers, are perfected for ever. And it is also a fact that we are joint-heirs with Christ. The Spirit bears witness. And mark, if we are joint-heirs of all the coming glory of Jesus — Son of man — do not overlook these few words; “if so be that we suffer with him, that we may he also glorified together.” That this was the case, see the whole history of the Acts. The world, and especially the religious part of it, hated the disciples of Christ, as they hated the Lord. And they suffered with Him. How is it that it is not so now? Because the religious world now pretends to be christian; and, alas! we sink very much to its level. But, in proportion as we are led by the Spirit, we shall certainly suffer the world’s hatred. Do you, beloved reader, know anything of being led by the Spirit? or are you led by the organisations and plans of the religious world? If so, is there any wonder that you should be a stranger, both to the enjoyed relationship of a child of God, or of suffering for Christ’s sake? Can you say you are led by the Spirit in your daily life — your shop, your business — or are you led simply by the maxims of the world? If so, you grieve the Spirit, and cannot enjoy the blessed relationship of sons of God — joint-heirs with Christ. It, is a wonderful thing to have the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, always abiding with us, well able to take care of us, and all our interests here below, as the children of God. Oh, to be led at all times by Him.

We cannot over-estimate or over-state the work of the Spirit, whether in us, as verses 2-13, or His work for us, verses 14-27. Then, to the end of the chapter, we shall find God for us, in all His eternal and absolute sovereignty — blessed ultimate purpose of God, that we may be also glorified together with Christ. Yes, let us remember this is the end God has in view, in all our sufferings and afflictions. Let every reader, however, know, that if he has not the Spirit of Christ, if that does not characterise him, he is none of His. And, further, if he is not suffering with Christ, it is most questionable whether he is a joint-heir of Christ, led by the Spirit.

Refuse to be led by the Spirit, and you may have the honours and applause of the religious world. If led of the Spirit, you will certainly be despised, as Christ was despised, and it will be your happy privilege to suffer with Him. But, oh, the glory so soon to be revealed in us. What a contrast! to be led by the Spirit, or to be led by the fashions of this world. Oh, how many there are that will sacrifice eternity for the fashions of this poor deceived world, and, all the while, pretend, yea, think, themselves Christians. Fatal delusion! If this should be the state of any reader of these lines, may God use these words to awaken him out of this delusive slumber. Surely we all need these searching words: “If so be that we suffer with him.”

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Who ever was better able to reckon on this matter than Paul? Bonds and imprisonments awaited him in every city — a life of constant suffering with Him he so loved to serve; yet he says, “the sufferings or this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Indeed, even “the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” What a solution of the perplexing paradox of all creation! The groans of battlefields shall cease; the misery and poverty and degradation of the multitude; the sufferings of creation, shall come to an end.

Verse 21. “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” What a day will that be! Yes, creation must share in the glorious liberty. “He tasted death for every thing.” It is a pleasant thought. If misery and death has reigned so long, and man’s sin so affected creation, even so the emancipation of creation shall be the result of the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Verse 22. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Mark, it is not for the salvation of our souls we wait, and hope, but for the redemption of the body. It may be from the grave, or it may be we shall be changed in a moment. It will be at the coming of the Lord. As to the body, even we have no relief from groaning, and suffering, until the coming of our Lord. We see not that yet, and therefore we wait and hope. It is a fatal mistake to suppose all this means that we do not know we have salvation; on the contrary, we know we have eternal life — “He that believeth hath eternal life.” There is no waiting or hoping for that. But we can wait in patience for the redemption of the body.

Verse 26. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” This is very blessed for us. He knoweth all that concerneth not only us, but the plans and purposes of God. We may be a few days’, or years’, distance of the redemption of the body. He surely knows what is suited for us in such circumstances. And God who heareth, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit. If we do not pray in the Spirit, we shall be sure to ask for things quite inconsistent with the dispensation or period in which we live.

We now enter upon the third or last division of our chapter. We may not be able always to understand.

Verse 28. We can, however, say, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” We know this because, God is absolutely for us. This is now brought out to the end of the chapter. “To them who are the called according to his purpose.” God has not called us on account of any good in us, or any purpose in us. Let us carefully mark what His purpose was, for His call is the result of His purpose. This, then, is His purpose: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” He foreknew whom He should

call; and He predestinated them, those whom He called, to this glorious destiny, to be like, conformed to the image of, His Son. What a purpose that His Son should be, the firstborn among many brethren! How great the privilege to be called to share this place of glory!

Verse 30. Let us not alter a single word to suit human thoughts or reason. “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Here all is of God, who cannot fail. This is His order. Predestinated; called; justified; glorified. From eternity to eternity. What a golden chain! What solid comfort to the sorely-tempted children of God! Has He called us? Then that proves He had predestinated us; and He has justified us; and will not fail to bring us to glory. Faith will surely trust Him. Unbelief would gladly let Satan reason all this foundation-truth away. Now “what shall we then say to these things? If God he for us, who can be against us?” Yes, if God he thus for us, who is he, and what is he, that can, be against us? See how God condescends to reason with us.

Verse 32. “He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” What, a question? Thus it is manifest that all things must work together for good to us, since God spared not His own Son. What infinite and eternal love to deliver Him up for us all! We can, expect all things according to the immensity and character of that love.

Verse 33. Since it is God in His righteousness, as has been seen in this epistle, that is the Justifier, “God that justifieth;” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Who is he that condemneth? If God is our Justifier, can any creature condemn us? It was God, who showed His acceptance of our ransom by raising Jesus from the dead for our justification. God delivered Him up for us all; and He raised Him from the dead for the justification of us all; and He is the unchanging righteousness of all God’s elect. “Who is he that condemneth?” God cannot condemn us without condemning Him who was raised from the dead to be our righteousness. Our justification could not be more perfect, for it is all of God. Our justification, then, is of God, and complete and settled for eternity.

There is just one other question. Can any possible circumstance alter the love of Christ, or alter the love of God in Christ to us? There are so many who doubt the love of Christ unless we in some way continue to deserve it, that this is a serious question. Now is it not a great mistake to suppose that we ever did, or do, or shall deserve that love? But does the Spirit of God, set before us our deservings?

Verses. 34 to 39. How beautiful and simple: He sets Christ before us. Let us follow the word sentence by sentence. “Christ that died.” Did He die for us because we deserved His love? Was ever love like His, and for us when dead in trespasses and sins? “Yea, rather that is risen again.” View Him risen from the dead to be the beginning of the new creation. For this express purpose — for our justification. And all when we deserved eternal wrath. “Who is even at the right hand of God.” He who bore our sins, and was made sin for us, our Representative, is at the right hand of God, as it were in possession of that place for us. Now the enemy who deceived Eve would just step in here, and say, That is all true if you never sin after your conversion, but if any man who is a Christian should sin, then surely that sin will separate him from the love of Christ. Dear young believer, mind your shield is not down when the devil gives you this thrust. Precious answer, “Who also maketh intercession for us.” Yes, “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews

7:25.) From how many sins does that intercession preserve us! But to the point, if a believer, a child of God, through unwatchfulness, should sin, will He then still, in His own infinite unchanging love, plead the cause of the failing one? “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins,” &, c. (1 John 2:1-2.) Yea, even then, in unchanging love, He is the same Jesus, “who also maketh intercession for us.” Thus all is of God and cannot fail. Read now the whole list in these verses, and let us, with the apostle, be persuaded that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There is no condemnation to those whom God justifies, whom He amounts righteous. And there is no separation from the infinite and eternal love of God, to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 9:1-33.

It will be noticed, there is now a change in the epistle. The next three chapters form a parenthesis. The righteousness of God has now been fully revealed and explained in His dealings with, and bringing to Himself, both Jew and Gentile. Both alike guilty, and now both alike justified; so that there is no condemnation, and no separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. But if this be so, what becomes of all the special promises to Israel in the prophets? This is the subject taken up in these three chapters. Had the apostle, who had so clearly brought out this truth of no difference now in God’s dealings with both, ceased to love the nation of Israel? Nay, his love for them was so intense, that, like Moses of old, he had, as it were, been beside himself. He says, “I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” In some cases, that intense love carried him beyond the guidance of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 20:22; Acts 21:4, etc.) No doubt the Lord bore with His devoted servant, and overruled all for good — ours at least — though Paul suffered imprisonment and death. How much this must have added to his grief of heart — to be hated and persecuted in every city by those he so deeply loved. How like his Lord, whom he so devotedly served.

Verse 4. He owns their full national privileges. “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

What privileges! The adopted nation, with whom God had dwelt in the tabernacle. These privileges were never given to any other nation. The eternal God had become incarnate, taking flesh from that nation. All this is fully allowed. He who is over all, God blessed for over, as to the flesh, the body, He was born of Mary, of the seed royal of that nation. But now another principle is brought out. God had, unquestionably, made a difference, even in the seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham were not all the elect, adopted children of promise. “But in Isaac shall thy seed he called.” “The children of the promise are counted for the seed.” A multitude sprang from Abraham; but Ishmael was rejected, and in Isaac alone was the chosen seed.

There was the same purpose of God in the election of Jacob. It was said unto Sarah, “The elder shall serve the younger.” It was also written, though many hundreds of years after, by Malachi, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” This matter of the free, sovereign favour of God is of great moment for Paul’s explanation and no one who believed the scriptures could doubt it, in the

cases referred to above; and God had said to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Surely, then, God had a sovereign right to show mercy to the Gentiles, the very thing that so offended the Jews. It is remarkable how all that say they are Jews now, or take Jewish ground, always dispute the sovereign grace of God.

Many learned men deny divine sovereignty, but God is wiser than men. We must not forget that man is proved by the cross to be at enmity with God. He has no desire, naturally, toward God.

Verse 16. “So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” This is very humbling, but surely true.

Verse 17. Pharaoh is given as a sample of the wickedness of man, and God’s just judgment upon him. How long God bore with his daring infidelity and rebellion, until, in the just government of God, he was given up, hardened, to his own destruction. Let every rebel against God beware, lest Pharaoh’s doom be his own. Pharaoh was a blasphemer. He said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” (Exodus 5:2.) Let the scoffer of this day beware, lest his heart he hardened against the Lord, to his eternal destruction. “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will; he hardeneth.” Men may say, If that is the case, “why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?” Did not Pharaoh resist God? Have not you resisted and refused God? “Who art thou that repliest against God?” Has the mere creature, the thing formed, a right to ask, “Why hast thou made me thus?” Nay, has God formed me thus? Far from it. Is He the Author of all man’s rebellion and sin? Mark, it is not a statement, but a question — “Hath not the potter power over the clay?” etc. Is not God Sovereign? It does not say He has made some unto dishonour. His wrath against all ungodliness in made known, but how long has He first endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? Did not Pharaoh fit himself to destruction? So of every sinner.

It is, however, most blessedly true, that He afore prepares the vessels of mercy unto glory. As to that, it is all sovereign favour: according to the riches of His glory. “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.” Man fits himself unto destruction, as the Jews were doing. God fits the vessels of mercy to glory.

Verse 24. “Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles,” quoting Hosea in proof of this: “I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved,” etc. Thus does he prove, from their own prophet, that mercy should be shown to the Gentiles.

Then he quotes from Isaiah, and shows that it is only a remnant of Israel that shall be saved. Yea, “Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.” Surely their rejection of Jesus, whom God had made both Lord and Christ, proved their guilt could not be greater. But human perversity did go even beyond this. They had killed the Just and Holy One of God, and even then clung to the law for righteousness.

Verse 30. “What shall we say, then I? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.” The Jews sought

righteousness by keeping the law, but never reached it. It is not so to this day? All who take Jewish ground, and seek to be righteous by keeping law — no matter what law — they never reach it. They never can he sure they are sufficiently righteous for God to justify them, thus they never attain to peace with God. The more religion an unconverted man has, the more difficult it is for the gospel to reach him. And why did they not attain to righteousness or justification? “Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.” And how did the Gentiles arrive at righteousness, and peace with God? They beard the glad tidings of mercy to them, through the Redeemer’s blood; they believed God; they were justified; they had, believing God, peace with God. Is it not even so now? The gospel is heard by a person brought up under law, hoping, some day, to keep it so as to be righteous, and then hopes, in another world, after the judgment-day, to have eternal life, and peace with God. Often filled with gloomy doubts — even forebodings of eternal wrath — he tries human expedients — a priesthood, to whom he unburdens, if sincere, the darkness of his soul, the weight of his sins, and the dread of the future. Does he attain to a righteousness that fits him for the presence of God? Never. Will any other religious expedient give this blessed peace with God? Not one.

How different, when a poor, guilty, ignorant, heavy laden sinner hears the gospel, and believes it, like the Gentiles of old! They had not the law, and did not seek righteousness by its works. They heard the sweet story of the love of God to sinners such as they. They heard how God had pitied them — yea, had given His beloved Son to die for them; that He had died, the Just for the unjust; that God had raised Him from the dead. They heard the glad tidings of forgiveness of sins through Him; they heard, they believed, they were justified from all things, they had peace with God.

Dear reader, have you so heard, so believed? Are you thus justified? It so, have you not peace with God? But our next chapter will bring all this out more fully.

Romans 10:1-21. The apostle here pauses a little. It is the pressure of his heart’s love. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. He was greatly distressed at the troublers, who sought to pervert the Galatians; yea, even longed that they would cut themselves off. But how he grieved over the mass of deceived Jews. Are we so grieved for the mass around us? Can we say our heart’s desire and prayer to God for them, is, that they might be saved?

Verse 3. “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted, themselves unto the righteousness of God.” You will remember the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. (See chap. 1: 17; 3: 21-25.) Thus the Jews who rejected the gospel, of necessity remained in ignorance of that righteousness. And thus it is at this day, all who refuse the revelation, that God is just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, must, if at all anxious to be saved, seek to establish their own righteousness; and thus refuse to submit to the fact that God is righteous in justifying freely, through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus. The Father’s meeting of the prodigal in Luke 15:1-32, will illustrate this subject. The prodigal, like the poor Gentile, had come to himself. The whole parable is most striking: the shepherd had come to seek the lost sheep, yes, He has, as we know, died for it. The Holy Ghost has been sent down from heaven and seeks the lost. And now the father has his full joy in receiving the lost son; he, the father, came to meet him. Deep exercise of conscience had taken place in the prodigal. A sense that there was plenty in the father’s house, and a readiness to

confess his sin, this always marks the Spirit's work. But as yet he was ignorant of the best robe. He hoped to be a servant, like every human heart, but totally ignorant of all that was in store. He had his rags, his guilt, his shame. He owned all this to his father. Had he a robe for the father? He had nothing but rags. Did the father tell him he must make a robe, a garment to fit him for his house? No. The father had a robe for him. Oh, look at the father, "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." This is how God meets the repentant sinner in his rags without a robe. The father said: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Thus joy fills the heart of God to receive the lost sinner. Not so the elder brother, he prefers to work out a righteousness of his own. What a contrast! Sad and fatal mistake! The prodigal had no robe for the father. He had nothing but rags and sin. The Father had the best robe, the righteousness of God for the prodigal. Yes, and the ring for his hand, everlasting love: and the walk provided for, shoes for his feet. All things new and all of God.

Now Israel, like the elder brother, would not have this compassion, and righteousness of God. Indeed they were ignorant of it "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." They had followed after the law of righteousness; they had tried to keep the law so as to be righteous. They had tried to make a robe to bring to God; but were ignorant of the best robe that God had to give to them. Is this your case, reader? are you trying to make out, to work out a righteousness, to bring to God? Do you say, Must I not try to keep the law so as to be good, and fit for the presence of God? Do you not see your mistake? are you not trying to bring the robe to God? What then is the best robe?

Verse 4. "For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth." Yes, Christ is the best robe — the end of all the requirements, and all the sacrificial types of the law. God hath made him to be unto us righteousness. We need no other, to go into the presence of God our Father. Practical righteousness before men is another question, but not the subject here.

"Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth these things shall live by them." But the prodigal had not done these things. And we have not done these things: we are guilty and have no righteousness to bring to God. But believing God, He can, and does reckon us righteous; and that by a work done, not something which has to be done. Christ has not to come down from heaven to die on the cross. He has once been down here and died for our sins. He has not to be raised from the dead, all is done, it is finished. Just as the father met the prodigal, the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This was just what Israel would not do. They would not confess that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had rejected and crucified, both Lord and Christ. They would cling to the law for righteousness, and they would not in their hearts believe on Christ as their righteousness before God. How many are doing the same to this day! They will seek to be righteous, but never attain to it. They never know the righteousness of God in justifying them the moment they believe.

Verse 11. Now the apostle quotes their own scripture in proof "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." This proves there must be a time when the no difference

doctrine should be in force. “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (or Gentile): for the same Lord over, all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Joel 2:32.) What a blessed fact is this: all, whether Jew or Gentile, that really come to the Lord, calling on Him, are as sure of a welcome, as was the prodigal. Which of these do you prefer, reader? If even it were possible, would you prefer that you had never sinned, and that you had wrought a righteousness fit to bring unto God, thus bringing a robe to God; or, owning all that you are, and all you have done, and now as a hell-deserving sinner, confessing with your mouth, and believing with your heart the Lord Jesus, your ever subsisting righteousness before God? We cannot, abhor ourselves too much; but oh, that deep compassion to meet us just as we are, and clothe us with the best robe, the ring, and shoes. And how is this righteousness of God made known? Read verses 14, 15 for the answer. By bearing the word, the sent gospel of peace. What glad tidings! Those who sought righteousness by law hated those good tidings and the preachers of the gospel. It is exactly so to this day, by all who say they are Jews and are not. Is it not a most astounding fact that man should hate and reject his greatest good, the gospel of peace? He will try or hope to try some day to make his own peace with God. But he will not have the peace made by the blood of Jesus; the peace preached to them that are afar off, and them that are nigh. Yes, peace proclaimed to all. “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord who hath believed our report” The word of the gospel was preached to all Israel: but they would not believe it. It is preached now, perhaps as it never was before, to all Christendom; but they will not believe it. We shall see the final result of a this in the next chapter.

God has His own, in spite of all man’s perverseness, whether Jews or Gentiles, as Isaiah boldly said, “I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.” Thus has the apostle proved the two things from their own Old Testament scriptures; no difference, and the sovereignty of God, Whosoever, Jew, or Greek, shall call upon the Lord shall be saved — and oh, blessed soul-sustaining truth, He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. Was Israel then lost because God was not willing to save them? “But to Israel, he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” They would not come unto Him: they refused the best robe, the ring, the shoes. May this not be the case with the readers of these lines. He that cometh unto Him shall in no wise be cast out.

Romans 11:1-36.

“I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid.” Paul himself was a proof of this, for he was an Israelite. “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” It is not God who hath rejected His ancient people: “He saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” It is important to see this side of the truth — the perfect readiness of God that Israel — nay, that all men — should be saved. It is man that is the rebel, the breaker of the law, and now the rejecter of the mercy of God. But then there is the other side also. When Israel had so rebelled against God, that Elijah said, he alone was left. He said:

Verse 3. “Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.” Here we have the deep, universal rejection and hatred of man against God. This is man in the full exercise of his own will. But has God left all men to their own free choice and wicked course?

“But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” God does not say they have reserved, or preserved, themselves; no, He says, “I have reserved.” Just as we have seen in chapter 9, if God had not done this, they would all have been as Sodom and Gomorrha.

Verse 5. “Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” Yes, at that very time none could deny that the nation, as such, was mad in its hatred and rejection of Christ. Saul himself was a proof of the exceeding madness of the Israelites against Christ. But, just as in the days of Elijah, there was then an election of grace, of free, unmerited favour of God. Dear young believer, you will be greatly tempted to reject this abounding, electing, free favour of God. In this day few heartily believe it. We would have you embrace it with your whole soul. Is it not evident that both Israel and we Gentiles are so bad, such utter rejecters of the grace of God, that, if it had not been for His election, in free favour, grace, none would have been saved — all, all would have been like Sodom. Yes, the total ruin of man, and the election of God, stand or fall together. You cannot truly hold the one, and reject the other. Mark, these scriptures show there is no unwillingness on God’s part, but man will not have the grace of God. When this is seen, how precious to the believer is the blessed truth of the election of grace! “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Ver. 6.) This is self-evident. Salvation by works, of whatever kind, must set aside the free favour of God. Do you stand in the free, full, everlasting favour of God; or are you seeking to attain to it by works? This is just what Israel were doing, but “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for.” With all their hatred of God, as revealed in Christ, they were, at the same time, zealous of the law, and seeking righteousness by works. Rejecting the free favour of God, they never would obtain it by works. On this very account their city was destroyed, and they were scattered or slain. “But the election hath obtained it,” that is, the free favour of God in which they stood. And, as to the rest, the rejecters of free, unmerited favour, they “were blinded.” And the scriptures are abundantly quoted, to prove that this would be so in verses 8-10.

Now here are two facts. The prophets have foretold that these rejecters would be given up to judicial blindness, and this has really been so for long centuries. If a self-conceited rejecter of the truth of the election of grace should read this, oh, beware lest He give you up also to blindness and hardness of heart. How long has God held out His hands ready to receive you? And are you still a rejecter, like self-righteous Israel? God may, in righteous judgment, give you up to hardness of heart, and to the darkness fast setting in. But will the present rejection of the grace of God by Israel, and their consequent blindness, ultimately alter the purpose and promise of God? We must now look carefully at the dispensational bearing of this question. God had overruled their fall for great blessing to the Gentiles. And, if this be the case, how much greater will be the blessing of their fulness? The Gentile world had been given up to gross idolatry, as stated in chapter 1. But now, if the casting away of Israel as a nation has been “the reconciling of the world,” what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? The apostle is not here speaking of the calling, or heavenly privileges, of the church, but of earthly privileges. When God called out Abraham, and separated him from the nations, he became the olive-tree of blessing and promise on earth. His seed became that tree of privilege, of which he was the root. It is not a question, then, of being branches in Christ but branches of the olive-tree of promise, or privilege. Relative holiness, too, or

separation from the world. Some of the natural branches were broken off — not all Israel, but some. And, to carry out the figure, Gentiles had been graffed into this olive-tree of privilege.

Let not the Gentile boast, however: he says, “Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.” And mark, it was because of unbelief they were broken off. It was not because God willed to break them off, but because of their own unbelief. And the Gentile stands by faith. “Be not highminded, but fear.” There was judgment, severity, towards Israel, which fell through unbelief; but toward the Gentiles goodness — “If thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” God is also able to graff Israel in again.

It is also utterly contrary to nature to graff the wild olive into the good. In all nature, the good olive, or apple, is graffed into the wild. But God had taken the poor wild Gentile, and graffed him into the good Abrahamic tree of privilege. And, further, the apostle would not have them ignorant of this dispensational truth, “that blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall he saved, as it is written,” etc. (Vers. 25, 26.) Thus the time of “no difference” shall come to a close; the purpose of God in gathering out of the Gentiles shall be accomplished; then all Israel shall be saved, as it is written. Then shall every promise to them be fulfilled. The whole then spared nation of Israel shall he gathered to their own land, and then be born of God, as it is written. Such is the purpose of God, though they are the bitterest enemies now; God elects so to do.

Verse 29. “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He never changeth. Not one jot or tittle of His word can fail. The literal translation of verses 30, 31 is important. “For as indeed ye [also] once have not believed in God, but now have been objects of mercy, through the unbelief of these; so these also have now not believed in your mercy, in order that they also may be objects of mercy.” This is very wonderful, and shows out the principle — He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. The Gentiles had no claim to salvation; they were dead in sins, in unbelief. God showed them pure mercy. Israel would not believe such mercy, and forfeited all their privileges through unbelief, that so God might at last save them as a whole nation, but as objects of mercy. “For God hath shut up together all in unbelief, in order that he might show mercy to all.” “O the depth of the riches,” etc. Not one shall he found in the church above or in the future kingdom of God on earth, but what has been saved as an object of mercy. The free favour of God in both cases thus reigns triumphant.

One word, before we close this chapter on the solemn warning, that if Gentile Christendom does not abide in His goodness, it, too, will be out off. Was there ever a time when the goodness, the free favour, of God were more distinctly rejected than the present moment? Never, since the days of the apostles, has the full, free grace of God been so preached, and therefore never so rejected. We lately visited a large town, where an excellent large room had been built, for the preaching of the pure gospel of the grace of God. It was closed. Another very large building was occupied by those who are, like Israel of old, seeking to attain to righteousness by works, and ritual, and the barely concealed Mass. Standing and sitting room was crowded. Will God bear this for ever? Surely the end is near. The Gentile branches must be out off. Thus has the Spirit of God explained this period of “no difference,” in these three chapters — 9, 10, 11. After its close there will come the dispensation of the kingdom of Christ, as foretold in all the prophets. And at that time all Israel will be saved, as objects of His mercy. “To whom be glory for ever. Amen.” This closes the

doctrinal part of this most wonderful revelation of the righteousness of God, in His dealings with man, the reading of which will profit us nothing, unless made good in our souls by the Holy Ghost. Has He, as we have passed along its wondrous pages, thus used His own word? Have we truly owned ourselves as ruined, ungodly sinners? Have we learnt that there neither has been, nor can be, any good in the flesh? Have we believed God, who hath raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences? Have we individually gone over those offences, and seen that they wore transferred to our holy Substitute? Can we say He was raised from the dead for my justification? Surely, then, we are justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, standing in this abounding free favour of God, what should be our walk? Yea, further, being made free, and having the Spirit of life, what should be the fruit? The remaining chapters give the answer to these questions.

Romans 12:1-21.

We come now to practical righteousness, the state and walk of those who have been made the recipients of the grace of God, who have been taken up in sovereign, free favour, justified from all things; without condemnation in Christ. It is by this very compassion of God that these precepts are addressed to them. “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies [or compassion] of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable [or intelligent] service.” It certainly does require some intelligence, as to these bodies, to yield them up thus in intelligent service. We are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Chap. 8: 23.) They are about to be fashioned like unto His glorious body. We are about to bear the image of the heavenly. Even as to our bodies, we shall soon see Him, and be like Him. (Php 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:48; 1 John 3:2.)

Now, having intelligence as to all this, we can give up our bodies beforehand, to be His now, to be used in holy separation to Him, and for Him. What a privilege! But this cannot possibly be, if we are conformed to this world — a world at enmity with Him. And as we have been renewed in spirit, “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

If God has saved us, in pure mercy and compassion, then let us intelligently seek to know His will, prove what that will is. This will require spiritual intelligence as to the time or dispensation in which we are found. The good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God as to this can only be known and proved in lowliness of soul and entire dependence.

Verse 3. “For I say, through the grace given unto me.” What a constant need of the sense of the free favour shown to us individually, and given unto us! It is this that enables us to have low thoughts of self, and to think soberly, or to think so as to be wise, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith.

Verses 4, 5. As there was one nation in the flesh in the past dispensation, and a covenant of commandments adapted to that dispensation, “so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” What a contrast this is to Israel; and we must have intelligence as to this, or we cannot prove the excellent will of God to us now. In the past no person could be in Christ. Christ must die, and be raised from the dead, or remain alone; but now we are one body in Christ. And this truth must rule all our obedience to Christ. We are to act in union, like

the various members of the human body, even as we are one body in Christ. It is not so much the doctrine of the one body here, as the practice of all the members of that one body.

Verse 6. Still ever remembering, “Having, then, gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Surely, whatever may be the service in the one body in Christ, it is all grace, all free favour. With this blessed sense of the free favour of God, let us be diligent in the service, whatever it may be — whether prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, or ruling. Let all be done with cheerfulness, and thus these heavenly precepts are so plain, they need no explanation, further than seeing all must be done in reference to the one body in Christ. And yet each precept is of the utmost importance, and can only he kept as walking in the Spirit; indeed, these are fruits of the Spirit. Will the flesh, still in us, “cleave to that which is good,” or, “in honour preferring one another,” or will it “bless them which persecute you”? Nay, it will ever persecute that which is born of the Spirit.

Verse 16 should be, “Have the same respect one for another, not minding high things, but going along with the lowly.” The very opposite of this world’s ways.

Verses 17, 19. How liable we are to forget this blessed teaching; how ready the flesh is to return evil for evil. And how sad when indolence takes the place of providing things honest in the sight of all men. Yea, without care, the Christian may fall into the almost universal dishonesty of the world. Is not a deceitful, dishonest transaction of the same character as highway robbery? These are words that need to be put up in every office, shop, and house: “Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Oh, for more faith and unswerving obedience in the common things of every-day life. We are persuaded it is carelessness in these things, if not worse than carelessness, that is the cause of much of our weakness. And how the flesh in each of us would avenge ourselves! But these are the words of the Spirit to us: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,” etc. Did He, whose precious name we bear, avenge Himself? The day of vengeance, of judgment on an ungodly world, will come; but are we not the followers of Him who healed His enemy’s ear? Oh, to be more like Him. What tender words are these: “if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” Where shall we find such words apart from the inspired scriptures of truth? Leave man to himself, will he act thus? No, no, these are the precious fruits of the Spirit. May they abound in us more and more.

Romans 13:1-14. The path of the heavenly man on earth in continued. What is to be his conduct as to the government of this world? He is to be subject. He is to regard the powers of government that be, as appointed of God. He is to be far from lawlessness and insubordination. “And they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment” [or, bring guilt upon themselves]. The Christian is to be, of all men, most loyal, even for conscience sake. “Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”

Let it be observed, there is no precept here that we should take a place, or part, in the world’s politics; but be subject. The church, or the Christian, is always looked at as not of the world, yet, in it, he must be subject: whatever the form of government, his path is to be subject; and, dear young believer, God is wiser than we are.

Chapter 13: 8. “Owe no man anything.” These few words are very comprehensive. Not merely debts when due, but to seek to pay all demands as soon as due. To do this, a Christian should

always seek to live below his income, and do his business within his means. This may require much diligence and self-denial, but what misery will he avoid. These words, then, are important, when applied as to income and expenditure. And also, whatever kindness may be shown us, let us seek to return it with large interest. “Owe no man anything, unless to love one another” (New Translation). Ah, that is a debt never fully paid, for it is to love one another as He hath loved us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:5.) Now, in its exercise, it flows out to others — the love of God in our hearts by the Spirit — and the result is, “he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Thus the commands as to our neighbour are all fulfilled. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This is by the twofold power of the love of God, already shed abroad in our hearts, and by the Spirit which has been given. This is not putting the Christian under law again, and telling him, if he keep it, God will love him, and give him the Holy Spirit. Neither is it telling him to pray for the Spirit, that he may keep the law. It is the opposite of all this. The love of God and the Spirit he has, and love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. How beautiful the order of God is, and the effect is never put before the cause.

Verses 11-13. Again, there must be intelligence, in order “that, knowing the time,” etc. But if Christians do not know the time, but suppose the very contrary, that the world is about to be converted, or to get better, that the night is not far spent, indeed that it is not night at all, but a grand day of development and human advancement — if thus so dark and mistaken, how can they know the perfect will of God for walk, of holy separation from a world doomed to judgment? Is it not impossible?

What a word for this moment!— “Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . . The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” What an arousing motive for holiness! Beware of all pretended holiness that has not this intelligence and this motive. What! is the Lord at hand, and we, Christians, asleep?— whether we think of joy to us, for ever with the Lord — how near now our salvation — or the day of wrath and judgment on a rejecting world. “Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” If the world is steeped in dishonesty in this dark night, “Let us walk honestly, as in the day.” What a change there would be in the conduct, even of Christians, if we were really to awake, to expect our Lord, day by day. Should you like to be found of Him walking in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, or in strife and envying? Surely not. “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Oh, that we may awake from sleep, and, waiting for our Lord, thus put Him on. The world will not hear the gospel — they will not read Christ in the word. May they, then, see Christ in us, and in all we do — living epistles, read and known of all men.

They will look at us, narrowly will they watch us. They know not how Satan seeks to trip us up. They know not the temptations and buffetings of the believer, and, without constant dependence on the power of God, how liable to fail. But may the world never see us making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. The Lord bless these precious precepts to both writer and reader. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Oh, how soon we shall be for ever with the Lord!

Romans 14:1-23.

“Now, him that is weak in the faith receive not to (the) determining of questions of reasoning.” (New Translation.) We may make a mistake either way. We may become so narrow as to reject a

brother weak in faith, or we may make our receiving a cavilling person, the determining of doubtful questions, and reasoning speculations. The Holy Ghost would have us carefully avoid both these extremes. In many things such as eating and drinking, esteeming one day holy, or all days alike — in all such matters, we are not to judge one another, but walk together in love.

Verse 10. “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand [or be placed] before the judgment-seat of Christ.” This is not a question of being brought into the judgment for sins, or sin. That has been settled earlier in the Epistle. (Chap. 8: 1, 33, 34.) The Lord assures us this shall not be. (John 5:24.) What then is meant here? Simply the question in hand. The fact that all will be placed before God, who cannot make a mistake in what He approves, should be a wholesome check in preventing the injurious habit of judging one another. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.”

Surely this does not teach us to be indifferent when the Person of Christ, or the truth in Him, is attacked: for Paul had to withstand even a Peter to his face. But it does teach us “that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” To do so, is not to walk according to love. A weak brother might, by seeing me eat things offered to idols, be led to do so, and his conscience being defiled, he might fall into idolatry, and get, for the time being, under the power of Satan, and, as to fellowship, away from Christ; in fact, just where a wicked person had to be put for the destruction of the flesh. (1 Corinthians 5:5.) This would be destroying a brother, instead of the flesh, or, on the other hand, his conscience might be destroyed. In any case love would seek to put no stumbling-block in a brother’s way.

We have also known cases where a person has observed the Lord’s day as the Sabbath, in a pious but Jewish way. Another person to show his superior knowledge has done things on the Lord’s day which were a desecration in the eyes of the former; and the result has been most disastrous to both. For years both conscience and communion were lost or destroyed. Do not, however, for a moment suppose that these words “destroy not him” etc., can possibly mean the destruction of eternal life. Scripture cannot contradict itself. If it seems to do so, it is evident we have not got the true sense of one at least of the texts. If the eternal life we have in Christ could he destroyed, then it would not be eternal. And of those who have eternal life, Jesus says, “they shall never perish,” that is enough for faith. It is, however, a most wholesome and important thing to have the judgment-seat of Christ constantly before us. It would preserve us from much judging, or even devouring one another. The great point here is serving Christ acceptably to God. “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.” These are precious words: righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. If God reigns in our hearts, there will be consistency, that which is consistent with the holy place we are in. “Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” This will lead us to do nothing, whether in eating flesh or drinking wine, whereby a brother may be stumbled. This must not, however, lead us to compromise the gospel. Had Paul also refused to eat with the Gentiles lest he should offend Peter, that would not have been for edification, but would have compromised the gospel. It was saying Christ is not enough for your eternal salvation, you must also keep the law. Thus by some the law was hold as superior to Christ. In like manner, if a society of men were to say, Christ alone is not enough for the deliverance of a sinner and his

complete salvation, you must take a pledge with no not to drink wine — it would not be of faith, or love, or edification, thus to compromise the gospel. It would soon be, as with the Judaising teachers, to seduce from Christ. If Christ has not the pre-eminence, something else soon will have. Satan ever seeks to use that which is good to displace Christ. Law is good, temperance is good; but let us watch lest we use either to rob us of Christ. We need to be kept on the right hand, and on the left. These remarks are only intended to apply where temperance is put in the place of Christ. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind, and let us each remember “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Let us ask ourselves in the presence of God, do I need this for my body which is the Lord’s? Is there any brother I know, who will be stumbled if I take it? Have I faith, is it pleasing to the Lord that I take it, or that I do this? And let us be very careful as to boasting in these matters, or in judging our brother. “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”

Romans 15:1-33. The apostle says, “We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” How tender then we ought to be now in, these days when all are weak, and feeble together. “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” Is not this truly lovely? Where shall we find it perfectly exemplified? Oh, there is One, yes, one only perfect One. “For even Christ pleased not himself.” No self-vindication; “but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” His eye ever on and up to the Father, He was the expression, the revelation of the Father, God manifest. And all the reproaches He felt to be against His Father. He answered not again, He pleased not Himself, but His ineffable delight was to bear all, and do the will of Him that sent Him.

“Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward, another, according to Christ Jesus. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What a prayer! how needed at all times, but more especially in these last days of discord. He is the perfect copy; it is “according to Christ Jesus.” He has received us to the glory of God, yes, as objects of mercy according to the riches of His grace. Let us never forget how He has received us, in receiving one another. Then the scriptures are quoted to show how grace has, and was, to abound to the Gentiles. This showed that Jewish believers were not to reject them.

It is also to be observed, that these scriptures will have their complete fulfilment in the millennial kingdom. “There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.”

Then follows another prayer, “Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” How distinctly the state of the soul is connected with the coming of the Lord, though it is not the subject of this Epistle! May we know our Father as the God of patience, and the God of hope.

Verse 14. In this verse it must be noted that there is no thought of the first bishop of Rome. “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” Now is it not remarkable that in the whole of this inspired letter to the saints at Rome, there is not a single sentence that can have the slightest recognition of, or reference to, such a person as a bishop of Rome. The brethren were able to admonish one another; and each was responsible according to the measure of grace bestowed,

as in chapter 12. The first bishop of Rome and his successors are a pure invention of after times. Had Peter been, or any other brother the bishop of Rome, Paul must here have recognised him as such. Does he not rather declare his own apostleship, as minister of the Gentiles. (Verses 16-20.) All this to Paul was the free favour of God, “because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,” etc. And the result of all this blessed favour, he could offer up to God, “being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” Now, all thus being of the free favour of God, he could glory. “I have therefore, whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.” The young believer will do well to ponder these precious divine principles of service — how the Gentiles had been made obedient to the gospel. Through mighty signs and wonders, by (not human wisdom or eloquence, but) the power of the Spirit of God. And what a mission to the Gentiles! And mark, the true work of this evangelist, not to build on another’s foundation. “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named,” etc. This is most important. Oh, think even in this day, how many thousands of nominal Christians are in the towns and villages, who have never heard the gospel. And in many places, there is a real thirst for the simple truth. It is most cheering to know how God in sovereign grace is using tracts. Still, it is pleasing in His sight, that His saints should not only spread these in faith, in regions beyond, but also the evangelist take the glad tidings everywhere, “and round about.”

Some may say, we are not evangelists. No, but you can help the evangelist; let him he well supplied with tracts and books: these greatly help him in his blessed work in winning souls to God, and in building them up when converted. You can help, perhaps, most in prayer, and sympathy. You can help him to take lodgings in the distant village. In a word, if our hearts are stirred up in the sympathy of Christ for precious souls, He will open a way in which we can be fellow-helpers in this work. The Lord give us more of the yearning after souls we have in these verses.

Verse 22. “For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you . . . and having a great desire, these many years, to come unto you.” Here a fact of no little importance is recorded. The Holy Ghost well knew the future arrogance of the professing church, and how Rome would be the ultimate head of those pretensions. He has therefore carefully excluded all knowledge as to who first preached Christ at Rome. It is evident, from these words, that the apostle of the Gentiles had, as yet, never been there. Neither is there a particle of evidence that either Peter, or any other apostle, had been there when it was founded, and the brethren were able to edify one another. We also learn that this epistle was written about the time that Paul went up to Jerusalem, to carry the contributions to the poor saints. That is a little before he was sent a prisoner to Rome. (Acts 20:1-38; Acts 21:1-40, etc.) He did not know what means the Lord would employ to send him to Rome. Let us learn in this that the Lord can, and will, accomplish all His purpose.

Verse 29. “And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.” Yes, and though bonds and imprisonment, and the fierce Euroclydon, awaited him as companions to Rome, yet his Lord did not disappoint him. It was from Rome, and at Rome, the Lord used him in bringing out the fulness of the gospel in the revelation of the church. And from thence he sent the precious stream of truth to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Thus, in the severest storms of life, we may rest in patience, assured that He doeth all things well. In verses 30, 31 we see how the apostle valued the prayers of saints he had never seen; and yet the Lord answers those prayers in His own way.

He has in this chapter spoken of God as “the God of hope,” and “the God of patience.” “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” Thus we surely need to know Him as the God of hope, patience, and peace. How important thus to know Him in these last and difficult days.

Romans 16:1-27.

We now have the closing remarks and salutations. The Lord would not have the devoted Phebe forgotten. She was a deaconess, or servant, of the church in Cenchrea. “That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” These verses throw much light on the true character of the deacon, as appointed by the apostles before the failure of the church set in so sadly. There is not a shadow of the modern clerical idea. “A succourer of many.” Evidently this was in temporal things. She was to be received in the Lord, in that relationship. And what beautiful love and care. She is to be assisted in whatsoever business she has in Rome. It might then be said, See how these Christians love one another. At this time, also, we find Priscilla and Aquila in Rome, and their devotedness is noted. There were no St. Peters then, but “the church that is in their house.” And, unto verse 16, we have various companies of saints, which appear to belong to different houses, all forming the one assembly of God in Rome. (See verses 14, 15.) “And the brethren that are with them;” or, “all the saints which are with them.” There were those then that took an oversight of these several companies of brethren, or saints. Such were called elders, or overseers, in other early epistles. But why is there no Bishop of Rome addressed? Simply and evidently because there was no such person. Nay, it is most remarkable that there is not one word in this Epistle that can be used as an authority for the episcopacy of Rome. How strikingly this displays the foreknowledge and wisdom of God!

Now contrast the Rome of that day with this. To return to the church as it was in Rome, as found in these salutations, what should we find? No pope or bishop of Rome, no cardinals, no clergy, no monks or nuns; not a single priest performing mass; no grand buildings, called churches. But we should find different gatherings of saints by calling, knowing their sins forgiven; justified from all things; having peace with God; able to admonish one another. All these assemblies, in certain houses or places, were under the care of the Holy Ghost, and labouring brethren are named in each company — the whole being members of the one body of Christ. We are compelled to own that there is no similarity whatever between the church in Rome in the year 60, and the Church of Rome in these days.

Rome is evidently a departure from the true church of God. Is it not remarkable that the only official person named — if we may so regard the deaconess — is a woman. And, lest the persons saluted should be regarded, or referred to, as priests, or episcopoi, women are named amongst them. How beautiful it was when they were thus brethren dwelling together in the unity of the Spirit, and some of the brethren labouring much in the Lord — such as “the beloved Persis.” Dear young believer, is there any reason why we should not be content with the same simplicity now?

Verse 17. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause [or form] divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” There are two things here we must carefully notice. Division is an evil in itself — it is strongly condemned in other scriptures. (See 1 Corinthians 1:1-31; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.) We also learn, that if any are practising that evil, by causing or forming divisions, contrary to the doctrine they had received, others were to avoid

them; that is, to separate from them. But if believers do thus separate from and avoid those who form divisions, do they not also form a sect, or division? No, obedience to the word is not division. And, further, those who cause divisions may always be known by the spirit in which they act. “For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ,” etc. We never go wrong if Christ is the only object. Happy is it when it can be said, “For your obedience is come abroad unto all men.” “Yet I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil.” It is most deadening to all spiritual life to be occupied with evil.

“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” That is certain: whether he persecutes or seduces, it is but for a little while. He still is the accuser, but shortly he will be out down. In the meantime, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ he with you. Amen.” This is repeated — verses 20, 24. Yes, the grace, the unclouded favour, unchanging love, sovereign and free, be with you all. Then follow the salutations of others. But even Timotheus is “my workfellow.” What unfeigned humility and brotherly love! As Paul commended the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:1-38), so here he says, “Now to him that is of power to stablish you, according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest [and by prophetic scriptures — New Translation], according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith. To God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.”

Yes, God is able to stablish all believers according to that which Paul calls “my gospel,” my glad tidings. The glad tidings committed to Paul have a wide range. The solid foundation of those glad tidings we have seen unfolded in this Epistle — the righteousness of God revealed in justifying the ungodly — both as to sins, up to chapter 5: 11, and also as to sin, chapter 5: 12 to 8: 4. It also contains the glad tidings of deliverance from sin and law; peace with God; no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus, whether as to sins, or sin; and no possible separation from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Here is also just a reference to a still further revelation, of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began. This mystery is fully explained in Ephesians 3:1-21. This was not made manifest in the scriptures of Old Testament times. How could it, since it was then kept a profound secret? But it was revealed by prophetic scriptures, that is, of the New Testament. It is, however, remarkable how soon that heavenly mystery was lost, and Christendom went back to an earthly Judaism. It not only put itself under law for righteousness, but set up a worldly church government, in imitation of Judaism; so that soon all trace of the church, as seen in scripture, was lost for long ages. Such is man. He has always become foolish; all his wisdom is folly. The closing words of the Epistle direct us not to man, or to what calls itself the church, but “To God only wise he glory, through Jesus Christ, for over. Amen.” However man has failed; however the church may fail as a testimony for God on earth; God shall be eternally glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. C.S.

101. The First Years of Christianity and What is the Church?

The First Years of Christianity and What is the Church?

Charles Stanley.

Contents.

"That which was from the beginning"

How the Lord Jesus regarded the Scriptures The Four Gospels The Promise of the Holy Ghost Christianity Begun First State of the Church The Church, its Ministry The Doctrines Taught The Righteousness of God The Gospel of the Glory Facts and Fruits of Paul's Gospel The Effects of the Gospel The Order of Preaching, Worship, and Edification What is the Church?

"That which was from the beginning" From the holy inspired writings of John we see the vast importance of holding fast that which was from the beginning. He says, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

These words do not refer to the past eternity, but the beginning of Christianity — to the manifestation of eternal life, the Incarnate Son of God in this world. If we go back to the beginning of all things, of the universe, that blessed Person was ever there. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." Distinct in Person, in eternity, yet truly God: with God, and was God. Ever in the beginning: never made or created; for "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." Life was not communicated to Him. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:1-51.)

He then created the universe, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17.) Such is He of whom we now speak, brightness of the glory of God.

He was in His own Person the beginning of Christianity; but Christianity did not truly begin until He died and rose from among the dead. This will be evident if we trace His wondrous history in the four gospels. He was truly man; but oh, how different His holy sinless humanity from our sinful fallen nature. "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35.) According to the prophecies, which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, He was announced at His birth as the Messiah, yet as Saviour, Emmanuel, God with us. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32.) We shall find„ however, that this forms no part of Christianity, and that His kingdom and earthly glory is yet future.

It is, however, important to see Him come in flesh, truly Man, and presented to Israel as the Saviour-Messiah — Jesus Christ. Let us be assured that not one jot or tittle of God's word shall fail. As the Messiah, the wise men from the east came to worship Him, "Saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." But how contrary to Jewish thoughts: He came in deepest humility. See the Creator of all things laid in a manger. Yes, and we will bow with those divinely guided strangers from the east, and worship Him. Whether laid in the manger, or nailed to the cross, or seated on the throne of glory, worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou, that every knee to Thee should bow. And when He was born, the glory could return to this earth. It was not in a palace, but in a stable, for there was no room for Thee, dear Lord, in this world's inn. This event was not made known by angels to kings or princes; but to those humble shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. It was to them the angel of the Lord came, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Yes, to these poor fearful shepherds did the angel say, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Heaven bore witness to the birth of the Messiah: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Born of a woman, under the law, the holy child Jesus, when the appointed day came, was presented to Jehovah in the temple. And the Holy Ghost had prepared a godly remnant to welcome Him, and own Him. "It was revealed unto him [Simeon] by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Hear the witness of this Israelite brought in by the Spirit at that very moment: "Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed. God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the eyes of all people a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." (Luke 2:26-32.) But if heaven rang with praises, and the godly Simeons and the Annas gave this precious witness to the child Jesus, what a contrast in the growl of hatred from the powers of darkness. "And the dragon stood before the woman which was, ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." (Revelation 12:4.) The court of Herod is troubled at the tidings of the birth of the King, the Messiah. As the agent of Satan, Herod will surely seek to destroy the young child. The angel of the Lord directs the wise men to depart, and Joseph to arise and take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt. "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children of Bethlehem," etc.

Such are a few of the circumstances attending this great wonder, the incarnation of the Son of God. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him." He was the light of men. "That was the true light, which coming into the world lighteth every man." "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

Behold Him "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions," at the age of twelve, "and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." Yet they knew Him not. Even His mother understood Him not, nor knew that He must be about His Father's business. Nothing more is recorded by the Holy Ghost for many years of His holy life except that He was subject unto His mother and Joseph; and that He increased in wisdom and stature (or age) and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:51-52.) And here may we be kept

from all the deadly error as to His being the sin-bearer during those years, and obnoxious to the wrath of God. All this is blasphemy against the Holy One of God, whose favour ever rested upon Him. He must be shown to be the perfect One, who knew no sin, before He could be made sin for us, on the cross. This was shown whether in the lowly place of retirement as the son of the carpenter, in sinless, perfect subjection, or as afterwards, when presented to Israel.

Well might John the Baptist be surprised when the Son came to him to be baptised. "John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" Yes, it was consistent for Him in deepest humiliation to identify Himself with the godly baptised remnant of Israel. We must notice, that this was John's and not Christian baptism. "And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." But had He sins to confess? Was He the sin-bearer then, bowed beneath the wrath of God? Such a thought destroys the true character of His future atonement for sins: no "Jesus when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Such was He to whom John pointed and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world," He was spotless purity itself, the Lamb without blemish. The heavens were not more holy than He: they were open unto Him. The Holy Spirit of God could descend on Him. No spot or stain could the eye of God see in Him. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I AM WELL PLEASED." Blessed Jesus! may we share the delight of the Father in Thee. The three temptations of the devil could find no response in Him. The Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is for the first time fully revealed at the baptism of Jesus, the Incarnate Son, anointed with the Holy Ghost. He is now led forth to meet the power of the devil. Let us never go forth to meet that fallen one, without the fullest dependence on the same Holy Spirit. It may be observed here, that all error is a denial, or an attack on the truth; yea, on Him who is the truth. To say that the devil is a mere evil principle, or our evil nature, would be to attack Christ, and make Him a fallen being with an evil nature like ourselves. No, the devil is clearly a real person, of great power and subtlety.

How distinctly truth is manifested in the word of God. We have the heavens opened to a man, and that man the Son, the beloved Son. The Father speaks from heaven to Him. The Spirit descends on Him. Behold the second Adam. The devil overthrew the first Adam in paradise: he has no power to overcome the last Adam in the wilderness — yes, truly man, and in grace entering into human circumstances of fasting and hunger for forty days and nights. With a doubt the devil attacked the woman, and a presentation of something good to the eye. Very similar the first temptation to our Lord. "If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." Is it possible? canst thou be the Son of God, and in such circumstances as these? so faint and hungry? Put forth Thy power, and at my bidding command these stones to be made bread. The devil pretends to seek the good of this hungry sufferer. Alas, we might have suspected no devil, and no sin behind this plausible temptation. Yes, we might say, That is a good thing, let us use our power to turn stones into bread, and thus relieve our sufferings. Mark, this was not a question of the ten commandments. The obedience of Christ consisted in only doing the Father's bidding, He must have, as the obedient man, a word from God His Father for all He did. The holy scriptures of God have now their place. Jesus answered the devil, "

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Yes, the devil may tempt Jesus, to meet His need by His own will and power; or to do some great thing to become popular, and to show Himself the Son of God, at the devil's bidding: or he may present the world to Him; but "It is written" is the answer of the Lord to every temptation. What an amazement would Christendom be in to-day, if even every Christian was to inquire if it be written for everything he is doing. Suppose we try it, beginning on a Lord's day and look to Him, that we may do nothing for which we cannot find an "It is written." Now as this stands so prominent in the very opening of His ministry, let us next inquire how the Lord regarded the holy scriptures.

How the Lord Jesus regarded the Scriptures

We have seen how the Lord answered the devil's common temptations entirely by the scriptures, as the word of God. And it is striking that as to similar attacks of the devil, men generally use their own reason, power, and will, and never think of turning to the word of God for an "It is written." It is also further remarkable that in each of these cases the Lord turns to the writings of Moses, as the word of God — the very writings especially attacked by modern ignorant infidels. These far-seeing men in darkness tell us they are not the writings of Moses, but were written hundreds of years after him. Let us hear Him of whom God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" He who alone could say, "I am the truth." To the healed leper He said, "Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." (Matthew 8:4.) He appeals also to the words of Moses in the matter of divorce: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female . . for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh?" And what these words of Moses teach He regards as of God. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," etc. The whole context proves that the Lord owned the words to be of, and by Moses. And the Pharisees acknowledged the truth of this, Matthew 19:3-8. See also, Mark 1:44, And offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." "For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother," etc. This Jesus regarded as the commandment of God. (Mark 7:9-10.) To the Pharisees on another occasion He said, "What did Moses command you?" (Mark 10:3.) "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham," etc. (Mark 12:26-31.) "They have Moses and the prophets . . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets," etc. (Luke 16:29-31.) "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Thus Moses and all the prophets are declared to be the scriptures by the risen Son of God. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which was written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." (Luke 24:27-45.) Do we need any clearer proof than the plain teaching of Christ? "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) Let us agree with Philip, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." (Ver. 45.)

Jesus constantly refers to facts recorded in the books of Moses. He says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." (John 3:14.) "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45-47.) "Did not Moses give you the law Moses therefore gave you circumcision," etc. (John 7:22.) Such is the uniform teaching of Christ. Thus the puerile

attempt to repudiate the true authorship of Moses, or the inspiration of Moses (the law), the psalms, and the prophets — as God truly speaking to us by them — is a wicked attempt to make Jesus a liar and a deceiver. My soul, be thou found with Him, the light and life and the truth; and not lost in the wanderings of modern thought. The teaching of the Holy Ghost, in the Acts and the epistles, is equally decisive. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers" . . . . and the words of Moses are the covenant which God made with those fathers. (Acts 3:21-26.) "Which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the -world began." Can we say of any other writings that God hath spoken to us by those writings? No, assuredly no! This is the true sense of inspiration. God hath spoken to us in the holy scriptures — and Moses is spoken of first. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers," etc. This is what we must understand by inspiration: God using men to convey His very words to us. What a privilege to be thus brought into direct contact with God.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by [or in] his Son." (Hebrews 1:1-2.) Thus all scripture was in the beginning owned as the very word of God; as such it was quoted by the Son of God; and as such was. always regarded by the inspired apostles. Hearken to Paul, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak: not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts . . . . For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe:" (1 Thessalonians 2:4-18.) So he exhorts Timothy to continue in the things which he had learned. "And 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. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" Therefore the closing words of Paul to Timothy are these, "Preach the word." For the time would come, and now is, when they will not endure sound doctrine.

Peter also says, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." It is not merely of man’s ability. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:20-21.) Oh how dignified then was the Lord’s answer to the devil, "it is written."

Let us then beware of appealing to any authority, but to the word of God. Now, as God did not speak to us in our own tongue, it is of the utmost importance that we should have the best and most literal translation — and that we should not add, or take from, for even one word would often alter the entire sense. There can be no compromise on this question. To give up one verse, or one thought, which God has spoken to us, is to give up all, and set up ourselves as God. In no other way can we meet the attacks of the devil than by appealing by faith to "It is written," in the word of God.

It is also important to remember, that the New Testament is regarded equally as the word of God with the Old. (See 2 Peter 3:16; Revelation 22:18-19.) Also Paul says to the Corinthians, "What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Where can our souls rest with calm security amid the confusion and contradictions of these last days, if we could not go back to that which was in the beginning, to the

very words of God to our souls? To bring down the inspiration of the scriptures then, to the level of Milton, or Shakespeare, or any mere man, is to reject the revelation, which God in richest grace has been pleased to give us. Our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles quote the whole Old Testament, as the word of God. And as to themselves, the inspired writers of the New Testament, John sums up all in a few words, "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John 5:6.) However men may in these days of "development" reject the word of God, or treat it as a mere human imperfect book, or books, it is most certain that in the beginning every Christian received it, as it is the very word of God. If a man did not, he was not of God, but of the spirit of error. Is it not so now? By this simple test then we know, that whoever questions the divine inspiration of holy scripture, is himself assuredly in error. All this may seem a long digression, but since our only appeal will be to "It is written," how vast is the importance of being well grounded in the fact, that what is written is the sure word of God.

Now let us for a moment suppose the Bible to be withdrawn from this world, and every ray of light borrowed from the Bible. If such a thing were possible, what would be the condition of mankind? How would you answer the thousand questions that rise in your mind? How came this world, or this universe into existence? We see in its existence proofs of infinite wisdom and power: but how came the things we see to exist?

Then what contradiction to that wisdom, and power, in the overwhelming scene of misery and death which covers the globe on which we live. How came this to be so? What could man say, except "I don't know!" What means, and what is that terrible thing we call conscience? — that terrible remorse of the human mind, for having done the things it hates, or loves, which leave such a poisoned sting? And what is the remedy, and where is it to be found? The poor dark mind could only reply, "I don't know." Will death end it? "I don't know." Is there a future after death? "I don't know." What is the future of this world even here? What is your future? On all these subjects, and thousands more, take away the holy scriptures, and man is left in total darkness. No God of love to speak to him. No Saviour from the terrible despair. No comfort, no help here, or heaven hereafter. The only thing such a man could do, would be to say, with Voltaire, "I wish I had never been born." Nevertheless, God did not leave the heathen without a manifestation of Himself, as we learn from Romans 1:1-32.

Oh young man, think of the end and aim and development of modern thought. Let it once get possession of you, and in the wretchedness of despair, as I have seen it, you may long in vain to be delivered from the poison you have imbibed in the writings of modern unbelief, which after all is not modern. No, it is as ancient as the words of the tempter, "Yea, hath God said?"

God hath spoken in His holiness, we will rejoice. Yes, He who said, Let there be light, hath spoken. What would this globe have been without light? Just what it would have been morally if God had not spoken. Oh the mighty power, oh the eternal blessedness of the word of God. I have known a dying man, by five words of Jesus, turned from a blaspheming infidel, to a happy believing child of God here, and in a few hours in heaven. Those words were, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." God grant that the reader may never reject that book of books, that treasure of all treasures. Well do I remember singing, when a youth fifty years ago:

"The word of God, the word of truth, Instruct our childhood, guide our youth, Uphold us through life’s middle stage, And be the comfort of our age."

Praise be to God I have found it so. No, fellow-believers, let us earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. It may possibly be asked, How am I to know what was the faith once delivered to the saints? Let us then turn to the sure word of God. May He grant us grace to reject everything concerning which we cannot, with our Jesus, say, "It is written." What is written then let us turn and see. The Four Gospels

We have already dwelt a little on the incarnation, baptism, and temptation of Jesus, the Son of God. What then is the character and teaching of the four gospels? And what is not the scope of their teaching? Four persons are used by the Holy Ghost to relate the life, words, and miracles of the incarnate Holy One. These four gospels do not present Christianity fully, but the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord, the foundation of Christianity. It is important to see this. Take the ministry of John the Baptist. He is the forerunner of the Messiah, and yet points Him out as the. Lamb of God; and as the Lamb of God He is the foundation of all blessing. But mark, John does not say one word about the church (the assembly of God). He came as a Jewish prophet, preaching only to the Jews, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But not because the assembly was at hand; that great truth was not revealed to John, but "For the kingdom of God is at hand." The kingdom of heaven, the reign of Messiah, was the burden of the Old Testament prophecies; but they never once named the church. That mystery was hid from them, and hid from John. No doubt repentance was requisite, equally for the foretold kingdom (Ezekiel 36:1-38); and also, as we shall see, for the forming of the church. (Acts 2:1-47.) But what was the teaching or preaching of Christ? Most profitable would it be to study the four gospels in their distinctive character. But this would fill a volume. Whether as the righteous Jew, in Matthew; or the Servant, in Mark; or as the Son of man, in Luke; and still more wondrous, as Son of God, in John — perfect in each, perfect in the whole. If you will examine each, you Will find in the first three Jesus preaches the coming kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. He does twice name the church, or assembly, but only as a future thing, "I will build my church." (Matthew 16:1-28; Matthew 18:1-35.) In the word of God everything is found in its place and time. The presence and teaching of Jesus on this earth, is the last trial of man. God who had sent His prophets, had now sent His Son — God manifest in flesh. He came to His own people, the Jews, and His own received Him not. To them there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He was truly God, yet perfect man; absolutely perfect in every relation, whether to man or to God. John says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Oh how wondrous to have in these gospels the invisible God revealed. Surely every word demands our study with profound reverence. We cannot conceive the profit, and deep untold joy we should have in becoming more thoroughly acquainted with each gospel, in its own peculiar character.

All is pure grace, yet there is truth in every line. Man’s true condition is set forth in each gospel. The presence of Jesus amongst men is like the rising of the sun on a dark world. Take just a little sample of man’s need and condition as illustrated in Mark 1:1-45; Mark 2:1-28. Jesus enters a meeting-room of religious men, the synagogue of the Jews, at Capernaum. What does His presence reveal? Man under the power of an unclean spirit! The demon is in the synagogue. But here is One with power to deliver; and all that were brought to Him were healed. "And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out demons."

Then there came a poor leper to Him, the very picture of sin in the flesh. Does He spurn him? No, with tender compassion He heals him. Then a helpless man, sick of the palsy, let down to His feet. He saw their faith; and they heard strange words from the lips of a man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." To scribes this was blasphemy. Yes, that which man needs first, above all things, the forgiveness of sins, was blasphemy to them! But He who forgave sins had power to say, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." Whether man knows it or not, these miracles truthfully set forth man's real condition. He is under the power of demons, and cannot free himself; he is full of the leprosy of sin, and cannot heal himself; he is utterly without power to walk in the holy commandments of God; he needs forgiveness and power to walk, and there is only One can meet his manifold need, and that One is Jesus. Has He met yours? None other can.

Take one other parable, Luke 15:1-32. Man is lost. The blessed Shepherd seeks the lost until He finds: and takes the lost sheep safely home. Then the lost piece of silver is sought until it is found. This gives joy. Then the lost son comes to himself, repents in the confession of sin. But oh, the joy of the Father! His great delight to receive, forgive, clothe, bring into His own presence! The work of the Son in redemption; the work of the Holy Ghost in seeking the redeemed; the unspeakable joy of God the Father in receiving the redeemed sinner — what a revelation of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

We might dwell for ever on the life, teaching, and miracles of the Lord Jesus, as a Jew in the midst of His Jewish disciples. But the time drew near when the passover must be killed. He set His face for the last time to go up to Jerusalem. He must needs suffer and rise again, or Christianity could never begin, or the kingdom be hereafter set up.

He fully exposed the wickedness and hypocrisy of the priests and Pharisees, who were pretending to righteousness by the law. God had provided a great supper, but men made light of it, and rejected it. (Matthew 22:1-46; Matthew 23:1-39.) He then spoke of the immense change close at hand. Their house was left desolate, and would be destroyed; and Jerusalem, the future metropolis of the earth, would be destroyed, and long trampled under foot. (Luke 21:1-38.) Very strange was all this to Jewish ears. All this implied a total change, and an entire setting aside of the ancient religion of the Jew, with all his privileges; and all of which came to pass. He was presented to the Jewish nation for the last time in the flesh as Messiah, and utterly rejected. His last passover came. See Him sitting with His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." After the supper He took the place of the paschal lamb. "This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Yes, a far greater redemption was about to be accomplished than the redemption from Egypt, which they had just commemorated. But as yet they understood not. He was about to be "reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." (Luke 22:37.)

What a night was that! What words did Jesus speak to His beloved disciples. "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father; having loved his own which were in the earth, he loved. them unto the end." We must, however, remember that as yet they were only disciples, just as John had had disciples. They had been drawn to Him as a centre, and yet He was alone; they could not be members of His body, neither was that wondrous truth as yet revealed. Wondrous was the truth He had revealed to them, for He had shown them, under the

figure of the corn of wheat, that He must die or remain alone. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:24.) No words can express the importance of this great truth, that until He should have died, been buried, and had risen from the dead, Christianity could not begin. He, until then, must remain alone. Nothing then could be more false than the error that the incarnation of Christ is salvation, or the improvement of man. His holy life and heavenly teachings could not have imparted full help to man, lost man. He must needs suffer the atoning death of the cross; and even that death is not the improvement of man, but the end of man in death. But all this was evidently utterly unknown to His disciples; and how little known now. What God had made known by all the holy prophets was, that one like the Son of man should come in the clouds of heaven, deliver His people, and reign over the whole world. This the disciples expected just as they were. There were also other prophecies which spoke of the sufferings of Messiah; of His bearing the sins of His people; and of His awful death, forsaken of God. (Isaiah 53:1-12; Psalms 22:1-31; and many others.) And had not every sacrifice, with all the blood of beasts, shed from the days of Abel, pointed on to Him, the Lamb of God? But as yet they knew not and felt not the need of this. Never had it dawned on their minds that He must bear the wrath, and be forsaken of God for their sins. And how few really know this now. Do you?

Well, the time had come that instead of receiving the long foretold kingdom, He must suffer such treatment from man, and bear the whole weight of God’s wrath against sin, as never was and never can be borne again. And thus He must be turned out of, and depart from, the world He had made.

We must then read this wondrous discourse, John 13:1-38; John 14:1-31; John 15:1-27; John 16:1-33; John 17:1-26, as anticipating the very period of His rejection on earth, and His presence in glory above all heavens. He knew it all, all we should need. "Clean every whit," as born of God, and as a new creation in Him; yet we have still to contend with an evil world, and the flesh in us, though reckoned dead. It is His blessed service to wash our feet, to restore our souls to communion by the word, during His absence, exalted as He is above all heavens. (John 13:1-38.)

He knows all the sore difficulties of the path during His absence. We shall not see Him now; but we may believe in Him, as we believe in God. Could He have said this if He had been only a man? He is as truly the Object of faith as God the Father. And now, being so near His departure, He tells them that of which no man had ever heard before. He lifts up their thoughts far above the earthly kingdom of Israel, and He says, "In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." They do not seem to have understood this in the least. Do we? What would a place in this world be to us, if we really grasped the wondrous grace revealed to us in these words, that He who loved us, and gave Himself for us, is gone to prepare a place for us in the glory; and will come Himself for the one special purpose, to take and have us with Himself? Is this the love of that Man in the glory, at the right hand of God? Oh, child of God, canst thou say, He loved me, and is coming for me, to have me with Himself? Does He not thus say to us, "Let not your heart be troubled? Remember, there had not been a word of all this in the Old Testament, or in His teaching, until the night of His betrayal. The nearer He approached the terrible hour of darkness and wrath, the sweeter the savour of Jesus as the meat-offering. In all things, and in every way, He was only proved to be a

sweet savour to God: without spot, blameless. Holy, holy One of God. How well did He know the need of His church during the long period of His absence. Let us inquire whom did He appoint and promise to take care of her until His return? The Promise of the Holy Ghost In departing from this world, how tender Christ's care and love for the church. He says,. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [or one who shall take the entire charge of you], that he may abide with you for ever even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you . . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The world, not knowing the Spirit, may appoint its emperors, kings, queens, and its high dignitaries, to take the place of head and caretaker of a church. But our blessed Lord named none of these. No, the world would persecute His church, or those who were His. In the world they should have tribulation. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 14:1-31; John 15:1-27.) And still more fully, instead of setting up the long-promised kingdom on earth, He says, "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." Then He fully describes His work. His presence will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: "of sin, because they believe not on me." There needs no further trial of man; the world has rejected and killed the Prince of Life. It is proved and concluded under sin.

"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." If the world is proved under sin, there is righteousness in heaven. The righteous Father hath received His Son.

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." This world's very prince and god is judged. Execution then of judgment is sure to him, and all that are his, though God's long-suffering tarries still.

Now mark the work of the Spirit during the absence of Christ. "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Such is the infinite provision Jesus promised before He departed from them: for the whole period of His absence. We shall see shortly how all was fulfilled. He then opens His heart to them, and tells them of His departure. (John 16:1-33.)

Surely He felt His rejection; did He not weep over Jerusalem? Though just about to be cut off, and have nothing of his earthly kingdom and glory, He could now lift up His eyes to heaven and say, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Though He well knew the extent of the world's rejection, yet His tender heart felt its deep joy in those whom the Father gave to Him. How much He gives them, how much He asks for them! How often He names to the Father those whom the Father had given to Him, and all on the ground of His finished work. Yes, this was His full blessed title, as man, He had finished the work which was given Him to do. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Yes, in the beginning, in eternity, however many myriads of ages this world may have been hung upon nothing, and rolled in space — yet, "In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was WITH God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning WITH God." Truly God; He WAS GOD: distinct in Person, WITH GOD; in eternity, the eternal now. Yes, immediately before He crossed the brook Cedron to offer Himself the infinite sacrifice for sins, He could thus look up to heaven, though rejected and cut of on earth, with the righteous claim as man to be WITH God, as He had been with Him in eternity. Could any created being claim such a place? This scripture, with many others, affords absolute proof that He was very God, and truly man.

Now see Him humbling Himself, and voluntarily giving Himself up into the hands of sinful men. All power in heaven and on earth was in His hands. They were made to feel it and fall to the ground. But He who made all things, gave Himself to be bound, to be mocked, to be scourged, to be crucified. A robber was preferred to Him in whom was no fault. The wicked representative of Gentile power was compelled to say, as judge, "I find no fault in him." He was made a curse, hanging on the accursed tree, for the very people that gnashed their teeth with rage as they watched Him die.

It was in the end of the ages, every age of the trial of man, that He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:26.) Then "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [or in continuance], sat down on the right hand of God . . . for by one offering he hath perfected for ever [in continuance] them that are sanctified." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18.) All scripture from Genesis to Revelation bears witness to the true propitiation, the bearing and meeting the wrath of God against sin, and the true substitution of Christ for His people’s sins. We need no learned and profane theory of the atonement, but with adoring hearts worship God for His great love to us in thus giving. His Son to be lifted up. It is only on that cross we learn what our sin really is in the sight of God. Blessed Jesus! it was for me Thou sufferedst thus.

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:1-15.) We shall see more of this when we come to the faith held in the beginning.

Christ died for our sins, and was buried. But then all appeared to be lost. The disciples were filled with sadness. They had looked for very different things, even the redemption of Israel from the Roman yoke. The only righteous One was laid in the grave — the end of all hope for man as a child of Adam — the end of man. The only righteous Man had died the accursed death of the cross, and was laid dead in the grave. Now just suppose this were all, then every ray of hope is extinguished. All is under death and judgment. If Christ is not risen there is no hope, and no good news possible for man. That high-day sabbath, when Jesus lay dead in the grave, was the end of Judaism, with all its sacrifices and temple service. The veil was rent; what a change!

How blessed to dwell on that resurrection morn, that first Lord’s day, the first day of the week. If we may use such words, one eternity ended when He lay in the grave, the other began when He rose from the dead. Judaism was left desolate — the new creation began. Who can tell the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward, when He raised Jesus from the dead? (See Ephesians 1:19-23.) The consequences to us of that resurrection are infinite and eternal.

We cannot but linger over, the results of His resurrection, even before we go on to the forming of the church or assembly of Christ. "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.'" Very blessed the instruction, whether in reference to the future kingdom as in Matthew and. Mark, or as preparatory to the formation of the church as in Luke 24:1-53 and John 20:1-31. What a change, and the disciples knew it not. There was the proof that He had risen from the dead; but the disciples, even Petal. and John, went away to their own home. Not so Mary Magdalene. She had already been delivered from great misery; for seven demons had been cast out of her. She has little intelligence; indeed, she seems to think He is still dead. But she lingers at the sepulchre as if He were gone: she had nothing left. There she lingered, her heart deeply attached to Jesus. And is the tender love of Jesus changed to His sheep now He is risen from the dead? He is close to the weeper, and asks, "Woman, why weepest thou? She supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said [one word], Mary." O what a thrill of joy to that desolate heart! "She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master." He was, however, no more to be held or known as Messiah. "Touch me not." He must go to the Father to receive the kingdom and return. He sends her with the joyful news of Christianity begun.

Christianity Begun

"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." He had wrought redemption. They were no longer merely Jewish disciples, but for the first time He calls them His brethren. They were in the same relation to His Father and God in which He stood Himself — one with Him in resurrection. These were their true christian privileges, the true standing now of every believer, whether he knows it or not, for they knew it not. At that moment they had very sad hearts. Mary came and told the glad news. They were gathered together the same day at evening. They did not yet form the church, but they were the persons, and were together a striking figure of the church, as we shall soon see. Being together, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, "came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." What a picture of the assembly, as Jesus had said, "For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20.) He had made peace by the blood of the cross — peace now flowed to them from the heart of God, from the lips of Jesus. Let us not forget this, the first word of resurrection, "Peace." This characterises Christianity — peace with God, through the finished work of Christ. "He showed unto them his hands and his side." "It is finished," He had said, and died. "Peace unto you." He is risen from the dead. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." There could be no question as to whether it was the same Jesus. His hands and His side proved that. If we know how much was involved in His resurrection, surely we may well be glad also. Oh blessed beginning of Christianity! First words of the risen Saviour, "Peace be unto you." Still He speaks. Do you hear Him? Do you believe Him? Are you glad? But mark, He speaks again. "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." As His missionaries, His servants sent forth, the very first qualification is "Peace." This is a true mark of one sent of Christ, "Peace" — the peace of God, even as Jesus served and suffered in perfect peace, peace with God, and the peace of God. Thousands of ministers made by men are strangers to "peace;" but no man is a true minister of Christ without it. And as the new creation had now begun, "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Another qualification in order to go and proclaim

the forgiveness of sins.

Luke continues the inspired narrative in the Acts. Forty days did Jesus remain, showing Himself to His chosen apostles, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, commanding them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the, Father, which, saith He, ye have heard from Me. They were to be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. At that time they had no idea of the church, or this present period of grace to the Gentiles, but were looking for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. He opens up quite another work for them — a work that they never fully understood or performed.

After the Holy Ghost should have come, He says, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." How little they, how little we, respond to the heart of Christ! And now instead of setting up the kingdom in Israel, "While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." There was the cloud, emblem of the divine presence, and He was taken from them. And whilst they gazed up into heaven, two heavenly witnesses assured them that, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Thus, if we think of Christianity as a kingdom, it is the kingdom in mystery, for the King is in heaven; hence, Matthew calls it the kingdom of heaven. As a kingdom, whilst the King is in heaven, there are in it both wheat and tares; the children of God, and the children of the devil. In the kingdom is seen the work of man, and the work of Satan. But the church, the body of Christ, is quite another thing. What He builds shall stand for ever. Jesus says, "I will build MY church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18.) Let us keep these two things distinct, as we now enter more fully on "That which was from the beginning." The greatest possible mistake is to presume that, that which man builds, is the same as that which Christ builds.

" And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Everything was now ready for the descent of the Holy Ghost, that the church might be formed. He could not be thus given until Jesus was glorified. If the church had been an earthly society, seeking salvation, it might have been formed whilst Jesus was here. But redemption must be accomplished. Jesus must be raised from the dead and received up to glory, before He, the Spirit, could be sent to form the church. People have no idea what an entirely unknown and new thing the church was. There had been for centuries Jews and Gentiles, but now a third company is formed. The disciples then were all together in one place, when a mighty rushing sound from heaven was heard in Jerusalem, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And they were all, not merely the apostles, but they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and a marvellous miracle bore witness to the presence of the Holy Ghost. They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Jews who came together, who were present in Jerusalem from various nations, heard them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. There was great amazement and wonder.

Peter, an unlettered fisherman, then stood up, and preached such a discourse as had never been heard on this earth. Fifty days before, this very Peter knew not the scriptures that Jesus must rise frown the dead. He now opens the scriptures, and preaches Jesus of Nazareth, the risen and exalted Lord, and Christ of God. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise

of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This, then, is the first great truth, according to the promise of Jesus: the Holy Ghost is now come and convicts of this dreadful sin. They believed not on Him, but crucified and killed Him, whom God had sent from heaven. He whom this world has murdered, God has raised from the dead, and made both Lord and Christ. Conviction of this terrible sin seizes their hearts, and makes them cry out, "What shall we do?" Is the reader unconverted? Do you know that you also belong to that world which has killed and rejected the Lord Jesus, now seated at the right hand of God? And what must they do? "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The very enemies, and murderers, must become the very disciples of Jesus, and they must fully confess this discipleship in baptism. What a complete and confessed change of mind, what self-judgment, for that is what the word translated 'repent' implies. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptised and the same day there were added about three thousand souls." They were deeply convicted of sin, they believed, were completely changed in mind, and showed it by being gladly baptised as the disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus, whom they had so lately rejected and murdered. All this was real matter of fact, confessed, and seen of all men. They were not ashamed to own Him Lord and Christ. Their sins were forgiven. They were gathered, and by the Holy Ghost added to, and formed the assembly of God. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house [or at home]; did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," or were being saved — that is, from day to day. All were added, but to what? evidently to that which the Holy Ghost was forming, not to different bodies or churches of men, but to the one only church of God.

It is important to notice the connection there was between repentance and baptism: so the Jews must have understood it. John preached, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And great multitudes went out to him, "and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matthew 3:1-6.) "John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for [or unto] the remission of sins," etc. (Mark 1:4-5.) Confession of sins was the scripture ground of forgiveness from the days of ancient Job. "He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."* We see how this was in the end produced in Job. He says, "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. And it was so." When Job was brought to that point, instead of seeking to maintain his own righteousness, he now counted himself vile, completely changed his mind, in dust and ashes. There God met him in unhindered blessing. (Job 33:1-33; Job 42:1-17.) {*The marginal reading is still more striking: and considered more exact.} Was not baptism the outward profession of this entire change of mind? On the day of Pentecost there was a vast multitude of Jobs, so far as seeking to maintain their own religiousness, or righteousness.

With astonishment they were convicted of the greatest sin a creature is capable of. They had rejected and murdered the Holy and the Just One. See how Peter, or rather the Holy Ghost, pressed this. In chapter 3 He says, "But ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you: and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." And then, after showing them that all this was what God had made known by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, he calls upon them to repent, to entirely change their minds from the mad course they were pursuing; and as many as believed and did thus change their minds were baptised, and this was the evidence, or proof, of confession of sins. In the preaching then of Peter to the Jews, repentance, baptism, and forgiveness were most intimately connected in the name of Jesus. And they thus became the disciples of the crucified and risen Christ. And when preaching the gospel to Jews, Mahomedans, or heathens now, these things would be the same. We could not admit the repentance of a Jew to be genuine if he refused to be baptised.

It is somewhat different in an already baptised country. There is little or no connection there between repentance and baptism. Unconverted parents, who never have repented, bring their children to be baptised, but this is confusion. They are in the nominal profession of Christendom, and as such they must be dealt with in preaching. Practically they are much like circumcised Jews. But repentance there must be, and a repentance so deep as to set aside all hopes of improvement in self. Self must be counted vile, abhorred. But then this true repentance is scarcely known. It is most probable, from the subsequent history of Peter himself, that he may not have fully understood the repentance of a Jew, and his baptism unto a dead and risen Christ. The death of Christ was the complete end of Judaism. Christ had been a Jew in the flesh. But now dead and risen He was a Jew in the flesh no more. Paul shows that we know Him no more as such. But then Judaism was God’s trial of man. Just so, but that trial was over in the rejection and murder of Jesus. The whole administration of that system of law, and trial of man, was over, abolished, and in every way a new thing had come in. Yes, so new that it is spoken of as new creation. If we only understood this, we should see how strikingly the figure of baptism shows the end of man, the first man in the death of Christ.

It was most important to show this first in Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, and to man under law. God in grace bore with the disciples, still clinging to the temple and its service. But now the great High Priest had passed into the heavens, of what value was the temple priesthood? And now the one sacrifice, offered once, in continuance perfected the worshipper, what was the value of all the blood shed in the offerings of the law? Jesus was dead. There was the end of the ages of trial of man. The first man, under the most favourable circumstances at Jerusalem, is set aside for ever. A new order has begun — a new creation, that which had been hid in God. The one purpose of His heart was now an accomplished fact.

These were the first days of the church. What a wonderful description we have of it in Acts 4:23-34, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all."

We have seen the formation of the church or assembly; its united prayer; the place shaken where they were assembled; and all filled with the Holy Ghost. The word of God was spoken with boldness. All that believed were of one heart and soul; the apostles with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Such was the assembly in the beginning. Alas, what a contrast now! And yet the true heavenly character of the new assembly was not then fully, if at all, revealed. The man, who was the chosen vessel to make known the church, was not even yet converted from Judaism. This man, Saul of Tarsus, was a mad persecutor of the disciples, the great enemy of Christ. As he was on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, brighter than the noon-day sun. The mad persecutor fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Amazed at these words, he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." What a revelation; and what a revolution in this man! The Jesus he persecuted was the Lord of glory. But most wonderful: this Lord of glory owned every disciple, every true believer, as part of Himself. What was done to them was done to Him. This contained the mystery — stupendous fact, that every believer now on earth was one with the Lord of glory. Many years after this we find it written, "As he is so are we." How little had Saul thought, that what he did to the feeblest disciple he did to Jehovah Jesus, Lord and Christ. What a repentance, what a change of mind! Trembling and astonished, he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was directed to Ananias, a devoted disciple in the city. Ananias, was greatly afraid of this terrible persecutor. The Lord calmed his fears, and said to him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel."

Such was the effect on Saul of this revelation, that for three days he was blind and could neither eat nor drink. His eyes were then opened, and he at once proved the reality of his repentance, or change of mind, by being baptised, and took his place with the disciples as those whose sins were washed away. The full account of his commission to preach and teach in the name of the Lord Jesus we find in Acts 26:12-23.

It must be observed that, as the sample minister of Christ, he received his commission and authority to preach direct from Christ Himself: not from man, not from the church. He takes great pains, in Galatians 1:1-24, to prove that this was from God. Never did he go to Jerusalem, to the apostles even, to receive authority to preach. He was only recognised by them. "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." (Galatians 2:9.)

It may justly be asked, if the apostles or the church never assumed to give authority to preach the gospel, or teach in the first years of Christianity, how is it that those who profess to be the successors of the apostles do so now? That is a question for them to answer. They will tell you, they have derived that power and authority to appoint and ordain those who alone shall be set apart to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments. And yet in the beginning there was no such power or authority in the hands of these very apostles. If there was, let it be shown. Paul was most jealous to disown all such authority. The subject of the christian ministry is a deeply

interesting one. Does that which assumes to be that ministry now, correspond with what it was in the beginning, or is it a totally different thing? Men are now ordained or authorised by men to preach and teach. But we must honestly own, that there is nothing in the New Testament account that corresponds to this. There was the one church of God or assembly of God; and all Christians formed that one assembly. There was the church of God at Rome; but there was no church of Rome at any place but Rome. There was no distinction between the assembly in Greece, and in Italy, or Syria. There were no denominations. If you had spoken of the church of Rome, or church of England in Scotland, or in Ireland, not a man on earth would have understood you. Then, if there were no denominations or national churches of the world, there could be no ministers of such churches. Now since this is assuredly, manifestly, the case, it follows that people may be members of such human churches, and not be members of the one body of Christ at all. Quite true, you will say, no doubt millions are so at this day. Then does it not equally follow, that men may be ministers of such churches and not even be Christians, and not ministers of Christ — in a word, that the christian ministry, and the vast denominational ministry, are two very distinct things? There is one thing perhaps above all others that marks this distinction. The true christian ministry owned and had the guidance of the Holy Ghost where to minister. The ministry, which is of man, is solely appointed. by man, and scarcely dares truly to recognise the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost. Let us turn to the word. We will first take Peter. Christ appointed him (John 21:15-17) and gave him the special ministry to open the door of the kingdom to Jews and Gentiles. (Matthew 16:19.) As to any other appointment from men he had none. Human education, none. He was an unlettered man. (Acts 4:13.) Could the Holy Ghost come down from heaven and use such a man? What a question! Let the preaching in the mighty power of the Holy Ghost answer (Acts 2:1-47; Acts 3:1-26), and how distinctly he had the guidance of the Holy Ghost. (See Acts 10:1-48.)

Then let us take the ministry of Paul. Sometimes Acts 13:1-4 is quoted as authority for ordaining a man to be the minister, preacher, and pastor. This scripture is doubtless a most important one as to ministry in every way. It gives us the most distinct view of true christian ministry that we could have. Here is the assembly as seen in the first years of Christianity: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers: as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen . . . . and Saul." Mark, all these were prophets and teachers. They were the chosen gifts of the ascended Lord. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Let us then take Saul. We read at his conversion that he "was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." This gave great amazement to all; but his authority to preach and the power were alike from Christ alone. Then Barnabas took him to Jerusalem, and told the apostles how he had preached at Damascus. "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians," etc. He is then sent to Tarsus. (Acts 9:18-30.)

Then again in the formation of the church from the Gentiles at Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul: "And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." (Acts 11:21-26.) Indeed, this scene at Antioch (Acts 13:1-52) is after the collection had been sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, and after their return. "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry," or charge.

(Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25.) So that there is no sense whatever in quoting chapter 13 as authority for doing the very opposite of what the Spirit did here.

Now look at the assembly gathered together at Antioch. There is no man as the minister of that assembly, but the prophets and teachers. They minister to the Lord. Where is this the case now? Is there no president? Yes, the Lord by the Holy Ghost. And where He is, there need be no other chairman or president. They so own the presence of the Holy Ghost that they have His very guidance as to the persons He appoints for a special mission. Here is the secret of the power of the first years of the church. And there is only power now, in proportion as we truly own the Holy Ghost. He is the power. In all the great gatherings of Christians, can you tell me of one that answers to this assembly at Antioch? Is not the Holy Ghost as truly here now as then? Assuredly, but men put a man in His place, and then pray for the Holy Ghost to come! Is it not incredible that there should be such darkness as to quote this scripture, when men appoint a man to be the minister over a church? The Holy Ghost did not say, Separate me one of these teachers for this special work, but He sends two; and we see this principle throughout. And in the preachings it is Paul and Barnabas speaking boldly, though Paul was the chief speaker. (Acts 13:43-46; Acts 14:12; Acts 15:35.) "Preaching the word of the Lord with many others also." And after the separation of Paul and Barnabas, it is the same with other companions, Silas and Timotheus. (Chap. 16.) And how the Holy Ghost guided their steps as to where to preach. For the time they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; but they were guided to Europe, and from place to place. (Acts 16:6-9, etc.) How distinctly also the Spirit guided Philip to join himself to the eunuch, sitting in his chariot. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him." (See Acts 8:26-40.) But we look in vain for a single instance of human ordination of a minister over a church to preach or to teach. It is said of Apollos, when he began to preach the gospel, "When he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." (Acts 27:27.) Surely this is an important scripture for our guidance now.

But, if such was the christian ministry in the first years of the church, as seen in the Acts, and fully borne out in the epistles, where is that same true christian ministry now? It is quite true that the various divisions of modern Christendom each has its ministry. But what have all these in common with the ministry of Christ, or christian ministry, as seen in the word of God? It is high time to search the scriptures to see what is of God, and what is of man. The apostolic appointment of elders and deacons was quite another thing. These might, or might not, be the gifts of Christ to teach or preach. The elders were appointed to care for and guide the assembly in spiritual matters, and the deacons to care for the poor in temporal things. The apostles, could also delegate a Timothy or a Titus, but very few would assume that we have apostles. now. Let us then, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, turn to His inspired epistles, and inquire what was the church, what its ministry, and what the doctrines taught in the First Years of Christianity. The Church, its Ministry and the Doctrines Taught

We have seen in the Acts that the church, or assembly of God, as distinct from the Jew and the Gentile, and yet composed of both, began on the day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Ghost; and that all through the Acts, all that were converted were added to that one and only church. Every local assembly, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, etc., formed the one assembly of God. These were gathered out of the world from Judaism or heathenism — they were

not of the world, but formed a new company, by the Holy Ghost. And there never had been such a company before. There had been individual believers, as Noah, Abraham, etc. There had been a nation, in a certain relation to Jehovah, as Israel. But the church was not a nation, but all the saved ones out of the nations.

What, then, is this new company thus formed by the Holy Ghost? In the Romans there is very little said on this: the church is not its theme, but the righteousness of God is the great subject of that epistle; man before God, and how God is righteous in justifying them that believe. We do however learn this, that "as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Romans 12:4-5.) And then all gifts, service, and work, is in accord with this entirely new position. This "one body" is IN Christ — every member of the one body is in Christ.

Now this could not be, as He tells us, until the grain of wheat had died. Until His death and resurrection He must remain alone. (John 12:24.) The believer is in Christ, who has died and for ever put away his sins, and condemned his sin; and is now risen from the dead, and ascended on high. The ONE BODY of Christ is in Christ as risen from the dead. We are to minister to one another as members of the glorified Christ in heaven. We are to walk on earth as those who are risen with, and now in Christ, on high. We shall see more of this ONE BODY in other epistles. What a subject! And yet men can despise, and even deride it. Such seem to be given up to judicial blindness.

We are also told that the mystery was kept secret since the world began. (Romans 16:25.) And this is a fact, that there is not one word in the Old Testament about this "one body in Christ." Now it is revealed in the New Testament scriptures, we may see figures of it in the Old, as Eve was the One wife of Adam. And it would seem that since the first days of the church until these last days, the mystery of the "one body in Christ" has been almost lost. And many believers even now have no idea what the church, the one body, is.

Many have a strange thought, that all sects form the one true church. But are all sects in Christ? Are all the millions of the Greek, Roman, and Protestant sects in Christ, risen from the dead and glorified? Are all these without condemnation, in Christ? No man would venture to say so. But may there not be some individuals in all sects, or divisions, of Christendom in Christ? Surely this may be so. Then are not those individuals, if in Christ, justified from all things? Do not they form the one body in Christ? They do; that is the very thing I want to show clearer. Thus, if the reader is in Christ, risen from the dead, he is a member of the one body, in Christ. But though he may be a pope, cardinal, archbishop, clergyman, or minister of any so-called church, yet if he is not in Christ risen, he has no more to say to the one body of Christ, or the true church of God, than a Mahomedan. But if that be so, it is of very little value to belong to any of the so-called churches — Greek, Roman, etc. Just so. The question is this, not are you in the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, but are you in Christ? And it does seem to me an important question, Does the Lord approve of my belonging to any division of Christendom? We shall find an answer to that question in 1 Corinthians 1:1-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23. You will notice this epistle is addressed to the true church of God, and also shows the responsibility of all who profess the name of Christ. And do not forget the test, the only test, in Christ.

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints [or, saints by calling], with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours." (1 Corinthians 1:2.) The church of God is composed, then, of those who are separated from the world, sanctified in Christ Jesus; and all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus are responsible to hear. If, then, you are not sanctified in Christ Jesus, if you are not holy as in Him by calling, you have no part in the church of God, the one body, in Christ.

God permitted sectarianism to begin in those first years, so that He might speak His mind by the Holy Ghost on the subject. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions [or schisms] among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. . . And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ . . . for ye are yet carnal for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 3:3. See the whole context.) Thus we may even boast that we do the very thing that God in His word condemns. Did you never meet a man that boasted that he belonged to the Church of Rome, or of England, or some other division? God says, I beseech you that you do not.

If we really know what the one body of Christ is, and that we are in Christ, in the one body, we really could not belong to any other body, be it Roman, or Protestant. The Lord restore this great truth to our souls more clearly. If the fact of divisions proves even Christians to be in a carnal or natural state, acting as men of the world, and forming schools of philosophy; and, as we have seen, all this is thoroughly disapproved of by the Holy Ghost, then, for the comfort of every believer in Christ, does the same word of God settle the question — that each and all believers in Christ form the one body in Christ. To put it still a little plainer, as God disapproves of all divisions, they cannot, as supposed, form the true church, or one body in Christ. Can I, then, if I am in the risen Christ, be assured that I am a member of the one only true body of Christ?

Let us hear the answer. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit ARE WE ALL baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit," etc. (1 Corinthians 12:12 to end.) If, then, you are in Christ risen and glorified, you are baptised by the Holy Ghost into the one body of Christ. This is a stupendous truth, and if known, error will drop off like autumn leaves.

Let us now pass on to the epistle to the Ephesians. In chapter 1: 1-18 we have the purpose of God; Ephesians 1:19 to end, and Ephesians 2:1-22, how that purpose has been accomplished. In Ephesians 3:1-21 the administration of that mystery committed to Paul; Ephesians 4:1-32, the church, the body of Christ; Ephesians 5:1-33, the church as the bride of Christ. But mark again how all this is limited to those only in Christ, to the faithful in Christ. (Ephesians 1:1.) They are blest with every spiritual blessing in Christ. They were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. (Ver. 4.) God predestinated them unto the adoption of children unto Himself. It was His good pleasure, His delight, to have them to Himself. In Christ, the beloved, they are brought into favour. God said, as it were, I will have them in the same favour as my beloved Son. In Him they have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Yes, this was our God’s eternal purpose, and such is every saint in Christ. God accomplished this purpose by raising up

His beloved Son from among the dead, and set Him; as Son of man, the new risen Man, at His own right hand in the heavenlies. Not now as Messiah on earth, but far above all principality and power. And all this as Head over all things to the church, which is His body: "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:18-23.)

Then is revealed to us the riches of His grace in taking us poor sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, and, in pure love, grace, free favour, giving to us, whether Jews or Gentiles, the very same place as His beloved Son, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." All this is far beyond anything ever made known or promised before. Thus in the church, all distinction between Jew and Gentile was broken down; peace was made by the blood of the cross, and peace preached to all both far and near. Oh, the depths of His mercy, the riches of His grace! The assembly — all who are in Christ — are the true saints of God, "And are 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 an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Have we been raised from the dead with Christ? If not, we are not stones in this heavenly building. Thus it is nothing to be members of man's churches, but everything to be in Christ.

Now the administration and revelation of this mystery was given to Paul. (Chap. 3.) It was hid from ages, and never made known: "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the joint body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." This did sorely perplex the Jews, and fill them with hatred to Paul. It perplexed them, because every promise in the Old Testament, the word of God, gave them a distinct place in the time of the kingdom; the coming time of this earth's blessedness. They knew not of this period of mystery whilst their Messiah is cut off and has nothing.

Every word to them, as a nation, shall surely be fulfilled, but in its time, not now. It wounded their pride to hear that there was no distinction — that in the boundless grace of God, beyond all thought, Jew and Gentile formed the one new joint body of Christ. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the assembly the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." What must the church be in the sight of God, and in the sight of all angelic hosts! Is there any wonder that Satan should seek to deface it with all the divisions of Christendom?

Now Paul had very fully put before them what it is to be in Christ risen from the dead. Without this no soul is a member of "the one body in Christ." But there is another thing equally important, and without which we cannot comprehend this wondrous purpose of God. For this he prays. Our being in Christ is evidently all of God. And it is to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ that Paul prays in Ephesians 1:17. Now he bows his knees unto the Father of our Lord. Jesus Christ. He longs that we may comprehend the subject before us: therefore he prays unto the Father, knowing the delight that the Father has in Christ and in us. He prays "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory." The glory given unto His Son, and unto us. (See John 17:22.) According to this glory, that we might be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." So great is this mystery, this eternal purpose of God as to the church, that it is not enough to know what Christ

has done for us, and what it is to be in Him risen from the dead, we need also to be strengthened with the Spirit, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. We are lost in the infinity of the purpose of God. "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Oh think of this amazing place of privilege: the risen Man in the glory of God. "He is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." It pleased the fulness to dwell in Him. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." And we are in Him, and He dwells in our hearts by faith. And all is grounded in love, the love of Christ unclouded and unchanging, filled with all the fulness of God. Well might the apostle bend the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that we might comprehend all this. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages" — to the ages of ages.

Such was and is the church. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Yes, every believer in Christ, in every land. He may be down in some dark mine, or in some ship far away at sea, on a distant island, or in the centre of a continent: he may know it or not, yet it is true. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." And just as with the human body, if members of the body joined to the head, we are members one of another. What a strange mistake to suppose that all sects compose this one body. We must see that it is only those who are in Christ. And mark, Christ is in heaven; the church, then, His body, is not an earthly society, but joined to Him in heaven, though as to our persons we are on earth. A heavenly people on earth, but our politics are in heaven, and we are waiting for Him to come and take us there. Paul was a prisoner of the Lord for this very truth; had he circumcised the heathens who believed, and thus incorporated them with the national system of Israel, the offence of the cross would have ceased — the high priest might have become the pope. But according to the eternal purpose of God, the church is separated from every worldly thing unto Himself. It is one, and its absolute unity excludes every imitation or competition. Is it a light matter to be treated with indifference? Paul says: "I . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Mark, it is not a question of mere agreement in opinion; but the entire state of soul: lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance. Lord, give us more of this. It is not a human organisation, but "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." How important, then, to be quite sure that the unity we are seeking to keep is the unity of the Spirit. How am I to know this? What are the marks, the facts? These are the facts, the marks, the circles of unity:

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." One body excludes the idea of many christian bodies, just as one Spirit excludes the idea of many Holy Ghosts. The idea is repugnant in either case to scripture. There is one body; we have not to make it, it is formed, it exists. How this has been forgotten. This one body is the first circle. "One body in Christ," as we have seen. Then

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." "One Lord" excludes the many lords of the heathens. "One faith" excludes all schools of mere human thought. "One baptism" excludes the many baptisms of the law. The believer professed discipleship to the one Lord, by one baptism.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." The unity of the Godhead excludes all idolatry. One Father excludes all so-called holy fathers: and what need of them? How Satan has sought, by the help of men, to deface and to deny the unity during the dark ages of departure from the truth, as held in the first years of the church. But does not the truth remain the same? Do not the facts remain the same? We must remember that these three circles of unity refer to the true church of God as seen in the beginning. Can the eternal purpose of God fail or change, as to the church? Can the love of Christ cease to His church? "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27.) If you are in Christ all this is certain to you as a member of His body, the church. Is it not most blessed? Though all unworthy in yourself, yet in Christ you are the object of the Father's love, even as Christ — the unchanging object also of the love of Christ.

Just think, you are part of Himself, member of His body, the church for which He gave Himself to die, ever applying the water of the word. He says "I come quickly. As Eve was presented to Adam, the figure of Him that was to come, so surely shall the church, the heavenly Eve, be presented to Christ.

We will now inquire a little more fully as to what was the christian ministry in the first years of the church. We know how men are educated and ordained by men now for the various churches of men. Was it so in the beginning? Assuredly not, for there were no such churches then. There was the one body of Christ, the church. And we may now look at Ephesians 4:1-32 as to the ministry Christ gave for His church. Verse 8 is a quotation from Psalms 68:18. And this is the ascension of Christ as man, victorious over the enemy. Hence, in the Psalm it is, "Thou hast received gifts in the man." (Margin.) That is, Christ has received gifts as man, having accomplished redemption and ascended up on high; so that true christian ministry dates from the ascension of Christ. That poor rebellious sinners can thus be used of Christ, is a proof of the complete efficacy of His redemption work. As man on this earth, He descended into death and the grave for us; and now, as ascended in victory over Satan and sin and death, He gave gifts in men.

Individuals are His gifts. "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These are not the sign-gifts of the Holy Ghost; but permanent gifts for the growth and edification of the body, the church. The apostles and prophets remain in their inspired writings, and, revelation being completed, we need no more.

There are two distinct gifts which remain, and are needed: the evangelist for the conversion of sinners, and adding to the building; and the pastor and teacher, which would mostly be the same gift, for building up, feeding, and nurturing the body of Christ as here below. These are the abiding gifts of Christ; but not for any denomination or national organisation, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And not only this ministry, but that ministry was so exercised that we "speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which 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."

Such then was ministry in the beginning. If a man was a gift from the ascended Christ, he was a gift for the body of Christ wherever he was. This did not hinder, but help and give opportunity for the manifestation of the Spirit, to be given to every man in the assembly used by Him. "Dividing to every man severally as he will." (Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-31.) The Spirit does not now work by the gifts of healing and miracles, which were for signs and witness in the beginning; but all that is needed for the increase and edifying of the body of Christ remains. We have seen the specimen of church order and ministry in Acts 13:1-52. Let us then remember that the same Holy Ghost still remains to the end. He is as really present now as then, but we do not own Him — imperceptibly man takes His place, and some Christians are not ashamed to elect a president to take the very place of the Lord and of the Holy Ghost. Who can conceive the loss this is to modern Christendom. Some are so ignorant of His real presence on earth, that they pray for Him, to come; others regard Him only as an influence. But who owns Him as acting here for the Lord, who is as truly present and acting by the Spirit, as if we saw Him?

It may be asked, but if confusion comes in, and many are found to speak to no profit, must we not have order, and appoint a minister over the local assembly, so as to avoid confusion? Is not all this fully anticipated? What will not man abuse? Very early in the first years this very confusion did actually come in at Corinth. Did the Holy Ghost appoint a minister over that assembly to correct the confusion? Never. No, the same order that we see in Acts 13:1-4 is directed to be carried out; "Let the prophets [such as speak to edification] speak two or three, and let the other judge. . . For ye may all prophesy one by one that all may learn, and all may be comforted," etc. And Paul regards these things which he thus writes, as "the commandments of the Lord." Now if this was the order of ministry and worship alone pleasing to the Lord, the very order He set up by the Holy Ghost in the first years, has He ever altered His mind for the church?

We must admit that episcopacy, or a man-elected minister over an assembly, is the very opposite of the order of ministry here described in the beginning. Then when afterwards did Christ set up that episcopacy, or one-man ministry? Can a single text be found for it in the New Testament? Is it not a great mistake? Is there any wonder, then, that what men call the christian ministry is leading the church to idolatry and infidelity? Can that be christian ministry which is not of Christ? The Lord lead us back to His word. The Doctrines Taught

We have already looked at the starting-point, The Holy Scriptures, inspired in the full sense of God speaking to us, "Thus saith the Lord." It must be evident, then, that without this starting-point, we have no basis. If God has not spoken, all is blank uncertainty. But since God has spoken, we need no man, or church, to tell us, that what He has said is true. What then were the doctrines taught?

Let us begin with the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. What was that death to the apostles, and, the early church, as seen in their inspired writings? We read, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3.) The, more we meditate on these words, the more wonderful they seem. Think how those scriptures of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets, bring before us this great fact, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of. sins. What victims had been offered in sacrifice, front Abel downwards to the lamb that must be killed, ere Israel could be redeemed from Egypt! There was no escape from judgment and. slavery until that lamb was killed. Then what blood had to be shed to make it possible for man to be kept in relation with Jehovah in the wilderness, and in the land! There was no approach to God but by blood. The

faith of Abraham was expressed in those wonderful words, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." Yes, Jehovah Jireh, the Lord, will see, or provide. The faith of the early church was, that the Lord hath seen to it: God hath provided His Lamb. "Behold the Lamb of God. that beareth away the sin of the world." Behold the living Person of the Son of God, God's Lamb. God has seen to man's deepest need: God has provided. The doctrine of the First Years of Christianity, all centred in Him, God's Lamb. Not man's Lamb; not man's providing, but the sent One of God. The Holy One was delivered for our offences, and was raised from the dead "for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, all was divine certainty. The whole church of God had peace with God; and this peace was made by the very blood of Christ. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you,that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight." (Colossians 1:20-22.) Thus they had peace with God; and that peace was made by the blood of the cross. They had not one thing to do to make their peace with God. Jesus had made that peace by His own blood; they had been enemies, but they now were reconciled. What was the object of Jesus in dying, as to all believers? Through death to present all believers holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in His sight.

Such was the value of the atoning death of Christ to all believers in the First Years of Christianity, and such their knowledge of God. And they had such certainty as to the value of the redemption blood of Christ, that they could so peacefully give thanks. Just hear them. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the scents in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14.) Oh, what precious certainty they had in those First Years! How seldom do we see anything like it now. What a separate people they were from the dark, doubting, guilty world around them. They were meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, in whom, in Christ, they had redemption. Sins were all forgiven. Ah, it was something worth while to be a Christian in those First Years. What completeness, was it not? As it is written, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." In those years they had a very exalted conception of the glory of the Person of the Son of God, as giving infinite value to His atoning sacrifice. "Who being the brightness of his [God's] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3.) That is the starting-point in the Hebrews — the finished work. He has done the work on the cross that puts away our sins for ever. The proof of this is clear. He sits, His work being done, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There is very little notice taken of this in these last years. It is very important to remember this, when we think of priesthood, or of worship. God has seen to it, God has provided His Lamb. The work that puts away our sins is done. God has accepted that work, and that Person who has done it to His own right hand. What rest to the soul this gave in those First Years.

Another thing was then revealed: that whilst the offerings of the law could never rend the veil, and bring poor sinful man into the presence of God, Christ having come, by the one offering of Himself

on the cross, the veil was rent; sins were purged. The way into the holiest was then opened, and all this was eternal: not for a year, but for eternity. This is all opened up to us in Hebrews 9:1-28. For this purpose He appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." No person bearing the name of Christ ever thought of questioning the purpose of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the bearing the real judgment of God on sins. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many and unto them that look for him shall be appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:27-28.) Thus the true doctrine of the First Years was this, That Christ came in the end of the world, or at the end of all the ages of the trial of man; that He undertook to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This will be yet seen in the new heavens and the new earth, that He undertook and bore the judgment of divine wrath due to the sins of many: for this purpose He was offered, the sacrifice for sins. When He appears a second time, there will be no question of sins for those who wait for Him.

All this is abundantly confirmed and applied in the next chapter, Hebrew 10. God could never be satisfied with those many sacrifices of the law which could never purge the conscience from sins. The Son of God says, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." The Son of God came, He offered Himself once the sacrifice for sins, and then in continuance sat down on the right hand of God. Now what was the effect of this one sacrifice to all believers as revealed in the First Years of Christianity? "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." This fact is of such immense importance, that we read further, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us," etc. It was very blessed when men believed this witness of the Holy Ghost; that God in infinite love had sent His Son, in the body prepared for Him, that He might put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that the Son had done this, and that as to all charge of sins against the believer, the Holy Ghost was Himself a witness, that all believers separated to God by the death of His Son, were perfected for ever, or in continuance. Ah, when men no longer believed the witness of the Holy Ghost, then they invented masses, penances, fresh sprinklings, etc., until the witness of the Holy Ghost as to the efficacy of that one sacrifice was forgotten.

Oh the folly, with such scriptures before us, of again offering sacrifices for the living and the dead, that can never take away sins. If we would enjoy peace with God, we must turn away from all these inventions of men, and go back to that which was in the beginning. What folly it is if you are in the dark, to think you must have a priest as dark as yourself, to offer a mass. There was no such priest, and no such mass in the First Years of Christianity. No, then it was distinctly understood that God said, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." As many as were in the light had fellowship with one another. They knew the whole matter of sins was settled for ever, that the blood of God’s dear Son cleansed them from all sin.

It is manifest from the very opening chapters of the history of the sons of fallen Adam, that there could be no approach to God most holy but by the death of a Substitute. Thus Abel came before God through the death of the. lamb. Thus did Noah worship God as he stepped out of the ark. Thus did Abraham also through the sacrifice on his altar. Thus only could Israel be redeemed from Egypt by the death of the lamb. It must be killed and its blood sprinkled. And thus for forty years was the lesson taught in sacrifices in the wilderness: that without the shedding of blood was no remission. Yea, for fifteen hundred years this great truth was set forth in every sacrifice on the brazen altar, that death alone can put away sin. And yet all these sacrifices could not in

themselves put away sins. All pointed Forward to that one Sacrifice that puts away sins for ever. In the prophets they read of a person who should be wounded for transgressions, bruised for iniquities; a Person on whom Jehovah would lay iniquities: One whom the Lord should bruise. (See Isaiah 53:1-12.) That Person they distinctly taught was Jesus, the Son of God. (Acts 8:1-40.) In a word, the one only foundation of the church of God, then was that "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins;" and that this redemption was not for a time only, but was eternal redemption. (Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12.) This great foundation truth runs through the Epistles. All believers then could say, "Unto, him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Soon all the redeemed will be gathered around the Lamb in the midst of the throne; yea, and all angelic hosts will say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Reader, are you quite sure you have that "redemption through his blood" here? Then you may be assured you will sing His everlasting praise there. But if not, to whom can you look for forgiveness of sins? The Doctrines Taught — The Righteousness of God

"God is love." But the question was, How could God deal with a creature like man, whose very nature was hatred and rebellion against the blessed God, who loved him even in his enmity? The law had been given to Israel for fifteen hundred years, God’s righteous rule for man — a law which brought out man’s rebellious nature, in open transgression. The rest of the world had been given up to their own will and lusts, they having given up God and His truth, as set forth in His eternal power and Godhead. (Romans 1:1-32.) The Gentile world had sunk to the lowest degradation, worshipping demons, and being led by them into every form of gross wickedness. Yet "God is love." Israel, on the other hand, was no better. With every privilege, having the oracles of God, yet they did not keep the law; and, what was far worse, so blind were they that they were seeking to attain to righteousness by that very law which God had given to manifest man’s sin in open transgression.

All this may be read as the distinct teaching of the Spirit of God in Romans and Galatians. Yet "God is love." However bad man may be, and he cannot be worse than he has proved himself to be in murdering the Son of God, yet "God is love." But then God is also a holy God; and "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18.)

You say, Is this a proved fact? Surely we need no greater proof than the word of God: Thus it is written. The wrath of God is a fact — wrath against sin. Let us look at one fact in proof of this — the penalty of breaking the first command to man: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or "dying thou shalt die." At the moment you read this, there are not less than 3000 children of Adam within one hour of death. By sin came death, as it is written, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12.) Yes; every day of this dying death — every twenty-four hours — near 100,000 of the family of that man by whom sin entered, pass away in death, and many in great agony. Have you ever read of an infidel who escaped the doom of sin? Now if such a visible stream, such a terrible river of death and anguish flows from sin, and all along its course such suffering, and pain and anguish of mind and body, poverty, sickness, guilt, and wickedness, flowing from sin, even in this world — what may you and I expect if God deals with us, in righteous wrath, through all the ages of eternity? Can we count the number of our sins? Ah, well might He

say, who bore them in His body on the tree: "They are more than the hairs of my head." And the doctrine in the First Years of Christianity was this, that all were guilty, Jews and Gentiles — not a single exception. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Every mouth stopped; all the world guilty before God. (Romans 3:9-20.) And still you say, "God is love." Yes, and God from all eternity, from before the foundation of the world, has chosen a people that shall be holy, and without blame before Him in love. Now tell me, reader, how do you expect to attain to that happiness? just tell me, how do you, a guilty sinner, hope to be able to stand before God, justified from all things, accounted righteous? Perhaps you say, "By attending a place of worship: there I am taught the law of God indeed, it is hung up for my eyes to see it. There I am taught to keep that law. And I hope to so keep it, with the help of God, that I may at last attain to righteousness, so as to be able to enter heaven at last. Is not this the right way to heaven?" Millions expect the same as you do. It was this very way that led the Jews to reject the righteousness of God. Being ignorant of that they went about, just as now, to establish their own righteousness. See Romans 9:31-33; Romans 10:1-4. Ah, those verses are dead against the fashionable religion of the whole world. But the doctrine of the First Years of Christianity was the very opposite of all this. It was plainly this: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20.) Have you not found it so? How old are you — forty? And if sincere you have been trying to keep the law over thirty years, are you fit for heaven? Are you righteous in His sight? Are you aware? Is your conscience awake, or hardened? Look back!

Look at the present — this day! Remember, God tells you, if you break one commandment you are guilty of all. You have longed to be holy, pure, sinless but sins, sins, sins Have you ever been overwhelmed, not able to look up? But you say, "I am eighty years of age." Worse still, eighty years of sins instead of forty. Ah, they stare upon you now every day of your life. Not a single day have you loved God with your whole heart. And with eternity before you, and all your efforts miserable failures, is it not enough to make you gasp? The most righteous thing you and I can do is to judge ourselves guilty before God. On the ground of any righteousness of our own we are lost. Past, present, or future, we have no hope of attaining to righteousness by works of law. We are undone.

Now for our question: with the wrath of God against sin before us, as we have seen, in Adam’s transgression, and our own sins — with the absolute certainty that sin must be punished, as that stream of agony and death even in this world fully proves — how is God to be righteous in taking such ungodly sinners as we are, and declaring us justified from all things? How is His eternal love and infinite abhorrence of sin to be revealed, in perfect, consistent harmony?

What is the righteousness of God, as revealed in the First Years of Christianity? Oh the importance of having again the gospel as then preached: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." (Romans 1:17 and context.) This is fully explained in Romans 3:21-26 : "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Mark, this is God’s

righteousness, apart from law, though surely witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ. We thus look by faith away from ourselves, and law, and every thing else, to Jesus Christ. And what we find there, is unto all and upon all them that believe. Let us fully own that all have sinned, you, I — all, and come short of the glory of God. God points us then to Jesus Christ, as the revelation of His own righteousness, and to the work of propitiation which He has wrought. God declares His righteousness, both for the remission of the sins of Old Testament believers, and also His, God's righteousness in justifying now "him which believeth in Jesus." This is a vital question for us. And mark it well, this is entirely of God: "Being justified freely by his grace." This is the free favour of God. By what means is God righteous in doing this, accounting the believer righteous before Him freely? The answer is very simple: "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." But you say, 'sin must be punished'. We have seen this verified, as to God's government in this world, by the black river of death, and in the judgment that is to follow; but how has God dealt with all believers' sins and iniquities? If they must be judged according to all that God is, has that been done? This is exactly how God has both commended His love to us, and revealed His inflexible righteousness. Yes, God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son for this very purpose. And we believe God, "that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences." Oh, behold, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, once delivered for our offences. Ah, He only knew what it was to be delivered to bear that wrath of God due to sin, as God sees it; to endure the punishment according to God's holiness, and abhorrence of sin. Such was God's love to us, that it pleased Him to bruise His Son in our stead. Yes, He who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will," sank beneath the dark billows of the wrath of God. Such was the price of our eternal redemption. And did God in righteousness accept the ransom price? This is the very thing we believe, that God raised Him from the dead "for our justification," in view of our justification, for that very purpose. So that God is our righteous justifier. Who shall condemn?

Oh, reader, reject this redemption, and you must suffer in your own person the just wrath of God against your sins, throughout an unending eternity. But now, thus believing God, we are accounted righteous before Him, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Thus God has acted in perfect consistency with Himself and toward all created beings. The sins of the believer have been borne, and sin judged on the infinite Person of the Son of God, according to the eternal purpose of God — according to all that God is in His holiness, majesty, and love.

It was this great truth, the righteousness of God revealed — displayed by the atoning death of the Son of God, proved by His resurrection and ascension to heaven, borne witness to by the descent of the Holy Ghost — that gave absolute peace with God, in the First Years of Christianity. And, however men and demons have sought to deface it, yet it remains the same — the only safe foundation for the sinner's soul to rest upon. There is no other foundation on which my soul can rest. God has settled every question for me in absolute righteousness, so that now we can say with certainty, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

God is thus revealed to us. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There is nothing on our part but sins — no work of our own in this matter, all is free grace. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for

righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin." (Romans 4:4-8.) Do you know God thus as your Justifier? Are you this blessed man? Not of or by any works of your own but freely by His free favour, through the redemption you have in Christ Jesus. Now if we see the kindness of God in making all this so plain to us, and His own righteousness in justifying us, all fear and doubt will be gone, and we shall do as they did in the First Years of Christianity, as Paul says, "We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." May it be so with the reader. The Gospel of the Glory

We shall better understand the wondrous character of the gospel of the glory, as preached in the First Years of Christianity, if we dwell briefly on the gospel of the kingdom, which preceded it, and which, when the church is gone to glory, will succeed it on earth. In the preaching of John the Baptist, the heavens were only opened to one Person, the Son of God. He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. The heavens were opened to Him, and on Him the Holy Spirit could descend. (Matthew 3:16-17.) John’s testimony was the last and greatest of the prophets to Israel. It was the axe laid to the root of the trees — to all Jewish prejudices and self-righteousness, and was a solemn call to repentance and confession of sins; and finally he announced the Messiah. There was no opening into the heavens for sinners, but only for the one Man who came from heaven. In the preaching also of Jesus to Israel, it was not the gospel of the glory, but of the kingdom. Several bright gleams shone forth: shall we say in the prophetic vision on the Mount, foreshadowing the coming glory? There were two men with Him in the glory. During His last night before His death there were wondrous words from His lips, both to the disciples and to the Father. He spake not of Jerusalem, nor this earth, nor the kingdom on the earth, but of the Father’s house, the many mansions, and of His going to prepare a place for them; and He 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." And He said unto the Father, when about to be with Him, in the glory that He had with Him before the world was, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." (John 17:24.) Yet even after His resurrection the apostles did not understand this. They were still occupied with the promised kingdom to Israel. (Acts 1:6.)

It is also very remarkable, that during the forty days Jesus remained with them, we do not read that He spake to them, about the church, or the gospel of the glory, "but being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." When the Holy Ghost had come down, Jesus having ascended up into heaven, and the new company of believers having been baptised by the Holy Ghost — the church being thus formed — the preaching even then was chiefly what characterises the kingdom. Very distinctly so in Acts 3:17-21. Peter unlocked the door, so to speak, by repentance and baptism into the kingdom of heaven — the kingdom on earth, whilst the King was away in heaven. The preaching went thus far, the apostles saying, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:29-31.) As yet the preaching is limited to Israel, and to the promises made to their fathers — very much, indeed, to the kingdom to be set up on this earth. Not a word yet of the gospel of the glory. Jesus was gone up into heaven, and He would come again. But the gospel

preached did not reach up to heaven opened to man. In Acts 7:1-60 there was an immense change. Israel, in the murder of Stephen, committed their final sin as a nation, in rejecting the Holy Ghost. All is now over with them for the present. All is over as to restoring the kingdom to them now; and at the same moment the heavens are opened to man, to the believing dying Stephen. Full of the Holy Ghost, he "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Alas, from that day they have stopped their ears. From that moment, though the earth has rejected the Son of God, the heavens have remained open to man, to every one who believes. That day there stood near a young man, at whose feet were laid the clothes of the murderers. We shall hear of him again. That young man, Saul, was consenting unto his death; that young man was the chosen instrument to go to the nations and proclaim the gospel of the glory. In Acts 9:1-43; Acts 22:1-30; Acts 26:1-32 we have another most remarkable advance. This very young man, Saul, mad with persecuting rage, was on his way to Damascus, with authority from the chief priests to bring believers bound to Jerusalem. A stream of glory shines right down from heaven. He says, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me." And he says, from that heavenly glory "I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What amazement seized that young man! Heaven was opened, and the glory descends, comes down to man, to man the sinner, the enemy. And that voice from heaven, from the brightness of the glory, speaks to the sinner mad with persecuting rage, and asks a question, which implies that those believers whom this young man persecutes, are one with Himself, who speaks from the glory. Astonished he asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" Who can this Lord of glory be? And he hears the wondrous reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Now it was from the glorified Jesus, Saul received the commission to go forth as His chosen witness and heavenly messenger, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." You will see that this was greatly in advance of all that had gone before. The gospel of the kingdom of God to be set up on this earth, most true in its time, was altogether different from this gospel of the glory and the heavenly vision. Discipleship by repentance and baptism was most prominent as the entrance into the kingdom, in John’s preaching, in the Lord’s also, in Matthew and Mark. But Paul was not thus sent. Indeed, as we have said, his preaching was far in advance of that of the twelve, as seen up to Acts 9:1-43. He is sent from the vision of the heavenly glory to both Jews and Gentiles, to turn them from darkness to light. It was to take out a people for heaven, from the power of Satan unto God. And what he preached was not what man must do, but that Christ must suffer, and "be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." And he could say, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Now whilst the twelve preached Jesus as the crucified, dead, risen, and exalted Lord and Messiah, Paul at once proclaims Him the Son of God. There was now nothing more to be expected from man. It was no longer what he must do, but what Christ must have done who had appeared to him in heavenly glory. Thus he opened the scriptures: "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is

Christ." To him it was the Son of God who had thus died for him, who had been made sin for him, who had put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Could he doubt the perfection of that work which Christ must do, and had done? No, He who had once been crucified for him had appeared from heaven in brightest glory — in light beyond the Eastern noon-day sun. God had raised Him from the dead, who had been delivered for our offences, and raised Him for the very purpose of our justification. Thus he preached, and thus, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he wrote. This was his gospel of the glory. Let us hear him.

He says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. So that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them . . . . Because it is the God who spoke, that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:3-6. Lit. Translation.) Thus the gospel of the glory of Christ shines down from heaven on a lost and guilty world. All is darkness here. Man is darkness. Satan, the god of this world, has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving: he presents every form of false religion and dark superstition to hinder the rays of heavenly glory shining into the poor dark soul of man. Has the radiancy of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ever shone into your soul? Has that risen and glorified Jesus ever spoken direct to you? Can you say, I have heard His voice speaking to me? What a colour the heavenly vision gave to all the preachings of Paul, that once fiery young persecutor! When he preached forgiveness of sins to guilty sinners, it was straight from the glory. Nay, the inspired writings of Paul will be all fresh and new, and heavenly, if we read them as in the First Years of Christianity, in the warmth and brightness of the heavenly vision. They will indeed be like a river of water of life, and light from the throne of glory, of God and the Lamb. Let us remember the power of that vision of the glory which attracted Paul from everything under the sun. May it be so with us.

Facts and Fruits of Paul’s Gospel

What did Paul preach? What produced such marvellous results? Did he preach what man must do? Or did he preach what Christ had done? Did he preach baptism as a means of regeneration, or of salvation? No; baptism had no place in the gospel he preached. (1 Corinthians 1:17.) Did he preach that all men were under the law, and that they must be justified by either keeping the law, or by some one keeping it for them, any way that they must be justified on the principle of the law? No; we do not find such a thought.

Let us keep close to the facts — his preaching as commissioned from the heavenly vision, by the Lord Himself, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in his epistles. You will notice in his manner of preaching that there was not one word of what man was required to do. Men were treated as lost, and Paul had a message from God for them: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Not a word about all men being under the law and that Christ must needs keep it for them. The very Jews of the synagogue, who were seeking to be justified by keeping the law, needed an entire change of mind, repentance; and the facts that Paul preached produced that repentance. The mass of them rejected this gospel and these facts with scorn, just as those now who say they are Jews, that is under law, and are not, will reject these facts of the gospel, which were told out in

the First Years of Christianity.

Study these three facts: 1st fact, "Christ must needs have suffered." 2nd fact, "And risen again from the dead." And the 3rd fact, "That this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." These three facts formed the base or foundation of all Paul's preaching. And they were not hearsay facts: he had not been taught them by others. But he had seen this very crucified Jesus in that heavenly vision of glory above all created light.

It is no little privilege to have the true gospel thus direct from the man who received it in the heavenly vision — a man who could not be mistaken. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 he gives an account of the gospel he preached to them: it is as ever the same: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." And that others as well as himself had seen Him after His resurrection: "So we preach, and so ye believed." If Christ was not risen, then he was a false witness, and they had believed in vain, and were still in their sins.

These were not doctrines, properly speaking, or much less theories, but simple facts. All else in the world were doctrines and theories of men. Here were facts that fully revealed the righteous character of God; that met all God's claims on the guilty sinner, and gave him the absolute assurance that all was met and settled to the glory of God; for the full glory of God shone in the face of His beloved Son, the Man who had done it all; and who declared, in the plainest terms, that all who believed God were reckoned righteous before Him. All this was clearer and brighter than the Eastern noon-day sun.

Now, is not this just what man needs to know with certainty, so that he may have perfect peace with God, in the full radiance of His glory? Perhaps nothing has more tended to hide this clear gospel of the First Years of Christianity than the Galatian heresy, the determination to put all men under law. Not the openly giving up of Christ, but making our justification to depend partly on Christ, and partly on law. Even Peter utterly failed in this matter, and the beloved Barnabas was carried away with the dissimulation. The Spirit of God, by the Apostle Paul, takes this ground, that since Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God our Father," then to mix up the law, that is, the principle of what we ought to do to God, would be quite a different gospel from the gospel given to him. (Galatians 1:4-12.) And Paul shows the real folly of this, for the Jews who were under the law had to give it up, "That we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by works of the law shall no flesh be justified." To do it would be to build again the things which, he had destroyed. As to himself, as a responsible man once under the law, he was dead, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ." Now a dead crucified man is not under law, but is dead to it. He says: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

No, nothing could be more sad or foolish than the giving up the truth, as held by Paul and set forth in this epistle. It has leavened all Christendom, and brought in the utmost confusion. Sometimes the soul believes God, and then is happy; then seeks to attain to a little more righteousness by the law as a rule of life! and then, is almost in despair. Where is there one who has not suffered by this

confusion? Are you perplexed, and say: "Why, I have been taught from my childhood that all men, Jews or Gentiles, were under the law, and all had transgressed it, and all were under its curse, and that even the believer is put under it again, as the rule of life?" Yes, this is exactly what men teach now. Is it what Paul taught in the First Years of Christianity? As this letter to the Galatians was one of the very first of the first years, do prayerfully read on. What do you find in Galatians 3:1-29? He tells us that Abraham was justified long before the law was given. He believed God, and it (faith) was reckoned to him for righteousness. He tells us: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." Then if all are now of the works of the law, all are still under the curse. He tells us that the law is not of faith. Speaking of Jews, who had been under it, he says: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He tells us that the covenant confirmed of God in Christ, which He promised to Abraham, was 430 years before the law. He explains why the law was given. It served to bring out transgressions that it was a schoolmaster until Christ. In Galatians 4:1-31 there is the most marked distinction betwixt those under law, and those under grace: the one in bondage, the other in the liberty of sons. And under the allegory of Agar and Sarah, or Ishmael and Isaac, the two principles of law and grace cannot go on together. Ishmael must be cast out. Oh, how we, like Abraham, plead that he might live. How we struggle that the flesh under law might live, when God tells us to reckon it dead. It seems so desirable that there might be some good found in us, and the work of Christ to make up the deficiency. To take this ground is to be in bondage. Ah, you know this, though you thus cleave to and plead for Ishmael. Oh that my old "I" could live and be better. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Read every word that follows in Galatians 5:1-26. Remember, if you take the ground of the law, "Christ shall profit you nothing."

What solemn warnings follow, and how little heeded. The only power for a holy walk, and we need no other power, is this, the power of the Holy Ghost. And notice this mark: "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Then also you find the great truth, that neither the law, circumcision, nor lawlessness, uncircumcision, availeth anything, but a new creature. A truth of the utmost importance! Man must be born wholly anew. The law only brings out the sin in his nature in open transgression. This is most fully brought out in the larger letter on this subject, the Epistle to the Romans. Oh, that we could go back to the first years, and read that epistle as the very words of God. All are proved guilty: both the Gentiles, which have not the law and the Jews, which had the law. For until the law, that is, until the time that it was given, from Adam to Moses, sin was in the world, though not reckoned as transgression. And there is no thought in that epistle of man being justified on the principle of law. This was impossible, since man was guilty. Why should we seek to be wiser than God? He deals with the facts of man’s condition. The fact was, the Gentiles without law were guilty of the grossest sins, and the Jews under the law were no better. So that the glad tidings could not be in any way what man was to God, for he was only guilty and under judgment, and had no strength to be better. God could not be righteous then in justifying the guilty on the principle of law.

Then shone out the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner, entirely apart from law, exactly as Paul had received the gospel of the heavenly vision. Jesus must suffer the atoning death of the cross. He must die for our sins. He must be delivered for our offences, whether Jews or Gentiles. He must rise again — yes, God raised Him again for our justification. Now what had the law to do

with this, or to say to this, except in the types of the sacrifices? You will thus see that both the righteousness of God in justifying, and our eternal salvation, rest not on what we must do, or law: but solely on what Jesus must do, and what He has done — done once for all, never to be repeated. For God, who raised Him from the dead, had been glorified by His death and suffering wrath for our sins. So that God could in perfect righteousness raise Him from the dead, for the express purpose of our justification. And as the work of Christ can never lose its value for us, we see the everlasting proof of this — Jesus in the glory. The very Jesus who took the entire responsibility of our guilt and sins, is without spot in the presence of God for us. So that we are in the perfect righteousness of God, justified from all things, and for ever. And for ever we have peace with God. Jesus must suffer, and rise again. Jesus has suffered and risen again. This being the case, the effect of believing God in all this must be immediate forgiveness, and justification from all things. Such always was the case in the First Years of Christianity. And why not now? Repeat this verse until God give you to rest in the certainty of His word: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Effects of the Gospel

We have dwelt on the facts of the Gospel in Acts 17:1-34, so very contrary to all human plans and theology. As Paul opened the scriptures, it was not to show what man must do, as in the law of old, but what Christ must needs do: that Christ must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he preached is Christ. Let us now see what was the effect of this singular preaching. Did you ever hear preaching of this kind — not a word about what you must do, but all about what Jesus has done?

Let us go back to those early years when Paul, fresh from the heavenly vision, having seen the glorified Jesus, who must, and had died for his sins according to the scriptures. No doubt the certainty in his own soul carried great weight with it. He was sure he had the authority of God.

Three poor men arrive in the rich, populous, wicked heathen city of Thessalonica. They had been treated as dangerous vagabonds at another city, and were sore with stripes; and so poor and friendless they seem, that they have to labour night and day to get bread.

They had no authority from man nor from the Roman state. They were the disciples of a Man who had been executed in the most degraded and cruel manner. There was a Jews' meeting room, or synagogue, in that city in those days, in which the law of God was read. There was often speaking in that synagogue, but always teaching what man was to do to attain to righteousness; not one speaker or hearer had ever been known to attain to righteousness before God. For three sabbath days these poor men went into that synagogue. Never had such preaching been heard in that city before. It was a strange contrast to all that had ever been heard there. It was not what they must do, as we have seen, not one word of the kind; yet it was just the thing needed. Many felt they needed salvation first, and fruits would follow. All that is said, however, is that they believed the preaching, and consorted with Paul and Silas — a great multitude. These poor men soon had to flee for their lives as usual from the cruel hatred of the Jews, who could not endure such doctrine. They would rather seek after righteousness by their own works.

God ordered that an inspired letter was sent by these poor men to all these believers, as soon as they had heard from them. And as this is just a sample of the effect of the preaching of Paul, and others with him, in the First Years of Christianity, it is a great privilege to have such an inspired letter, showing the immediate effects of the true gospel in those days. This assembly at

Thessalonica does not seem to have had any further human help until Timothy was sent to see how they did. (1 Thessalonians 3:2.) So that all we read of are the effects of a few weeks' preaching in a heathen city, given up to demon worship. We shall also find in this letter a good outline of the teaching of the apostle to such as are saved. The first thing that strikes one is, that all these believers are at once brought into the position of the assembly in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. This assembly was gathered out from Jews and Gentiles by these few weeks' preaching. This, as we see elsewhere, was the work of the Holy Ghost. There are no jarring sects or parties, but the one assembly in that city, and in such a blessed relationship in the Father and in Jesus Christ. And their condition was such that Paul could give thanks to God always for them all, making mention of them in his prayers. And what was the effect of this singular preaching as to good works? He says: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." It must be right seed that produced such fruit as this. There could be no uncertainty as to their election of God. For the gospel he preached, so different from anything ever heard before, was not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Now this is never the case where a mixture of law and grace is preached, but it is always a vague hope, and all is uncertainty No such uncertainty accompanied the true gospel in those first years. The full assurance of salvation in the power of the Holy Ghost always leads the happy believer to long to make it known to others.

Thus, though the apostle had to leave them, yet the word of the Lord sounded out from them over a larger district than all Yorkshire. And mark another effect. These poor heathens were turned to God, from idols, "to serve the living and the true God." Was not this wonderful? Did not God set His seal to His gospel in this marvellous result? But were there no worldly advantages held out to these first Christians? Not a single earthly advantage, but the very opposite. It was "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." They, as everywhere, received the word in much affliction and persecution, and with only one hope before them, the return of the Lord Jesus, the coming of the Lord. Nay, Paul himself had no other hope, as he says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coining?"

Oh, those first years: how different from these last days! One marked difference was this: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God," etc. Is it not generally the opposite of this now? Doctrines are believed, because certain men teach them. What should we think of a child, if a father sent him a letter, and he said, "I will believe it if the servants say it is so"?

Let it not be supposed from the gospel preached — of salvation entirely through what Christ had done — that when these hearers were born again, were saved, were justified for ever from all things, that they were not then taught to walk as children of God. No, Paul says: "As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." As he says elsewhere: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works," etc. (Titus 3:8.) The order is this: first, the grace of God bringeth salvation to all men; secondly, this teaches us to lead a holy

life; and thirdly, to look for the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord. See Titus 2:11-13. How simple this was in the first years.

Such was the order, and such the effect in Thessalonica. First, the free sovereign favour of God, bringing salvation; all accomplished by Christ, not a word of doing or law-keeping. Secondly, they were, when saved, exhorted to walk worthy of God, who hath called them unto His kingdom and glory. And thirdly, they were separated to God to wait for Jesus from heaven. And the power of the truth was so great that it spread in all directions. The more we study this epistle to these young converts from Jews and Gentiles, the more wonderful we see the effects of the gospel Paul preached. Just a few weeks' preaching, and a multitude of believers was the result, and every one of them in holy separation to Christ. Is there any town or city now on this earth, that answers to this? With all the vast machinery and privileges of these last days, can we find even a village where all the believers are separated, gathered to Christ; with no sect or party in it, but all under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, all enjoying the full assurance of faith, all waiting for Jesus from heaven? Where shall we look for the Christianity of these first years? How many cities may be found where there is not one believer really separated to the name and Person of Christ, and not one really waiting for Him from heaven; where it would be difficult to find anything that really answers to the first years? We must own the truth of this. The Holy Ghost has not left on record the manner or order of their meetings for worship or teaching. We may, however, learn from Acts 17:1-34 that soon after their conversion, Paul and his companions had to escape by night. (Ver. 10.) Neither do they seem to have had the least help from any other servants of the risen Christ, except the visit of Timothy. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2.) Yet there were those amongst themselves "which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." And they were to esteem them very highly. And they were enabled to edify one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11-14.) We shall find this in keeping with other epistles we may shortly notice.

Thus though we have not an exact description of a meeting for worship and edification, yet they had both, without the arrangements of modern Christendom. And it would be a most important inquiry, to examine the Acts and the epistles, to see what we can learn as to the way in which the assemblies came together in the First Years of Christianity. Have you ever done this, beloved reader? We are so liable to take for granted that what each of us has been brought up in is the right and scriptural thing, without ever comparing it with the word of God. At present our inquiry is more connected with the effect of a full unconditional gospel such as Paul the apostle preached. We have seen the effect to be marvellous. The Order of Preaching, Worship, and Edification

First, as to preaching the word. This evidently varied according to circumstances. The first day, the Pentecost, was ushered in by the descent of the Holy Ghost. A vast multitude was called together by the rushing sound from heaven. The assembly of God on earth was formed by the Holy Ghost. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with miraculous power. Peter was then used to preach the crucified and risen Christ. The result is a new company is formed at Jerusalem. That company is called the church, or more properly translated, "the assembly." The word thus translated always means an assembly. It is so used to describe the nation of Israel in the wilderness. (Acts 7:38.) It is the same word in the Greek used to describe a crowd in the theatre at Ephesus (Acts 19:32; Acts 19:39; Acts 19:41), and it is properly translated assembly. But what is this new company called "the church," or "the assembly"? That it is a new company is clear. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Corinthians

10:32.) Does this company, "the church of God," ever appear in scripture before Pentecost? (Acts 2:1-47.) Never, except in two passages, and there as a future thing. Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:17 : "I will build my church," "Tell it unto the church." Peter preached at Pentecost, but the Lord by the Holy Ghost formed this new assembly. It was not that He formed what we see now, hundreds of sects, or denominations. He did not form the Greek, or Roman, or Anglican churches, etc., but "the church of God." It is of immense interest to inquire what this was, and what it is. Did you ever do this?

It was composed of all saved persons. "The Lord added [together, or] to the church daily such as should be saved." This new company then was composed of such as should be saved. The true church of Christ was only composed of the saved, or such as were being saved. All that were saved were added together, and formed the assembly of Christ. To this agree the words of Paul, "Unto the assembly of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling," etc., and again, "Unto the assembly of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in, all Achaia."

Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1, and 2 Thessalonians 1:1. Thus it is most certain that no person belonged to the church of God, in the First Years of Christianity, except the holy ones, the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Be not deceived, if this is not your case, you have no part nor lot in the church of God, be you pope, emperor, king, or bishop. This church is also the body of Christ, "and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:22-23.) And mark, this body is not a body of Christians organised by men. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." (1 Corinthians 12:12.) This body, this one body, is composed of all true saved believers, and is formed by the Holy Ghost. Dear fellow believers, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Such is the church, the body of Christ. "And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings," etc. (1 Corinthians 12:28.)

Mark, this is all of God. He set what He pleased in the church, and what He pleases still remains. Do not be too sure that what you call the church is the church of God, but search the scriptures. Only of this be sure, that if you are not saved and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, whatever other church you may belong to, you do not at present belong to the church of God.

Now as to the preaching and ministry of the word of God in the First Years of Christianity, we must notice the difference between individual responsibility to Christ, and ministry in the assembly. Individually they had the guidance of the Holy Ghost as to where they should go, as Paul in Acts 13:1-52. He and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Ghost. And they had the fellowship of the assembly at Antioch. And we find them preaching Christ, and declaring the glad tidings at Antioch in Pisidia. Then Paul and Silas are directed to Philippi, by the river side. See the same guidance at Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. In Ephesus we find Paul for two years daily in the school of one Tyrannus. (Acts 19:1-41.) So that it is evident the evangelist or teacher is responsible as guided by the Holy Ghost to preach the word wherever the Spirit opens a door for him. These should also be commended and helped on in their work by the assembly. (3 John.)

It is, however, astonishing how little we find as to the assemblies' meetings for worship and edification, that answers to modern Christendom. Suppose you look through the Acts and the Epistles, do you find anything in the least like the mass? Is there any priest to offer a sacrifice for the living or the dead? It could not possibly be, since all the worshippers were for ever perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ, and there is no more sacrifice for sin. (Hebrews 10:1-18.) To break bread in remembrance of that death through which they had redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, was done by the disciples on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7.) To offer another sacrifice would be to deny the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice which had been offered. Do you find the disciples ever did this? That all true believers were worshipping priests is evident. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Hebrews 13:15.) "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5.)

What kind of places of worship had they? Had they churches, or chapels, or temples? Had they consecrated bells, or buildings? These abound now, but do we find a trace of such in the New Testament? Not a trace. We find. them in an upper chamber in Acts 20:8. Wherever the saints were gathered together to Christ, there was, and there only, the true church or assembly. Was it not so?

Worship was spiritual — in spirit and in truth and in the holiest. (Hebrews 10:19.) This was the very immediate presence of God, the third heavens. The tabernacle or place of worship of Israel was a figure of this. There is the atmosphere the starry heavens and the dwelling place of God, the third heavens, the holiest. And in spirit the whole church had holy boldness there as worshippers. But as to buildings, so-called places of worship, we do not find one even in imperial Rome. Read the last chapter in the Epistle to the Romans, and all must admit that all we find are assemblies in houses. Thus the place was nothing. The Father had found worshippers to worship Him in spirit and in truth. But when gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, do we find the order of worship and ministry described in the word of God?

Concerning this matter, we find the Holy Ghost present. (Acts 13:1-4.) And whatever the diversity of gifts present, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Corinthians 12:7.) Mark, this is in the assembly. But no man could take the place of the Spirit of God, and no man could take the place of the Lord. But if confusion took place, did they not appoint a man as the minister over the assembly? We never find such a thing. Confusion had come in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40. Do we read that one man therefore must take the lead or the whole service? No, we read, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Read to the end of the chapter 1 Corinthians 14:29-40. It is quite true that human arrangements have set all this aside. But such was the Christianity of the First Years. The presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost was a reality. And Paul says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (Ver. 37.)

Now whatever men may set up, it is most certain that when the assembly is gathered together for worship and edification, it is the will of the Lord that there should be this holy liberty, for two or three to be used of the Holy Ghost in ministry. Surely we have lost that deep sense of the Lord's presence which was in the assemblies in the early days of Christianity. A mere imitation, however, of this true order of ministry in the assembly, without real heart subjection to the Holy Ghost ever

present, would be utterly powerless, and would soon degenerate into radicalism or self-will.

If, on the other hand, human pretensions have usurped the place of the Spirit, and human organisation has entirely displaced scriptural primitive order, let us not boast, but humble ourselves, and ever remember the apostolic commendation is to God and the word of His grace, and not to any party or denomination of men. And though Christendom has ceased to walk according to the commands of Christ, yet we are warranted in expecting to find some who desire to own Him who is the holy and the true. To such Jesus still says, "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 hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." And further, to such He says, "I come quickly: hold that fast which thou Last, that no man take thy crown." (Revelation 3:7-13.)

Beloved reader, is the Lord’s word nothing to you? Is it quite enough for you to go on with the stream of modern profession? Is it nothing to you what name you bear in Babylon? Or, whilst conscious of much failure, is it the desire of your heart to answer to what the Lord so graciously approves in the above scripture, indeed in all scripture? May the Lord use these few remarks on the First Years of Christianity to stir up our hearts, to seek to walk so as to have the testimony that what we do in these last days of Christendom may be pleasing in His sight.

Many of the readers may say: Would it not be most profitable to look into the scriptures for an answer to this question — What is the Church?

We will look to the Lord to enable us to do so.

What is the Church? The word "church" is used in so many ways that it is difficult for many to understand what the church of God really is, as spoken of in scripture. "Feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28.) "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Corinthians 10:32.) Thus in the New Testament there are three classes on this earth: the Jewish nation, the Gentile world, and the church of God. Do we ever find these three classes in the Old Testament? Never; neither in Moses, the Psalms, nor the prophets. Is that a fact? It is. Then what did Stephen refer to when he spake of "the church in the wilderness"? (Acts 7:38.) If you read the context, you will see that it was the children of Israel, or the nation of Israel gathered out of Egypt in the wilderness. It was one of the two things then on earth, and not the third thing, called in the New Testament "the church of God." That is quite clear.

I should like to ask, When was it first named in scripture? It was first named by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16:1-28; but as a future thing. He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it . . ." It is generally supposed that all saved persons, all believers, from the very first, say from Abel downwards, belong to the church. Do we not read of the Jewish church? Yes, but not in scripture. Only in the books of men who are guided by custom, and who do not examine scripture, for what they, say.

Then again. we hear and read of the church of Rome, church of England, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian church, etc. Is this a correct way of speaking? Well, men understand what they mean. But our Lord did not mean any of these when He said, "I will build my church." No, He did, not say, "I will build the church of Rome," or any of the churches that men have built. If any one of these was "the church" that would exclude all other believers in the other churches from being saved, as "the church" is also the "one body," and also the bride of Christ. "For as the body is one,

and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether, we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13.) "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4.) Who are meant by those that are, baptised by the one Spirit into this one body, the church of God? "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (1 Corinthians 1:2.) Is it not evident from these scriptures that all true Christians form the one body of Christ, the church of God? So that if Christ meant any of those bodies of men which claim to be the one body, the church of God; or, to put it very plainly, if Christ meant that He would build the church of Rome, and that therefore it is the church of God, this would undoubtedly prove that all outside the church of Rome are not Christians at all.

These remarks would be equally applicable to any other church which assumed the position of being the church of God. As the church is the one body of Christ, you cannot be a saved Christian if you are outside that one body. Would it not then be foolish work to spend our time in trying to prove which of the many churches of Christendom is the true church, since to do so would also prove that all other true Christians were not members of the body of Christ? This is not our object, but simply to inquire what is the church, the one body of Christ, who is the Head of the body in heaven.

What is God’s thought of the church? We have already said that the church is not once named in the Old Testament: was it, then, an afterthought of God, on the rejection of the Messiah by Israel? Far from this: we shall find that it was the first great purpose of God in giving His Son to accomplish redemption. And though this His purpose was never revealed, but kept hid for ages, yet we have most striking types of the church, the bride of Christ, in the Old Testament. We will take three of these types or pictures of the church, the bride of Christ. No doubt the Holy Spirit will teach us by these pictures, and help us to understand the New Testament scriptures better. The first will illustrate the work of our God and Father; the second, the work of the Holy Ghost in gathering this bride; and the third will bring before us the Bridegroom Himself, and very precious details as to how the bride is redeemed and brought to Himself. We refer to Eve, Rebecca, and Ruth. Bear in mind, that we do not seek to prove the doctrine of the church by these types, but use them to help us to understand the doctrine as taught in the Acts and the Epistles.

First, then, as to Eve. In Genesis 2:1-25 we have the first Adam as a figure of Him that was to come. God placed him in paradise, the garden of Eden. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." How wonderfully this reveals the thought of God in eternity: His purpose that the Last Adam, now in the paradise of God, should not be alone. We then see how God formed the creatures, and brought them unto Adam, and how Adam gave them their names. But there was not a help meet for him in paradise; not one suited to him; not one like him; not one of the same nature that corresponded to him. The animals were with him in paradise, companions we may say; but there was no real correspondence. No creature was of his nature meet for him; no creature meet to be ONE with Adam.

Mark, this was absolutely the case until "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof and the rib, which the

Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." It is quite true we could not have seen this hidden type of Christ and the church, if the Holy Ghost had not revealed it in Ephesians 5:30. Now all is clear.

There was no Eve until Adam had been laid in the figure of death: the deep sleep. Until then he was alone, though in the midst of all creation. The Lord Jesus tells us the very same thing: speaking of Himself, He says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:24.) He was there with His disciples, or in heaven in the midst of angelic hosts; but, as to His nature, He was and must be for ever alone, unless He die, and be raised from the dead. The moment Eve saw Adam she was like him, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. It will be so with the second Eve, the one bride of Christ: when she shall be presented to Him she will be glorious; yea, the moment we see Him, we shall be like Him. (Ephesians 5:26; 1 John 3:2.) There was no Eve until Adam in figure died and rose again. Then she corresponded perfectly to Adam: was part of himself. There was only one meet to be so. And the New Testament carries all this out fully as to the church, the bride of Christ. To faith all is now sure; but the presentation in the perfect likeness of Christ has not yet come. Surely all this should prepare us to find something marvellously new and different when Christ, the last Adam had died, and had risen from the dead. And that something is new; that new creation is the church of God, one with Christ, the Head in heaven. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Thus was Eve meet to be Adam’s companion and a help meet in the paradise of Eden. And all this was the work of God, according to his own purpose. And is it so, are all believers, according to the purpose of God, made meet for the paradise of God? Yes, we can all give "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Colossians 1:12.) As this is the first figure of the church, it is well to note how all is of God And this answers to Ephesians

Just as Eve was one with Adam, blest in and with him with every blessing in the earthly paradise, it was God who thus blessed her, and thus placed her the one bride of Adam, who had been dead in figure and was alive again: all was of God — so now of all the saints of God "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. But all, all is of God. Did God raise Adam from his deep sleep? Then "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:19-23.) And then the same blessed God hath raised us up from the dead: "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," etc. (Ephesians 2:5-6.)

Yes, the first thought of God in giving His Son, was that He might not remain alone, the Man in the glory of the heavenly paradise; but that He should have a bride, the church, in His own perfect likeness. Sins and sin for ever passed away, she should share in His glory for ever with and like Him — having His own sinless perfection, His own very nature. Oh what will it be to be the

companion of the last Adam in eternal glory, in every way corresponding to Him, as Eve to Adam! No other creature in the universe is to have or can have this place. We will next go on in our meditations to the second figure or picture of the bride of Christ. Can you, reader, recognise the hand of God (as in the picture we have looked at for a moment), in your new creation? Then dwell on the purpose of God as to your eternal future.

Rebecca.Genesis 22:1-24— 24.

If we turn to this inspired account, we notice that Isaac had no bride until after that remarkable event in his history, his being offered up on the altar, and his being received in figure from the dead. It is written of Abraham, after he had offered up his only begotten son, that he accounted that "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Hebrews 11:19.) Until this event, until in figure Isaac was raised from the dead, we do not hear of the bride of Isaac. This in our illustration then is the foundation of all that follows. "God will provide himself a lamb." Was not this so in the great antitype? When God gave up His only begotten Son unto the actual death of the cross, and until that work was finished on the cross, and God had raised up His Son from the dead — until then we have not one word of the church, the bride of Christ, as an existing thing. So far then the illustration is in keeping with the New Testament account of the formation of the church.

Then, in the account in Genesis, it is after the receiving of Isaac from the dead, that Sarah dies, and is buried. It was after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Jews were set aside and for a time buried among the nations. But still more striking is the fact, that after the death and resurrection of Isaac, the father, Abraham, and the risen son, Isaac, send the third person, the steward of the household, from Canaan (figure of heaven) for the specific purpose of fetching the bride, Rebecca, for Isaac the son. Could anything be more striking as a figure? It was after Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, had died, and was risen from the dead, and had ascended up to heaven, that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Ghost from heaven to this world, — the Jews having rejected the Saviour-Messiah, and all the promises to Israel for a time being set aside, buried, as it were, for the present. Oh, that this were understood. The specific object of the descent of the Holy Ghost, as we shall see when we come to the Acts and Epistles, was to form the bride, and take her to meet the Bridegroom. Let us look at this picture.

Eliezer then is a figure of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. He comes, sent of the father, Abraham, for a bride for Isaac. He does not come for all Mesopotamia. And at this time Jesus does not ask for the whole world, but for those whom the Father hath given Him, and who will compose the bride.

Mark, he comes in pure grace, giving freely his gifts, but giving first to the bride. Like Jesus at the well, he desires a drink of water from this stranger. For the Holy Spirit, as the Shepherd, also has joy in finding the lost one. (Luke 15:1-32.) But He brings all to her: the jewel for the forehead, and the bracelets for the hands. And not as the world, He giveth all first. Such is the way of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things that are Christ’s. It is the righteousness of God unto all, and the jewel upon the forehead of every one that believeth, and where the righteousness of God is on the forehead, everlasting love clasps the hands. This free favour touches the heart of Rebecca. There is room enough for the camels to lodge in.

It is free favour, everlasting love, that opens the heart to Christ, and the Spirit then dwells there for ever. The heart is won for Christ. Mark this second type brings out the work of the Spirit in fetching the bride. Precious lessons for every servant of Christ. It is ours to seek this divine guidance, and when we have found it, to bow and worship. And now he brings out "Jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and GAVE them to Rebecca; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things." Yes, the Gospel sent by the Holy Ghost is giving. Every other gospel is asking something from man, who finds he has nothing to give. Which gospel do you hear? Giving in pure free favour, like our picture here; or asking like the law, and giving nothing? But thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ for the bride. The precious realities of redemption are figured by jewels of silver, and divine righteousness by the figure of gold. All is from the risen Son, the heavenly bridegroom. But when thus clothed, and made meet to be the bride of Isaac, is there nothing more? no question of responsibility for the bride? Yes, there is the question of all questions: "Wilt thou go?" Have we heard that question? The Holy Ghost will never ask you that question until He has shown you and given you all that makes you perfectly meet to be the bride of Christ. Ah, then your heart longs to be gone. "Yes," she said, "I will go." "And the servant took Rebecca and went his way." Yes, she is gone from all she held dear in that land of idolaters. She is gone to meet the bridegroom. She sits on the camel with her back on her former home and her face toward the bridegroom and her future home. Which way do you sit, my reader? Is your back on all you once held dear in a sinful world? Is your face toward your waiting Bridegroom and your eternal home above? The true attitude of the church is to go out to meet Him she loves. This was her first love. Yes, she turned her back on all below, to meet Him she loved. The journey was long, in dependence, at every step, on the guide who came to fetch her. But the next event, after she left her old home, was "Isaac came," "and Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming." And to this agree the words of Jesus, "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." Yes, as Isaac came out in the fields of Canaan to meditate, so Jesus is now meditating in the fields of glory. Oh that the bride may now lift up her eyes and see Him, as Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. May we, like her, dwell on all the Spirit has to tell us of the Man that cometh out to meet us. Oh yes, it is His delight to tell us more and more of the Man that cometh out to meet us. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God! and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.)

Yes, as the call of Rebecca brings before us the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to form and fetch the bride to meet and be for ever with the Lord, this lovely picture will enable us to detect all that counterfeits His blessed work.

Let us try it. Here comes a very large company, led by a wonderful person. You will find his name and character in 2 Corinthians 11:14, and his company in verse 15. But how is this? They are all going the wrong way. They have all their backs on the coming of the Lord. They all say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth his coming." They are full of hatred to Rebecca, and would like to smite her. They say, "We are the church, and all that do not belong to us are damned, or shall be, both in this world and the next, so soon as we have power."

Well, they seem very much in earnest; they seem to have an object before them. If it is not Christ coming from heaven to meet them, what is it? Ah, if you could but get it out of them you would not forget it.

Ask one or two. Well, try this one — the Rev. So-and-so. Kindly excuse me, do you not profess to be a Christian, and this company with you, does it not bear the name of being "the church, the bride of Christ?" "Yes, quite so. And we are the only church; all others are heretics, and will be lost for ever." This is strange. Did not the church of Christ in the beginning go out to meet Him? And you are going the wrong way, with your backs to the coming of the Lord, and your faces on what?

How many would say, if they spoke up, "I have no time to think about such things as the coming of the Lord, I am seeking a good living in the world. We want possession of all Mesopotamia, and divide it into parishes for priests." And here comes another. He might say, "I am not so foolish as to give up the world. I delight in tennis, football, and all the dancing and carousing of Mesopotamia." Poor things! When they think of eternity, they need a good amount of what they call pleasure to make up for the awful despair of eternity. To another, the one like an angel of light is whispering, "What, give up Mesopotamia, my beautiful world? (2 Corinthians 4:4.) Come and join me in my politics, and let your hope be the improvement of Mesopotamia!"

Far more than this is true of that company who assume to be the only church on earth, but alas, they are travelling the wrong way. But what a test for the writer, and every reader of these lines! Are we being led by Satan, or by the Holy Ghost? Is the world your object, or mine? Or is the object of our hearts the Bridegroom of the church? Have we received the free-grace gifts of the Holy Ghost? Christ our redemption; Christ our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our all? Have we been won to Christ? Have we said, "I will go?" What have we gone out from to meet the Lord? Is He, the coming One, the object of our hearts?

Before we look at our third picture, let us meditate on this question: Which way are we travelling? If not to meet the Lord, our name is not Rebecca. In this picture then we see that the purpose of the Father, and the work of the Holy Ghost during this time, is to gather and present the bride to the risen Son. This alone is the present work of the Spirit.

Ruth.

We have looked at the creation of Eve as illustrating the purpose and work of God, in the new creation of the church, the bride of Christ.

We have also seen the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to form the church, the bride of Christ, in the call of Rebecca.

Now we would behold the Bridegroom-Redeemer in the Book of Ruth — the attractions of Christ, and the way the desolate stranger is drawn to Him and becomes the redeemed bride.

We get also the exercises of heart through which each soul passes, more or less, that is brought to Christ. Just as each, whether Jew or Gentile, is found dead in sins, children of wrath in Ephesians 2:1-22 — yes, each of those raised up with Christ to occupy the place of highest blessings in Him in the heavenlies — so it is in our picture. Ruth is one of a people outside, under the curse according to the law. (See Deuteronomy 23:3-6.) Just as in Ephesians 2:12, "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."

Such is our condition by nature. Such was the position of Ruth, the Moabitess. And death was written upon her. All hope was gone as to her husband, he was dead, and his brother was dead; Elimelech their father also was dead. This is the place where grace finds her. For from first to last "by grace ye are saved." God can use whom He pleases in that work of grace.

She who was "Naomi" (pleasing) in the land of Jehovah, has become "Mara" (bitter) when away from her God, and is stirred, for she hears of blessing when in the land of Moab far away, "how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her." Thus the work of grace begins apparently in both Ruth and Orpah. And so it is, often the work seems to begin in two persons, and they travel on together for a time. And there is the same outward love for a time to the feeble messenger of that grace. Thus it was with Orpah as well as Ruth. Orpah wept and kissed Naomi, and then went back to her demon gods. 1 Corinthians 10:20, "I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons] and not to God."

How many Orpahs have we known, who once professed to have left the world, and started for the heavenly journey? Such have sacrificed themselves and their children to the worship of fashion and pleasure. Not so where there is a real work of grace: "Ruth clave unto her." She says, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," etc. There must be uncompromising decision for Christ.

Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the soul’s first meeting with Christ than Ruth 2:1-23. She gleans in the field of the bridegroom, the kinsman-redeemer. What grace he shows her! She is welcome when thirsty to drink, and at meal times to come and eat; and handfuls are dropped on purpose for her. Still she was only a gleaner. Many remain in the fields of our Boaz, happy to get blessing, and sharing those blessings with others, as Ruth did with Naomi, and never seem to reach the true ground of rest.* "Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" said Naomi to Ruth.

{*Many more of these details may be seen in a tract, "Ruth," to be had of G. Morrish, London.}

We notice, that the only way to find rest, is to seek it at the feet of the Redeemer-kinsman, as seen in chapter 3. We must know Him as the Redeemer-Bridegroom; just as Ruth took that place at the feet of Boaz in his sleep, picture of the death of Christ. Spread thy sheltering protection over me, for thou art One that hath right to redeem. There was another relation before Boaz, and Ruth had to wait until the morning. Yes, we must be brought to the death, of the cross of Christ. But mark it is not there we find rest, the rest of redemption. If the morning of the resurrection of Christ had never broken the silence of the tomb, we could never have found eternal rest. He must rise again, or there can be no redeemed bride. We must call attention to this point in this beautiful illustration. The church as such had no actual existence until Jesus arose from the dead. Ruth has not to glean now, but to sit still, "for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

Chapter 4 is the question who is to be your husband and redeemer? Man, as represented in Israel, was placed under law, as the old husband. That relationship existed. The question then was, could the law bring man into resurrection-redemption? It could not. It could go no further than the land, that is, the government of God in this world. It could not redeem the guilty. The first kinsman could

not redeem Ruth, one of the accursed race, and give her a place in resurrection. Very strikingly is all this brought out in this chapter. He must relinquish all claim and pretension, "So he drew off his shoe." What he could not do, Boaz did; he says, "Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." In like manner, what the law could not do Christ has done; as it is written, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church," etc. Oh what love was this, the eternal Son, the creator of all things, to humble Himself so low as to become the Redeemer-kinsman of poor lost sinners under the curse of sin, to pay the purchase of their redemption; and, as risen from the dead, to take them into everlasting oneness with Himself as His body and His bride.

Very briefly let us now see how all these pictures or types of the church have been fulfilled in the church, the bride of Christ. In Ephesians we see the church as the workmanship of God, according to His own purpose, which answered to the creation of Eve. God raised Christ from the dead. The new creation of the church was consequent on His death and resurrection. The church is to be presented to Christ, the last Adam, and be joint heir with Him over all things in the paradise of God in the heavenlies.

Then after the death and resurrection of Christ the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to form the church. This work of the Spirit is going on still, and will go on until that moment when the church complete is presented to Christ, as Rebecca was to Isaac. The day of Pentecost was the first day of the work of the Holy Ghost, in forming the church; and soon the last will have arrived. See the Acts for the full account of the formation of the church. And though the Satanic counterfeit goes on to Babylon’s apostasy, yet the work, guidance, and care of the Holy Spirit never ceases; and daily now, as at the beginning, such as are saved are added to the Lord, as truly as on the day of Pentecost. And as the church or assembly included all who were saved then, so now it is quite true there is no salvation outside the pale of the true church, simply for this good reason, that all that are truly saved are baptised into the one body, the church.* "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body," etc. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13.) The Holy Ghost never makes or baptises different bodies of Christians. For it is as true that there is but one body, as it is that there is one Spirit. Christ is the head of His body the church. "And there is one body." (Ephesians 4:4-6.) The Lord grant that we may hold this important truth firm to the end. For whatever is not truth is not of God, but of the father of lies.

{*This is not water baptism, but by the one Spirit.}

There was one Eve, one Rebecca, one Ruth. In each figure, is only one. One bridegroom, Boaz; one redeemed bride, Ruth. There were different local assemblies, but only the one assembly, the body of Christ. All believers formed that one assembly. All believers now form the one church or assembly of God. That one assembly is about to be caught up to meet the Lord, and to be for ever with Him, and all the varied imitations of men or Satan will be left behind. The blessed. hope of the church may be seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, and the judgments that will follow in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 : "And they shall not escape." "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and

that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.)

How terrible the judgments about to be poured on apostate Christendom as revealed to us in Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24. Then, when the great harlot is for ever judged, the bride of the Lamb will be the true second Eve, the Rebecca, the Ruth. Then will be heard the voice of the great multitude in heaven, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Revelation 19:7-8.) Read also the description given of her in Revelation 21:9 to end. "Having the glory of God, and her light [or shining] was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Such is the sure destiny of the church of God, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling. The church of God is composed only of such. All pretensions as to being the true church will soon be tested. May every reader of these few lines be tested now. Rest not, beloved reader, until you are quite sure you belong to the redeemed church of God — until you know that you have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. Tomorrow may be too late; the church may be gone to be for ever with the Lord, and you, if unsaved, for ever left, shut out. Oh think of those words, "Too late!" What infinite mercy that it is not too late yet. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Oh the precious grace that invites you so sweetly, even unto the last moment. Have you tried the pleasures of this world, its sins, fashions, and its follies — and still you thirst? Oh come to Jesus, come now. He says, "And let him that is athirst come." Do not say, "I am too bad for such scenes of glory and holiness." No, He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He is the truth — He will not deceive you. Oh, come. And to you who have come, can you look up to Jesus in the heavens and say, Come? Who can say that He will not come the day you read these words — nay, even before they are in print? C. Stanley.

102. The Way the Lord hath Led Me;

The Way the Lord hath Led Me; or, Incidents of Gospel Work. by Charles Stanley.

London: G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square.

Contents

Chapter 1.

Nothing to read but the Bible. — Trying to Reform. — Conversion. — Need of Fellowship. — First Sermon on John 3:16. — Early Life. — Visit to the Old Butler. — Remove to Sheffield. — No advance in divine knowledge. — Hear of the Second Coming of Christ

Chapter 2. A Room opened for Preaching. — Captain W. — Found out our ignorance. — Captain W. charged with error. — Testing him with Syllogisms proved my own folly. — A great change in the current of my course. — Visit to those who were gathered round the Lord Jesus. — Gathered to the Lord's Table. — Led to read 2 Corinthians 1:1-24, but read by another. — Real Guidance of the Spirit. — My second start in preaching. — God blesses His Word, though we are ignorant. — Visited many Towns

Chapter 3. A preacher and a man of business. — Two cases of my need met by God. — God cares for our temporal things. — The lost dinner. — Led to go where the Lord directs, and found fruit after many years. — Sent to Scarborough. — Expenses paid. — A collision on the way. — Met at the Terminus, though unknown. — Call to preach on a Steamer. — A Sermon, twenty miles long. — Many Saved

Chapter 4.

Committing children to the Lord in faith. — The Lame Captain. — Sent to Scarborough, when there was no one else to preach. — The full gospel much needed. — The Lord's bag. — The work began at York. — Preaching at the funeral of a Roman Catholic. — Lecture on the Signs of the Times. — An After Meeting in a cottage. — T. S. sent to York, and then W. T.

Chapter 5.

First visit to Southport — Lecture, on the "Second Coming of the Lord". — J. H.'s prayer answered. — Good to be afflicted. — Went to Wath-on-Dearne. — Lydia M. and her house blessed. — Preaching at the Pottery, and many saved. — The Railway Tracts. — Other Tracts followed. — "Mephibosheth" especially blessed. — The dying Shepherd in Australia. — "Victory" on board ship. — The Hindoo and Mahometan. — The dying Infidel.

Chapter 6.

Looking for guidance daily. — The Bell-man at Wootton-under-Edge. — Preaching at Llandudno. — Diagram on the Lord's Coming. — The Revivals. — A ton of tracts asked for America. —

Meetings at Birmingham. — Faith answered at Stafford. — Meeting at Leamington. — Unitarian lady

Chapter 7.

Preaching in London. — At John Street Chapel. — The old Prodigal. — In the eastern counties. — Ipswich, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Norwich, Bury St. Edmunds. — The Lord’s special leadings. — At Sudbury

Chapter 8.

Preaching at York. — At Bradford and Rochdale. — John 5:24 and Acts 13:38. — What more can an anxious soul want? — Early and after meetings. — The greatest sinner in Exeter. — One blessed at six in the morning. — After meetings. — Leadings of the Spirit real. — A case in point.

Chapter 9.

Direct answers to prayer. — Led to Leeds, and preserved from danger. — Danger in Sheffield from the Roman Catholics. — The Church of Rome in the year 60. — The Roman Catholics in Glasgow gladly hear the preaching.

Chapter 10.

Visit to a village in the Yorkshire Moors. — Need of faith. — Preached at the Moravian Settlement at Fulneck. — Peace with God, and no Condemnation. — Preaching tour in Yorkshire. — Call to an old woman blessed. — An aged relative

Chapter 11.

Encouragement to young Evangelists. — The three aged Saints. — An old man in a grey coat at Bournemouth. — One great secret of success in preaching. — Servants of Christ, not of men. — Lectures and preachings in a colliery district. — Many helped. — Meet for breaking of bread. — Decay. — Scattering

Chapter 12.

Help from a life’s experience. — Study of the Epistle to the Romans. — Love alone not enough. — What God is and what He has done. — Dependence on the Holy Spirit. — Deliverance. — Searching the Scriptures as to the Second Coming of Christ

Chapter 13. The Church the body of Christ. — Is this held truth? — Separation from evil. — Guidance from Scripture in days of difficulty. — The ministry of John commended. — Dates of the Epistles. — Errors in the Church. — The Word of God a sure guide

Chapter 14.

How to walk in days of evil. — The Word of God. — Righteousness of God. — Righteousness of Christ and Redemption. — In Christ

Chapter 1.

How wondrously true is that word which the Lord spake to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” The writer of these pages desires for His glory, who hath shown mercy to him, to record His ways of sovereign grace. As a child I had very little opportunity; but I had a great thirst for books and learning. One day I happened to say, in the presence of a poor woman, how I longed for books, and had nothing to read. “What, Charles,” she said; “there is the word of God on that table, and you have nothing to read!” She said no more, but those words could not be forgotten. They were used by the Spirit to show me that I had no heart for God. This, no doubt, came with deeper force as I had, though only twelve years of age, a good knowledge of the letter of the word. In those days it was the lesson book in the village school, which I had left about a year; and for which I have ever been thankful. As yet I had no knowledge of my true condition as a lost sinner, and at once set about becoming religious. I tried hard to reform my outward conduct. What surprised me much was this, the more I tried, the worse I became. This went on for some months. There were none in those villages who could point me to the finished work of Christ. All who seemed to have, any care for the things of God, were working for salvation. From acquaintance with the letter of scripture, I was sure there was a peace with God that I could not obtain by all my doings and efforts. After months of struggle and distress, I was returning home one dark rainy night, when the burden on my soul was so great, that I fell down on my face in the road, and cried out, “Oh Lord, I can do no more,” and a deep sense that I was lost came over my soul. It was there, as I lay in the dark lane alone, that the Spirit of God revealed to my soul the finished work of Christ. Then it was that I saw that which I was vainly trying to do, had been done by my precious Substitute on the cross. I do not remember that I saw beyond this; but, like Israel in Egypt, I found shelter and safety beneath the precious blood. And as I rose from the ground, I do not doubt, I was a new creature in Christ Jesus; but though born of the Spirit, how much had I yet to learn as to what the flesh was. When I was converted, I began at once to long for the fellowship of Christians. Fifteen to twenty minutes’ preaching once a week, was all we got. Nothing could have been more lifeless. Indeed, I do not remember that there were any who attended the village church that knew their sins were forgiven. I attended other preachings a few times, was greatly impressed, and enjoyed their hymns and prayers; but felt their preaching was not the finished work of Christ, through which God had spoken peace to my own soul. I had, moreover, in my conversion and ever since, a deep sense of the sovereignty of God, and I soon felt that this was set aside too much in the preaching.

I can see now, that what the new nature longed for, was the fellowship of saints in separation from the world. There was a little meeting begun in the neighbourhood, and the preaching was much in keeping with what the Holy Ghost had taught me in that dark lane. There was a gracious work of God, and a good many souls were converted to God. This was at Laughton, in Yorkshire, in the year 1835. In that year, when I was 14 years of age, it so happened that the preacher, one day, failed to come. The Lord then, for the first time, opened my mouth to tell of His wondrous love, to a world lost in sin. I remember the text was John 3:16. In visiting the village more than forty years after, I happened to call on a man who well remembered the sermon, and the text. It is very interesting to me at this long distance of time, now fifty-three years ago, to remember that in that first preaching, it was what God is to us: “God so loved.” It was not, it is not, what we are to God. Oh, if this were the case, I should have been lost a thousand times since then. No, if that were the case, I for one have found, that if my salvation depends on what I have been to God, I am lost for ever. In my case, nothing short of an infinite Saviour could have met my sins and need.

Here I would just name how God had educated and prepared me, as a vessel of mercy for His future work. Left an orphan at the age of four, I had been brought up by a grandfather, a man of the strictest integrity. I believe I was brought to know the Lord at the time of which I have just spoken. From the age of about seven, I had partly to earn my bread, by working in the fields in summer; and in winter I went to the village school. At the age of eleven, a gentleman took me to his house, and for two years I had the most remarkable instruction from this gentleman. I had little book education, but he made me learn everything that could be learnt by observation; the garden, the stables, the duty of the butler, with all this he made me perfectly familiar. One day he would say, “Charles, I give thee three hours to catch a crow.” Another, he would give me a covey of partridges to bring up. Sometimes he would require an answer at once to a difficult question, such as this: once before company, he asked me, What was the cause of an eclipse of the sun? I replied, “If I place my head between this lamp, sir, and your head, you will not see it, just like when the moon is between us and the sun.” Amongst other things, I had, at times, to act as chaplain, and read a sermon in the drawing-room; and this was done with great solemnity, though a child, when God had begun to work in my soul.

It would take up too much space to tell of many interesting particulars, and why and how I left that gentleman. It seems like yesterday since he gave me his long and last address. His last words were: “Charles, thou wilt either be a curse or a blessing to mankind.” Sure I am, if it had not been for the grace of God, I should have been the former; and if, in the least measure, it has been the latter, to God be all the praise! I am quite sure God used this kind man, during these two years, to the benefit of the whole of my after life.

I left him, and walked over two fields, and then sat down on a stone stile, and wept; and I saw him no more. Thirty years after this, I felt led to go into the neighbourhood, to see the aged butler, now with the Lord. We had never met during those years. He said, turning quite pale, “How strange, I have just been reading your tract ‘Mephibosheth,’ the same which my master gave me before he died, saying to me, ‘Thomas, take this, and keep it. God has shown me by it, that I have been wrong all my life. I thought I had a great deal to do for God. I see it is all the kindness of God, for Christ’s sake, and what He has done for me.’” I am thankful to be able to add, that aged Thomas was also brought to the Lord, and to rest in His finished work.

After my conversion I removed to Sheffield, then a town of 70 to 80 thousand inhabitants. Here I was apprenticed to a gentleman who kept a steel, iron, and general hardware store. He was also a file manufacturer. I thus became acquainted with the Sheffield trade, and all classes of its people. My various occupations had given me a wide acquaintance with human nature. But in those years God was pleased to show me the utter corruption of my own evil nature. It is a terrible lesson, but it must be learnt. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not!” This must be learnt. The full truthful history of the two natures, would be like the history of two distinct persons. The history of the flesh, with its lusts, would not be to the profit of any: to the individual believer, he learns, by its history, that salvation is wholly of God. What will be recorded then in the following pages, will be the dealings of God in perfect and amazing grace. In looking back on those years, I am struck with one fact, that is, I made no advance in divine knowledge. I was greatly interested in eloquent preaching, but learnt nothing. Indeed, I was in a state of self-satisfaction, and felt as if I knew all there was to be known. In one word, I had no idea of my own ignorance. This was not so in

reference to any branch of secular knowledge; but in divine things there was no advance. Indeed, there was the most astonishing ignorance of the true meaning of the word of God. I thought the world (that world which had rejected and killed the Lord Jesus) was rapidly getting better, and that we were the people who would gradually mend it, until it was a converted world!

I will now tell how all this self-satisfaction, and delusion, was broken in upon. I should be about 23 years of age, and at this time was keeping a little store of material for the Sheffield trades. A neighbour came in one afternoon, looking very serious, and said to me, “Have you heard the news?” “No,” I said; “what news?” He replied, “There are two men lecturing at the Assembly Room, and they declare that the world will be at an end, and Christ will come at four o’clock to-morrow morning!” I turned round, for I could not keep from laughing. He begged me to go and hear the lecture that night. I went. The lecturer said nothing about the world coming to an end the next morning; but he went over Matthew 24:1-51, and showed, from that chapter, the impossibility of the world being converted before the coming of the Lord. Now, though this man held much false doctrine, and probably was not a Christian, yet God was pleased, by this lecture, to awaken in my soul an earnest desire to know the truth as to the Lord’s coming again.

I was amazed at my own ignorance of scripture, and could scarcely sleep. About eight or ten others were also awakened to inquire. We met at five in the morning, to search the word. We had no idea, either, as to what the church was, or the coming of Christ to take away His saints; but we were occupied with the coming of Christ, to set up the kingdom on earth.

Chapter 2. At this time, two of us opened a little room at Sheffield, in Duke Street, for preaching the gospel. The late Captain W. was then labouring in the service of Christ in Sheffield. Hearing of this little meeting, he called on us, and asked if he might preach the gospel in our little room. We gladly consented. He set before us the living Person of Christ meeting the sinner at Jacob’s well — meeting the woman just as she was. Christ did not shun her, or tell her to go and reform her sinful character, before He could speak to her, or save her. It was the Son of God saying to a poor sinner, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (John 4:10.) I had never before heard Jesus thus set forth by any preacher; but I found it was the same precious Jesus, who had met me in that dark lane, and on that rainy night, and had spoken peace to my troubled soul. The effect of this preaching, I doubt not, has been felt by me ever since that night. It is a wondrous revelation of how God can, and does, meet the sinner.

We soon found that, for the present, instead of preaching, we needed close and continued study of the word of God. For eighteen months we read together the epistle to the Romans; and for that period, I scarcely read anything else but the word of God. This has been a great blessing to me. I must, however, relate one incident that occurred at the commencement of these readings. As almost everybody spoke of the errors of Captain W., I thought he must hold some; and, strange to say, the most precious truths he sought to bring before us, I, through my own ignorance, thought to be errors. I have often noticed the same thing since. At that time I had no little conceit of myself, and great confidence in logic. I thought the best thing to do would be to prepare a number of syllogisms, bearing on the points I judged to be error. An opportunity soon occurred, and, in answer to a question from the Lord’s servant, I let off a volley of syllogisms. I shall never forget his kind, pitying look, as he clapped his hand on his knee, and so quietly read the next verse. In that

moment the Lord showed me what a fool I was, and all my trust in logic was for ever gone.

I now come to an event that turned the whole current of my future course from that day to this.

I had heard that Captain W. and a few other Christians met on the first day of the week to break bread, like the disciples, in Acts 20:1-38. One Lord's day morning, I went to see what this could mean. I found them gathered in an upper room, in Wellington Street, Sheffield. I sat behind, and naturally looked for the pulpit. There was no pulpit, but a table spread, or covered with a white cloth, and on it the bread and wine, in commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus. I then looked for the minister, or president; there was no such person. All the believers gathered were seated around the table of the Lord. A deep, solemn impression fell upon me: "These people have come to meet the Lord Himself." I have no doubt it was the Spirit of God that thus spake to me. It is impossible to describe the sense I had, for the first time, of being in the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus, according to that word, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I could scarcely notice what was done, I was so overwhelmed with the presence of the Lord. No one can have any idea what this is, unless really gathered to His name. What a contrast to everything I had seen before, and yet how simple! It was like going back to that which was in the beginning of Christianity, before any priest was heard of to offer in the church a sacrifice for the living and the dead. I was much surprised to find, strange as this gathering together of Christians to break bread appeared to me, that it was exactly what we find in scripture. Instead of even a minister at the Lord's Table, I found the same simple liberty as described in 1 Corinthians 14:29-37. I was greatly struck with each worshipping before the Lord, in dependence on the Holy Ghost. I felt that was my place, deeply unworthy as I was of it. Well do I remember the thought, "This is my place, if even it were to be a door mat, for these Christians to wipe their feet on me."

After some weeks, I was named as one who desired to obey the Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and, through grace, I took my place as one redeemed to God, at the Table of the Lord. Shortly after this, I experienced one morning, whilst we sat in silent worship, what I had never known before — the leading of the Spirit of God. It came as a gentle whisper from the Lord, "Read 2 Corinthians, chapter 1;" and very precious thoughts came into my soul on verses 3-5. I felt agitated, so much so, that perspiration ran down my face and body. We had sat some time in silence. I felt bid to rise and read, but had not courage to do so. At length, Captain W., who sat at the other side of the room, arose and said, Let us read 2 Corinthians 1:1-24, and then he ministered the very thoughts the Spirit had laid on my heart. This was how I first learnt the leadings of the Spirit, in the midst of Christians gathered to Christ. This has been a matter of frequent occurrence for these many years. Some instances I shall relate. We cannot read the Acts without seeing that, after the Holy Ghost formed the church, He was really present to guide the servants of the Lord. I am persuaded it is our unbelief that hinders much more of His distinct guidance now.

One thing that made me now slow to speak, was the continued discovery of my astonishing ignorance of scripture. The more I studied it, the more I discovered my ignorance. I suppose it is always so. With a deepening sense of my ignorance, I will relate how I began again to preach the gospel. A brother in Christ was over from Ackworth. Before he returned home he said to me, "It is much impressed on my heart, that you are to go back with me, and preach the gospel at Ackworth." "What," I said, "I go and preach! nay, it will take me all my life to unlearn what is wrong,

before I can preach what is right." He said firmly, "You will; I believe, go, and the Lord will bless the word." This was quite another thing. I dare not doubt that He could bless His word. After prayer I went, and proved then and ever after, that the Lord could, and would, bless His word.

This, then, was the second start to preach the word, about ten years after the first, when a boy of fourteen. Seldom, in those days, did the Lord open my lips throughout the towns and villages of England, without some soul being converted. Not that this appeared at the time, but I have met them everywhere, ten, twenty, or thirty years after. As I did not keep a journal, it would be impossible to give an account in order of those preachings, readings, and conversations for forty-two years, in Sheffield, Rotherham, and the villages all around; in Hull, York, Wakefield, Scarboro', Malton, Whitby, Redcar, Newcastle, and around; in various parts of Scotland; in Manchester, Rochdale, Oldham, Bury, Southport, Liverpool, Llandudno, Stafford, Gnosall, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Leamington, Banbury, Swindon, London, and around; throughout Kent, Cheltenham, Malvern, Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, Clifton, Bath, Taunton, Exeter, Torquay, Plymouth. Then in the Eastern Counties: Ipswich, Colchester, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Bury St. Edmunds, Norwich, Grimsby, & c. & c.

Chapter 3.

It may be asked by some, how could I preach all my life in so many places, and provide for my family? Well, I found there was nothing too hard for the Lord. I may say I never gave up my business, until the Lord had given me sufficient to live upon; but my custom was to preach three or four times a week, sometimes more, and work the rest. Indeed, often after a day's work in commercial travelling on my own business account, I found the Lord with me in preaching the word. The Lord often helped me in a very remarkable way. I will give two instances when I felt greatly in need of His help. At the time I kept a store of material for the Sheffield trades, I had only small capital, but desired no more than I had. Indeed, I had learnt that the Lord took special care of His little dependent ones. I was walking about in my shop, having been absent of late about half my time preaching. I had a bill to pay on the following Monday, and I felt a Christian should always pay as payment was due, but in this case I had not the money, and did not know where it was to come from. I lifted up my heart in prayer to the Lord about this, and immediately thought of a large stock of emery; I had many casks which I could not sell. I told the Lord about this emery. He said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." I said, Lord, which is "the right side of the ship"? Immediately the thought came, He must be the right side of the ship. I then asked the Lord to sell for me the emery, for I could not, and the amount would just meet my need. Whilst I was in prayer, a man walked into my shop, and said, "Have you any emery to sell?" "Yes, I have," I said; and went and took a pinch of the heavy stock I had to sell and placed it in his hands. "Aye," he said, "this is exactly what I want: how much have you?" I told him the number of casks (a twentieth part as much I had never sold at one time in my life); he said, "We will have it all at the price you name, send it down to our firm to-morrow. And we always pay for all we buy casually on Monday morning." I said, "I will do so; and now tell me how it is you came here, and how is it you can use this kind of emery? I have tried, and could not sell it anywhere; indeed I ought to have returned it, as it was sent in mistake to me." He replied, "Such and such a grinder told me you had a quantity to sell; we wanted it badly, so I came on to see it. You might well not sell it, as we are the only manufacturers who use this particular kind: we use it for scratching saws for the Russian market." I sent it on, and received just the money I needed.

I will give another out of the hundreds of instances of the Lord's care; and then return to speak of His work. Years after the former case, when I was a Sheffield merchant, supplying export houses in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, London, Liverpool, and Glasgow, I had been travelling three days, and preaching at night, and had received no orders — this was trying. I was walking down B… Street, in Birmingham, in prayer that the Lord would direct me to the house where I might receive an order for goods. As I was thus in prayer, I felt distinctly bid to walk exactly opposite to where I had arrived. There was a small plate on the side of the door, H. and G., but it did not say what they were. I looked in, and from what I saw, I said, "Why, Lord, this is a leather warehouse. This is nothing in my way!" But the Spirit of God seemed to say, "Go forward!" I did so. I opened the warehouse door, and found a number of men doing something to skins of leather. I presented my card and inquired if Mr. H. was within. I was shown into the private office, where I found Mr. R, and inquired if they were requiring Sheffield goods for the export trade, naming Australia, as there was a great demand for those colonies. He looked with some surprise, and said, "Do you supply such goods for Melbourne?" I replied, "Yes," and named several firms in the neighbourhood that I supplied. Opening the order book brought by a clerk, he said, "Are you sure that you supply R. & Sons?" "Certainly," I replied. "Well," he said, "this is very strange. We are export leather merchants, and one of our clients in Melbourne has just sent us an order for Sheffield tools, & c. We know nothing about these goods. But here is the order, reading out some of the numbers and prices of my goods, which had been sent by some one else." He ordered the clerk to write out the order, which came to several hundred pounds. This was the commencement of a large and most satisfactory account with a most honourable, straightforward house.

How can we account for all this, except on the ground of the tender care of Him who hears and answers prayer? The history of that ever watchful love, even in temporals, would fill a volume. From a child I had been led to believe that God heard and answered our prayers. This will be seen from a circumstance that occurred to me soon after my conversion. I was in a field two miles from home, and had put my dinner in a hedge; a young horse had got the dinner out of the hedge, and destroyed it except one small piece of bread. Also my tinder and flint were gone, for making a fire, the weather being cold in winter. I knelt down and prayed for a fire, and also that the Lord would make the bread sufficient for my dinner. I found the steel, and walking in the field soon found a flint. I gathered some dry leaves and rotten wood, and soon had a fire. I then sat down, and whether the Lord multiplied the bread, or made the little give the same sustenance, I know not; but certainly I was as strengthened and satisfied as if I had had the best of dinners. Many may smile at this; for my own part, I only pray that we all had more, childlike faith, that expects and then enjoys answers to prayer. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." I felt thankful for the need which gave the opportunity for asking and receiving. This is a little digression, but it is happy to think of His loving care. From that first visit to Ackworth, about forty-three years ago, I was led to go just wherever the Lord sent me, depending on what He could and would do, by the Holy Spirit, in blessing to souls. Now I would not so much relate what appeared at the time; but for the encouragement of the Lord's servants I would say, I scarcely ever have visited a place twenty years after preaching but there I have found fruit to His praise.

Some may be ready to ask, What do I mean by going wherever the Lord sent me? I will try to give a few distinct cases out of very many.

I had gone down to Hull to collect a few accounts. At the time I was only in a small way of business, and as I was pretty sure to collect the same, I had not taken money with me. I was at a meeting for prayer and reading the word, with a few Christians from different places, at eleven o'clock on the Saturday morning. As we were reading, the Spirit of God laid it on my heart that I must go to Scarborough to preach. I went into a room alone, and looked to the Lord in prayer that I might be assured of His will in the matter. He gave me distinct assurance that I must go. This was a long journey then, via York, and I had not money to take my ticket. But then the Lord knew that. I took my bag, told the friends I was staying with, that I felt distinctly called to go to Scarborough, though I had never been there, and only knew the name of one person there, and I had not money to pay my fare. I named this to no one. But when God gives faith, it is faith. I left the house, and walked until I was just stepping up to the booking-office, when A. J. cried out behind me, "We have just heard you are feeling led to go to Scarborough to preach to-morrow. A brother, Mr. H., desires to have fellowship with you, and has sent you, [I think it was £3] to pay your expenses." On the way we had a slight collision, exactly at the corner of the carriage where I sat, which was broken through. None of us were injured beyond a shaking. I thought this was surely a token that the Lord would have me speak the word to some one. I got into conversation with a young man who was, I judged, going home to die of consumption. I found him somewhat anxious about his soul, but thought he had a great work to do before he could be saved. I believe God blessed the message to his soul. "It is finished" was a wondrous new truth to him. As we drew near to Scarborough, his mother who was with him, was so delighted with the joy and peace of her son, that she begged I would make her house my home whilst I stayed in Scarborough. I thanked her very much, but said I could not do so, as I had just been making a request to the Lord that would hinder me from accepting her kind offer. As I only knew one name in Scarborough, I had been asking the Lord to bring him to the station, and show me which was he. At last, the train stopped. A gentleman came, and looked very earnestly at me. And the Lord said to me, "That is he." Still I hesitated to speak, and got out of the carriage. He continued to look at me. I thought, how foolish I am to pray, and not to believe God, so I said: "May I ask, Is your name Mr. L.? " " Yes, it is," he said; "is your name Stanley, of Sheffield?" "Yes, it is," I said; "but how do you know my name?" He said, "Mr. J., of Hereford, was expected by this train, to preach to-morrow; and this is the last train, and there is not one in the morning. And as I was feeling disappointed, my eye caught you, and it was just as if a voice had said to me, That is Stanley of Sheffield: I have sent him." He assured me of a hearty welcome, and a large congregation on the morrow. There is something very blessed in preaching Christ, feeling the certainty that He had sent you. Certainly I had that assurance on the following day.

Shortly after this, I was again at Hull, having preached on the Lord's day. I was seated with Mr. A. J. after dinner, when I had a distinct call to preach on a steamer. I told Mr. J. He said, "There is a market steamer which will leave at 2 or 3 o'clock (I forget the exact time), and it will be crowded with market people." I felt assured I was called to preach there on board that day. I therefore took my bag, and Mr. J. went with me to show me the way. At that time there was no proper landing-stage for this steamer, and as I was walking the plank from the pier to the steamer, it suddenly lurched from shore, my plank fell in the water, and I just caught on to the steamer's side, and was got on board. There was a great shout and excitement, and I was a good deal shaken. In this weak condition, I looked to the Lord in prayer that He would raise me up, and give me a fellow-helper on board. I walked the crowded deck in prayer, and as I passed a man sat down; the

Lord pointed him out as the one to help me. I stooped down, and asked if he were a Christian. “Yes,” he said, “through mercy I am.” I said, “Have you faith?” I then told him how the Lord had sent me to preach on board, how shaken I was, and weak, and I had been asking the Lord for a helper. He jumped up, saying, “Faith and works, man,” and ran away. I now felt much cast down. How strangely the Lord prepares His servants for His work. I had about become low enough for the Lord to use, when the man came back with a beaming face; “All is ready,” he said. I asked, “What is ready?” He said, “I have got the captain’s permission, and a number of people are ready to sing a hymn.” He gave out a hymn, which was heartily sung. The Lord then gave me strength to preach the gospel all the way, nearly to Thorne — that was the name of the place. The people kept getting off at different landing stages up the river. At the time I was not aware that a single soul was saved that day. I was preaching all the afternoon until night.

Many years after this, when I had almost forgotten the circumstance, after preaching in Birmingham, a gentleman came up, and said, “I dare say you have forgotten me.” I did not recollect him. He said, “Do you remember preaching a sermon twenty miles long?” I did not remember him, I said. “Well,” he said, “Do you remember preaching up the river, from Hull to Thorne, which was twenty miles or more?” Then it came to my mind very distinctly. He was a Wesleyan minister, and said, “I have long wished to see you.” He was the man who helped me so kindly that day. He told me he was stationed at Selby afterwards, and visited the different towns and villages up the river where the steamer stops, and he had found souls who had been saved that day all up the river. Thus, after many days the Lord gives us proof that His “words shall not return unto him void.” Oh to preach in full assurance that souls will be saved!

What a joy it will be in the presence of the Lord, at His coming, to see the thousands, (it may be) of souls, who have been brought to Him, through the riches of His grace, by His weak servants! Oh depths of mercy, not only to have saved us from hell, but to use us as channels of mercy to others. The apostle could say, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” I have never, that I am aware of, seen one of those dear children by the river. No doubt by this time, after so many years, many of them are with the Lord. I shall meet them in the glory, so near at hand.

Chapter 4.

Just about this time I well remember an incident that may encourage many a parent in prayer. More than seventy years before this event, a godly mother committed her babe to the Lord, in faith that the child would be converted, and join her above; such was her faith as she departed, to be absent from the body, present with the Lord. For seventy years there was no sign of answered prayer. The child grew up a careless, ungodly man, a captain of a man-of-war. He had both his heels blown off by a splinter of a shell. He was now an aged and lame man. He had been brought to hear the word, being carried into the crowded room. That night the Spirit led me to preach from “Mephibosheth.” (See the Tract written about that time.) I was describing the sinner’s utterly lost, lame condition, and the kindness of God shown in Christ, not only in giving Christ to die for our sins, but in fetching the poor sinner, just as he is, to His own presence, as David sent and fetched Mephibosheth, lame on both his feet. I said, “Now, you poor lame old sinner, you who have been fetched into the presence of God to-night, where are you?” The poor old captain felt it was God speaking to him, who knew all about him; and, trying to get up, he cried out, “I am here.” God

saved his soul that night, and thus answered a mother's prayers, but in His own way and time. It was a happy sight to see the dear old captain rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and sitting at the King's table as a King's son, "and he was lame on both his feet." Read, in connection with this little story of grace, 2 Samuel 9:1-13.

We were having a little prayer-meeting one, Saturday evening, when I had a very distinct call, that I was to go to Scarborough again, to preach on the following day. I went home, but my dear wife on this occasion did not feel it was the Lord's mind that I should do so. I asked the Lord that if it were His will, He would give us both the same judgment about it. After prayer, I went to bed and fell asleep. At two o'clock I found myself standing on the floor, and the Lord said, "You must go to Scarborough." I awoke my wife, and she now was of the same mind. I quietly prepared a little breakfast, and then walked to the station. There was a train to York, I went by it in faith. After' waiting a little at York, I found there was, at that time, a train to Scarborough on Lord's day morning. I arrived there about nine. I thought I would not call on any one until the time that a few Christians met to break bread, according to scripture, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I walked down on the shore, there I saw G. A. walking slowly, and looking rather down. I walked up behind, and laying my hand on his shoulder, I said, "How are you?" He turned round and said, "Well, this is a rebuke: Mr. B. has been suddenly called to a funeral in London, and there will be a large company at the room to-night; I was feeling down at the thought that there would be no one to preach, and now the Lord has sent you." Those who have never experienced this kind of direct guidance, cannot have any idea, what a solemnity it gives.

There was another thing that gave great interest in preaching the gospel in those days. And this caused great delight in breaking up new ground. You might often go into a town or village, yes, even a city, and there would scarce be a soul in it, that enjoyed the certainty of eternal redemption. If you had asked them the meaning of Hebrews 10:2-14 they could not have told you. And real Christians had only "a good hope that they would be saved." Then, in almost every case, you found souls under law, and therefore in bondage. It was my delight to go throughout all England, telling out the full gospel of God.

I was by no means rich in this world's goods, yet I always had means to go and preach wherever the Lord sent me. Perhaps the reader would like to know how this was the case. I will tell him. I had a little bag which I called the Lord's bag. Whatever was given me by the Lord's people for travelling expenses was put into that bag, and for all those years of gospel work, I never could reach the bottom of it. This continued until the Lord gave me the greater privilege of Acts 20:35.

I will now relate how the Lord began His work in several places, these can only be a few samples out of many. The city of York had been on my mind for some months, and I had often looked to the Lord in prayer about it. I was returning home one day from Scarborough, and had about three hours to wait at York. As I walked over the bridge, I lifted up my heart in prayer, and asked the Lord, if it were His will that I should preach the word there, to give me a congregation that day. Whilst I was in prayer, I met a great crowd turning down by the castle. The Lord said, "Follow this crowd." I found there was going to be a funeral of some Roman Catholic dignitary. We walked on until we came to a large shed. The rain fell at this moment, and the people rushed in and filled the shed. I felt it was the Lord's will I should stand in front of the shed. I took out my Bible and read the words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." A very large company gathered in front.

Some hundreds heard the word with marked attention. The Roman Catholics seemed to think I was one of themselves, and, crossing themselves, came very close. I was led to dwell first on the blessedness of those who now fall asleep in Christ. I did not refer to the special time to which this text applies; but, as a general fact, how blessed is the soul that departs from this scene to be with the Lord. I then showed that the word did not say, “Blessed are they that die in the Roman Catholic church, or in the Protestant churches, but in the Lord.” This caused rather a flutter, and then even greater attention, whilst I endeavoured to show from scripture, what it was to be “in the Lord.” As I closed, a man asked me, in a distinct, clear voice, that was heard by all, “Do I understand you to say, that a man may know in this world that he is saved, and that he has eternal life?” This question, and the answer, appeared to have great effect on many, as I showed from scripture that it was the privilege of all believers, to know that they were “justified from all things,” and had peace with God. For the word says, “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things.” If we believe God, how can we doubt what He says: “Be it known unto you”? Other scriptures were quoted, and just as I finished my answer, the head of the funeral approached us, being about two hours behind time. Let us not say this was very strange, it would not be so at all if we walked more in faith.

Some little time after, I felt led to go and give a lecture in York, on the large market space, called the Pavement. I put out a little notice, “Lecture on the Signs of the Times.” This was at the time of the Chartist agitation, just at the crisis. Somehow a report got abroad, that I was a Chartist, come to revolutionise the city. The Mayor sent for me, and as I was only a Christian that belonged to no denomination, he could not understand it, and therefore thought it must be wrong. He thought it best to order out a large force of police, to keep the peace. There was an immense concourse of people, which filled the market place. I was very weak, and had almost to be lifted into a chair to speak. It is a solemn thing to address so many thousands of souls, all of whom will be so soon in eternity. I dwelt much on the approaching judgment of the living nations, at the glorious appearing of Christ. Then I showed Christians how the Lord would come first and take them to Himself (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:18.) All this was quite new then in the city of York. And as the preaching went on until it grew dark, the thunder rolled and lightning flashed. Altogether, it was a night never to be forgotten by many.

I should have said I had heard of a Christian of the name of S., and though unknown to him, I went to his house before the lecture, and asked him if he would allow me to preach Christ in his house at ten o’clock that night. He looked somewhat astonished, but consented. A little before ten the lecture closed. I then invited all those who were anxious, or desired to know more of these things, to go with me to his house. The largest chapel would have been filled had it been opened. The little house was crowded, and we had the after meeting until near twelve o’clock.

Thai night the Lord sent His servant, the late T. S., from Leeds, to labour awhile in York. He arrived late, went to his lodgings, and heard nothing of our meetings. Early the next morning, the Lord directed him to that very house; and there the work began, and there the table of the Lord was spread in the city of York. Soon the work spread, and the Lord sent His dear servant, the late beloved W. T.

Chapter 5.

Soon after this, I paid my first visit to Southport. It was then a comparatively small place. On my arrival, a serious, if I remember aright, a fatal accident had occurred on the sands. I felt greatly pressed to preach the gospel on the sands, but the people were, scattered all over the extensive shore. I spoke, however, to one man, and found he was a believer. I asked him to stand whilst I read a portion of the word of God. He did so. I got on a sand hill, where the promenade is now. I trembled to begin, and made a little hole to stand in. I read the chapter, and the people collected from all sides. After the preaching, I announced a lecture on the “Second Coming of the Lord,” and we had, it was said, 2000 to hear the word in a large sand valley, half way to Church Town. Soon after I began, I noticed an aged man come right through the crowd, and sit down on the sand just before me. In a little while he sprang up, and stood in amazement and ecstasy. His name was J. H., of Church Town, long since gone to be with the Lord, though quite a colony of his descendants still live in the place. The Lord had awakened this dear old Christian in that most out of the way place. The Holy Spirit had opened his understanding, to understand the scriptures, and to wait for the Lord Jesus from heaven. The church of God was fast asleep around him, as foretold in the parable of the ten virgins. Many other precious truths had God taught His aged servant, such as the apostasy of Christendom from its heavenly calling. After standing alone for many years, he had become greatly tempted. He had been praying earnestly to the Lord to send, at least, one of His servants, to confirm him in the truth. A young man had told him of the lecture, and brought him to hear it. But when he heard, for the first time, the blessed truth of the Lord’s return, exactly as the Spirit had taught it to him, he could scarcely contain himself for joy. And this was the beginning of that work which resulted in Christians being gathered to the Lord Jesus in Church Town and Southport. Yes, in those days many souls passed from death unto life on the sands of Southport, and in the open air at Church Town. To the God of all grace be all praise. In the midst of such service, my Father and God saw it well and needful to afflict me. I can truly say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.” I had repeated haemorrhage from the lungs very seriously several times, until I was brought nigh to the grave in consumption. I spent a winter at Torquay in 1850, and few expected to see me return alive. Dr. T. told me one lung was nearly gone, and that I could scarcely live in the north, but might, as an invalid, in the south. There was much prayer throughout England, and the Lord heard and answered; and for 37 years since then have I been strengthened to preach to hundreds, and sometimes thousands, with only one sound lung. When unable to preach to large companies in towns, the Lord has given me great joy and blessing in village work. I will here give a sample. A poor widow invited me over to her house at W.-on-D. I went, and she asked a few professors to meet me. They were quite sure there was no need of any preaching at W…, but there was a very neglected, and, as they said, wicked colliery and pottery village a mile away. Immediately I felt assured this was the place where I should preach. I went and preached in a house there that night or afternoon. In twelve months, to a day, I felt led to go again. I may say, when going to preach at a fresh place, I have often felt the exceeding importance of being guided to just the right place in the village. In this case, I was guided to take a stand exactly opposite the little homestead of W. M. His wife’s name was Lydia. Of course, all were strangers to me. These people were, at that time, greatly averse to what they would have called dissenters, and, I suppose, would not have come twenty yards to hear me. I was speaking on the cleansing of the leper (Leviticus 14:1-57.) Lydia was crossing the yard as I happened to say, “The little bird is let fly.” This rather aroused her curiosity, and she came to her gate to look what little bird it was. She listened with deep attention as she heard how one bird

pointed to the death of Jesus for her sins; and the other bird dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed, and sprinkled on the poor leper, and then let fly, to show that the leper was cleansed. That this showed how God declared, by the resurrection of Jesus, our justification; that if the little bird was let loose, the leper was cleansed. If Jesus, our substitute, who died for our sins, be risen, we, believing God, are justified from all things. Lydia had never known before what the resurrection of Jesus had to do with our justification; and she was greatly arrested. She could not help listening again at night. She was converted, or perhaps, as a quickened soul, found peace. She and her whole household, from her aged mother, over eighty, to her grandchild, aged about four, all were saved. We had preaching there seven Lord's days, when the table of the Lord was spread in the house of Lydia, and was continued there for many years, and afterward removed to W. Thirteen first met to obey the Lord in the breaking of bread. This brings to my mind one of the most remarkable displays of the Lord's grace I have ever witnessed. It took place in this same village some years after.

We had a preaching of the gospel one night in the Pottery, just after the close of the day's work, in one of the large workshops, called the Throw room. A number of colliers had also come in, just as they left the pit. It was a strange-looking company, some as white as millers, some as black as sweeps. It was a very quiet preaching, the word only was preached with expecting, faith; and there was a deep solemnity on the whole company. At the close, I was repeating the following scriptures, slowly, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Precious words of Jesus. (John 5:24.) Also, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38.) I did not make a single remark, but there was the deep sense felt that God the Holy Ghost was speaking these words to lost, guilty sinners. You have seen the wind pass over a field of corn, bowing every blade and stalk. It was just like that. The divine presence passed over the meeting, from end to end, and bowed every heart and every head. A deep sigh was heard from end to end, many fell, some against the wall, some on forms. There was a profound silence, only broken by sobs. Then the Christians present began to speak to the unconverted. I will give one instance. D. M. said to one who leaned against the wall, one who had been a very careless youth, "David, are you anxious to be saved?" "No," he said, "I am saved, I have everlasting life." David had passed from death unto life, and the new creation was manifested in him to the last; he is with the Lord. There were few words said to any, but the Lord opened their hearts to receive His word. They heard His words, they believed God that sent Him, and the Spirit imparted faith to believe it, because He said it. And is not that a blessed moment when the ear is opened to hear God's message of forgiveness of sins, and then to know one is justified from all things, for God says so? But what was so remarkable, Lydia, a Christian of very clear judgment, told me years after this meeting, that she had carefully watched the result, and she had no doubt, that every unsaved person at that meeting was converted, and had either departed to be with the Lord, or were living proofs of the grace of God. Dear Lydia! one of the first fruits in those parts; she and her husband, and how many more, who were converted in the times I describe, are now with the Lord.

There are few joys more deep and real than to see your children in the Lord depart in peace. What a picture of calm, perfect peace was the face of aged Lydia, as she lay in the sleep of death! What

will it be in that morn, too bright for mortal eyes, to see thousands to whom the word has thus been blest, rise in the glory of Christ, to meet Him in the air! Will you, dear reader, be there, or for ever shut out? My heart lingers on these village labours, but I must hasten away to other scenes.

I would now relate how the Lord laid it on my heart to write the Railway Tracts, and from them all that followed. I had been preaching the word at Tetbury, where I frequently went in those days. Our brother W. said to me, “Why don’t you print some of those incidents of the Lord’s work in the railway carriages? I am sure the Lord would use them.” I said, I had never thought of it. He urged me to do so. I felt the Lord had spoken to me thus to do it for Him, expecting Him to bless them to souls. How little did I think, at that moment, how the Lord would use them in so many languages all over the world. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 Railway Tracts were the first that were written, and how many souls have been saved through the Spirit of God using those four little papers. I had already written “What is the Sabbath?” I will name a few thoughts I had in writing every tract. To look to God to give me to write just what He pleased, and to enable me to write it plainly, without any adornment. To never allow me to write with a party feeling, but to write for the whole church of God, or gospel to every sinner. In every incident related, to give the exact words, as near as I could possibly recollect.

It has thus been my constant habit to write a paper, as I believe the Lord has led me to do so; such tracts as “Mephibosheth,” “Joseph,” “Ruth,” “Jonathan,” “Job,” “Nehemiah” &c., &c., &c. These have been written after preaching them in different parts of the country, during a period of over forty years. I believe the Lord rarely ever led me to preach from Mephibosheth, as a type of Christ, without souls being converted. He has also been pleased to use that tract very often, when repeated or read to the sick and dying, and also through others preaching it. Mr. M. told me he had preached it in almost every city and town in America, and, he thought, never without souls being brought to God. It would fill a volume to tell of the great number of cases that the Lord has been pleased to bring to my own notice. Oh! how often has our God and Father, by the Holy Ghost, been pleased to use a tract in the dark places of England, when the door seemed closed against the light of the gospel.

Over thirty years ago, I was told of a tract, I think it was “Smashed to Pieces,” that was given to a poor woman in Rutlandshire. She was taken ill. The Lord spoke peace to her soul through this little paper. She died with it enclosed in her hand. Her dying request to her husband was, that he should read it to her children. After her departure, that tract was blessed to the conversion of eight persons. Many similar cases have occurred, and many in America, India, and Australia. I will name one. An overlooker on a very large sheep run, far out in the Australian bush, found a poor, lonely shepherd, on a distant station, in a dying state, and greatly alarmed at the prospect of death and judgment. There was no person near him to point the way to Christ. The young man rode a great distance to his residence, and took a tract, and read it to the dying man. God spoke peace to his soul. He departed from the lonely bush to be with the Lord, which is far better. And how many of that deeply interesting class, the sailors, have been blest through a tract. I was walking one day in Glasgow, when the late Captain G. met me, and said, “I must tell you of a very interesting case, how the Lord was pleased to bless the tract ‘Victory.’ During my late voyage,” he said, “one of my men was taken very ill, and became anxious about his soul. I got the mate to hold the lamp whilst I read the tract ‘Victory’ to him; and it pleased the Lord to use the reading of the tract, both to the conversion of the poor man, and also of the mate. The man died in peace, and we buried the body

at sea." That was the last time I saw Captain G. He sailed with his mate shortly after for the West Indies, and was never heard of again.

I am sure it is God who thus is pleased to use these little papers, because, in themselves, they are so unlikely to meet the cases. Take the following: A poor Hindu coolie, in Demerara, was in great distress about his soul. He could no more bathe in the Ganges, and, therefore, could get no relief for the distress of his soul. He had a friend, a Mahometan, who was much moved at his distress. He said, "I believe I have a paper that would give you the relief you long for." He read and translated to him the little paper, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." They were both converted to Christ, and became preachers of the gospel. Now there was nothing in the paper likely, to human reason, to accomplish so wonderful a result. God was pleased to use His own word in the tract. This same little tract was used to a dying infidel in Sheffield, in the following manner: This man refused to read, or receive the visit of any one, to speak to him about Christ. He was a soul going down to hell in darkness and unbelief. A woman folded the tract in her hand, so that just the text only was seen, as it lay inside her hand. She put her hand before him, and said, "Can you see this? Can you read?" He read the words "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He started. It was God speaking to his soul. Yes, God said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He said, "What, my sins! Is it possible, my sins!" And the sins of a past life stood out before him; and God, in infinite love for Christ's sake, said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Through divine grace he believed God, and the next day he was in heaven. Who can measure or limit the grace of God? I might tell of hundreds of cases, but must now return to the way the Lord hath led me.

Chapter 6.

It is important to look to the Lord every day, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we never know when or where He may use us in sovereign grace. I was crossing the country, one day from Bristol, where I had been preaching, to Tetbury. I had never been in some part of the country before. On arriving at Wootton-under-Edge, I had some time to spare before going on. It was about five o'clock on a hot day in the midst of harvest. There was scarcely a person to be seen in the little town. I was very distinctly impressed from the Lord, that I must preach the gospel there that afternoon, yet there appeared to be no people to preach to. Nearly all seemed to be out in the harvest field. Yet the conviction deepened, that I must preach. I took a few tracts, and gave them where I could find any one. I was standing in a little shop, speaking to a woman about her soul, when a man came running up the road, the perspiration streaming off his face. He turned into the shop, and said, "Please, sir, are you a preacher of the gospel?" "Yes," I said, "I am, through the Lord's mercy, but why do you ask?" He replied, "I am the bell-man, and if you will preach today I will cry it." "Well," I said, "it was very much laid on my heart to preach the gospel here to-day, but I do, not see any to preach to. Tell me, how is it you came in such haste, and asked me the question?" He replied, "I was working in the field, and a woman came past and told me some one was distributing tracts in Wootton, and it was just as if a voice had said to me, 'You must run, and there must be preaching in Wootton to-day.' That is why I left my work, and came immediately." As he was the bell-man, I involuntarily put my hand in my pocket to give him the shilling. "Oh dear no, sir," he said, "I don't want the money, I want souls to be saved;" and the earnestness and solemnity of the man confirmed his words. In half-an-hour he had washed himself, cried the preaching, and we were on the way to the Chipping, to preach. To human reason it seemed impossible to get any to preach to.

Just as we came outside the town, we were passing a gentleman's house on the right. The Spirit of God stopped me, and distinctly directed me to stand on that door-step, and on that end of it nearest the town. By this time, perhaps, half a dozen people had collected, and came and stood before me. I gave out the hymn, "Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, Oh Lamb of God, I come."

There were very few to hear; but I was much led out in showing the exceeding riches of the grace of God, in receiving the sinner just as he was; and that in perfect righteousness, through the accomplished work of Christ. That it was not so much the joy of the prodigal, as the great joy of the father, in receiving him. I found afterwards that the master and mistress of the house hearing some one singing on their doorstep, had come into the passage behind me, and had heard every word. When I closed, the gentleman, who was a doctor, begged me to go in, and see his aged mother, upstairs. He said, as tears of joy rolled down his face, "I never heard this before: I thought I had a great work to do before I could be saved, and now I hear it has all been done, and God has joy in receiving me, just as I am." I found the aged, bedridden, mother had heard every word, her window being exactly over that end of the door step. The circumstances of this day had almost passed from my mind, when years after, I was preaching at Cheltenham, and a lady there told me that the Lord blessed the word that day, in the conversion of the doctor, his wife, and also the aged mother, through the chamber window. The doctor and his mother had both departed to be with the Lord. Is it not true that "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy"? Up to that day the doctor had been enveloped in the dark cloud of Ritualism. What a contrast when the gospel is heard for the first time. How blessed, when the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

There was often much blessing at that time when preaching at the seaside places. At Llandudno there was remarkable attention for twenty-one days. I had no need to give it out, if I went up Orme's Head the people followed, and we had preaching on the hills. There was a great commotion one night owing to the Ritualist clergyman hiring a band of music to drown the sound of the gospel. There was great resentment felt by the people. Several magistrates and clergymen stood by me every night. They advised me to retire into the house, whilst they quieted the people, who were with difficulty restrained from throwing the instruments into the sea. After a time all was quiet again, and I continued the preaching. It was a remarkable time, I could not step out of doors but I met with anxious souls. And many passed from death unto life (John 5:24.)

There was also considerable awakening as to the coming of the Lord. It was there the diagram on the Lord's coming was drawn, with the assistance of Colonel B. The day will declare the harvest of those three weeks' sowing. "He knoweth them that are his." The way the diagram originated was this: I was speaking on the coming of the Lord. And finding some difficulty in explaining the difference between the present gospel period and the millennium, or the period of the reign of Christ, I took up a piece of chalk, or lime, and made two circles on a garden door, and said, "Now we will suppose one of these to represent the present period, and the other the millennium." I then read out such scriptures as describe the present period, during which Jerusalem is trodden down under-foot, as Luke 21:24. Then, during the millennium, or kingdom of God on earth, this same Jerusalem shall be the centre of blessing to the whole world. Many other scriptures were also read, to show the great contrast between these two periods. Then different questions being asked, a line was marked to indicate the history of the Jews, and the ministry of Christ previous to the commencement of this present circle of time. Then another line, to show the ascension of Christ to

heaven, the heavens retaining Him during this period of grace on the part of God, and impious rejection of that grace on the part of man. Then another line was marked, to show the coming of the Lord Jesus to fetch His saints. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.) Then a short line between this period, after the saints are taken to meet the Lord. The time of judgments, described in the book of Revelation. Then another straight line downwards, to show the coming of Christ with all His saints, to execute judgment and to commence the millennial reign. Then at the end of that blessed dispensation, a short line was marked, to show the short period when Satan will be let loose — ending with the judgment of the dead, and the beginning of an endless circle, to show the eternal state. All these were crude marks, on the garden door, but wonderfully helped the audience to understand dispensational truth. As noticed above, Colonel B. kindly drew it correctly, on pasteboard. Such then was the simple origin of the diagram tract on the coming of Christ. It will be known to many who read this, how God has been pleased to use this little paper. Thus He gives, and thus He uses what He gives.

I omit a great number of incidents of those days, some of which are related in the Railway Tracts; and here I would observe that those few incidents in the Railway Tracts are strictly true. They were written at the time, and word for word, as exactly as could be remembered.

We will now pass on to what was called the revival time, 1859. I had heard of the wonderful effects of a quarter of a pound of gospel tracts, in the highlands of Scotland. I believe that wave of blessing rolled on to Scotland. The tracts were single leaves, “Bread Cast,” and only one left in each village. I had also been deeply moved by the faith of one aged man, in America. He was over seventy years of age, and a few of the tracts had somehow reached him. He found the Lord graciously using these tracts to many souls. The dear old man ordered a Ton of them to be sent to him. He said he would send them throughout the States. He had no money to pay for them, but he was sure faith could trust the Lord across the Atlantic, and He would pay in the coming day. It is only known to God how the faith of this dear aged H. was honoured. We did not send a ton, but we sent many cwts., and the dear aged servant of the Lord sent them throughout the States of America.

Well, the wave of divine power reached Scotland. Dear W. T., now long with the Lord — one who ever did, and does to this day leave the precious savour of Christ behind him — had been to Glasgow, and had seen hundreds of souls seeking mercy, and being brought to Christ. He came over and told me of the wonderful works of the Lord. A most remarkable sense of the Lord’s presence came over me, I felt moved by divine power to go at once to Birmingham. A strength of faith and expectation that souls would be saved, such as I had never had before, filled my soul. The large room in Broad Street was crammed night after night. At the after meetings nearly all stayed. There was no excitement in the preaching. There was not even much invitation, or pressing of sinners. It was more the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner, and the completeness of that justification in the risen Christ. Indeed, I have always found the more God is revealed in Christ, in preaching, the more lasting the results. There must also be undoubting confidence in the word of God: that all who are brought by the Holy Ghost to believe God, are justified from all things.

Whilst these meetings were being held in Birmingham, a brother in Christ came over from Stafford. He was filled with faith that God was about to bless souls there. He returned, and asked some

brethren to come together to cry to God in prayer, at six o'clock the next morning. Quite a number came together, to ask the Lord to bless the word there that same night. But when this brother borrowed chairs and forms, so as to seat every available space in the large meeting-room, some did not know what to make of it. At a quarter to seven the large room was simply packed. Several were fainting, but could not be got out. A gentleman present stood up, and said "the danger from the crush was so great, that he would, as deacon of a large chapel near, open it on his own responsibility." In a very short time it was filled. I remember seeing a man come in in a state of drunkenness. The solemnity of the presence of God seemed to sober him in a moment. He professed to be converted, but I never heard whether it proved to be real. I have never had a doubt that God was working in a remarkable way at these meetings. Many professed to be saved. Some fell away as stony-ground hearers; but the day will declare what was of the Spirit of God. A few days after, three of us felt led to go to Leamington. We had a little notice printed, about the size of a small envelope, asking the Christians of Leamington to come together in the music hall at three o'clock, for prayer, for the Lord's blessing on the word to be preached in the hall that night. About two hundred came together. And oh, what a cry of united expecting prayer went up to the throne of grace. It must have been truly blessed when the assembly were gathered in the unity of the Spirit, as in Acts 4:1-37. At seven, the large hall was filled. That night God answered prayer. It was the birth-night of many precious souls, and the deliverance of many more. It was said some hundreds found deliverance and blessing that night. At nine o'clock there was no inclination to leave, and the meetings continued until eleven. The people could not go away. Great numbers were in deep concern about their eternal salvation, and all classes were alike moved by the Spirit of God. It was not so much during the preaching, as in simply quoting scripture, after the preaching had closed. The case of one lady was striking, and at the same time illustrated many others. She had been brought up with soul-destroying Unitarian ideas. She was arrested in hearing of the righteousness of God revealed in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus. But it was whilst I was quoting those blessed words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment,] but is passed from death unto life." She exclaimed, so as to be heard by all around, "hath! oh does Jesus say hath, hath everlasting life?" I read the words of Jesus again: and assured her they were His very words. Therefore he who believes Jesus cannot have a shadow of a doubt that he hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. I do, not know what exercise of soul she had had previously, but no sooner had she realised that Jesus was the Son of God, God speaking to her, than she felt a deep sense of her sins. She said, "What about my sins?" I told her the blood of Jesus, the infinite and holy One, cleanseth from all sin. The exact words I do not remember, but that was the substance. It was a hard struggle, but is anything too hard for the Lord? She passed from death unto life. The pressing upon her John 5:24 and Acts 13:38-39, gave her the certainty of two things. She knew that she was justified from all things, and that she had eternal life. She believed God. This is a sample of what took place that night with great numbers, from 9 to 11 o'clock.

I know some may question the grace of God in such immediate conversions. About eighteen years after that remarkable night, I met a lady in M., who told me she came to that preaching at the request of her mother, with a number of other young ladies, in fact, a ladies' school. She came in a most unprepared state of soul, having just returned from a kind of convent school in France. She and all (if I remember rightly) of the young ladies, who sat with her on that seat were converted

that night, and she knew that all had manifested, in after life, that the work was of God. Thus hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy.

Chapter 7. At that time I was accustomed frequently to preach in London. I named to a few that it was on my heart to take the Myddelton Hall, Islington, for a week's preaching. Some doubted, but many hearts were lifted up in prayer to God. It was taken in dependence on God. I had no arrangements or preparation, or even knowledge of what subjects I might speak upon. The hall was filled every night. Many written petitions for prayer for dear ones were offered up. A very solemn circumstance occurred one night. As we commenced, a person came bringing a request for the prayers of the meeting, for a lady in a worldly family, who was dying without Christ. Mr. G., now with the Lord, went back with the messenger. We bowed in solemn earnest prayer. He found the poor lady in the midst of the folly and finery this world can produce. But none there knew Christ, or could speak a word to an affrighted soul, about to pass from London society to outer darkness and eternal woe. God answered prayer. He opened the heart of this poor lady to receive the word of life; she was eternally saved. There was a great solemnity fell upon the meeting. Eternity felt very near to us all. We asked the anxious to retire into an anteroom. In a few minutes it was crammed. It was a wonderful sight to see young and old, rich and poor, with streaming eyes and anxious looks, asking what they must do to be saved. We were obliged to go into the large hall. And whilst some looked to the Lord in silent prayer, others spoke to anxious souls. The interest seemed to deepen every night; the large hall being quite full. Known only to the Lord is the number of those who passed from death unto life.

About this time I was invited by the Hon. B. N., to preach in John Street chapel, three nights. The subject was the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner. After preaching we invited the anxious into the schoolroom adjoining. Nearly 200 came in. It was impossible to speak to them all individually. I was too exhausted to speak again. And so Mr. N. went over the discourses, and enforced it with most sweet simplicity. This was remarkable, as I was told he had held different views on the subject. He now explained very clearly how God was righteous in justifying the sinner that believes Him, through the death and resurrection of Christ.

I dwell on this a little, to show that the preaching was not in the least of a revivalistic character. Indeed, Mr. N. said to a friend, that they were more like lectures on divinity. I am more and more convinced this is the kind of preaching needed; not excitement, but the calm unfolding of the gospel of God.

After Mr. N.'s addresses in the after-meeting we spoke to a few, and then dismissed them. I shall never forget one case; a fine tall old gentleman, about seventy years of age. He had long been in the dungeon of dark despair. I had been speaking of the deep joy of God, in receiving the prodigal. The work of the shepherd was done; He had sought and died for the sheep. The Spirit had come down from heaven to seek and to find the lost one, like the woman that swept the floor for her lost piece of silver. And now the Father in righteousness and grace can meet and receive, can kiss and clothe the prodigal. I heard the deep groan of that tall old gentleman, or once a gentleman. He said, "I have spent all. I have spent my health, my fortune, every comfort, wife, children, all gone; here I am, sunk in sin, and misery," &c. &c. It is impossible to describe the agony and distress of this aged man. We put the gospel before him, and we trust the grace of God shone into his dark soul. Where is he now?

Many souls professed to find peace. But I rather judge the Lord used these three preachings to many who were the children of God. At this time I had invitations to preach in the large chapels in London, but felt more led to preach in town halls, assembly rooms, &c.

I will now try to describe a week in the Eastern counties. I stayed with a christian lady in Ipswich, had met her in Birmingham. I had barely time to take a cup of tea on my arrival from London, as a large audience was waiting at the assembly rooms, at seven o'clock on the Saturday evening. I went to the hall, gave out a hymn, but felt all a blank in my thoughts. Not a scripture, or a thought had I on my mind. I knelt down in prayer, still all appeared a blank. As I rose from my knees that scripture came to my mind, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." I said, "Lord, I will tell them that, any way." I read the words. That night will never be forgotten. Years after, I met a lady who told me she, and her brothers and sisters, received blessing that night. They were then quite young people. And many others, especially the young, were brought to God. The next day, the Lord's Day, we had preaching at Needham Market, at half-past two. The number was so great that all could not get in, and the power of the Lord was felt. At night the Assembly Room, Ipswich, was crowded. A large bundle of petitions, for relatives, were sent up to be read. As I read them out, before lifting up our hearts in prayer, I had noticed an aged man near me, hang down his head in deep distress. He was filled with sorrow that he had not sent up a petition for his daughter. Just as I closed reading the papers, I saw a tall young lady forcing her way through the crowd, with flushed face and weeping eyes, she came close up to the aged man, and sinking down by his side, said, "Father, won't you pray for me?" The coming day, so near, will declare the results of that night. It was late before we could leave the many anxious souls. The following night the interest was equally great. On Tuesday afternoon we had a meeting at Stowmarket at four, for prayer and fellowship. Well do I remember one prayer. A dear Christian from Bury said, "Lord, thy servant is here, we do not ask him if he will go to Bury, but we ask Thee if he is to come and preach Thy word there." Those words are as fresh as though I had heard that prayer last night. The large new corn exchange was taken, and at seven it was full. People had come in from all around the country, in carts, waggons, carriages, &c. Hour after hour went on, still the interest deepened. If we closed, all remained, only to go on again; until at last, about eleven, the gas was turned off. I then spoke of the coming of the Lord, and the vast company still remained in the dark. It was near twelve when we got away. God only knows the results. Many professed to be saved. In many cases, no doubt, the work had been going on before. On Wednesday at two o'clock, a large company was assembled in the Theatre, or Assembly Room, Norwich. And at seven the crowd was so great that it quickly filled; two other large buildings were also filled. At about nine o'clock the crowd outside was so great, still waiting, that the one company went out, and the place filled again for another service. One aged minister stood up and said, he had never known real peace with God before that night. This produced a deep solemnity. It was felt God was working by the Holy Ghost. Very many professed to have been brought to Christ that day. The next day I went on to Bury St. Edmunds. The brother who had prayed at Stowmarket had taken the large Town Hall. Some Christians had rather remonstrated, saying it would be so discouraging to see the large place half filled. At seven there was scarce a seat to be found. Here the word seemed to be specially blest to such as had been under serious impressions. There were many also, that had never enjoyed the certainty of sins forgiven, and sin not imputed. Oh how blessed that God is righteous in reckoning us righteous before Him. When I look back upon that week, I say, "Who but God could have given strength to a poor weak body to go through such a week of

labour, with only one sound lung? And who but God could have gathered such numbers of anxious souls, to listen to His blessed word?" Often unknown to me, and without any effort but simply obeying the guidance of His eye, and leading of the Spirit of God, doors of blessing have been opened; and in altogether a different way from the above. On another occasion I was at Ipswich, and it was much on my heart that I should go to Sudbury and preach Christ. I named it to several, but they discouraged me, all except one brother. I only knew the name of one person there. I wrote and said I hoped to come and preach on such a day. I called at Bury on my way, and found the brother who prayed at Stowmarket had been praying for Sudbury about two years. How much have such praying Christians to do with the work of the Lord! The brother said he would go with me. I will give this as a specimen of many a first visit to a town.

We arrived at Sudbury station. A young gentleman came up to me, and asked if my name was Stanley? I replied it was. He said his mother would be glad to see us at her house, and there were a few waiting to read the word. We found quite a company at four o'clock. Of course, all were strangers to us. We had a very blessed time over the word, and whilst reading, a minister sent word to offer me his chapel. I said I could not accept it, unless on the understanding that I was free to speak whatever the Lord gave me to speak. He made one condition. However, I said I would come on at the time, seven o'clock. I went, and the chapel was pretty well filled. But I felt I could not go on there; and I was led to propose that we should go outside, and have the preaching in the open air. They were quite agreeable, and we all went out. To my surprise there was a large company assembled on the green, by the parish church, who would not come into the dissenting chapel. I preached there in the open air until about ten o'clock, to a large company. It might be asked, How could all this be? How could they get to know? I will tell you. I was told afterwards (I had only to obey the Lord at the time) Mr. H. had been preaching in the parish church, and had given it out that I was expected to preach in Sudbury during the week, and he begged his congregation to come and hear.

It might also be asked, Where should I lodge upon I going thus, as a stranger, to different towns. Well, at the close of the preaching, a lady came up to me, and said a gentleman, who could not be there himself, owing to the funeral of a near relative, at a distance, had sent his carriage, and begged us to accept his hospitality for the Lord's sake. We drove a few miles, came to a mansion, and had a meeting until near midnight, and then another for the large household in the morning, returning to Sudbury, where we had a reading the whole day. As I write this, a letter has just turned up, from which I will give an extract: "You may remember standing up to preach God's glad tidings, on a bit of ground called the Croft, Sudbury. I was amongst that crowd; and through the Lord's grace and love, got complete deliverance… and was brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and can bless and praise the Lord for His wondrous love to me, in giving One who could, and did, do all, things for the poor sinner. By the Spirit of God you showed me it was all on the Lord's side, that a complete satisfaction had been made to God by the Lord Jesus Christ; and that God's mercy had been shown out to the utmost, when He gave His Son. I felt like one unfettered from the influences of Satan and the bondage of men, content to come outside the camp to that blessed object who is outside all man's pretensions."

Chapter 8. But I must still go back a little, and linger in that remarkable work of God in so many places. In the city of York there was a blessed work, though some excitement was mixed up with it, and some cases turned out to be such as had no root. The meeting-room was so crowded that

people got up to the windows. The meetings at six in the morning were times of great refreshment and communion. In the evening believers would go out into different parts of the city, and bring the unconverted to hear the word. One lady would go into the lowest parts, and almost compel them to come. She would marshal them in rows, and walking by their side, would bring them to the room. The little tract, “Awake, awake,” expresses very much the character of the preaching at this time, also “Justification in the Risen Christ.”

Similar scenes were witnessed in the Mechanics’ Hall, Bradford, also in Rochdale. It was in the latter place John 5:24 began to be used so remarkably. Precious words of Jesus which have been used of the Lord in giving certainty and rest to thousands. There was a young woman in distress of soul at the after meeting. She had longed for some time to know, with certainty, that she had eternal life; and from the various doctrines she had heard, she was perplexed to know how this certainty could possibly be enjoyed. She said, “How am I to know that I am saved?” The words of Jesus were quoted, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” The amazing fact that it was Jesus that spoke these words of assurance, broke in upon her soul. She then said, “But my sins.” Then the words of the Holy Ghost were quoted to her, “Be it known unto you… that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him, all that believe are justified from all things.” (Acts 13:38.) The change that took place was even manifested in her countenance. It was from the gloom of unbelief to the brightness and joy of simply believing God. The same precious verses were quoted to a number of anxious souls at the other end of the room, and a similar change passed over them, like a bright ray of sunshine. From that memorable night those two verses have been used of God wherever the gospel of His grace is preached.

If an anxious soul reads these lines, let me ask, What can you want more than the assurance of the words of Jesus, that believing God, you have eternal life (compare 1 John 5:10-13), “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life. These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” Are you oppressed with sins? Does the remembrance of them overwhelm you? Oh look back at Jesus, dying on the cross, the propitiation for sins. See Him raised from among the dead for the justification of all who believe God. For God has thus accepted the atoning sacrifice. And now does not God most distinctly proclaim to you the forgiveness of sins? Does He not declare that all who believe are justified from all things? Then if you believe Him are you not justified, accounted righteous before God? Will you answer these questions in the presence of God?

Here I would make a few remarks on the before and after meetings we were accustomed to hold at that time. The before, or early meetings, at six a.m., were greatly blessed. My own room at Rotherham was crowded at six a.m. almost every morning. There was earnest and continued prayer. Then, as a result, the room in the Crofts, an old hay-loft turned into a meeting-room, would be crowded at night, and many an anxious soul professed to find peace with God. Early preachings, too, were often owned of God. We were having preaching at 6 a.m., at Exeter, near the castle. A young woman was passing, and just heard the sentence, “The greatest sinner in Exeter is welcome to the Lord Jesus Christ.” It was a message from God to her soul. She went home, and kneeling by her bed, she sobbed out, “Lord, I am the greatest sinner in Exeter! Oh, am I

welcome to Thee?”

Some months after this, a brother in Christ was called to see a dying woman. From the character of the neighbourhood and the house, he expected to find a sad case of a soul about to pass into eternity unsaved. He was surprised to see a face radiant with heavenly peace. It is a lovely sight to see one just about to depart and be with the Lord. He was so surprised he could scarcely speak. At last he said, “What has made you so happy? Has any one been to see you? Or have you had some tract given you?” “Oh no,” she said, “No one has been to see me. I have been here alone with the Lord Jesus.” She then related what she heard at six o’clock one morning; how she came and kneeled by that bed; what she said to the Lord; and the everlasting welcome she had found to His infinite love. Many years has she now been with the Lord. Oh, ye dear servants of the Lord, that have bodily strength, will you not try a few meetings at six o’clock in the morning? But we must not forget the after meetings. These have, no doubt, been greatly abused. What has not been? That God was pleased to work in them by the Holy Ghost, there can be no question. The people had not to be asked to stay. They would not leave. God was working by the Holy Ghost, and very many found peace during the after meeting.

Unbelief might be ready to say, that many of these apparent leadings of the Spirit were but incidental occurrences. In many cases this could not be. Take the following: On one occasion I felt a very distinct call to go and preach at a place I had only seen once in my life: a town on the left-hand side coming from the Potteries to Derby. I did not know the name of the town, but it was vividly before my eye, and I felt assured that I must go there and preach Christ. I described the town to a person from Staffordshire, and he told me at once the name of the place was Uttoxeter. I continued in prayer during that week; and on Friday I received a letter from Tenby, South Wales, enclosing a letter from Mrs. H., of Uttoxeter, asking the lady in Tenby if she knew my address, to forward an enclosed letter to me; which letter was an earnest request for me to go to Uttoxeter, and preach the gospel. I immediately went, the word was owned, and a number were gathered to Christ. Was this a mere accident, on the day that I was called to go and preach at this, to me, unknown place? A Christian was also led to write a letter, to ask me to go? Why should we doubt the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost now, as He was manifestly present in the beginning? Jesus said, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” Yes, He abides with us; and if we were more simple, we should know far more of His divine guidance in our path of service. It is just as ecclesiastical arrangements increase, that the direct guidance of the Spirit is set aside. We have little idea how much we lose by this.

Chapter 9.

There is something most strengthening to faith in having direct answers to prayer even in little things, but especially in the service of God. You preach in quite a different way if you have the certainty that God has sent you to a place. I remember being distinctly led to go to Leeds to preach, and immediately went. A prayer meeting was being held when I arrived. I kneeled down without its being known I was there, near the door. Prayer was being offered for me at the time, that I might be sent in the power of the Spirit, and that there might be blessing on the following day. I think it was Saturday night; and if I remember rightly, it was on that occasion my life was threatened, whilst preaching to a great company in what was called the Vicar’s Croft. The infidel

party seemed filled with Satanic rage; but the Lord preserved me, and the result was the room was crowded to hear the word that night.

I had a much narrower escape whilst preaching in the open air in Sheffield, at the pump, in Gibraltar. I had noticed a good number of Irish Roman Catholics gradually close around me. Then two men, one on each side, got behind me, and pressed my arms close whilst speaking. At that moment I felt the point of some sharp instrument at my back. I immediately said, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command you to make an opening for me, that I may walk out of this throng; my life is being attacked.” It was a strange sight to see the people fall on each side, until an opening was made, as it were, in an instant. It was the hand of God. I walked firmly away for one or two hundred yards, and then my legs seemed utterly to fail me, and I could scarcely walk home.

It would, however, be an injustice to leave the impression, that I usually received this kind of treatment from the Roman Catholics. Generally they have listened to me with respectful attention in the open air, as I was accustomed to preach the gospel, and not attack them. I will give an instance: —

I was walking with a friend one Lord’s day morning, at Newcastle, in the Potteries. My friend said, “The man we are meeting is a very earnest, devoted Roman Catholic.” I turned aside to him, and said, “Here, I want you for a particular matter this afternoon. I want you to make known to the Roman Catholics that I hope to preach in the Market, at three o’clock to-day, and mind you let them know that I am about to prove that the doctrine of the Church of Rome, in the year 60, is the only true doctrine.” “I quite understand,” said he. “And,” I continued, “you see now that they all stand as near me as they can get, and that they don’t let any one disturb or hinder me from going through the discourse.” It was astonishing what a number of them were there by three o’clock; and they stood packed all round, so that no one could have got at me. I then commenced, and showed that we were not left in any uncertainty as to which was the true church at Rome, in the year 60. It was composed of all the believers in Rome — the one church, the only true one church at Rome. Neither were we left in any uncertainty as to what were the true doctrines of the church at Rome in the year 60. We have an inspired account of those doctrines, and to that document we ill turn our attention. From chapters 1 to 3 we found the statement as to the total ruin of man through sin. Whether Jews or Gentiles, all were sinners, all guilty, all utterly unable to acquire righteousness by works of law. Every man found it so, also, by his own experience. It must be so, for this was the true doctrine on the subject of the church at Rome, in the year 60; and it was the only true church in the year 60, at Rome. There was no other.

I then went on to show God’s righteousness revealed in the glorious plan of redemption. How He is righteous through the atoning death of Jesus, in justifying all that believe Him. “Their faith is reckoned for righteousness.” (Chap. 4.) Believing God, “who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our iniquities, and was raised again for our justification.” They are thus accounted righteous — justified. I gave illustrations of these, to show that the mighty debt of our sins had been paid; and the everlasting proof was Jesus risen from the dead. He is our everlasting righteousness. Now this being the case, there was one striking peculiarity of the church at Rome, or the believers at Rome. A mark of the true doctrine was this, that they did not hope to be saved. They did not hope to make their peace with God. They had peace with God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here

is the true doctrine of the church at Rome in the year 60. All doctrine contrary to this is heresy and falsehood. The utter corruption of human nature: all guilty. Redemption through the blood of Christ, not human works, is the remedy. All that believe God are justified, and have peace with Him — are not hoping to make their peace with God. Jesus has finished the work on the cross. They believe it, and have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Well, the application began to be too pointed for my friends. They looked at each other, as I asked if this was the doctrine of those around me. Had they found that they were utterly lost sinners; and that, try as they might, they could not acquire righteousness or peace by works of law? Had they accepted this full salvation through Jesus Christ? Did they really believe God? Were they hoping to get peace, or could they say, with the Roman believers in the year 60, “We have peace with God”? I assured them there was no salvation apart from the doctrine of the church of Rome, as revealed in this epistle in the year 60. By this time some of my inside friends had become outsiders, and some had disappeared, but many listened to the end; and I had not an insulting word. Oh, may the day declare, that souls were that day brought to rest in Christ, and believe the word of God. This brings to my mind the remarkable way in which the Roman Catholics stood by me in the Salt Market, Glasgow. It came about in this way. On arrival in Glasgow from Birmingham, one day, a beloved christian friend walked with me to the Salt Market, a large open space, where, at that time, there were frequently preachings and lectures of all kinds. An aged Scotch minister was preaching. He was urging the people to give up their sins, become good, religious, and sober; and finally asked them all to attend the kirk, and at once to go with him to such a kirk. When he concluded, I stood up and said I had just come about 300 miles, and I wished to add a few words; indeed, I had something I wished to tell them. Scarcely a person went off to kirk, but all listened with eager attention; and the crowd began to gather from all sides. I did not think it wise to tell them what I thought of the preaching they had been hearing, but took up the matter in this way.

I said, “You have heard now what this aged preacher has told you; and now, would you not be most happy if you did as he has told you to do? Would it not be far better for every one of you if you were to give up your sins, and to become a sober, holy, religious people? You know it would be far better with you were you holy; yes, so holy that you were fit for heaven, and sure to go there? Would anything make you more happy than to be quite sure of going to heaven?” Many were the responsive sighs. “But,” I said, “now tell me, Have not many of you tried to do all this, that the preacher has told you to do? You have tried to give up all sins, and you have tried to be holy. You have longed to be fit for heaven, and you have utterly failed. Some of you have felt as if it were no use trying. You feel as if you only get worse and worse. You go to kirk, and try to be religious, but you are not a bit better for it. You long to do what this preacher has told you to do, but you fail to do it. Now is not this the honest truth?” The people seemed convicted on the spot. I then said (I give the substance as near as I can remember), “I will now tell you what I have come 300 miles to say. God knows our utterly helpless, guilty condition. Yes, He saw us not only guilty, but without strength to be better, just as you have found. He saw us lost, and we should not be lost, if we could help ourselves. That vessel among the breakers is not lost if the crew have the least hope of reaching shore. But see, all hope is gone; she is on the rocks; she is going to pieces. Now, if a man is saved it must be by the lifeboat. You are lost! Every effort to save yourselves only proves you are lost, lost. Oh, to you is Jesus, the lifeboat, sent! Yes, God sent His Son ‘to seek

and to save the lost.'" The scriptures were then opened, and they were shown how God had so loved them, lost in sins, and helpless, and had sent His Son to make propitiation for sin. And if they had learned that they could not attain to holiness or righteousness, by their efforts or works, I had now the glorious message to declare to them, free forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ the Lord. I then concluded, as it was getting late; but not one person would move, and I was entreated to go on, and tell them more of the blessed news. I had to preach again, I should say, a full hour.

Many may read this who heard the gospel of their salvation that night. There are many Roman Catholics around the Salt Market, in Glasgow. Many came and heard, and none paid deeper attention. Some years after, I went again, and immediately I walked on the open space I was recognised, and especially by the Irish Catholics, who came and stood, from beginning to the end of the preaching, which had again to be prolonged to a late hour. Indeed, I was told that they were most interested in these preachings. I name this to show the importance of preaching the grace of God, so needed by every soul, instead of attacking others. Nothing exposes our human errors like the truth of God. And let us remember, that man in his natural state, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, is darkness; not merely in darkness, but darkness itself. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." (Ephesians 5:8) There is no true knowledge of God, no light, but in Christ: out of Him all is moral darkness.

It was very remarkable, as in the above case, how the Lord gathered large companies to hear the word preached without any of the usual means of post bills, or otherwise. When I spoke first in the Glasgow Salt Market, I only knew four Christians north of Scarborough.

Chapter 10.

Sometimes in going into strange and out of the way places, faith was tried. I had heard of a few poor Christians, in a village about nine miles from Penistone, on the borders of the Yorkshire moors. I knew none of them, but a dear fellow-labourer had visited them. I started early, one Lord's day morning, and walked nine miles over a hilly country. When I arrived, they were holding a prayer meeting, in the forenoon. I found the house, and kneeled with them before the Lord. After the meeting, I told them I had come to speak for my Master. They seemed very shy, and in no hurry to welcome a stranger. It was agreed, however, I should preach in a house near, at three o'clock. No one asked me to dinner, for which I was quite ready, having breakfasted at seven, and walked nine miles, after a journey by rail. I believe it was poverty, and the poor people were ashamed to offer me their poor fare. I walked about the village until two, and then a man asked me if I would take what he had, he would be glad for me to do so. I went in, and we sat down round the cottage table. There was a rice pudding baked hard in a brown dish. I should think it was made with water; and we drank good water out of one yellow mug. That was our dinner, and I, for one, was thankful for it.

Still, my new friends were shy. I went to the house to preach. There was a wooden chair, with high sides, and I sat in it, and sang a hymn, "One there is above all others, O how He loves." Not a soul would come in to sing, or pray, or hear. A few crept to the door to hear there. Certainly, if I had walked by sight that day, I should have got out of that chair, and walked straight to Penistone. I have often found, the greater the difficulty, the greater the blessing. I came out of doors, and found a few of my shy friends standing about. The Spirit of God directed me to point to a tree, on the green. I said to the men near, "You see that tree, and if God has sent me to preach here, you will

see a congregation under that tree at such o'clock." I forget whether it was four or six. At the time named, there was such a congregation as had probably never been seen in that part of the country before. The Spirit of God gave me much liberty in telling out the kindness of God, as illustrated by the history of Mephibosheth. And such was the interest awakened, that the meetings, out of doors and in, continued until twelve o'clock that night. I slept in a little closet; but at four they came calling me up for another meeting, before I left, at seven, for Penistone station. How the news spread, and the people were collected, I never knew. And this was one of the many places I never saw again. Jesus says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" and as David sent and fetched Mephibosheth, so the Holy Ghost can bring whom He will to hear the word, and be saved. And whilst depending on Him we should let no circumstances discourage us.

Sometimes we cannot, by any means, account for His sovereign actings, or the way in which He brings about His purposes. I received a letter from the minister of the Moravian Settlement at Fulneck, near Leeds, to say that by some means a report had got abroad, that I was to preach at the Settlement on the following Lord's Day evening. The impression was so universal in the neighbourhood, that it was no use trying to alter it. I gathered that the hand of the Lord was in the matter, and went. A few of us had prayer in the vestry, and on coming out we had the greatest difficulty in reaching the pulpit, the crush was so great. From all parts of the country the people streamed to the large hall. I was sorry to hear that many of the Moravians could not get in. I was led to speak on "Peace with God," and no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 5:1; Romans 8:1.) This was evidently the very subject needed, as the aged minister told me afterwards, he scarcely knew one in the Settlement, who knew with certainty that he had peace with God. Is it not sad, that so few even of those who are Christians enjoy this blessed certainty? How many who read these lines may not have that enjoyment! Yet, surely, Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross, for all who believe. It was truly a blessed time, and I have no doubt of meeting many in the presence of the Lord, who passed from death unto life that night. But it is not always in public preaching that God displays His sovereign grace. Nothing perhaps shows that grace more strikingly than the call of the aged; and the various, nay peculiar means, that He may use in calling them by His grace. A few Christians had it laid on their hearts to take a long drive in a waggonette, through the villages in Yorkshire, around my native village, Brookhouse, and leave a tract at every house, and preach the gospel as the Lord might direct. After passing Whiston some distance, we came to where one road turned up to Laughton, and the other down to Brookhouse. I felt deeply impressed that the Lord had now some special case I must see in Brookhouse. I called to the driver, who was a Christian also, and said, "B., you must drive down to Brookhouse and stop just when I tell you." He said, "We cannot turn round in the place." I said, "We must go, and you can drive on to Hooton, and there you can turn the vehicle." We drove down the village. I was in prayer to the Lord to guide me to the right person He had in view. At last, I felt assured, "This is the place!" and called out for B. to stop. I got out, and found myself exactly opposite a little bridge over the brook. I had well known that bridge in childhood, and often had I crossed it to buy sweets, as a child, from a little shop up a short walk, kept then by a person known as Becky F. To the door of that once little shop I felt directed. I knocked at the door. A middle-aged woman came to the door. I said, "May I ask you, is Mrs. F. still living?" "Yes," she said," she is still alive; please walk in." And she took me to the little parlour, and there, propped up in bed, was the aged dying woman, Becky F. I do not know that I had seen her for forty years. It was a solemn moment. She was perfectly sensible, and knew me, She said, "Is that Charles Stanley? Why the

Lord has sent you. I am dying; and I have no one to tell me how I can be saved, and go to heaven. Oh, tell me how I can be saved." I assured her God had sent me to declare to her, through the atoning death of Jesus, the free, full, everlasting forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:38-39.) I showed her from scripture that that atoning death was finished; that God had raised Jesus from the dead; and declared that, through Him, all who believe are justified, and have peace with Him.

It was, however, the blessed Person of Christ speaking those words, that had been blest to so many, and that will be yet blest to many who read this paper, until Jesus comes. The Spirit had prepared this very aged dying woman to hear the words of Jesus. I said, "Now Jesus says to you, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.'" (John 5:24) Oh, it was blessed to see how she drank in those life-giving words. I said, "Do you hear these words of Jesus?" "I do," she said. "And do you believe that God sent Him; that God so loved?" "I do." "He says, then, you shall not come into judgment. Do you believe Him?" "I do." Yes, it is most true, for He has borne the judgment due to all who believe Him. "He says, then, you have passed from death unto life. Do you believe Him?" "I do." Yes, she, through grace, believed the words of Jesus. She sweetly passed from death unto life. I said, "We will now give thanks." I kneeled down, and gave thanks unto God. As I rose, I heard the carriage returning. I left her a new creation, soon to be for ever with the Lord; a blessed trophy of infinite grace. In what a variety of ways will God be glorified! This was not the only case that day. We then drove on to Laughton. We got out, with tracts, and gave to every house, and also to all the children in the school where I had sat, a little boy, so many years before. We also had a preaching opposite the chapel, where the Lord first opened my mouth, when a little more than fourteen years of age. We then drove on to Firbeck. I suddenly remembered that some of my ancestors lived in that village. I called at a cottage, and inquired if any of that name were left in the village. I was soon directed to the house of my grandfather's sister-in-law, the very aged widow of his brother. She was sitting in her cottage, with the door open, surrounded by her children, and their children, and their children, who had come to see her that day. She had never seen me since I was eight years of age. Yet, strange to say, she knew me, and felt that I was a messenger sent from God. She was anxious to be saved, and had no one to show her the way of life. I have every reason to believe that God blest His word to her that day. I was accustomed after that to visit her unto the day of her departure. Though so aged, she was able to walk over to Roche Abbey, one mile, and there we had preaching of the gospel. The large and excellent school from Worksop was there that day, and the boys desired to hear us preach. The masters very readily gave their consent. The boys, and also my aged friend, listened with the deepest attention. It was a happy day's service, because spent in communion with Christ, in telling out the love of God to lost sinners. It is a most solemn thought, that even service, if not in communion, is worth nothing nay, is it not sin?

Chapter 11.

I will here give a case for the encouragement of the young evangelists, who may not, at the time, see any fruit of their labours in the gospel. An aged woman, of the name of Hannah F., had come some eight miles to hear a lecture, on the Lord's coming, in the Mechanics' Hall, Rotherham. She was nearly blind, but God was pleased to open her spiritual eyesight, and two things were made known to her in the power of the Holy Ghost. God gave her the certainty of eternal salvation, and also made known to her the blessed hope of the coming again of the Lord to take His saints.

These two things were entirely new to her; she had never heard them before. She returned to her home at Anston, filled with “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” She told her aged husband, about one year older than herself, the blessed news she had learned. The Lord opened his heart also to receive the glad tidings, and much of their time was spent in thanksgiving and worship. They had an aged neighbour, a farmer, about the same age as themselves. One day they had knelt down, giving thanks together that they were both washed in the blood of the Lamb from all sin and were waiting and longing for the coming of the Lord in the air to take them to Himself. The aged farmer came in to see them, as had been his custom; and as both of them were rather deaf, and so entirely absorbed in thanksgiving, they did not hear him come in.

He listened with amazement, such joy he had never witnessed, such words he had never heard. It was not prayer, but they were giving thanks to Him who had saved them with an everlasting salvation, who had made them fit for His holy presence, in purity and glory. They were in spirit in heaven, not at Anston; and they were talking to One they knew so well, and never seemed tired of talking to Him. They talked to Him about His coming, to take them to Himself. The old farmer was fairly lost in amazement. At last the dear aged couple rose from their knees. Their visitor said, “Whatever does all this mean? I have been going to church these seventy years, and saying my prayers; but I cannot say that I am even saved, much more saved for ever, and saved perfectly. No, indeed, I cannot. And you are speaking to God as if you knew Him. And what can you mean about the coming of Christ to take you?”

Then aged Hannah told the gospel she had heard: how God loved; how He had sent His Son; how He had offered Himself the infinite sacrifice for sins; how God declared that all who believed were justified from all things, and their sins and iniquities God would remember no more. Yea, how that, by one offering, all who believed were perfected for ever. And Jesus assured all who heard His words, and believed God that sent Him, that they had eternal life, and should never come into judgment, but were passed from death unto life. And that Jesus told them not to be afraid; He was gone to prepare a place for them, and would come again to receive them to Himself. She spoke from the deep enjoyment of Christ in her own soul. God blest her words to their aged farmer friend. Though over 80, he, too, was brought into the enjoyment of peace with God. As a little child did he receive the truth from the lips of Hannah. Heavenly was the communion of these three aged pilgrims, when a friend of mine found them some months afterwards. Much of their time was spent together in worship and communion, waiting for Jesus from heaven. When the farmer saw the smoke from the cottage chimney, he was soon with them in sweet employ of thanksgiving and praise. But it became necessary that the aged couple should be taken care of. Hannah was now blind; and a loving son took them to his home twelve miles away. But how was this happy little band to be separated? How could the home be broken up? Well, the secret was not told them. They were taken as on a visit first, and then told. Morning after morning the dear aged farmer looked for the smoke from the chimney. It never arose again, and after a few mornings, the Lord said to the farmer, “Come up hither;” and sweet as is fellowship here below, it was with him now “far better.”

Once only did I meet this aged saint, Hannah. I met her at the house of the friend who first told me of them; and my heart feels melted within me as I remember the interview. She was now quite blind. Truly she might have said, Once was I blind, but now I see. An aged temple of the Holy Ghost unhindered. It is impossible to give any idea of that holy, waiting Hannah, so full of Christ.

So my dear brethren, do not be discouraged, though you see not the fruit for many days. Blessed truth, “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.”

Oh the riches of the grace of God in meeting and calling the aged! He will be glorified by each one amongst those myriads who shall sing His praise as the One who is worthy, “the Lamb as it had been slain.” Whilst preaching in the Assembly Room at Bournemouth, I had felt much interested in an aged man, with a long worn grey coat. I had spoken to him repeatedly. He was like a man before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle; but his hand was never laid on the head of the sin offering. (Leviticus 4:1-35.) There never seemed to be the link of true faith in the sacrifice of the Son of God for him. I had been speaking from Romans 8:1-3, and showing the ground on which there can be no condemnation to the believer in Christ. That not only had Jesus been delivered for our iniquities, and had borne them away, that God had raised Him from the dead without them for our justification; but also sin, the very root of all sins, had been utterly and for ever judged. “God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin] condemned sin in the flesh.” So that there is nothing left to be judged. After the preaching the aged man came up to me, and said, “Now I see it all. Now I have peace with God. All is done; my sins have been judged, and the very sin of my nature judged, condemned, and all is finished. No condemnation.” He went home to his humble lodgings. He had been much reduced in circumstances; all his children were dead; he had lost his property. He had come with his last child, and opened a shop for her with his last little property; but the business failed, and the daughter had died. He had broken into his last sovereign; but he returned that night to his lodgings, justified from all things, and he knew it, and had peace with God. He sat down in the arm chair; he told the people with whom he lodged that he had now peace with God; he was now ready to depart. His head fell back on the chair; calmly the spirit departed. He was gone to be for ever with the Lord.

We must not forget one great secret of success in preaching the gospel. It is one that has impressed me all my life, and never more so than at present, after more than 53 years, through much failure, in preaching the word of God. Long have I noticed how the apostle Paul takes care to show that he was not the servant of any party; neither did he derive authority from any human source, not even from the apostles at Jerusalem. He could say, “Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” See the whole context of this verse. (Galatians 1:1-24.) No doubt the Holy Ghost foresaw the authority that men would assume in the place of Christ as to this. But is it not as important for the humblest servant of Christ to be the servant of Jesus Christ now, as for Paul to be so then? Think what it is to receive your commission from Christ Himself, and to be His servant alone, whatever may be the state of the church. “Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Jesus Christ.” These are searching words. Who can say them from the heart? Surely they do not set aside the blessedness of the fellowship of saints. But the church does not give authority to the servant of the Lord to preach the word, as is clearly seen in the above scriptures. Well then, if I am the servant of Christ, what would He have His servant do in any place, to which He may send him? What is the heart’s desire of Christ as to all that are His in that place? What is the will of God as to the whole world, or the unconverted in that district? We will take an illustration.

I received two anonymous letters from the centre of a large colliery district, to go and preach a full gospel, including the coming of the Lord Jesus. The last letter was so urgent, that I gathered it was

the will of the Lord I should go over and help them. We took the Town Hall, and gave four lectures on the second coming of Christ, with a profound sense of the love of Christ to His saints in the neighbourhood. I had no thought of forming a party, or serving a party; but as the servant of Christ, to serve all that were His. The hall filled, and very many of the Christians in the neighbourhood, for miles around, came to hear. They were deeply interested; but from conversation with them, it was evident they did not understand what to them was so entirely new. We then took a room at a temperance house, that would seat forty or more. This was filled at once with local preachers, class leaders, &c., all being free to ask questions or make remarks. It soon became so crowded that we were obliged to have the reading in the Town Hall, and also preaching of the gospel on Lord's day evenings. The numbers so increased that the reading had to be more like a sitting lecture. For one whole year these meetings were continued, and most, if not all the Christians of the district, heard the word. I think it was one of the happiest years of my service for Christ. I had a drive of eighteen miles twice a week; but it was so peculiarly blessed to go with the assured presence of Christ, and in the full unhindered sympathies of His love to all whom the Father had given to Him, to have no object but to serve and please Him.

Many of the local preachers were greatly surprised to learn the truth of Hebrews 9:27-28. They had been preaching a general judgment to all, and of all — the day of doom. This seemed to be the first truth that struck many — that Christ had borne the judgment due to His own, and therefore into judgment for sins they could never come. They had read that scripture as if it had said, that it was appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment. They had never noticed it did not say so, neither had they noticed the contrast, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." Neither had they ever really noticed that Jesus assures believers that they shall not come into judgment, as the word should be translated in John 5:24. The infinite value of the one sacrifice of Christ, also now became understood, and really caused their peace to flow like a river. Then eternal life as a present thing: what they had regarded as great error, became their deep joy. Eternal redemption also led them into perfect rest in God. It would fill a book if one could remember all the questions put at these meetings.

We will just relate one: I had been speaking on Romans 3:1-31, especially on the righteousness of God, when man was proved to have none. Not only guilty, but his condition utterly lost; his incompetency to keep the law, and so be righteous on that ground. A local preacher suddenly rose in the midst of the crowded hall, and said, "Mr. S., I want to ask you a question: If a father was to set his lad a task to do, that he well knew he could not do, and then because he did not do it he was to thrash him well, would that be right?" Every face was fixed, waiting for an answer. I said, "Mr. B., you have been a local preacher forty years." "Yes," he said, "I have." "Have you found anything more difficult than to convince a man that he is a lost sinner?" "No, I don't know that I have." "Very well, then, I will just suppose you were the captain of a life-boat. You are sent out to rescue the crew of a ship going to pieces on the rocks. You know they are helpless, they cannot get the ship to land. Laws of navigation are good in themselves, but they cannot help this crew; they have no power to work the ship. You see they are stiff and helpless. You would not stop a hundred yards short to discuss the laws of navigation. You would not tell them to do their part and meet you a hundred yards off. No, you would pull alongside, and assuring them it was impossible for them to save themselves, you would take them from the breaking wreck, and pull to shore.

Now, Mr. B., would you be very much to blame?" Mr. B. by this time had forgotten his half infidel question, and said, "No, I don't think that I should."

I tried then to explain how Christ was the life-boat, sent to save those who were lost, and could not save themselves. Is it not so, dear reader? The law of Moses, nay, the law of God, will no more help in this matter for the salvation of a soul, helpless on the rocks of guilt and sin, without power to escape, than the laws of navigation will help to save the crew from a ship, breaking to pieces on a rocky shore. Yet man is blind as to the grace of God in sending the life-boat, after first giving the law to convict man of his lost and helpless state. We may justly question whether any who raise such cavils, have ever known themselves really lost. How many there are who have yet to learn the utter ruin of fallen man! The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, and his true, real personality was also very new to these people; and also the blessed truth, that all believers are baptised by the one Spirit into one body. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) And that according to the word of God there is "one body," just as there is "one Lord." All this greatly surprised them, in contrast with the many religious bodies of men. For the Lord gave me great freedom, as I regarded all Christians in the district alike members of the body of Christ; and by the grace of God sought to declare to them the whole counsel of God. And the joy with which these truths were listened to and received can never be forgotten.

One person gave a vivid description of the meetings. She said, "It must be very easy to speak at these meetings." I said, "Why?" "Well," she said, "they are like a bird's nest, full of young, with all their mouths open." It was exactly so. It was remarkable to see both men and women coming long distances, in the depth of winter, to drink in the word of life.

After twelve months, they felt the words of the Lord Jesus as to breaking bread, "Do this in remembrance of me." They said they felt the time was come when they must obey the Lord. I said to them, "If you do this, it must be your own act to Him alone. For twelve months I have sought to declare unto you the whole counsel of God; and I call on you to bear witness that I have never lifted a finger, or spoken a word to ask you to leave your chapels or churches. If you meet now to break bread I shall not be with you, lest it should have the least appearance of leading you to follow me. It must be to the Lord." On the following Lord's day, about twenty-five came together to show forth the Lord's death; and I was told it was a time of great blessing, and they had such a sense of the Lord's presence as they had never known before. Soon many more were gathered with them to the Lord. Thus it was as at the beginning, Peter preached, and the Lord gathered. (Acts 2:1-47.)

Beloved fellow helpers and servants of Christ, let us not be discouraged. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Our hope is not the church being restored to order, and visible unity here in this world. No, the apostle could say in the very beginning of the work of God in Europe, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crow of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" though we surely are responsible to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. Many now have left the village; some are with the Lord, waiting with Him, some here, some there. That which is of God will stand for ever. All that the Father gave to Jesus shall soon meet, where scatterings are no more.

We dwelt a little at length on the history of the work of God at the above place, as it illustrates the experience of nearly a lifetime in the service of Christ. I have always found blessing and results in

proportion to communion with Christ, in His love to the whole church, whether in writing or preaching; and no Christian can prosper in his own soul unless he is seeking the welfare of others. He must come unto Christ and drink, and then “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Thus may we serve Him according to the sympathies of His own heart. I might add page after page of incidents in His blessed service, but hope I have not already wearied the patience of my readers.

After four years’ absence I have just been to the same place, and have found much freshness and blessing. To Him be all the praise.

Chapter 12.

I will now seek to give a little help from a life’s experience, to those who desire to be the servants of Christ; and more as to how God has opened to my own soul the scriptures of truth.

I have already stated how I was led to study the epistle to the Romans. This was not the work of a few months, but of a life-ever finding how little I knew of that wonderful epistle of foundation truth. The result of those meditations has lately been published, at the request of a fellow-labourer.* Nothing short of the revelation of the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner can sustain the soul, either in passing through the storms of temptation, of the world, the flesh, and the devil; or in faithfully preaching the gospel to others. I would then strongly press the prayerful study of the Romans on all young preachers of the gospel, as to the basis, and revelation, of the righteousness of God.

{*Notes on the Epistle to the Romans." G. Morrish, London.}

It is no doubt very blessed to preach the love of God, but this alone you will find will neither sustain your own soul in peace, nor prove lasting good news to your converts. A mother’s love is very precious; but if a daughter has fallen into sin, and in disgrace has had to flee her country, when walking the streets of some far off city in the wretchedness of sin, will the remembrance of that mother’s tears and undying love make that daughter happy? Far from it. But go and tell that fallen one that her mother’s love has found a way of restoring her to her home and a mother’s heart, with all her sin and shame gone for ever, to be remembered no more — this will be glad tidings to that broken heart. Oh tell first how the Shepherd has died for the sheep; then tell how the Holy Ghost has come to seek and to find the lost; then tell how the Father has His own joy in receiving that lost prodigal. Yes, if God has so loved this world, it was to give His Son to be lifted up.

Ever keep God revealed in Christ before you. It was not man reconciling himself to God, but God reconciling the world to Himself. The gospel is what God is, and what He has done, in sending that Son to die for us and to rise again. Like the daughter far off from her mother in the wretchedness of sin; so we were far, oh, how far from God, in the untold wretchedness of sin. And what has God done to redeem us to Himself! Yes! sing, oh ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it!

Another thing I would press, unfeigned dependence on the Holy Ghost, whether as to a holy life or preaching the gospel. As to the former, we must learn that “in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.” Oh how distressing this lesson is to most of us! To find every hope of improvement in the flesh end in failure. To long to do the will of God, and yet in an unexpected moment to fail. To discover the desperate wickedness of the human heart. Yes, self must be

utterly set aside, an Christ be all. To cry out, with Hezekiah, “O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.” And then with deep untold joy of heart, to be able to say, “What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.” (Isaiah 38:14-15.) Or with the one under law, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 7:24-25.) It may be years before we really learn the riches of His grace, and the depths of His mercy. When He first called us, we did not know, but He did know all that we were, and all that we should do; and He did undertake for us, and He hath done it! All our iniquities were laid on Him. God has done it in sending “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The way of deliverance is made clear in this way: We learn that the old “I,” my old self, has been utterly judged and condemned in the holy Person of my Substitute. All that I am is judged and put out of the sight of God, not reckoned now to or as me. The Holy Ghost makes this truly known in the soul. I am now of the same mind and judgment with God as to the flesh, that is, as to myself, as a child of Adam. I therefore give up all hope of walking in the flesh. I give up my old self as utterly bad.

What then! Is this that I may walk in sin, or in the flesh? No! but walk in the Spirit. Thus it is the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” If walking in the flesh, and seeking as in that condition to keep the commandments, I am just liable to fall into the deepest wickedness in breaking them; for I should find the law of sin in my members too much for me. But if all is given up as bad and lost, and without strength to be better, the new law of the Spirit of life takes the entire place of self. Then, oh how blessed, to enjoy the delivering liberty of the Spirit of life.

Now sometimes this deliverance may be learnt at conversion; but this is rarely the case when God calls us in childhood. In times of weakness and temptation we learn “to esteem others better than ourselves.” And, oh, how we learn the riches of His grace! But it will be when we know as we are known, that we shall fully have learned to say, “Worthy alone art thou, O Lamb of God.” It is here also we learn our need of the all-sufficient priesthood of Christ to help us in every time of need, and His advocacy to restore us when we fail. Sad will it be in our experience if we neglect the reading of the word. We need the constant washing, not again of the blood of Jesus, but the washing of the word. The mark of a soul not in darkness, but walking in the light, is “that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Without this light to the soul, there is no power for a holy walk. For a holy walk, then, there must be entire dependence on the Holy Spirit: not less so in preaching the word to others. Having been actively engaged in business, I have often had to go from a hard day’s work of commercial travelling, or manufacturing cares and difficulties, with only just time to look to the Lord in prayer, sometimes not knowing, up to the last moment, what portion of scripture to take. Yet I can say, for the encouragement of others, those have often been my happiest times of freshness of soul, and sense of His presence, without which all preaching is utterly in vain. I can say, with one now gone to his rest, “It is far the happiest way never to allow the thought, that you are going to preach from such a passage of scripture. Study the scripture for your own soul’s need and profit, but in no bondage of preparation for preaching. Then either speak from that or any other portion, as the Spirit may direct you.”

It is also most important that the servant of Christ should search the scriptures as to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul had this blessed hope always before him; indeed,

without it the gospel is incomplete. The effect of his preaching was to turn men to God to wait for the Son from heaven. There is no doubt this blessed hope gives a new turn, and a fresh colour, to every thought in your heart. Like many more, after discovering the teaching of the Millerites to be very carnal and earthly; I was led to search the scriptures apart from all human books or opinions; and was greatly struck with the fact, that the truth as revealed to me in the word, was exactly the same as made known to so many others in different parts of the world, unknown to one another at the time. For it is remarkable in how many places, and by what a variety of means, Christians were led to the same blessed expectation of the Lord Jesus, to take His Church before the tribulations coming on this earth. In one place I visited, a little boy, eight years of age, had read a verse of scripture which spoke of the dead in Christ, that they should rise first when Jesus came. The child could not find it again, and begged his parents to seek for it. They knew nothing of such a thought; but they searched the scriptures until they not only found 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, but also they became first interested, and then well informed, on the subject of the second coming of Christ. And many others came to hear, and hold fast the blessed hope. I believe thousands were thus taught by the Spirit in the word; and then, when they came to know each other, they found their views exactly the same. And, above all, these were not wild speculations, but the Person and coming of the Lord Himself, as the object of immediate hope. Where the truth of the Lord's coming was received direct from the scriptures, it invariably had a separating effect. It was, as many said, like a second conversion.

Further, it is all the more needful now to search the scriptures, I and not merely read books, as many are little more than the wanderings of the human mind. I could easily name such, but I prefer saying, Search the scriptures. The tracts I wrote on that blessed subject are just as I wrote them long years ago — just the result of reading the word. If any reader would like to have simply a reference to the scriptures on the subject of the coming of the Lord, he would find the halfpenny little book, called the Diagram Tract, helpful for that purpose; but I beg of him to search those scriptures in the fear of the Lord.

Chapter 13.

There is another subject that the humble reader of the Word is sure to find, and which may, at first, give him some perplexity; that is, if he compares what he finds in scripture with what he sees around him. I refer to the church, the body of Christ. He will find such words as these, "one body," "one Spirit," "one Lord." (Ephesians 4:1-5.) He will also find such words as, "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13); and many such scriptures. It will become more and more clear to him, that in the beginning all Christians formed the one body of Christ. There was only one body, as truly as there was only one Lord.

He will then say, How is this? There are now many bodies of Christians. He will soon perceive it is not one of these bodies that is the "one body," neither is it that all these bodies compose the "one body," as 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 will teach him that the body is composed of individual members. If simple as a little child, he will soon learn that the body of Christ, the Church, is composed of all true believers now on earth. But then he finds divisions multiplying. What is he to do? Before I close I will tell the reader a little of the Lord's dealings with me in this matter. Very sorrowful difficulties these are, that are sure to cross the path of the servant of Christ. The first question is this, Do I hold the truth of the one body? That all believers since Pentecost are members of that

one body? That all believers now form that one body in Gods sight? The next question is this, Do I personally desire to act on that truth; to love all that are the Lord's, and seek to serve them? Whatever others do, do I desire to shape my ways in accordance with this great truth — the truth of the "one body"? I find others do the same. Not that they, for a moment, assume to be that one body, but seek to recognise no body but the one body of Christ, composed of all that are His. If I find others desiring to walk according to the word of God, then surely I can have fellowship with them. But if wolves come in and scatter, and if men arise speaking perverse things to lead away disciples after them, then there is the necessity of separation from evil. Is the Christian who desires to walk in the fear of the Lord to give all up in despair? Or if evil abounds, is he to allow it and go on with it? He will find these questions distinctly, answered in the word of God. In the midst of all the evil of the last days, he will hear the voice of scripture, "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Give all up! No, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." (Read 2 Timothy 2:1-26; 2 Timothy 3:1-17.)

"But," you may say, "in times of great perplexity, how am I to know who is right?" Have you noticed, in that epistle which reveals the church more than any other, which is the first precept? "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." (Ephesians 4:25.) And read carefully every word that follows to the end of the chapter. If all believers walked according to these precepts, division would be impossible. Neither will it be very difficult to discover who do, and who do not, act on these blessed principles. Ah, it is the state of the soul that is the root cause of division. False representation, bitterness, and evil speaking, spiritual pride, vain conceit, worldliness, want of uprightness. If we walk in the fear of the Lord, we shall have no difficulty in discerning what is of the devil.

Still many a young, ah, and old Christian, too, is distressed beyond measure at the state and failure in the professing church; and many an evangelist is sorely hindered in his work. Would that I could help such. Have you had the right hope before you? Has it been the church presented glorious at the coming of the Lord? Well, that hope has not altered, and it is nearer than when we first believed. Or have you had some undefined hope of the church being restored here on earth? If this is so, no doubt you will be greatly disappointed. Or have you imperceptibly slidden into the thought, that the church has been restored, and that some one company of Christians is the church restored? No wonder if you discover your mistake. Now whilst fully maintaining the privilege of the Christian to hold fast all that he has been taught from the word of God as to the Church of God, yet I would bring a subject here before you that has been of no little comfort to my own soul, in these days of perplexity. Many of my readers will remember almost the last words of one now with the Lord, at the last reading meeting we had with him, "Brethren, do not neglect the ministry of John." The ministry of John, in his inspired writings, what is its place in the word? In this paper I can only just call attention to this important inquiry. You may have noticed the remarkable order, or development, of revelation in the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi. But have you carefully studied the order in which the New Testament was given, so far as the dates are known? It would be beyond the scope of this paper to go through the whole. But just observe that the church is seen in order up to about A.D. 65. This is marked in 1 Timothy and Titus. Bishops or elders, and deacons, are officially recognised. What a change had taken place in about a year,

may be seen by reading 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, and Jude. The church, as a testimony for God on earth, had failed. Deceivers and corrupters had crept in, and for a time inspiration ceased; yes, as is generally supposed, for about twenty-five years.

We should not forget that, for all those years, declension and failure rolled on. Then the Holy Ghost spake by John. He spake of the church only as that which had failed on earth, and to be judged. (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22.) One assembly is selected and described in the epistles; but an entirely new order had been established there, one person taking authority. This was so opposed to the true principles of the church of God, that this man refused even the apostle John! We are left in no uncertainty whether God, by His aged servant John, approved or disapproved of this new order, which, I doubt not, had then become general. (2 John.)

If the Spirit did not then bring the church before us, except to judge its failures, and commend a weak remnant at Philadelphia; and if it was then the last time, and antichrists abounded; and if that last time has continued through the patience of God ever since, what did the Spirit present to us, as that which would abide during this last hour? If the church had failed as a testimony, what would not fail? The Person and glories of Christ. In the 1st epistle he says, “That which was from the beginning,” &c. In the Revelation it is, “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” In the gospel it is, “In the beginning was the Word.” When all had failed, the eternal relationships and glories of the Son who never fails, were revealed. God is revealed in the Son, “The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Now when we are sorely tried by the failure of man, the failure of the church, as seen on earth, yea, the sad sin and sorrow of all that is of man, how blessed to turn to the last full revelation of God in Christ. This will be increasingly important as the darkness settles on this poor world and the professing church.

We repeat we must hold fast all the inspired word of God. But has not that full revelation of the Son of God, the faithful witness of God, given so long after all the rest a peculiar place? One thing is certain, we have the very desires, the breathings of His heart to the Father for us, during these scenes of failure. If everything ecclesiastical utterly breaks down, still we have the most minute instructions for the children of God. In the gospel of John it is God the Father revealed in Christ; the infinite love of God to the world, Jesus, the Lamb of God, lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him may have everlasting life. Tell the glad tidings to every creature, yet mark divine sovereignty on almost every page. He says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Do not forget this. Then mark how God in Christ has been rejected by religious man, the Jews. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” They have rejected Him; and in this gospel they are set aside. Sovereign grace takes out a remnant. Salvation was not by incarnation; He must die or remain alone. (John 12:24.)

Then mark how much we have in John’s gospel that is omitted in the others. Take chapters 13 to 17; and if our eyes are opened we shall see all this as an answer to the errors and departures of what has been called the church in, and of, this world. Shall we notice a few? As to the Lord’s supper, the great error for centuries has been to turn it into a sacrifice for sins. He says to believers born of God, “Ye are clean every whit.” He takes the water, not blood, to wash their feet. The work of the brazen altar is finished; and now it is the laver, the washing of water by the word. (Compare Ephesians 5:26.) Jesus takes the place of the paschal redemption lamb, and His

redemption is eternal. It is possible that even by the time this gospel was given, the Lord's supper may have been greatly abused. The Spirit well knew how it would be put in the place of Christ; and it (the Lord's supper proper) is scarcely named. Chapter 13 scarcely goes beyond the Passover supper. In every way it is Himself that is before us. It is remarkable when we think of what is made of the eucharist that John, the last inspired writer, never names it!

Then how universal has been the error that true Christians should come into judgment at the great day! All this is anticipated. Jesus assures us it shall not be so. (John 5:24.) Nay, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled;" "I will come again and receive you unto myself." (Chap. 14:1-3.) And what is the remedy for all the conflicting ecclesiastical forms of church government. Simply the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, as promised in chapters 14, 15, 16. What a stay and comfort, and security, to all believers if they really believed that the Holy Ghost, as a Person, was as truly on earth as Jesus was with His disciples. Could you not have trusted Christ? Can you not trust the Holy Ghost, come what may?

But, says the evangelist, the sorrow of my heart is when I see souls converted, I know not where to direct them. I see that which bears the name of the church split up into contending, and often bitter parties; some of these arrogating the title, to be regarded as the church. And the thought with many others seems to be that we are at liberty to do as we like. I am not satisfied. If you would know the mind of Christ, you will find it revealed, just meeting this very state of things. You will find that one object of His atoning death was to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (John 11:52) And mark, it was after this last hour of failure and abounding of antichrists had begun, that the breathings of His heart in His prayer was recorded by inspiration. (Read John 17:1-26.) Does He not pray for all who shall believe on Him, "That they all may be one: as thou Father art in me, and I in them," &c.? Yes, whatever may be the state of that which is called the church, surely every true believer will seek to respond to the heart of Christ. We merely give these few suggestions for the study of this last inspired utterance of the Holy Ghost — the writings of John.

What an intense interest this gives to these late epistles. How are we then always to know what is of the devil, and what is of God? Nothing can be more simple or more sure. "He that practiseth sin is of the devil," "and whosoever is born of God does not practise sin." These two things characterise the children of God, and the children of the devil. "In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." No wickedness has ever been surpassed on earth greater than that development which began in, or before, the days of the writings of John.

It may be asked, Will this divine instruction be a sufficient and sure guide now? Not a doubt of it. If a work be of Satan it may come in by men as angels of light; but soon, very soon, it will bear the marks described in 1 John 1:6-10. The devil is a liar, and his work will show itself in misrepresentation, and a spirit of hatred against the brethren; such as are most used of God are sure to be the objects of hatred. This is invariably the case, whatever pretensions there may be to righteousness. Look through the history of that which has called itself the church, or of those true children of God all through this last hour, and you will find what is described in this epistle to have been the case. It is so at this moment; and if the children of God walk in the patience of Christ, and in His gentleness and meekness, they will find it so.

Yes, fellow labourers, let us hold fast the righteousness of God as revealed in the Romans, and the dearness of the church to Christ as in the Ephesians; the special instruction in 2 Timothy, when evil had already come in, and every truth revealed to us in the whole word of God. And let us not forget the special instruction when all had failed in the hands of man, in the writings of John. I will not here speak of the special place of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, as I have written a tract upon it, and notes in “Things New and Old,” 1885-1886. What has been written here is for the encouragement of the servants of Christ. If any would wish to read the subjects, or substances of subjects, I have been led to preach during now near 53 years, they will find them in the tracts, a list of which will be found at the end of this paper, and in “Things New and Old,” new series.

Beloved fellow labourers, our time and opportunity for service will soon have closed. How soon we shall see His face, and be with Him and like Him for ever. He says, “I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” May we be waiting as we serve. If these few incidents out of many of His goodness and mercy, shall be used in encouraging the hearts of others, it will be my joy. And to Him be eternal praise.

Chapter 14. The publication of these “Incidents” has been delayed some years. It is difficult to write about that which concerns one’s self, except to set forth the riches of God’s grace to the chief of sinners. The fully developed evil, and blasphemous character of evil doctrine, is now rapidly coming to a head. How would the Lord lead His servants to walk in such days? It is not so much in attacking the evil as in holding fast the truth, “That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3). This can only be by taking heed to the word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16.)

Let us dwell a little on this. It is not that the scriptures were given by inspiration of men. It is not what they thought, but absolutely of God. He has not left us in uncertainty, but has surely spoken to us, and His word is truth. It is not what man says. It is not what the church says. May we have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the assemblies. What a priceless treasure the holy scriptures are then, God speaking to us. It will not do to look at them through human spectacles, so to speak, or hear them explained by human authority. We must individually hear what God says to us. To say I can only believe what God says, if my minister or my church says it is so, is to put man between my soul and God, yea, to exalt man above God. Yet how often this is done.

How gracious, how consistent with Himself, to give us a divine certain revelation of Himself in His word! That revelation is complete: there is no further development. But how little have we studied and searched it! How little we understand of its fulness! With many, the distinct object of the Spirit in each book of the scriptures is very little understood, and hence what confusion! Passages are often quoted which, if examined, would be found to refer to totally different subjects.

Let us take one or two important illustrations: “The righteousness of God.” How commonly this is quoted from such scriptures as Romans 3:21-26, as if it meant the righteousness of Christ. Is not this great and serious confusion? Is it not as clearly as words can express, the righteousness of God in justifying the believer, whether before Christ came or after — the righteousness of God without law, or apart from law altogether? Not on the principle of law in any sense, but “being justified freely by his grace [by God’s grace], through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his [God’s] righteousness for

the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his [God's] righteousness: that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This great foundation truth, how God is righteous in justifying, is scarcely ever heard, even in evangelical preaching. I have read carefully the preachings at Exeter Hall and elsewhere, in defence of the gospel, as attacked by hosts of infidel ministers; and I thank God for the zeal of so many who spoke. Yet we are compelled to say on this most important truth, "the righteousness of God," the trumpet gave a most uncertain sound. No anxious inquirer could tell from those preachings what "the righteousness of God" means. It is so confused with the righteousness of Christ. Far be it from me to seek to oppose those learned and gifted men. I would only seek to help. I am sure nothing would help them and the whole church of God more than a clearer understanding of this subject.

What then is the righteousness of God? and what is the righteousness of Christ? Righteousness is perfect consistency of character and actions, according to the relation of one being to others, or with himself. Thus the righteousness of God is the perfect harmony of His attributes in His dealings with all created beings — perfect consistency with Himself, and that in justifying the ungodly sinner. How could His perfect love to me a sinner, and His infinite hatred of my sins, be in absolute harmony? The redemption work and infinite propitiation for my sins, and substitution on the cross, is God's only possible answer to this awful question. Blessed be God, He is righteous, and my justifier! Let a man place himself in honest truth before God as a guilty sinner, and then he will find in the gospel the only possible, revelation of the righteousness of God in justifying him. Now the way God is righteous in justifying the sinner is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The scripture does not say through the righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner to restore him before God, just as if he had kept the law, and never failed to keep it. It is quite a different gospel to seek to reinstate man as a fallen child of the first Adam; and there is no mistake we are so liable to make as this.

Bearing in mind, then, that the righteousness of God is God's whole purpose of salvation for guilty man, from first to last, and that purpose has been accomplished by Christ in redemption, let us then inquire, What is the righteousness of Christ? and then what is the redemption that He has wrought? The reader may not be aware that there is not exactly such an expression in scripture as the righteousness of Christ; 2 Peter 1:1 is the nearest to it. But there His Godhead is spoken of. We may say, however, the gospels present the only perfect righteous Man that ever trod this earth: perfect, and in absolute harmony with the mind and will of God, consistent with every relationship in which He stood. But that obedience must go up to the death of the cross. He must die, or remain alone. That one obedience must meet all the sinner's need, in order that the many may be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19.)

He must be a spotless victim, without sin, to do this, as it is written, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21.)

Thus "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Every type and shadow, every sacrifice, the utmost demand and curse of the law on the guilty (and that is what we surely are) has found its very end in Christ. God is glorified above the heavens, in absolute righteousness in justifying the guilty. Yes, God's righteousness is exalted above the highest

heavens, before the whole universe. Praise ye the Lord! But is this Christ keeping the law, and that placed to man's account to restore him, and make good his standing before God as a law keeper? Does righteousness come in this way by law? If so, there is no meaning in redemption. And it is remarkable, that wherever this different gospel is preached, which is not another gospel, redemption is not understood and seldom referred to.

What is redemption? Now, before reading another line, take a sheet of paper, and write down what you understand by redemption, especially if you have held that Christ's keeping the law is one half of our salvation, and His atoning death the other half.

Let us take God's own type for illustration: the redemption of Israel from Egypt. It would require quite a different story to illustrate the different gospel. Take just one point in Exodus 5:1-23. They are in bitter bondage as slaves; they have no straw, and they cannot make the count of bricks. They are in sore distress. Does Moses, as a figure of Christ, make up the count of bricks for them? Are the bricks that Moses made imputed to them, so as to make up the full legal count? There is no such thought in a single figure of the Old Testament, or a verse in the New. Redemption is not the amelioration or improvement of man as the slave of sin and Satan; but, as in Egypt, it is the bringing man out of the place of slavery altogether into an entirely new place and condition. And this could only be by the blood of the Lamb. Is it not so whether we speak of the present redemption of our souls by His precious blood, or the still future redemption of our bodies at the resurrection? It is the bringing of that which is ransomed from one state to another. Redemption is not the improvement or making good the old man. When Israel had passed through the water, figure of death, they were dead to the law of brick-making in Egypt. They passed out of that state altogether. Is not this the very secret of the believer's power for a holy, righteous life even here? Being dead to sin (Romans 6:11), is he not to reckon this to be so? Is he not also as dead to law? "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4) This is God's way. Man's way is just the opposite. He would say, "If you are born of God now, you must be married to the law to bring forth fruit by keeping it; and where you fail, the law-keeping of Christ will be imputed to you to make up." Can any soul have peace or deliverance in that way? Read the whole of this chapter before us. (Romans 7:1-25.) Here is the very case: a man born again, but still under law, trying to find some good in the flesh, in the utmost distress as we have all found: he cannot make his count of bricks. It is not a make-weight or helper he needs. He finds there is not a bit of good in the flesh. As born of God he delights in the law of God; but, ah, that other law in his members! He needs, and in Christ he finds, full deliverance.

Well, you may say, I have, through the grace of God, believed the free forgiveness of sins, through the atoning death of Christ. Is there not something more? I do not seem satisfied. Well, it is blessed to hear and believe, that "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of I sins." And even as to this part of the gospel, it is well to know the sure witness God has given. Not only has Jesus been delivered for our offences, but God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and for this very purpose, in view of this which we so need: "And was raised again for our justification." Believing this we are reckoned righteous. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus. Christ." (Romans 4:24-25; Romans 5:1.) Yes, we are justified from all our sins accounted righteous through what Christ has done for us on the cross. But then Paul not only preached free forgiveness through Jesus, but he also said, "And in Him

every one that believes is justified from all things," &c. (Acts 13:39, literal translation.) If we are believers, what have we not in Christ? Do you say, I want to be sure I have righteousness? "In Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Do you want to be assured that there is no condemnation to you? "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1.) Do you say, I want this old sinful nature to be improved, and made fit for heaven? Ah, there is no such thought in scripture. No, on the cross the Holy One of God was "sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.) No, the righteousness of God is seen condemning our sinful nature on the cross, as well as in Jesus bearing our sins; and thus, by the cross, He set aside for ever the old man with his deeds, and gives the believer a new place in Christ, the second or last man.

Oh think what it is to be in Christ. This was the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; but all this "in Him." (Read Ephesians 1:3-7.) And mark what God has given us in Him, according to His eternal purpose. No, it is not the lost man restored and made a good Jew under law. Mark these words: No, we do not know Christ after the flesh. It is not Moses making up the bricks under law, but, "Therefore, if any man, be in Christ he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God," &c. (2 Corinthians 5:15-17)

What can the believer need or even desire more, except grace to walk worthy of this high calling in Christ Jesus. He is thus our righteousness, but not to make good the old man under law. It is what He is now, made unto us, as risen from the dead. As He is so are we, and all of God. Oh what a difference is felt and enjoyed, when we come to the end of all hope of the flesh under law, and find all in Christ in resurrection! Not I, but Christ. Oh God, our Father, bless these few remarks to the deliverance of many souls; and to Thy name be all praise!

C. Stanley.

103. The Righteousness of God

The Righteousness of God Charles Stanley.

God has graciously given us a complete, divine revelation of Himself, in His Word. There is no further development. But how little have we studied and searched it! How little we understand of its fullness! The distinct object of the Spirit in each book of the Scriptures is very little understood by many, and hence what confusion! Passages are often quoted which, if examined, would be found to refer to totally different subjects.

Let us take one or two important illustrations: "The righteousness of God." How commonly this is quoted from such scriptures as Romans 3:21-26, as if it meant the righteousness of Christ. Is not this and serious confusion? Is it not as clear as words can express, the righteousness of God in justifying the believer, whether before Christ came or after ■ the righteousness of God without law, or apart from law altogether? Not on the principle of law in any sense, but "being justified freely by His grace [by God's grace], through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare [God's] righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, say, at this time, His [God's] righteousness: that He [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth Jesus." This great foundation truth, how God is righteous in justifying, is scarcely ever heard, even in evangelical preaching.

I have read carefully the preachings at Exeter Hall and elsewhere in defense of the gospel which being attacked by hosts of infidel ministers, and I thank God for the zeal of many who spoke. Yet we are compelled to say on this most important truth, "the righteousness of God," the trumpet gave a most uncertain sound. No anxious inquirer could tell from those preachings what "the righteousness of God" means ■ it was so confused with the righteousness of Christ. Far be it from me to seek to oppose those learned and gifted men. I would only seek to help. I am sure nothing would help them and the whole Church of God more than a clearer understanding of this subject.

What then is the righteousness of God? and what is the righteousness of Christ? Righteousness is perfect consistency of character and actions, according to the relation of one being to others, or with himself. Thus the righteousness of God is the perfect harmony of His attributes in His dealings with all created beings ■ perfect consistency with Himself, and that in justifying the ungodly sinner. How could His perfect love to me a sinner, and His infinite hatred of my sins, be in absolute harmony? The redemption work and infinite propitiation for my sins, and substitution on the cross, is God's only possible answer to this awful question. Blessed be God, He is righteous, and is my Justifier! Let a man place himself in honest truth before God as a guilty sinner, and then he will find in the gospel the only possible revelation of the righteousness of God in justifying him. Now the way God is righteous in justifying the sinner is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The Scripture does not say through the righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner to restore him before God, just as if he had kept the law, and never failed to keep it. is quite a different gospel to seek to reinstate man as a fallen child of the first Adam; and there is no mistake we are so likely to

make as this.

Bearing in mind, then, that the righteousness of God is God's whole purpose of salvation for guilty man, from first to last, and that that purpose has been accomplished by Christ in redemption, let us then inquire, What is the righteousness of Christ? and then what is the redemption that He has wrought? The reader may not be aware that there is not exactly such an expression in Scripture as the righteousness of Christ; 2 Peter 1:1 is the nearest to it. But there His Godhead is spoken of. We may say, however, the Gospels present the only perfect righteous Man that ever trod this earth: perfect, and in absolute harmony with the mind and will of God, consistent with every relationship in which He stood. But that obedience must go up to the death of the cross. He must die, or remain alone. That one obedience must meet all the sinner's need, in order that the many may be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19).

He must be a spotless victim, without sin, to do this, as it is written, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Thus "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Every type and shadow, every sacrifice, the utmost demand and curse of the law on the guilty (and that is what we surely are) has found its very end in Christ. God is glorified above the heavens, in absolute righteousness in justifying the guilty. Yes, God's righteousness is exalted above the highest heavens, before the whole universe. Praise ye the Lord! But is this Christ keeping the law, and that placed to man's account to restore him, and make good his standing before God as a law-keeper? Does righteousness come in this way by law? If so, there is no meaning in redemption. And it is remarkable, that wherever this different gospel is preached, which is not another gospel, redemption is not understood and seldom referred to.

What is redemption? Now, before reading another line, take a sheet of paper, and write down what you understand by redemption, especially if you have held that Christ's keeping the law is one half of our salvation, and His atoning death the other half.

Let us take God's own type for illustration: the redemption of Israel from Egypt. It would require quite a different story to illustrate the different or false gospel. Take just one point in Exodus 5:1-23. They are in bitter bondage as slaves; they have no straw, and they cannot make the count of bricks. They are in sore distress. Does Moses, as a figure of Christ, make up the count of bricks for them? Are the bricks that Moses made imputed to them, so as to make up the full legal count? There is no such thought in a single figure of the Old Testament, or a verse in the New. Redemption is not the amelioration or improvement of man as the slave of sin and Satan; but, as in Egypt, it is the bringing man out of the place of slavery altogether into an entirely new place and condition. And this could only be by the blood of the Lamb. Is it not so whether we speak of the present redemption of our souls by His precious blood, or the still future redemption of our bodies at the resurrection? It is the bringing of that which is ransomed from one state to another. Redemption is not the improvement or making good the old man. When Israel had passed through the water, figure of death, they were dead to the law of brick-making in Egypt. They passed out of that state altogether. Is not this the very secret of the believer's power for a holy, righteous life even here? Being dead to sin (Romans 6:11), is he not to reckon this to be so? Is he not also as dead to law? "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead the law by the body of Christ;

that ye should married to another, even to Him who is raised the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4. This is God's way. Man's way is just the opposite. He would say, "If you born of God, now, you must be married to the law to bring forth fruit by keeping; and where you fail, the law-keeping of Christ will imputed to you to make up." Can any soul have or deliverance in that way? Read the whole of this chapter us. (Romans 7:1-25.) Here is the very case: a man born again, but still under law, trying to find some good the flesh, in the utmost distress as we have all found ■ cannot make his count of bricks. It is not to make up a deficiency, or a helper he needs. He finds there is not a bit of good in the flesh. As born of God delights in the law of God; but, oh, that other law in his members! He needs, and in Christ he finds, full deliverance.

Well, you may say, I have, through the grace of God, believed the free forgiveness of sins, through the atoning death of Christ. Is there not something more? I do not seem satisfied. Well, it is blessed to hear and believe, that "through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." And even as to this part of the gospel, it is well to know the sure witness God has given. Not only has Jesus been delivered for our offences, but God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and for this very purpose: our justification. "And was raised again for our justification." Believing this we are reckoned righteous. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 4:24-25; Romans 5:1. Yes, we are justified from all our sins; accounted through what Christ has done for us on the cross. But then Paul not only preached that free forgiveness through Jesus, he also said, "And in Him every one that believes is justified from all things" (Acts 13:39, literal translation). If we are believers, what have we not in Christ? Do you say, I want to be sure I have righteousness? In Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. Do you want to be assured that there is no condemnation to you? "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. Do you say, I want this old sinful nature to be improved, and made fit for heaven? Ah, there is no such thought in Scripture. No, on the cross the Holy One of God was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3, and 2 Corinthians 5:21. No, the righteousness of God is seen condemning our sinful nature on the cross, as well as in Jesus bearing our sins; and thus, by the cross, He set aside forever the old man with his deeds, and gives the believer a new place in Christ, the second or last Man.

Oh think what it is to be in Christ. This was the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; but all this "in Him." (Read Ephesians 1:3-7.) And mark what God has given us in Him, according to His eternal purpose. No, is not the lost man restored and made a good Jew under law. Mark these words: No, we do not know Christ after the flesh. It is not Moses making up the bricks under law, but, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.

What can the believer need or even desire more, except grace to walk worthy of this high calling in Christ Jesus. He is thus our righteousness, but not to make good old man under law. It is what He is now, made unto us, as risen from the dead. As He is, so are we, and all of God. Oh what a difference is felt and enjoyed, when we come to the end of all hope of the flesh under law, and find all in Christ in resurrection! Not I, but Christ. O God, our Father, bless these few remarks to the deliverance of many souls; and to Thy name be all praise!

104. Decision for Christ.

Decision for Christ.

Charles Stanley. In the subject of "Decision for Christ," there are two or three obstacles which lie in our way ■ two or three difficulties which hang around the question, which we would fain remove, if possible, in order that the reader may be able to view the matter on its own proper ground, and in its own proper bearings. In the first place, we encounter a serious difficulty in the fact that very few of us, comparatively, are in a condition of soul to appreciate the subject, or to suffer a word of exhortation thereon. We are, for the most part, so occupied with the question of our soul's salvation ■ so taken up with matters affecting ourselves, our peace, our liberty, our comfort, our deliverance from the wrath to come, our interest in Christ, that we have but little heart for aught that purely concerns Christ Himself ■ His Name ■ His Person ■ His cause ■ His glory.

There are, we may say, two things which lie at the foundation of all true decision for Christ, namely, a conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, and a heart that bows with reverent submission to the authority of His word, in all things. Now we do not mean to dwell upon these things in this paper; first, because we are anxious to get, at once, to our immediate theme; and, secondly, because we have so often dwelt on the subject of establishing the conscience in the peace of the gospel, and in setting before the heart the paramount claims of the word of God. We merely refer to them here for the purpose of reminding the reader that they are absolutely essential materials in forming the basis of decision for Christ. If my conscience is ill at ease, if I am in doubt as to my salvation, if I am filled with "anxious thought" as to whether I am a child of God or not, decision for Christ is out of the question. I must know that Christ died for me, before I can, intelligently and happily, live for Him. So also, if there be any reserve in the heart as to my entire subjection to the authority of Christ as my Lord and Master; if I am keeping some chamber of my heart, be it ever so remote, ever so small, closed against the light of His word, it must, of necessity, hinder my whole-hearted decision for Him in this world. In a word, I must know that Christ is mine and I am His, ere my course down here can be one of unswerving, uncompromising decision for Him. If the reader hesitates as to this, if he is still in doubt and darkness, let him pause, and turn directly to the cross of the Son of God, and hearken to what the Holy Spirit declares as to all those who simply put their trust therein. Let him drink into his inmost soul these words, "Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Yes, reader, these are the glad tidings for you. "All from all," by faith in a crucified and risen Lord. But we see another difficulty in the way of our subject. We greatly fear, that while we speak of decision for Christ, some of our readers may suppose that we are contending for some notion or set of notions of our own; that we are pressing some peculiar views or principles to which we vainly and foolishly venture to apply the imposing title of "Decision for Christ." All this we do most solemnly disclaim. The words which stand at the head of this paper are the simple expression of our thesis. We do not contend for mere attachment to sect, party, or denomination, for adherence to the doctrines or commandments of men. We write in the

immediate presence of Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, and we distinctly avow that our one object is to urge upon the christian reader the necessity of decision for Christ. We would not, if we know ourselves, pen a single line to swell the ranks of a party, or draw over adherents to any particular doctrinal creed, or any special form of church polity. We are impressed with the conviction that where Christ has His right place in the heart, all will be right; and that, where He has not, there will be nothing right. And, further, we believe that nothing but plain decision for Christ can effectually preserve the soul from the fatal influences that are at work around us in the professing Church. Mere orthodoxy cannot preserve us. Attachment to religious forms will not avail in the present fearful struggle. It is, we feel persuaded, a simple question of Christ as our life, and Christ as our object. May the Spirit of God now enable us to ponder aright the subject of "Decision for Christ!"

It is well to bear in mind that there are certain great truths ■ certain immutable principles ■ which underlie all the dispensations of God from age to age, and which remain untouched by all the failure, the folly, and the sin of man. It is these great moral truths, these foundation principles, that faith lays hold, and in them finds its strength and its sustenance. Dispensations change and pass away ■ men prove unfaithful in their varied positions of stewardship and responsibility; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. It never changes, never fails. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." And, again, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Nothing can touch the eternal truth of God, and, therefore, what we want, at all times, is to give that truth its proper place in our hearts; to let it act on our conscience, form our character, and shape our way. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." This is true security. Here lies the real secret of decision for Christ. What God has spoken must govern us in the most absolute manner, ere our path can be said to be one of plain decision. There may be tenacious adherence to our own notions, obstinate attachment to the prejudices of the age, a blind devotion to certain doctrines and practices resting on a traditionary foundation, certain opinions which we have received to hold without ever enquiring as to whether or not there be any authority whatever for such opinions in holy scripture. There may be all this, and much more, and yet not one atom of genuine decision for Christ.

Now we feel we cannot do better than furnish our readers with an example or two drawn from the page of inspired history, which will do more to illustrate and enforce our theme than aught that we could possibly advance. And first, then, let us turn to the book of Esther, and there contemplate, for a few moments, the instructive history of "Mordecai the Jew." This very remarkable man lived at a time in which the Jewish economy had failed through the unfaithfulness and disobedience of the Jewish people. The Gentile was in power. The relationship between Jehovah and Israel could no longer be publicly acknowledged. The faithful Jew had but to hang his harp on the willows, and sigh over the faded light of other days. The chosen seed were in exile; the city and temple where their fathers worshipped were in ruins, and the vessels of the Lord’s house were in a strange land. Such was the outward condition of things in the day in which Mordecai’s lot was cast. But, in addition to this, there was a man, very near the throne, occupying only the second place in the empire, sitting beside the very fountain-head of authority, possessing princely wealth, and wielding almost boundless influence. To this great man, strange to say, the poor exiled Jew sternly refuses to bow. Nothing will induce him to yield a single mark of respect to the second man in the kingdom.

He will save the life of Ahasuerus; but he will not bow to Haman.

Reader, why was this? Was this blind obstinacy or bold decision ■ which? In order to determine this we must enquire as to the real root or principle of Mordecai's acting. If, indeed, there was no authority for his conduct in the law of God, then must we at once pronounce it to have been blind obstinacy, foolish pride, or, it may be, envy of a man in power. But if, on the other hand, there be within the covers of the five inspired books of Moses, a plain authority for Mordecai's deportment in this matter, then must we, without hesitation, pronounce his conduct to have been the rare and exquisite fruit of attachment to the law of his God, and uncompromising decision for Him and His holy authority. This makes all the difference. If it be merely a matter of private opinion ■ a question concerning which each one may lawfully adopt his own view ■ then, verily, might such a line of conduct be justly termed the most narrow-minded bigotry. We hear a great deal, now-a-days, about narrow-mindedness on the one hand, and large-heartedness on the other. But, as a Roman orator, over two thousand years ago, exclaimed in the senate-house of Rome, "Conscript Fathers, long since, indeed, we have lost the true names of things;" so may we, in the bosom of the professing Church, at the close of the nineteenth century, repeat, with far greater force, "Long since we have lost the true names of things." For what do men now call bigotry and narrow-mindedness? A faithful clinging to, and carrying out of, "Thus saith the Lord." And what do they designate large-heartedness? A readiness to sacrifice truth on the altar of politeness and civility.

Reader, be thou fully assured that thus it is at this solemn moment. We do not want to be sour or cynical, morose or gloomy. But we must speak the truth, if we are to speak at all. We desire that the tongue may be hushed in silence, and the pen may drop from the hand, if we could basely cushion the plain, bold, unvarnished truth, through fear of scattering our readers, or to avoid the sneer of the infidel. We cannot shut our eyes to the solemn fact that God's truth is being trampled in the dust; that the Name of Jesus is despised and rejected. We have only to pass from city to city, and from town to town, of highly-favoured England, and read upon the walls the melancholy proofs of the truth of our assertions. Truth is flung aside, in cold contempt. The Name of Jesus is little set by. On the other hand, man is exalted, his reason deified, his will indulged. Where must all this end? "In the blackness of darkness for ever."

How refreshing, in the face of all this, to ponder the history of Mordecai the Jew! It is very plain that he knew little and cared less about the thoughts of men on the question of narrow-mindedness. He obeyed the word of the Lord, and this we must be allowed to call real breadth of mind ■ true largeness of heart. For what, after all, is a narrow mind? A narrow mind we hold to be a mind which refuses to open itself to admit the truth of God. And what, on the contrary, is a large and liberal heart? A heart expanded by the truth and grace of God. Let us not be scared away from the path of pain decision, by the scornful epithets which men have bestowed upon that path. It is a path of peace and purity, a path where the light of an approving conscience is enjoyed, and upon which the beams of divine favour ever pour themselves in undimmed lustre. But why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? Was there any great principle at stake? Was it merely a whim of his own? Had he a "Thus saith the Lord" for his warrant in refusing a single nod of the head to the proud Amalekite? Yes. Let us turn to the seventeenth chapter of the book of Exodus, and there we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And

Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."*

{*It is interesting to note that neither the Jews' best Friend, nor their worst enemy is once formally named in the Book of Esther; but faith could recognize both the one and the other.}

Here, then, was Mordecai's authority for not bowing to Haman the Agagite. A faithful Jew could not do reverence to one with whom Jehovah was at war. The heart might plead a thousand excuses and urge a thousand reasons. It might seek an easy path for itself on the plea that the Jewish system was in ruins, and the Amalekite in power, and that therefore it was worse than useless, yea, it was positively absurd, to maintain such lofty ground when the glory of Israel was gone, and the Amalekite was in the place of authority. "Of what use," it might be argued, "can it be to hold up the standard when all is gone to pieces? You are only making your degradation more remarkable by the pertinacious refusal to bow your head. Would it not be better to give just one nod? That will settle the matter. Haman will be satisfied, and you and your people will be safe. Do not be obstinate. Shew a tendency to be courteous. Do not stand up, in that dogged way, for a thing so manifestly non-essential. Besides, you should remember that the command in Exodus 17:1-16 was only to be rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, and only had its true application in his bright and palmy days. It was never meant for the ears of an exile, never intended to apply in the days of Israel's desolation."

All this, and much beside, might have been urged on Mordecai; but, ah! the answer was simple: "God hath spoken. This is enough for me. True, we are a scattered people; but the word of the Lord is not scattered. He has not reversed His word about Amalek, nor entered into a treaty of peace with him. Jehovah and Amalek are still at war, and Amalek stands before me in the person of this haughty Agagite. How can I bow to one with whom Jehovah is at war? How can I do homage to a man whom the faithful Samuel would hew in pieces before the Lord?" "Well, then," it might be further urged upon this devoted Jew, "you will all be destroyed. You must either bow or perish." The answer is still most simple: "I have nothing to do with consequences. They are in the hand of God. Obedience is my path, the results are with Him. It is better to die with a good conscience than live with a bad one. It is better to go to heaven with an uncondemning heart, than remain upon earth with a heart that would make me a coward. God has spoken. I can do no otherwise. May the Lord help me! Amen."

Oh! how well we can understand the mode in which this faithful Jew would be assaulted by the enemy. Nothing but the grace of God can ever enable any one to maintain a deportment of unflinching decision, at a moment in which everything within and around is against us. True it is, we know that it is better to suffer anything than deny our Lord, or fly in the face of His commandments; but yet how little are some of us prepared to endure a single sneer, a single scornful look, a single contemptuous expression, for Christ's sake. And, perhaps, there are few things harder, for some of us at least, to bear than to be reproached on the ground of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. We naturally like to be thought large-hearted and liberal. We like to be accounted men of enlightened mind, sound judgment, and comprehensive grasp. But we must remember that we have no right to be liberal at our Master's expense. We have simply to obey.

Thus it was with Mordecai. He stood like a rock and allowed the whole tide of difficulty and opposition to roll over him. He would not bow to the Amalekite, let the consequence be what it might. Obedience was his path. The results were with God. And look at the result! In one moment, the tide was turned. The proud Amalekite fell from his lofty eminence, and the exiled Jew was lifted from his sackcloth and ashes and placed next the throne. Haman exchanged his wealth and dignities for a gallows; Mordecai exchanged his sackcloth for a royal robe.

Now it may not always happen that the reward of simple obedience will be as speedy and as signal as in Mordecai's case. And, moreover, we may say that we are not Mordecais, nor are we placed in his position. But the principle holds good whoever and wherever we are. There is not one of us, however obscure or insignificant, that has not a sphere within which our influence is felt for good or for evil. And, besides, independent altogether of our circumstances and the apparent results of our conduct, we are called upon to obey implicitly the word of the Lord ■ to have His word hidden in our hearts ■ to refuse, with unswerving decision, to do or to say aught that the word of the living God condemns. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This should be the language, whether it be the question of a child tempted to steal a lump of sugar, or the most momentous step in evil that one can be tempted to take. The strength and moral security of Mordecai's position lay in this fact, that he had the word of God for his authority. Had it not been so, his conduct would have been senseless in the extreme. To have refused the usual expression of respect to one in high authority, without some weighty reason, could only be regarded as the most unmeaning obstinacy. But the moment you introduce a "Thus saith the Lord," the matter is entirely changed. The word of the Lord endureth for ever. The divine testimonies do not fade away or change with the times and seasons. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what our God hath spoken shall never pass away. Hence, what had been rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, as he rested in triumph under the banner of Jehovah, was designed to govern the conduct of Mordecai, though clothed in sackcloth as an exile, in the city of Shushan. Ages and generations had passed away; the days of the Judges and the days of the Kings had run their course; but the commandment of the Lord with respect to Amalek had lost ■ could lose ■ none of its force. "The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek," not merely in the days of Joshua, nor in the days of the Judges, nor in the days of the Kings, but "from generation to generation." Such was the record ■ the imperishable and immutable record of God, and such was the plain, solid and unquestionable foundation of Mordecai's conduct. And here let us say a few words as to the immense importance of entire submission to the word of God. We live in a day which is plainly marked by strong self-will. Man's reason, man's will, and man's interest are working together, with appalling success to ignore the authority of holy scripture. So long as the statements of the word of God chime in with man's reason, so long as they do not run counter to his will, and are not subversive of his interests, so long he will tolerate them, or it may be he will quote them with a measure of respect, or, at least, with self-complacency; but the moment it becomes a question of Scripture versus reason, will, or interest, the former is either silently ignored or contemptuously rejected. This is a very marked and solemn feature of the days that are now passing over our heads. It behoves Christians to be aware of it, and to be on their watchtower. We fear that very few comparatively are truly alive to the real state of the moral atmosphere which enwraps the religious world. We do not refer here so much to the bold attacks infidel writers. To these we have alluded elsewhere. What we have now before us is rather the cool indifference, on the part of professing Christians, as to scripture; the little power

which pure truth wields over the conscience; the way in which the edge of scripture is blunted or turned aside. You quote passage after passage from the inspired Volume, but it seems like the pattering of rain upon the window; the reason is at work, the will is dominant, interest is at stake, human opinions bear sway, God's truth is practically, if not in so many words, set aside.

All this is deeply solemn. We know of few things more dangerous than intellectual familiarity with the letter of Scripture where the spirit of does not govern the conscience, form the character, and shape the way. We want to tremble at the word of God, to bow down, in reverential submission, to its holy authority, in all things. A single line of scripture ought to be sufficient for our souls, on any point, even though, in carrying it out, we should have to move athwart the opinions of the highest and best of men. May the Lord raise up many faithful and true-hearted witnesses in these last days ■ men like the faithful Mordecai, who would rather ascend gallows than bow to an Amalekite! For the further illustration of our theme, we shall ask the reader to turn to the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel. There is special charm and interest in the history of these living examples presented to us in the Holy Scriptures. They tell us how the truth of God was acted upon, in other days, by men of like passions with ourselves; they prove us that in every age there have been men who so prized the truth, so reverenced the word of the living God, that they would rather face death, in its most appalling forms, than depart one hair's breadth from the narrow line laid down by the authoritative voice of their Lord and Master. It is healthful to be brought in contact with such men ■ healthful at all times, but peculiarly so in days like the present, when there is so much laxity and easy-going profession ■ so much of mere theory ■ when every one is allowed to go his own way, and hold his own opinion, provided always that he does not interfere with the opinions of his neighbour ■ when the commandments of God seem to have so little weight, so little power over the heart and conscience. Tradition will get a hearing; public opinion will he respected; anything and everything, in short, but the plain and positive statements of the word of God, will get a place in the thoughts and opinions of men. At such a time, it is, we repeat, at once healthful and edifying to muse over the history of men like Mordecai the Jew, and Daniel the prophet, and scores of others, in whose estimation a single line of holy scripture rose far above all the thoughts of men, the decrees of governors, and the statutes of kings, and who declared plainly that they had nothing whatever to do with consequences where the word of the Lord was concerned. Absolute submission to the divine command is that which alone becomes the creature.

It is not, be it observed and well remembered, that any man or any number of men have any right to demand subjection to their decisions or decrees; this would be most strongly deprecated. No man has any right to enforce his opinions upon his fellow. This is plain enough, and we have to bless God for the inestimable privilege of civil and religious liberty, as enjoyed under the government of England. But what we urge upon our readers, just now, is plain decision for Christ, and implicit subjection to His authority, irrespective of everything, and regardless of consequences. This is what we do most earnestly desire for ourselves and for all the people of God, in these last days. We long for that condition of soul, that attitude of heart, that quality of conscience, which shall lead us to bow down in implicit subjection to the commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. No doubt there are difficulties, stumbling blocks, and hostile influences to be encountered. It may be said, for instance, that "It is very difficult for one, now-a-days, to know what is really true and right. There are so many opinions and so many ways, and good men differ so in judgment about the simplest and plainest matters, and yet they all pro

fess to own the Bible as the only standard of appeal; and, moreover, they all declare that their one desire is to do what is right, and to serve the Lord, in their day and generation. How, then, is one to know what is true or what is false, seeing that you will find the very best of men ranged on opposite sides of the same question?" The answer to at this is very simple. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." But most assuredly my eye is not single if I am looking at men, and reasoning on what I see in them. A single eye rests simply on the Lord and His word. Men differ, no doubt ■ they have differed, and they ever will differ; but I am to hearken to the voice of my Lord and do His will. His word is to be my light and my authority, the girdle of my loins in action, the strength of my heart in service, my only warrant for moving hither and thither, the stable foundation of all my ways. If I were to attempt to shape any way according to the thoughts of men, where should I be? How uncertain and unsatisfactory would my course be I Thank God, He has made it all plain ■ so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; and all I want is a single eye, a subject will, a teachable spirit, to be led aright. If I really want to be guided aright, my God will surely guide me; but if I am looking to men, if I am governed by mixed motives, if I am seeking my own ends and interests, if I seeking to please toy fellows, then, undoubtedly, my body shall be full of darkness, heavy clouds shall settle down upon my pathway, and uncertainty mark all my goings.

Christian reader, think of these things. Think deeply of them. Depend upon it, they have a just claim upon your attention. Do you earnestly desire to follow your Lord? Do you really aim at something beyond mere empty profession, cold orthodoxy, or mechanical religiousness? you sigh for reality, depth, energy, fervour, and wholeheartedness? Then make Christ your one object, His word your rule, His glory your aim. Oh that thus it may be with the writer and the reader of these lines. Alas! alas! how we have failed in these things, God only knows. But, blessed be His Name, there is full forgiveness with Him, and He giveth more grace, so that we can count upon Him to restore our souls, to revive His work in our hearts, and grant us a closer walk with Him than we have ever known before. May the blessed Spirit be pleased to use for the furtherance of these ends our meditation on the interesting narrative of "Daniel the prophet."

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion or fault; forasmuch as be was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (Daniel 6:1-4.)

What a testimony! How truly refreshing to the heart! "No error or fault!" Even his bitter enemies could not put their finger upon a single blemish in his character, or a flaw in his practical career. Truly this was a rare and admirable character ■ a bright for the God of Israel, even in the dark of the Babylonish captivity ■ an unanswerable proof of the that no matter where we are situated, or how we are circumstanced, no matter how unfavourable our position, or how dark the day in which our lot is cast, it is our happy privilege so to carry ourselves, in all the details of daily life, as to give no to the enemy reproachfully.

How sad when it is otherwise! How humiliating when those who make a high profession are found constantly breaking down in the most commonplace affairs of domestic and commercial life! There are few things which more tend to discourage the heart than to hear ■ as, alas! one so often does ■ that Christians, so-called, are the most unsatisfactory persons to have any dealings with ■ that they are bad masters, or bad servants, bad tradesmen ■ that they do not attend to their business, that they charge higher prices and give worse value than those who make no profession at all. It is most deplorable when any just ground is afforded for such statements. No doubt worldly people are only too ready to find occasion against those who profess the Name of Jesus; and, further, we have to remember that there are two sides to every question, and that, very frequently, a broad margin must be left for exaggeration, high colouring, and false impressions. But still, it is the Christian's plain duty so to walk in every position and relationship of life, as that "no error or fault" may be found in him. We should not make any excuses for ourselves. The duties of our situation, whatever it may happen to be should be scrupulously performed. A careless manner, a slovenly habit, an unprincipled mode of acting, on the part of a Christian, is a serious damage to the cause of Christ, and a dishonour to His holy name. And, on the other hand, diligence, earnestness, punctuality, and fidelity, bring glory to that Name. And this should ever be the Christian's object. He should not aim at his own interest, his own reputation, or his own progress, in seeking to carry himself aright in his family and in his calling in life. True, it will promote his interest, establish his reputation, and further his progress, to be upright and diligent in all his ways; but none of these things should ever be his motive. He is to be ever and only governed by the one thing, namely, to please and honour his Lord and Master. The standard which the Holy Ghost has set before us, as to all these things, is furnished in the words of the apostle to the Philippians: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." We should not be satisfied with anything less than this. "They could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Noble testimony! Would that it were more called forth, in this our day, by the deportment, the habits, the temper, and ways of all those who profess and call themselves Christians. But there was one point in which Daniel's enemies felt they could lay hold of him. "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Here was a something in the which occasion might be found to ruin this beloved and honoured servant of God. It appears that Daniel had been in the habit of praying three times a day, with his window open toward Jerusalem. This fact was well known, and was speedily laid hold of, and turned to account. "Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree."

Here, then, was a deep plot, a subtle snare, laid for the blameless and harmless Daniel. How would he act in the face of all this? Would he not feel it right to lower the standard? Well, if the standard were something of his own, he might surely lower it, and perhaps he ought. But if it were something divine ■ if his conduct were based upon the truth of God, then clearly it was his place to

hold it up as high as ever, regardless of statutes, decrees, and writings established, signed, and countersigned. The whole question hinged upon this. Just as in the case of Mordecai the Jew, the question hinged upon the one point of whether he had any divine warrant for refusing to bow to Haman; so, in the case of Daniel the prophet, the question was, had he any divine authority for praying toward Jerusalem. It certainly seemed strange and odd. Many might have felt disposed to say to him, "Why persist in this practice? What need is there for opening your window and praying toward Jerusalem, in such a public manner? Can you not wait until night has drawn her sable curtain around you, and your closet door has shut you in, and then pour out your heart to your God? This would be prudent, judicious, and expedient. And, surely, your God does not exact this of you. He does not regard time, place, or attitude. All times and places are alike to Him. Are you wise ■ are you right, in persisting in such a line of action, under such circumstances? It was all well enough before this decree was signed, when you could pray when and as you thought right; but now it does seem like the most culpable fatuity and blind obstinacy to persevere it is as though you really courted martyrdom."

All this, and much more we may easily conceive, might be suggested to the mind of the faithful Jew; but still the grand question remained, "What saith the scripture?" Was there any divine reason for Daniel's praying toward Jerusalem? Assuredly there was! In the first place, Jehovah had said to Solomon, in reference to the temple at Jerusalem, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." Jerusalem was God's centre. It was, it is, and ever shall be. True, it was in ruins ■ the temple was in ruins; but God's word was not in ruins, and here is faith's simple but solid warrant. King Solomon had said, at the dedication of the temple, hundreds of years before Daniel's time, "If thy people sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captive unto a land far off or near. Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee, in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captive, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee." (2 Chronicles 6:36-39.)

Now this was precisely what Daniel was doing ■ this was the ground he took. He was a captive exile, but his heart was at Jerusalem, and his eyes followed his heart. If he could not sing the songs of Zion, he could at least breathe his prayers toward Zion's hill. If his harp was on the willows at Babylon, his fond affections turned toward the city of God, now a heap of ruins, but ere long to be an eternal excellency, the joy of the whole earth. It mattered not to him that a decree had been signed by earth's greatest monarch, forbidding him to pray toward the city of his fathers and to his fathers' God. It mattered not to him that the lions' den was yawning to receive him, and the lions' jaws ready to devour him. Like his brother Mordecai, he had nothing to do with consequences. Mordecai would rather mount the gallows than bow to Haman, and Daniel would rather descend to the lions' den than cease to pray to Jehovah. These, surely, were the worthies ■ the spiritual giants of other days. They were men of the right stamp ■ real, downright, thorough-going men ■ men whose hearts and consciences were governed absolutely by the word

of God. The world may dub them bigots and fools; but, oh! how the heart does long for such bigots and fools, in these days of false liberality and wisdom!

It might have been said to Mordecai and Daniel that they were contending for mere trifles ■ for things wholly indifferent and non-essential. This is an argument often used; but, ah! it has no weight with an honest and a devoted heart. Indeed there is nothing more contemptible, in the judgment of every true lover of Jesus, than the principle that regulates the standard as to essentials and non-essentials. For, what is it? Simply this, "All that concerns my salvation is essential; all that merely affects the glory of Christ is non-essential." How terrible is this! Reader, dost thou not utterly abhor it? What! shall we accept salvation as the fruit of our Lord's death, and deem aught that concerns Him non-essential? God forbid. Yea; rather let us entirely reverse the matter, and regard all that concerns the honour and glory of the Name of Jesus, the truth of His word, and the integrity of His cause, as vital, essential, and fundamental; and all that merely concerns ourselves as non-essential and indifferent. May God grant us this mind! May nothing be deemed trivial by us which has for its foundation the word of the living God!

Thus it was with those devoted men whose history we have been glancing at. Mordecai would not bow his head, and Daniel would not close his window. Blessed men! The Lord be praised for such, and for the inspired record of their actings. Mordecai would rather surrender life than diverge from the truth of God, and Daniel would rather do the same than turn away from God's centre. Jehovah had said that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and therefore Mordecai would not bow. Jehovah had said of Jerusalem, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually;" therefore Daniel would not cease to pray toward that blessed centre. The word of the Lord endureth for ever, and faith takes its stand on that imperishable foundation. There is an eternal freshness about every word that has come forth from the Lord. His truth holds good throughout all generations; its bloom can never be brushed away, its light can never fade, its edge can never be blunted. All praise be to His holy name! But let us look, for a moment, at the result of Daniel's faithfulness. The king was plunged into the deepest grief when he discovered his mistake. "He was sore displeased with himself." So well he might. He had fallen into a snare; but Daniel was in good keeping. It was all right with him. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." It matters not whether it be a lion's den at Babylon or a prison at Philippi, faith and a good conscience can make a man happy in either. We question if Daniel ever spent a happier night on this earth, than the night which he spent in the lions' den. He was there for God, and God was there with him. He was there with an approving conscience and an uncondemning heart. He could look up from the very bottom of that den straight into heaven, yea, that den was heaven upon earth to his happy spirit. Who would not rather be Daniel in the den than Darius in the palace? The one happy in God; the other "sore displeased with himself." Darius would have every one pray to him; Daniel would pray to none but God. Darius was bound by his own rash decree; Daniel was bound only by the word of the living God. What a contrast! And see in the end what signal honour was put upon Daniel. He stood publicly identified with the one living and true God. "O Daniel," cried the king, "servant of the living God." Truly he had earned this title for himself. He was, unquestionably, a devoted and decided servant of God. He had seen his three brethren cast into a furnace because they would worship only true God, and he had been cast into the lions' den because he would pray only to Him; but the Lord had appeared for them and him, and given them a glorious triumph. He had allowed them to realize that precious promise

made of old to their fathers, that they should be the head and their enemies the tail; that they should be above their enemies below. Nothing could be more marked ■ nothing could more forcibly illustrate the value which God puts upon plain decision and true-hearted devotedness, no matter where, when, or by whom exhibited.

Oh! for an earnest heart this day of lukewarmness! Lord, revive thy work!

105. An Allegory:

An Allegory Things Supposed to Illustrate Things that are.

Charles Stanley.

Some years ago, there was a serious outbreak of smallpox, and some scholars came from an infected house to a large school. Those who had the care of the children refused to examine whether there was smallpox in the house from which these children came, maintaining that if the smallpox was not in their school, had nothing to do with its being in other houses, or in other places. The result was that a good many children left this school, and many parents refused to let their children go there. Finally, after forty years, this school decided to hold this principle, that it did not matter if children came from a house where most decided cases of smallpox were known to exist: if the children who came were themselves free. from this severe disease, they should be received. And strange to say, those who had left this school, and adopted the contrary principle, that is, who felt it would be utterly unsafe for the health of the school, to allow any scholars to come from infected houses, or to go to them, these were greatly blamed by the others, and great bitterness was shown towards all connected in any way with the school that desired to do their utmost to preserve their scholars and school from smallpox. And what is still more strange, many doctors also greatly blamed this great care, and thought it very foolish and narrow-minded to refuse to go to that school. Indeed, those who sought to exclude smallpox were quite despised and slandered for forty years. Not long ago a person could hardly believe it, possible, so he wrote a letter to one of the principal persons at this smallpox open school, and to his surprise he received a distinct answer in the affirmative. Yes, it was quite true, their principle of admission at the open school was, that if a scholar came from a place where he believed the smallpox was unmistakenly, providing this person was free from the disorder, even if as a day scholar he continued to actually live in the house where the smallpox was, still he should be admitted. Well, the exclusive school have been very sorry, and felt they could not mix with the open school: and for this alone they have had to suffer long and great reproach. At a time like the present, when smallpox is raging, to which of these schools would you prefer sending your child? Is there anything very dreadful in seeking to preserve a school from the danger of smallpox? The exclusive school have not an unkind feeling towards those who carry on the open school. It is only this smallpox infection they feel they must by all means avoid. Are they not bound to do so, if they care for the children? To many this allegory will be perfectly plain without one word of explanation. Some will say it is not true. Surely every Christian will say that deadly false doctrine, against the Person of Christ, is as serious and dangerous to the soul as smallpox is to the body. If this be allowed, then is not our allegory an exact picture of what has taken place for the last forty years? deadly doctrine against Christ broke out like an. epidemic. So serious was this, that one of the chief leaders at Bethesda, Bristol, said if it were as Mr. Newton taught, Christ would have needed a Saviour! or words to that effect, and which was assuredly true. Bethesda refused to judge this false doctrine, refused to honestly separate from those who held it, or came from where it was held and taught, and greatly blamed those who did seek in every way to refuse all fellowship with it. We

do not need here to repeat what thousands of Christians felt, and do still feel, to be shocking blasphemies against Christ. I never met a Christian yet who did not so judge when it was put before him.

I wish, however, to keep to this one point. Is my smallpox allegory a fair representation of the case? Many with Bethesda will say, Far from it. Many will say, "Bethesda has judged its past mistakes: has judged the evil doctrine of Mr. Newton, and is as clear of it as you are, and would no more receive from where it was held than you would. Never would we receive from an assembly where known false doctrine is held." Many are deceived dear sincere souls believe it is so. The Lord is my witness, I love them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Oh how I have longed that it was true, and longed until I almost thought it was true, that they would not have fellowship with any coming from and being in fellowship where false doctrine was held. If this were true, why should they remain separate? And here I would just remark, it is utterly untrue that those they call exclusive, have bitter feelings against those who take the open ground. We love all the Lord's people amongst them; and we say, if you repent of your past actions, and now desire to exclude all connected, or in fellowship with false doctrine, then why are you not with us, seeking to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Is it true then, that Bethesda really does now receive from those in fellowship where those minister who teach errors? Certainly not, many will say. C. L., a Christian young man in London, being much perplexed as to this question, wrote to Bristol to inquire at the fountain head. He received the following: ■

New Orphan Houses, Ashley Down, Bristol: 19th Dec. 1883.

Dear Sir, In reply to your enquiry, the ground on which we receive to the Lord's table is soundness in the faith, and consistency of life of the individual believer. We should not refuse to receive one whom we had reason to believe was personally sound in the faith and consistent in life merely because he, or she, was in fellowship with a body of Christians who would allow Mr. Newton to minister among them; just on the same principle that we should not refuse a person equally sound in faith and consistent in life simply because he, or she, came from a body of Christians amongst whom the fate Mr. J. N. Darby had ministered, though on account of much more recent unsound teachings of the latter, we might well feel a priori greater hesitation.

I am, faithfully yours, Signed. James Wright.

Now, passing by the false accusations against that honoured servant of the Lord Jesus, J. N. Darby, suppose it were true that he also, as well as Mr. Newton, taught unsound doctrine against the blessed Lord, what then are the avowed principles of Bethesda to this very day? Are they not exactly the same as the supposed school that admits its scholars, if free themselves from smallpox, though they come and go to houses infected? Is not this utter heartlessness as to Christ? Should we speak of a man consistent in life because he pretends he is free from Unitarianism, and yet is in fellowship with them? This question is raised again in Christendom. J. N. Darby is with the Lord. Another has spoken out ■ I give one line, and such a line.

"To pursue union at the expense of truth is treason to the Lord." ■ C. H. S. ("Sword and Trowel," p. 558.) These are weighty words, and we thank God that the writer has taken some action in accordance with them. Not so the defender of the open school. The editor of "The Christian," speaking of Mr. Spurgeon, remarks, "He has taken action which we deeply regret." (Nov. 18, 1887,

p. 13.) To the editor it is perfectly dreadful, because it would justify Mr. Darby in withdrawing from those who held or favoured abominable, unsound doctrine. He says, "It is difficult to distinguish between excommunicating the Baptist Union, and excommunicating the churches represented in it. Nor is it very easy to discern the difference between this line of action and that of the followers of Mr. Darby in excluding from fellowship George Muller and the Bethesda meeting, etc. The argument practically is that all who are faithful and true to Christ ought also to withdraw. What would follow? That the field would be left in the hands of those whose light is darkness. . . . . Mr. Spurgeon has made his statements, which we believe in the main to be true . . . . and he has taken action which we deeply regret."

Thus he deeply regrets Mr. Spurgeon's action. Yes, this is sadly true. The leaders of this open school, open to unsound doctrine, deeply regret that J. N. D. withdrew from it, and deeply regret that Mr. Spurgeon should do the same thing! It would be difficult to conceive more utter indifference to Christ. That association with evil is not only allowed, but advocated, may be seen in a letter by Mr. Groves, re-published in "The Christian" (Sept. 23, 1887), in which the writer says, "I would infinitely rather bear with all their evils than separate from their good." Can words be plainer? Is it not even worse than the school open to smallpox infection? For if the bad doctrine is inside, to withdraw from it, is to take action which is deeply regretted. It is well known that the partisans of false doctrine were in Bethesda, when we were compelled by their refusing to judge it, to withdraw from it. Yes, that is what we felt then, and still feel before the Lord. With this defender of Bethesda it is no question of Christ, but of men, be it Mr. Newton, or Mr. Darby, Mr. Spurgeon or Dr. Angus, and other doctors. May the Lord open the eyes of many sincere but deceived Christians. To talk of Mr. Darby or Mr. Spurgeon excommunicating such men as George Muller, or Dr. Angus and others, is merely to throw dust in people's eyes. They do no such thing: but in faithfulness to Christ purge themselves from all who identify themselves with false doctrine concerning Christ. The scripture is clear as to the path of a Christian in these circumstances. 2 Timothy contemplates a state of corruption so sad, that the faithful Christian can no longer purge out the leaven of evil. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Not that he will be alone, or seek isolation, but will seek to be in holiness, "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Then read the inspired description of the professing church at this hour (chap. 3: 1-5), "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." God says, "from such turn away."

Read 2 John, "Whosoever transgresseth [or goeth beyond] and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. . . . If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Are we to say, "Oh it will not do to obey these scriptures; think of what would follow if you did"? No, faith does not reason thus. Surely the reader will see the difference between arrogantly excommunicating others, and simply obeying the word of God. There must be an undivided heart for Christ, that would follow Him at all Cost. "Cost," did I say? There can be no joy greater than pleasing Him. Yet true it must be at the cost of everything, to follow Christ, and obey from the heart His word. If Mr. Spurgeon is with God, and his eye only

on the glory of Christ, he will go through this hour of testing; and if he is not, he will break down. Nothing will do but uncompromising decision for Christ, and dependence on the Holy Ghost.

Surely every true lover of Christ will be deeply thankful for the action of Mr. Spurgeon. Faithfulness to Christ is not bitterness against those that are His. Can any one see bitterness in either Mr. Darby or Mr. Spurgeon in refusing fellowship with the abettors of soul-destroying false doctrine? No, but Christ was more to them than union with those who would destroy the gospel. One is gone to his rest. His most private letters are now published which he wrote during the severe trial, when the storm of persecution burst upon him, for withdrawing from false practice and false doctrine. Read them, and see whether he breathed the spirit of rancour, or tender love even to those who so deeply erred. Our prayer is that now the same spirit of holy tender love may continue to mark all our steps, and the steps of Mr. Spurgeon, if the same storm of persecution breaks upon him.

It was that very sentiment that guided my steps forty years ago, "To pursue union at the expense of truth is treason to the Lord Jesus." And forty years' experience has confirmed me in its truth. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 1:10-11.) C. Stanley.

106. The Preparation Day.

The Preparation Day.

"Behold the man."

C. Stanley.

"And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King." (John 19:14.)

Let us note that instead of the sixth hour presenting any difficulty, it was the most suitable mode of stating time, the common time of the Roman Empire just as the Jewish mode had been the most suitable for the Jews. Again, the seeker of difficulties may ask, How could this be the preparation of the passover, when Jesus and His disciples had eaten the passover many hours before?

Let us examine this. We read, "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him." And if we turn to Deuteronomy 16:1-22, we have the spiritual instruction as to the passover ■ the month, and the day, and the place. It was not to be in any place, "but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt." Thus Jesus was at the place God had chosen for the sacrifice of the passover, and the month, the day, and the hour had come: the going down of the sun. The appointed hour had come. As to the chief priests and scribes, they sought how they might kill Him. They knew not that He was the true passover Lamb. They understood not that the time had come that the passover must be killed. But when the hour was come He sat down with the apostles. Thirteen persons, within the prescribed number, according to Jewish history. They sat down on our Thursday, about six o’clock, at the going down of the sun: of Jewish time, it was the beginning of their Friday.

Now when we remember the vast numbers, that gathered to the appointed place, Jerusalem, and that there were only from ten to twenty to each lamb, the number of passover lambs must have been very great. See Josephus, Wars, vi., ix. 3, and Book ii., chap. xiv. 3■56,000 lambs are said to have been sacrificed. And further, as the passover occupied some considerable time it would seem that most of the night would be occupied before all had eaten it, only nothing must be left until the morning. There was a division in the service of the supper before the lamb was eaten; so that there is no contradiction or difficulty when we read, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not in to the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled but that they might eat the passover." Thus it would appear they returned to finish the passover by eating the lamb at the very hour they delivered Jesus to the Gentile power to be tried and killed. (John 18:28.)

If we turn now to John 19:14 we shall find a still more blessed explanation: one full of the deepest instruction for our hearts. You will notice it is not the preparation for the passover, but of the passover. And even after the crucifixion we read, "And now when the even was come, because it

was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath." (Mark 15:42.) "For that sabbath day was an high day." (John 19:31.) That is, the sabbath of the passover week was of all sabbaths the highest type of eternal rest. For fifteen centuries the preparation day had pointed on to this day, on which let us now dwell. Jesus, the Lamb of God, had presented Himself at this very passover, when the passover day fell on the day before the sabbath. Alas! the Jews understood it not. Do they who say they are Jews understand it any more now? The preparation day, then, commenced on the Thursday evening at sunset, and lasted until Friday evening sunset. But what was it the preparation for? It was God's preparation day for man, poor, lost, guilty man, to be brought into eternal rest to Himself: the eternal sabbath based on redemption. This had long been foreshadowed in Deuteronomy 5:15 : "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." The sabbath, or rest of creation, had long been lost, and now God set forth the sabbath of redemption, which never can be lost whilst God is faithful to the claims of the redemption-blood of His Lamb.

Oh that our eyes may be fastened on Him, the Lamb of God, during the twenty-four hours of this preparation day. In this year the passover day was the preparation day. When the hour was come at the beginning of this day (6 p.m. of our Thursday) He sat down. Let us hear His precious words. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16.) Think what He had to endure that day to fulfil the passover, and prepare the sure ground of our eternal rest. Yet such was His love to us, He could say, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Thus began the preparation day. There was no more use for the thousands of dying lambs. No more use for their flesh, nor typical value in their blood. The material feast must cease, and the spiritual now be symbolised by the bread and wine. The Lamb of God presents Himself. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." The blessed Lord well knew the way these words would be perverted to a literal meaning of His flesh and blood, and thus He uses a word to shew it was not literal: He does not say which shall be, but which is. Indeed, another word also "This cup." Now the blood was not yet shed, and the cup was not His blood. Did He not clearly mean, that as the paschal lamb had been eaten by Israel, in remembrance of the temporal redemption from Egypt, so it is His blessed will that we should partake of the symbols of bread and wine in remembrance of Him and of our eternal redemption? Nay, He says, "Do this in remembrance of me." We shall find He finished the work of this preparation day, and left no need of another sacrifice to bring men into the sabbath of eternal rest.

Let us return to John for further details of the preparation day. Chapter 13. Supper, the passover supper, being come, there was Judas, the devil having put into his heart to betray Him; but Jesus knew His own, and loved them with a love that knows no end. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments." This was probably at the usual break in the passover, before the lamb was eaten, when the head of the household catechised the younger children in the word. Did not the washing of their feet by water signify how He would ever, in love, apply the word? What a precious lesson on the preparation day! He will ever keep us suited to the rest into which we are brought. And thus He would have us serve each other.

He may have felt the first pang of suffering as He washed the feet of Judas; for when He had sat down again we read, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." This produced great consternation. And well it might. And what a remembrance for Judas for ever and ever! And what does the tender heart of Jesus still feel as He sees men reading the word, and enjoying every outward privilege of Christendom, and yet hastening on to where Judas went? It will be terrible in hell to remember a father's prayers and the constant reading of the word; and a sister or a brother resting in the love of Jesus, as one disciple leaned on Jesus' bosom. Well may we look round the family, and ask, Lord, who is it? Are you quite certain, reader of these lines, the doom of Judas will never be yours? Oh, what did the blessed Jesus feel when. He dipped the sop and gave it to Judas? It was all over for that man. Satan entered into him, he went out, "and it was night." And a night to his soul that will never, never know the break of day. No hope. What a warning, on the preparation day! And the bold and devoted Peter must learn this day, that he has no strength. It is not what Peter can do for the Lord on the preparation day, it must be the work of the Lord for him. And it was on this preparation day that the veil was lifted up, and the heavenly place and home of the saints fully revealed for the first time. (John 14:1-3.) Jesus would be no longer the object of sight; but the object of faith, even as God. These poor disciples are lifted up, far above the promises to Israel, up to the Father's house with its many mansions. He says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Is not all this revelation suited to be given on preparation day? If on that day He would do the work that redeems us and prepares us for the place on high, then it was the fit time to tell them and us that He would go and prepare the place, and come and take us to Himself. But if a Peter has no strength in the hour of temptation to stand for Christ, and Christ is no longer with us in bodily presence to sustain us, what is to become of us until He comes? He says, on this preparation day, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [one to take entire charge of you], that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth." See how this is repeated so as to meet our need in every way. (John 14:16; John 14:18; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-14.) Nay, all the blessed instruction of John 13:1-38, xiv., 15, 16. And then the claims of Christ for us in chapter 17. All this occupied after supper the evening of preparation day, and every word is needed for our souls. The great work, however, of the preparation day had not yet begun. Let us carefully notice each stage. The preparation day had advanced. "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples." Let us go with Him into the garden, and witness the sorrows of our own dear Lord. As Jesus crossed the Cedron and entered the garden of Gethsemane for the last time, in the dark night of that preparation day, no human heart could sympathise with Him. No, to all His disciples it was the day of deepest disappointment. None knew the Father but the Son. None knew what was in the heart of God our Father but He. God is love, and God had sent His Son that man might be brought into the eternal sabbath of rest. This was the purpose of God; and this was the preparation day, foreordained from all eternity, in which that work should be accomplished; yes, finished that very day. A work that should rend the veil, and remove every obstacle, should open the way for you and me and every guilty sinner that believes God into His own eternal rest ■ a sabbath that can never be broken ■ eternal rest based entirely on the work accomplished on that preparation day.

Never was there a day like this before; never can there be another like it throughout the ages of eternity. Every promise, and every sacrifice yea, all the dealings of God with man had reference to this preparation day. All this was known to Jesus. And when they had sung a psalm they went out and went into the Mount of Olives. Now what was it that pressed upon the heart of Jesus? What was there so terrible before His soul? He said unto them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered: abroad." (Matthew 26:31.) It was not merely what He was about to endure in all the mocking, and cruel torment, that men could inflict; but, as the shepherd, though equal with God ■ His fellow, yet He must be smitten by Jehovah. Oh, think of the holy, holy, holy Son being made a curse beneath the smiting of Jehovah. Must this be accomplished on the preparation day? He would need and would look for sympathy, but all would forsake Him. And all to bring us into rest. How tenderly He said, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." Oh, look at Him there, "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." What a cry that the cup might pass from Him! And what subjection to the Father's will. The Lamb must be killed. He gave Himself up.

None but the Father knew how He loved the church, when He thus gave Himself up for it. Deep was the sorrow and anguish of His heart when He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Hear Him: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." In Matthew it is, when He had gone a little way from them, He "fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In Mark, He said: "Abba, Father." My Father, Abba Father. He appeals to all the endearing affection of that eternal relationship. But He could not be heard. He said: "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people." (Psalms 22:4-6.) Oh, the depths into which our precious holy Jesus sank on that preparation day! But there was no other way by which the guilty sinner could be brought into the sabbath of God. And what was the sympathy of His chosen three? He found them asleep, for their eyes were heavy. But nothing changed His changeless love. Three times did He thus go and cry to the Father, His Father. Three times did He return to find His most devoted disciples asleep. Yes, such is even devotedness, when put to the test. And if such is devotedness, what is mere profession? A little noise is heard in the garden. The dreadful cup must be drunk. Here comes a very apostle of profession, at the head of a band of men, with swords, and staves, from the religious authorities of Israel. Hear what he says: "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forth with he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him," or covered Him with kisses. Such is man, whether it be a devoted disciple, or a false apostle. Jesus, blessed Jesus, thou must do the whole work alone on that preparation day! In John, at this trying hour, the Godhead shone out for a moment: as "Jesus said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground." And now the last act of Jesus before He was bound was to heal His enemy's ear. Peter could sleep when he ought to have been watching, and he would fight when the hour had arrived to be yielding. But Jesus was perfect in His deepest humiliation. He who had made all things gives Himself up to be bound.

We now enter on another stage of sufferings of Jesus on the preparation day. He is bound by His own people, and they take Him, the holy, holy One, as a criminal. They led Him first to Annas,

father-in-law to Caiaphas the high priest. We have not much account of what He suffered before him. We read that he sent Him bound unto Caiaphas, the high priest. (John 18:13-24.)

Now mark the sufferings of Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, before His own high priest. What He suffered at his hands was as the Captain of our salvation. Just an example of what His followers have ever had to suffer if the pretended priesthood have had the power, whatever the name by which that priesthood was known. Surely no just charge could be made against the pure and spotless One. And the priest tried to entangle Him in His words. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them," etc. (John 18:19-21.)

What a revelation of man: "Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death." (Matthew 26:59.) How often have the priests of Rome, pagan and papa], done the same thing. What parallels we might give from the history of God's real saints. Mark, the sole object of the Jewish sanhedrim was the death of the Holy One, Jesus. No false witnesses could be found to agree. Driven to the last extremity, the high priest adjures Him by the living God, that He should tell them whether He was the Christ the Son of God. How blessed the answer of Him who is the truth. "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The high priest ought to have known that the Messiah would come exactly in this manner, as may be seen in Daniel 7:9-14; Micah 5:1-3. The word of God was perfectly clear, and the Christ of God stood before him; but he knew it not. All was blasphemy to the high priest. And what was the thought of chief priests, elders, and sanhedrim? "They answered and said, He is guilty of death." (Matthew 26:66.) All that He had said was the exact truth. Man has no heart for the truth.

Mark well how religious man treated the Lord of glory. "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands (or with rods)." This gave much torment and extreme suffering. Ah, what would be said in our day if a highwayman was treated as they treated the Holy Son of God, against whom no charge of sin could be brought?

We read further in Luke 22:1-71 that "the men that held Jesus mocked him and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?" And in the midst of all this unparalleled outrage and inhuman cruelty, and anguish, and suffering, was there no human heart to pity or sympathise? No; as we read in Psalms 142:4, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." But what of Peter, who really in his heart loved Jesus; Peter, who sincerely thought and said he would die for Jesus? What was he doing when Jesus was blindfolded and cruelly smitten by brutal Jews? Hush, whilst we tell it; he was denying Jesus, with cursing and swearing. Can we desire a greater proof that we cannot trust in ourselves, or our love, or our promises? We have now seen in this first trial of Jesus, what the man under law is with all his privileges. The Jew stands thus before us on the preparation day; he had every possible privilege; the oracles of God and His prophets had foretold these sufferings of the Messiah. Never in the history of the Jew had he made greater professions of zeal for the religion of his fathers. The law commanded him to love God with all his heart. And now God incarnate, visible in humanity,

humbled, in love to man, love to them: Jesus was delivered up into his. hands. And the full character of the most favoured man was fully revealed. What is in man came out in all its envy, malice, and hatred, against the Son of God. The chief priests seem to have been the worst. How strange, the greater the pretensions, and the more highly esteemed amongst men, the greater the wickedness and hatred to God.

Thus the midnight hours of the preparation day passed on. Deeper sorrows yet awaited our adorable Lord. Let us trace them; for all hearts must be tested on this preparation day. The whole multitude now arise and lead Him bound, again to tramp the dark streets of Jerusalem. They are taking him to Pilate. They are determined He shall be given up to the Gentile power. They long that He shall die the most cruel and shameful death. Let us follow, and see if the Gentile is better than the Jew.

It is now approaching morning on the preparation day. Remember how Jesus had been beaten, spit upon, and mocked at His trial before the high priest. "And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate." (Mark 15:1.) The Jews could convict Him of no sin, and Pilate can find no fault in Him. He fully declares this. He is greatly puzzled. He knows well that for envy the Jews had delivered Him to him.

Oh, what a sight! The weary, bruised, beaten Jesus! There He stands: see how His blessed face has been smitten. And there stand the multitude of the Jews, fiercely accusing the Prisoner, who created the universe. Yes, the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And in their cruel hatred they could only belch out lies against the Holy One. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar," &c. And when the Roman governor declared he could find no fault in Him, they were the more fierce.

Pilate, hearing He was from Galilee, seeks to escape from his difficulty by sending Him to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at this time. Yes, every possible insult must be heaped upon the Lamb of God. He must be led again through the dark streets of Jerusalem to stand before the wicked Idumean Herod ■ the voluptuous, cruel murderer. And this wicked man was glad, and hoped to have his curiosity gratified. Not a single word of complaint, even now, escapes the holy lips of Jesus. "He answered him nothing." Blessed Jesus, may we learn of Thee! And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. They followed Him like bloodhounds on this preparation day. Yes, they accused Him, their Messiah, to the murderer Herod. They had blindfolded Him, and beaten Him with rods, and in the face. And is there any pity in the heart of Herod? Just as much as the true followers of Jesus have found, and may again find, in the dungeons of the Inquisition. "Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

Thus, O Jerusalem, was thy Jehovah, King, and Lord, dragged and mocked by the cruel crowd through thy dark streets. Not a word of pity, or a look of sympathy for Him, who came to do the Father’s will.

Pilate felt the deep wickedness of the chief priests and rulers of the people. Again he tries to set Him free. He says, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him." (Luke 23:1-56.) Herod, too, had pronounced no sentence of

death on Him. The struggle to release Him was made still greater by a message from his wife. This poor Gentile alone pleads for Jesus with Pilate her husband. She says: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." (Matthew 22:19.)

Pilate tried hard to escape the evident guilt of giving up "that just man" by using his privilege of releasing one prisoner at the feast of passover. But no, the Lamb must die on this passover day. The chief priests demand His death, and deliberately prefer a murderer and a robber to the holy and the just One of God ■ the Lamb without spot. They demand that Jesus shall be crucified. And now Pilate joins them in their wickedness. No evil could they lay to His charge, "But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Then the bold words from the Jews were uttered: "His blood be on us, and on our children." And what did this representative of the Gentile power then do, convinced, judge as he was, that there was no fault in Jesus? He deliberately released the robber and murderer. And then what? Was there a little respite now? Was the bruised and beaten prisoner, the declared just One, allowed to rest His weary body awhile? The first thing done was to inflict the cruel torment of the Roman lash ■ a torment under which prisoners often died. Pilate has Him stripped and scourged. How that back was torn with the cruel lash!

Isaiah, more than 600 years before, had described this scene. He who clothes the heavens said, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah 50:6.) "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7.) Yes, He loved the church and gave Himself for it. Oh, look at that bleeding, bruised Lamb of God, silently suffering all the cruel agony that man could inflict

How long they tare His back we are not told. Surely this was enough! No. He was now given up to the brutal Roman soldiers. The whole Gentile band was called together. And after all that He had suffered at the hands of His own people the Jews, was there no pity, no relaxation in the cruel torture? No, none! The first twelve hours of the preparation day had about closed (John 19:14) and the first of the measured three hours began with the scourging, about the sixth hour of Roman time: and lasted until the third hour of Jewish time (9 A.M.) when He was crucified.

What took place during these three hours? The awful scourging. This may have been nearly unto death. But all was borne in holy silence, the silence of undying love. No tender hand to wash and dress those bleeding wounds. They took Jesus after the awful torture into the common hall. Patiently He bore the pain as they stripped Him there, "and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him saying, Hail, king of the Jews!" Oh, hold! is not this enough? No, no. "And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head." And when they, the Gentiles, had had their fill of cruel torture and mockery, then Pilate must add one more act of deep degradation. At this very time when the soldiers were wearied out with their mockery, and beating Him with their hands; whilst Jesus was wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, "Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to

you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, behold the man!"

Behold the man! All, behold the Lamb of God! See the blood drop from His holy crowned brow! Yet this is He who shall come in glory and shew that nation his wounded hands. And is there no melting of the Jewish hearts to Him? Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? No, the very priests cried out again, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate at last delivers Him up to them.

There was no rest for Jesus on the preparation day. The soldiers spit on Him, and smite Him on the head, and then take the robe from off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. Oh, what He went through during these three hours from His condemnation to the cross! His perfectly tender human heart needed sympathy; but lover and friend were far from Him.

It was customary to compel the malefactor to bear his own cross to the place of execution, From John we learn this was carried out on Jesus. After all the beating, scourging, smiting on the head, and torture, we read, And he bearing his cross went forth." (John 19:17.) In Luke 23:1-56 we read, "And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." Was this pity to Him in His extreme weakness? No, from all we have seen they may have feared He would die on the way, and so they might lose the Satanic gratification of witnessing His on the cross.

Oh, look at that last procession on the preparation day. All that was past was as nothing to what was before Him, yet to come. He was about to drink the dreadful cup of wrath due to millions of souls. Let us look at the procession in Luke 23:27. It is now approaching nine o’clock A.M. A great company of people follow Him. "And of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." His tender heart was occupied with the terrible judgments so soon to fall on them and their city. What love! God is love.

One other indignity must be added, that the words of Isaiah might be fulfilled, "And he was numbered with the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12.) "And there were also two other malefactors, led with him to be put to death." What a sight! He who was God, walking with two thieves, to that place where the great work of the preparation day must be accomplished, that shall bring lost sinners into the sabbath, the rest of God. The procession halts at a place of a skull, Calvary. "There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left." This is at the third hour of Jewish time, or 9 o’clock A.M. The cross was not merely an instrument of death, but of torture and death, the most prolonged and painful torture. The six hours’ torture are divided into two distinct parts. Let us inquire what took place in each.

We have traced the holy sufferer through the hours of the preparation day until the third hour, or nine o’clock A.M. In His last journey He halted at the place of crucifixion. We read the words, but how little can we realise the depth of degradation to the holy, holy Son of God. Let us meditate on what took place during the first three hours on the cross, until twelve at noon. What is crucifixion? At first it was an instrument of death, shameful and cruel. The poor criminal was stripped naked, a sharp stake was placed in the ground with the point upwards. This was driven through the body of the living prisoner, upwards to the heart, and there he was impaled to die! But this was a merciful death compared to the mode used in the days of our Lord. A hole was dug in the ground to receive

the beam of wood. The feet were nailed to that wood and the body laid in awful agony on the same, and the hands nailed to the cross part at the top. Then think of the torture of the body as the cross was lifted up, and let fall in the hole prepared. It was at this supreme moment of untold pain that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." For three hours He hung there on that shameful cross, brutal soldiers mocking Him, rulers deriding Him. Oh, behold Him there crucified between two thieves. "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." And there the unfeeling crowd pass by, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ah thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." The priest, yes, the chief of them, joined in the mockery, The very thieves reviled Him. (Mark 15:25-32.) Oh, for three hours they sat down and watched Him endure the torture of the cross. But what was the inward experience of our adorable Lord, as He hung there in cruel suffering? He tells how the fathers had trusted in God, and were delivered, "But I am a worm, and no man . . . and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him." Oh, read the unheard sighs of Jesus in Psalms 22:1-31. Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? In the midst of all the cruel mockery, only one voice was heard that owned Him Saviour, Lord. One of the reviling thieves was given to Him, as He hung there on the cross. He had heard those gracious words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Faith was given to the dying thief: precious grace. May we not also still pray, Father, forgive the living thieves all around in this day, who are robbing Jesus of His glory as the Saviour of sinners, and the giver eternal life, yea, denying His divinity and atonement for sins ■ for they know not what they do? But oh, wretched men, beware lest your doom be not that of the dying thief, but that of Judas. For surely the man that pretends to be a minister of Christ, and is a betrayer of the scriptures into the hands of the infidels, is more like Judas than like the dying thief.

Oh, how full the answer of Thy heart, blessed Jesus, to the faith of the tortured dying thief "Verily, say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Yes, he was justly put out of this sinful world, but in grace he was be with Thee in the paradise of God.

It would appear to have been about noon when Jesus thus spoke to the converted thief, the sixth hour of Jewish time. (Luke 23:43-44.) "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." (Mark 15:33.) And why is there so little said in the Gospels as to what the holy, holy Lord suffered during those three last hours? Surely it is because it cannot be told. It can only be known to God what Jesus then suffered for us, for our redemption. We only hear the final bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Darkness covered Him from every eye but the eye of God. Oh, think of Him being made sin or us; of all God’s billows rolling over His soul; of all our sins, dear fellow believer, laid on Him ■ delivered for our offences, bearing our iniquities ■ the infinite wrath of God, which could only be borne by the infinite One. And now He cries, with a loud voice, "It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30.) Nothing now remained, but to take down the precious body and lay it in the sepulchre. The great work of the preparation day is finished. Every scripture is fulfilled all the shadows of the law pass away. The one atoning sacrifice has been offered. Will God accept it? What was the preparation for? The sabbath of the passover week, the sabbath or rest of redemption. As we have seen, God gave the sabbath to Israel because they were redeemed, as a shadow of this rest, or sabbath, to tome. Well, let us see what took place. The body of Jesus is laid

in the sepulchre at the close of the preparation day. The great stone was laid on the mouth of the sepulchre. Did God raise Him from the dead on the Jewish sabbath, and thus restore man to rest under the sabbath of the law? No Jesus lay in the sepulchre all through the sabbath given to Israel. The eternal sabbath of rest for man must be entirely new ■ the rest of the new creation. We cannot express in words how entirely all was changed, and all the effect of the work accomplished on the preparation day. When that work was finished the veil was rent. The way of approach to God was opened ■ opened also was the way for God to come out to man in richest, fullest grace. But this must be by first raising Jesus from the dead. He must be the first-fruits of them that slept. If He be not risen, all He suffered was in vain, as is fully shown in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Oh, what a first day of the week was that, when God raised Christ from the dead! Could He have given a greater proof that He accepted the work done on the preparation day? The grave clothes were laid peacefully aside, "and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." How little the disciples understood what had been accomplished on that preparation day! "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead."

What were the first words Jesus spoke to His disciples when He was risen from the dead? "Peace be unto you. And when he had so said he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Yes, He had made peace by His own blood on the preparation day. He showed them His hands and His side. The work was done. It is finished. They heard Him speak unto them. We also are assured by the inspired word that righteousness is reckoned unto us, "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 4:24-25; Romans 5:1-2.)

What a sabbath of rest, entirely through the work accomplished on the preparation day! Now, if you saw Jesus, if He appeared to you, and you looked at His wounded side and wounded hands, and He were to speak to you with His voice, "Peace unto you," just as He did to His disciples, would not that make you perfectly happy? Well, He says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Do you believe He died for your sins according to the scriptures? Do you believe that God raised Him from the dead for the purpose of your justification? And believing this, do you know that you are reckoned righteous, or justified from all things before God? Then He says, being justified by faith you have peace with God ■ and all through our Lord Jesus Christ: yes, through the work He finished on the preparation day. The redemption from Egypt was temporal, and the sabbath given to them also was temporal, for a time: has been lost, and passed away. But the redemption effected by Jesus on the preparation day is eternal, not for a time, and can never be lost. It does not depend on what we shall do, but on what He has done. The efficacy of His work, like His Person, is ever the same, "having obtained eternal redemption for us;" our sabbath of peace and rest is eternal also. Soon we shall enjoy it in all its fulness in His presence, where all is peace and rest for ever.

Such is the everlasting portion of him that believeth. And do not forget, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God on him." (John 3:36.) Which is before you? eternity of

the blessed sabbath of the rest of God, or an eternity with His wrath, ever, ever, abiding on you: where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night." (Revelation 14:10-11.) If we think of what this sabbath of rest cost Jesus on the preparation day, and of what God says as to the result of rejecting it, how is it that man can go on with this question unsettled? Eternal rest or no rest day nor night ■ torment for ever and ever? Do ask yourself, reader, how it will be with your soul? How is it with you now? Have you ceased from all works for salvation, and entered into the rest of God? In this matter be most careful, neither to carry a burden, nor do a work. See Jeremiah 17:21-22.

All this is individual. On another occasion we may look at the first great and eternal purpose of God in the work accomplished on the preparation day. C. Stanley.

London: G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square.

107. A Sermon of Five Words which all may preach.

A Sermon of Five Words which all may preach.

C. Stanley.

Many ago there was a very remarkable preacher, that drew thousands, and thousands, to hear him. He was a true man of God. We may say he was the most remarkable preacher on earth, and he drew the greatest multitudes after him, far greater than any other man. The whole country came to hear him. It would, if such a thing occurred now, be considered a great revival. To all appearances great numbers repented. Indeed, it seemed to be a great work. But, so far as we know, there was no real lasting effect from these most popular preachings. Not one really followed Christ.

Soon after this, we are told, and it is true such changes do occur, this very same preacher, though in the open air, had a congregation of two. He preached on this occasion a very different sermon, all he said was contained in five words. The effect was marvellous. Both became decided for Christ there and then. They both became most useful servants of Christ; devoted followers of Christ. A work began that day, the like of which had never been seen before on earth, and which has continued until this day; though, we should say, that after three or four years, it became deeper, and even far more blessed. Do you ask the name of this preacher sent of God? His name was John the Baptist. You may have read the account many times, and like myself, have never noticed the different effect produced, until a brother at a distance called my attention to the contrast. You may read a minute account of the great revival preaching in Matthew 3:1-17; and no doubt God used this in preparing the way. And often, the preacher can see no immediate fruit that satisfies his longing heart, he may not see one soul manifestly brought to Christ; and yet the ground may be preparing for the seed. Is it not remarkable how many may be baptised, and not one be brought to follow Christ? How many now may be baptised, and yet be lost for ever?

Let us, however, turn to the short sermon to two, and mark its effects. (John 1:35 to end of chapter.) "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." What a living text! The preacher’s eyes were on Jesus, "looking upon Jesus," not looking upon the crowd. What he looked at was his text; his subject was the living Person of Jesus, and Jesus as the Lamb of God! And he said, Behold Him, "Behold the Lamb of God." Yes, God’s Lamb; hitherto man had brought his lamb. Five words. Without this, tons of volumes of theology are worthless. What words to Jewish ears who had seen in the law, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Here was the Son of God; and He was the Lamb of God. Behold Him. The two heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. How simple, yet this is the power of God. Has any message come to your heart yet, and turned you from everything else to follow Jesus? You may have gone to confession, and you may have been baptised, and you may have done many things else, but has this blessed Person, the Lamb of God, attracted your hearts to follow Him?

Jesus saw them, and He sees you at this moment. "And Jesus said unto them," and He says unto you, "what seek ye?" Do you hear Him? You profess to be a Christian. What seek ye? What is your object? They said, "Master, where dwellest thou?" Has the Spirit put a desire in your heart? Do you really want to know where Jesus dwells, He abides? He says, "Where two or three are gathered together my name there am I in the midst of them." Do you say, Where is it, Lord? is that place? "He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day." Will you come and see? Will you abide with Him? We are near the end; soon He will appear. Now, if Jesus is nothing to you, you will say, No, I will stay where am. I see no good in giving everything up to follow Jesus. Oh, what is Jesus to you? Is He everything, or is He nothing?

"Come and see;" and if you see where He dwells abide with Him. You must be with Jesus or with Satan, the god of this world. First abide with Him, and then become a preacher. So did one of them which heard John the preacher, whose name was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He becomes a preacher to the first person he meets. He did not wait until he could get a room, or begin to preach in a room, a chapel, or a hall. "He first findeth his own brother Simon." Oh, if every true follower of Jesus, the Lamb of God, would just go out and seek a brother Simon! Now mark the preaching of Andrew. He says, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." This was true, but we should say much more ■ "We have found the Saviour!" Nay, He hath found us. Ah, this kind of preaching would have far more effect than all the learned eloquence in the world.

You walk out in the street, or elsewhere. Who is this? Here comes Simon. For years he has been seeking salvation by law-keeping, by sacraments, by works, by his church, as he calls it. But he is saying to himself, I am as far off as ever. No rest, no real peace. I cannot say I am saved. I cannot look death and judgment in the face; and there are so many opinions I am bewildered; and I have so many sins; I try to forget them but it will not do. Oh, that I could find out the right thing.

Now speak to him; tell him. Just take him by the hand, and try Andrew’s sermon. Say, if you can, "I have found the Saviour," the only Saviour; I have found him; I have found all you need in Jesus, the Lamb of God. And just do as Andrew did, "he brought him to Jesus." Mind you do this. Do not bring him to what men call the church, or to any sect or party on earth. "And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona." Yes, it was the very future apostle Peter brought to Jesus by this little sermon-preaching of Andrew. And mark, this was the way of Jesus. "The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." It is quite true the Holy Ghost can and did, and at times still does, work after the Pentecostal way. Thousands heard, and thousands were truly converted, and gathered to the Lord. But John wrote his gospel long after those Pentecostal times; and does he not give by inspiration, that which continues the end? And this is most encouraging for us in these days, when popular preaching may be popular infidelity, or gross superstition.

Philip was immediately imbued with the same spirit: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Now Nathanael seems to have been a religious Jew. He had been deeply exercised in soul beneath the fig tree, no doubt in self-judgment, and thus without guile, as an Israelite. This religious man was shocked at the thought of any real good coming out of despised Nazareth. Oh, think of Jerusalem the established, with its priests and its temple. Is it not exactly so

now? The place where Jesus is in the midst is ever despised. Can there be any good there? "Philip saith unto him, Come and see." Yes. tell the religious man, Nathanael, you have found all he needs (and seeks in vain to find) in Jesus of Nazareth; and say to him, "Come and see." And whom did he find the despised Nazarene to be? He says, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God." The Lord give us more of this kind of preaching, telling to others what a Saviour we have found; bringing souls to the blessed Person of Jesus, Lamb of God. And how ready He is to receive them. Oh, beloved reader, have you come to Jesus? Do you abide with Him? Do you follow Him? Then surely you can tell your brother Simon. C. Stanley.

108. Justification.

Justification. A few remarks on a tract by John Venn, M.A.

C. Stanley.

We duly received your letter, and tract on Justification. We should hesitate to notice it, were it not for the importance of the subject. The object of the writer may be very sincere, but the tendency of the tract, is to confuse the mind: and only lead to uncertainty and unbelief.

We find no such teaching in the scriptures as that, "if a man should pay an absolutely perfect obedience to the law of God throughout his whole course, he would obtain eternal life" and that, "even if it were possible for a man thus to fulfil the law, and any one were to do so, the gift of eternal life would be wholly of grace; inasmuch as even an absolutely perfect obedience can never give the slightest right to a reward." The teaching of scripture is the opposite of this: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:4-5.) If man could have worked out a perfect righteousness of his own, he would have received his just reward. (Romans 2:6-11). But all are proved guilty: both Jews who were under law, and Gentiles who were not under law. (Romans 3:9-19). The Jews had many advantages, but being proved guilty, the law could not help, or justify the guilty. Then if the Gentiles were also guilty, it was no use putting them under law: as all were guilty. No flesh living could be justified, on the principle of law. This must be first proved, and is so proved in Romans 3:1-31 : before the Apostle explains the true ground of justification. It is no use reasoning further about the law, for man is found guilty: and the law curses him if under it, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." ■ Galatians 3:10.

Now it is evident, that a guilty sinner cannot be accounted righteous and cursed, on the same principle of law. Thus to seek righteousness by law, is to pursue an impossibility. In order then to the justification of a sinner, another righteousness is revealed in the Gospel, even the righteousness of God; but this without the law, apart from the law. (Romans 1:17; Romans 3:21.) That by which God is righteous, just, in justifying the sinner: that is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," witnessed by the law, the psalms, and the prophets. Every sacrifice before, or under law, the psalms, and the prophets, set forth the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is the glorious theme of scripture. The Paschal Lamb: the day of atonement: the cry of the forsaken one, in Psalms 22:1-31. The sin bearer of Isaiah 53:1-12. All bear witness to that atoning death, by which God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The writer of the tract is too little occupied with the righteousness of God: and like thousands more, too much occupied about his faith: making it really a kind of work, for which, if the right sort, and strong enough, God will justify him. This is a very common snare of the enemy: if he can only get us thinking about ourselves, the eye is then off Christ. Let us take the well known illustration given by the Lord: the brazen serpent. If the eye had been taken off the serpent lifted up, and the poor bitten Israelite had

begun to reason about the strength of his eyesight, and said I must feel cured, before I simply look, and believe, what God hath spoken about that serpent on the pole. Would that have been faith? It came to pass that whosoever believed what God had spoken about that brazen serpent was healed. Jesus says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted: that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life." If therefore we look at ourselves, fruits, feelings, or the kind of weak or strong faith: what is this more or less than unbelief? It may seem strange, but it is only a clear way of stating the unbelief of the human heart, that justification depends on faith, and faith on ourselves. The writer says, "And hence the believer's faith depends upon his grieving or not grieving the Spirit: and its strength will vary with his works. ■ How then, it may be asked, can we know whether our faith is strong enough to justify us? the only answer I can give is this: we may know it by conscious experience of the results of justification. As soon as we are justified, the Spirit regenerates us," etc. Could anything be better calculated to bewilder an anxious soul? Justification depends on the strength of faith, and the strength of faith on works. And all this before the Spirit regenerates us, and implants a new nature! Again the writer says, "Justification we may now observe is perfect while faith lasts." "Faith is exclusively a work or an exercise of the understanding." "It is true that faith must be obtained (though it is a gift from God) by the use of certain moral means, such as repentance and works meet for repentance." "It is faith therefore, a pure intellectual act, which is counted righteousness to us: " and much more of the same kind so mixed up with truth, as to greatly deceive and perplex.

We would not have transcribed so much confusion, were it not that it expresses the thoughts of the natural man, so exactly. How many suppose they have to repent, and to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, before they believe? This entirely overlooks man's ruined and lost condition in sin. Did the Ninevites repent before they believed? How could they? Did good moral acts, and fruits, lead them to a purely intellectual act? They believed God and then repented.

Again, how many think they can only know their justification, by "conscious experience." They thus spend their lives in gloomy uncertainty. The eye is entirely off Christ, and ever looking within, at experience. The more we do so, the more wretched we are. Is it not so? There is the hidden doctrine of Rome here: or rather, as we said, of every unbelieving heart. If faith then is not knowing my justification by looking within at conscious experience, What then is faith? On what does it rest?

Faith that justifies: is the believing God, believing what He says He has done to justify me as a lost sinner. Faith knows what God says is true. Solely because He says it. To believe the church, or to believe in my own conscious experience, is simply not to believe God, because God speaks. See how the Thessalonians believed. ■ 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Let us put it thus, to return to scripture. All are proved guilty and under judgment. Romans 3:9. Now take ten men proved guilty, and under sentence of death. Her Majesty sends them a free pardon. Five of them hear the written pardon read, and believe it as the word of her Majesty the Queen: and are immediately set free. The others reason about conscious experience and find themselves still in prison. That is their experience. They cannot therefore for want of experience believe the Queen. That is they reject her word as false, and perish on the scaffold. Oh how many thus reject the word of God and look to conscious experience. If the sinner then can repent, bring forth fruits of repentance, believe as an intellectual act, he is certainly far from lost: and all this before he is born again or regenerated.

It is quite true scriptures may be quoted where many believed and were not justified. Such as John 2:23; John 8:30, etc. But what did these believe? They evidently believed in Jesus as a prophet or as the Messiah. For as yet the disciples "knew not the scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead." It was not until after His resurrection that He opened their understandings. Luke 24:26-27; Luke 24:44; Luke 24:47. If we only believe on Christ as a mere man, a prophet, or Messiah, this will come far short, of that which will enable us to say "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

What is justification then according to scripture? It is thus described. It is to be reckoned or accounted righteous without works. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth (or reckoneth) righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is thus a man is accounted righteous before God. Not only sins forgiven, but the Lord will not impute sin.

How is God righteous, in giving guilty sinners such as we are, such blessedness? He is the justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus. But how can He be just in doing this? He has given His Son to be the propitiation for sins: and in this His righteousness is revealed, and set forth. Abraham believed God before His righteousness was thus revealed. God may have given him in some measure to understand the figure, in the resurrection of Isaac, how God would provide Himself a lamb. Faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. "And being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform." Yes, he believed the bare word of God, "and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." There this difference with us, the righteousness of God is fully set forth by the propitiation of the death of the Lord Jesus. The promise is fulfilled. The work accomplished. "It is finished."

How then are we justified? How are we accounted righteous before God? "If we believe (or believing) on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Thus the scripture declares that not only was righteousness reckoned to Abraham, but to us, believing what God has now done in order to be righteous, in justifying us. And mark the resurrection of Christ from the dead proves that God is glorified by His death, and therefore He has straightway glorified Him. There can be no mistake here, it is the word of God, not my changing conscious experience. There is not a word here about our feelings or doings. Believing, we are accounted righteous, or justified.

Believing whom? God, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Reader, can you say I believe God who raised up my Jesus from the dead?

Believe what? "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Reader, can you say I believe Jesus was delivered for my offences? Was Jesus delivered up to bear your sins on the cross? To be your sin-bearer: your substitute, bearing the full judgment due to your sins? Do you believe that God delivered up His beloved Son for this? Oh what untold love to you a guilty sinner. Do you believe God? Nay, still more; that He was raised again for your justification. Do you believe God raised Him from the dead for your very justification? That as He had been made sin for you, you might become the righteousness of God in Him. It is not possible thus to believe God, and not be justified. For the word of God says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is by the death and resurrection

of the Lord Jesus, that God is righteous in justifying the ungodly.

Now we would especially point out, that in the epistle to the Romans, the very epistle written on this subject, that it is the exact opposite to the tract sent us. In it, experience, as is commonly the case, comes first. In this inspired epistle there is not a word about experience, until after the believer is justified and has peace with God.

It is a righteousness wholly of God. It is the righteousness of God, apart from the law, and man, and experience altogether. But righteousness, or God revealed to be righteous, in justifying the sinner: whether those who were justified before, or now, by the death and resurrection of Christ. Not that (as is said by many) by which we are made righteous personally in ourselves, but that by which God is righteous in reckoning us so: and treating us as righteous before Him. So that the blood of Jesus having put away our sins from the sight of God: we are so justified from them by His blood, that God cannot in righteousness remember them against us any more.

There is thus nothing betwixt our souls and God. In the full blaze of the light and glory of God, we have peace with God. For He who is in the presence of God as man, is our peace. He has made peace by the blood of the cross. It is as perfect and as stable as the throne of God. For He who is our peace is seated on the Father's throne. Oh, reader, if you believe God, let no man rob you of this perfect peace with God: being justified by faith. This tract we have read would lead us from Christ, to faith; or rather to intellectual self. The author may not intend it, for in some sort he admits the believer's security. Yet he makes faith an intellectual act of man, before regeneration, and he is only is so long as be believes. Faith s thus turned into works, and thus it leads to salvation by works. It is the common mistake of, what I am and what I do; not what God is, and what He has done for me. It is also the faith of the old unregenerate man!! No person can be sure of justification, and have peace with God, whilst he is on the principle of law; that is what he is to God. Whether feelings, love to God, fruits, a holy life, experience, etc. All this, or any part of it, as going before justification, plainly sets aside the divine principle of grace: of free unmerited favour. If God deals with us according to what we are: it is all over with us for either justification, or peace. Oh precious infinite grace, He has dealt in righteousness according to all we deserve, in the Person of our Substitute. And He who once really bare our sins, is now in the glory. Surely the sins are gone, they are not on Him now. If He is our accomplished righteousness there, then it is evident, our justification lasts as long as He is our righteousness, and that is for ever.

It is really pitiful to come down from this: and to make faith our Saviour, to say our justification lasts only as long as faith last. This though true in a sense yet it takes as from what Christ is, and throws us on ourselves. We know that faith which is of God is like gold, it will not be consumed though tried by fire. That faith then which is spoken of, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," is believing God because of what He has done: and because He tells us what He has done for our justification.

How is this faith obtained? The scripture answer is very simple. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

How am I to know that I am justified?

God having up Jesus from the dead, now says, "Be it known unto you . . . that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things,

from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Is not this plain enough? What an announcement to ungodly lost sinners: forgiveness of: and through nothing that they had done or could do: but through this Man. The risen Jesus. And the declaration that all who believe are justified from all things. It impossible to believe what God says, and not know, for He says all that believe are justified. Mark this is not believing that Jesus was a prophet, or even the Messiah in the flesh, but believing the forgiveness of sins that God proclaims to me. And further God declares that all who believe are justified from all things. What further evidence can I require than the word of God. On that word my soul rests, not on my faith. If God says so, do we need either the testimony of the church, or conscious experience to prove what God says is true? The condemned prisoners might just as consistently say, "We must have the conscious experience that we are out of prison, before we can believe Her Majesty's free pardon." No doubt they will have that happy experience, when having believed the pardon, they are out. Believing God we are justified; and being justified we have peace with God: and having peace with God as to our sins, we also have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. We stand in the free unmerited favour of God. As to the future, we do not reason about ourselves or our faith but, "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The question is this: is the believer's security in himself, or in God? If in himself he may cease to believe, and so as the writer says cease to be justified. But his security is, "Much more then, being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him; for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." It is wonderful, but the believer's future is "much more" than the past. Thus faith is simply believing God. It is not believing in continuing to believe.

Without one atom of confidence in self. Do we believe our salvation is eternal, because God says so? Hebrews 5:9. That if we have redemption through the blood of Jesus: that that redemption is eternal? Hebrews 9:12. Do we know with absolute certainty resting on the very words of Christ that hearing His words and believing God, that sent Him: that we have eternal life? If we are saved at all: if we are Christians, then it follows that all is eternal. Eternal salvation, redemption, and life. What a portion, and all of God. And perfectly accomplished by Christ. Where then is the sense of perplexing ourselves by reasoning about our continuing in faith? It is like a man who has had a large estate left him, and instead of enjoying it, going constantly to an oculist to have his eyes examined. Let him look over the estate and if he sees it and enjoys it, he will not be examining or thinking about his eyes.

It may be said, but what about the title deeds of that eternal inheritance? Should we not lose an earthly inheritance, if we lost the title deeds? Indeed we might: yes, even if the purchase money had been paid every penny. Would it not then be so, if we lost the title deed of the eternal inheritance? No doubt of it. Or, in other words, if we could lose the title of our everlasting justification, should we not lose both our justification and eternal inheritance, notwithstanding that the atonement for our sins has been made, to the utmost claims, of a holy and a righteous God? Assuredly so: we have not a doubt of it.

What then is the everlasting title of our justification? Go back to that wondrous scripture. God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Mark, this was after the atoning work was done. "He was delivered for our offences. And raised again for our justification." As surely as He was nailed to that cross to bear our sins, for our offences, so surely God raised Him from the dead for our justification. (It is not correct to say on account of our justification. This would imply that we were

justified before we believed God, and would contradict that word, "All that believe are justified.") But when a sinner is brought to believe these two things, Christ was delivered for his offences and raised again for his justification, he can read Isaiah 53:1-12, and use the personal pronoun. He can say Jesus was bruised for my iniquities, etc. He believes the atoning death of Jesus for his sins. But where is, and what is, the title of his justification: that he is accounted righteous? The title deed of his justification is this, that God raised up his Substitute from the dead, for the purpose of being his righteousness, for being his justification. As to his sins, he looks back to the cross: as to his justification, he looks up, and sees Jesus the title of his justification, seated in the glory. What a title deed of the eternal inheritance! And if Jesus be not risen from the dead he has no title. 1 Corinthians 15:17. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Faith is not the title then, but Christ raised from the dead for our justification. Can the Christian then lose that title deed: Christ raised from the dead seated in glory? Never, never, never. Death hath no more dominion over Him. Whether it be as dying for our sins: or as the sacrifice for sin: He can die no more. Therefore it is not only when the believer first believes God that he has his title deed, so to speak: Christ raised from the dead for his justification. But he cannot lose his title to justification Christ is ever on the Father's throne. is He not ever the same? The righteousness of God is thus exalted, above the highest heavens in justifying the ungodly.

Thus though all is lost in Adam, and so far from looking for any renewal, or restoration of human innocence, or of Adam life: we can now reckon ourselves dead, with Christ. Yes how much more has grace abounded. We have much more than Adam life, even eternal life: the life of the Eternal One, who has gone through death for us. Thus, if through Adam's sin there is condemnation and death, through that one act of righteousness toward all men there is justification of life. This short paper will not allow us to dwell fully on the "Justification of life." But we would in conclusion ask the reader, do you believe God? "It is God that justifieth. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us." We do not reason about the faith of Abraham. He believed the bare word of God: the unconditional promise of God. And faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. The law or conditional covenant which came in 430 years after could not make the promise of none effect. Galatians 3:1-29. Promise was confirmed in Christ. Therefore faith in the promise looked on to Christ. But now Christ has come; it is no longer promise but fact. God has sent His Son: He has been delivered for our offences. God has raised Him from the dead for our justification. And is it not equally true to the believer that righteousness is reckoned to him ■ that he is accounted righteous before God? And being justified by faith he has peace with God. Thus believing God, all this is true, and for ever true. Yes, believing God who raised up Jesus from the dead your title deeds are ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Peace with God is as perfect now, as it will be when we are in the glory. For He who is perfect has made peace. And He is our peace. There is no more betwixt our souls and God, than there is betwixt Him and God. We shall know this better, enjoy it more, when we see Him as He is, and are like Him. But our justification is everlastingly the same. "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The believer's justification never can be more complete than this.

Oh the riches of the grace of God! And grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ. God is both just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Away then with doubts and fears, away with mere reasonings about kinds of faith: or continuing to believe. Away

with all thoughts of self. "Salvation is of God."

"Moreover, whom He did predestinate them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Oh, my soul, rest thou not in thy faith, but in the unchanging word of the living God. God saw us in our lost and guilty state. He tells us by the deeds of law we could not be justified. His righteousness is now manifested in justifying us by the eternal redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In His righteousness He has proclaimed forgiveness of sins to us. Through grace we believe Him. And He declares us justified from all things. All praise and glory be to Him. It is not even do we accept the sacrifice of Christ. God has accepted it on our behalf: for our justification. We believe God who raised Jesus from the dead. "Therefore being justified by faith have peace with God." C. Stanley.

109. I have compassion on the multitude

"I have compassion on the multitude"

Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, p. 29.

"In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away." Mark 8:1-9.

Mark the starting point of this narrative: "Jesus called His disciples unto Him." What a question this would be to every preacher in this land: Have you heard the call of Jesus? Have you come unto Him? Do you know Him? You cannot he a river of water if you have not come and drunk yourself. If you do not know Him you cannot break the Bread of Life to others. If you do not know your own sins are forgiven, you will not be able in faith to preach forgiveness to others. If you know Him, then just come unto Him; He has something to say unto us.

He says, as it were. I want to tell you how I feel about those millions of lost souls on earth where you at present dwell. I have compassion on the multitude. I have been offered up a propitiation on the cross. I freely offered up Myself the sacrifice; I am the Mercy-seat — God My Father is just, is righteous, in sending a free pardon to those millions, and you have never told them. You have never made the proclamation of forgiveness of sins in My name to millions within your reach — "I have compassion on the multitude." And there was a large company that had been with Him three days-He says, "And have nothing to eat." And all around are multitudes of professors, very busy in religious activities, but they have nothing to eat. They have sacraments and outward services, periodicals and religious books; and still may have nothing to eat. They are unconverted, are in their sins, guilty before God, hastening on to judgment, and literally no real gospel has been set before them, suited to lost, guilty, bell-deserving sinners.

Jesus says, "I have compassion" on them; He further says, "If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way; for divers of them came from far." Is it so, dear reader — is your house very far from Jesus? Is Jesus known in your house? Is the holy perfume of His dear presence there? If a stranger comes to your house, does he feel that Christ reigns there? Or is it a mere Sunday profession with you, and Satan and his world all the week? Ah, when you come on Sunday you come from afar; but Jesus has compassion on you; He knows how it will end with you

if you are not saved-when your heart shall cease to beat, and there is a hush in your house, and they whisper, “he is gone.” But oh, where? Will you have refused the compassion of Christ until it is too late? Where will you be? Will it be to lift up your eyes in torment? What a mercy it is, as you read this paper, that it is not yet too late. Think, then, of the compassion of Jesus.

How little sympathy the disciples had then, with Jesus. How little now. They say, “From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” Did they not forget the Lord? He who fed the millions daily for forty years in their wilderness journey, the Jehovah of the days of Moses, was in their midst. They forgot the infinite resources they had in Him. And do we remember the compassion and power of Him who says, “I am with you alway, even unto the end”? Is anything too hard for the Lord? How little we feel the claims and needs of these perishing millions — how little sympathy with those devoted servants of the Lord who are true distributors of the Bread of Life in the regions far from home and comforts. But they have the joy of fellowship with Him who said, “I have compassion on the multitude.” “And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.” They had the perfect number, and with His blessing, more than enough to meet the need. And now, fellow-disciples of Jesus, whose heart is full of compassion and love for the multitude, how many loaves have we? We will take first the great multitude of Christendom, who have no Bread of Life ministered to them; infidelity and superstition enough, but no Bread of Life — what have you got for them? Do you say, A very few loaves for so many? Jesus says, “Give ye them to eat.” And remember that among them there are dear redeemed children of God, very faint on the way; long have they been without food that gives real nourishment. Give ye them to eat. One means which the Lord has greatly owned — He only knows how much — is the distribution of tracts. Have you a few of these loaves? Never was there such a need to be sure that there is no poison in them — poison where little expected. Do not give any one to eat what you have not eaten of yourself, and proved to be the Bread of Life.

“And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground.” He who commanded this vast universe to be, and it was; who spake, and it was done; He commanded the people to sit down on the ground. Look at Him in the midst of that multitude — every eye turned to Him; yes, the very multitude who had requested Him to depart from their coasts in chapter 5. Yes, precious Jesus, Thou hadst compassion on the men who preferred their swine to Thee. Have you heard His voice? Have you been brought to sit down in His blessed presence? All the needed supply goes out from Himself. “And He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them, and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.” The disciples gave nothing except what they had received. May it ever be so with us. It is most cheering to hear of souls in so many distant lands being brought to sit at His feet; to sit down and rest in His dear presence, to prove His tender compassion — and then themselves to be the distributors of the Bread of Life. It will be so everywhere if there is fellowship with Him in His compassion for lost souls. O my brethren, where should we have been but for His compassion on us? He has mercy on whom He will have mercy.

“And they had a few small fishes, and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.” Have you a few small tracts that contain the true gospel of God? Will you look to Him to bless them? Can you in faith obey Him? He commands you to set them before those who have nothing to eat. You have now the privilege of distributing tracts in many languages. Will you give them to such as have nothing for the soul to feed upon? Our compassionate Jesus is using them, in spite

of the disciples' coldness, in regions far from where our feet can tread. Oh, to he a transcript of Him who has compassion on the multitude. O blessed Lord, to be more like Thyself!

Seven loaves and a few small fishes seemed very little for four thousand persons. They would have been utterly insufficient, but Jesus was there, and He delights to use our littleness, our weakness, our insignificance. It is thus His fullness and all-sufficiency are made to appear. Waggon-loads of loaves and boatloads of fishes would have been more to the disciples' ideas then and now. Oh, the grand secret of sinners being brought to Him is, He all, and the disciples nothing; but this does not suit man. The need is great around; let us measure it by His infinite fullness.

"So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets." Well, dear reader, have you eaten? Are you filled? If so, you will hunger no more. Jesus said: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6:35. This is the sure mark of the one that has been brought to sit at His feet to receive Himself — the Bread of Life — he hungers no more. He knows the truth of the word, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. He thirsts no more. He needs nothing more to fit him for the holiest. He is complete in Christ, and has perfect peace and rest for evermore.

If this is your singular and happy place, what will you do with your basket? Will you send nothing to those who have nothing to eat? Will you have no compassion on the multitude? It is a wonderful feast — always as much left as when we began. If Christ is enough for you, He is enough for every poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner on earth. Oh, to be off with our baskets, and take good portions to them for whom nothing is prepared! "And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away." Will you ask Him where you shall go with your basket?

Oh, blessed revelation of God, the heart of God, the love of God to a lost and guilty world! Yes, Jesus says, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." "But 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 Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18. May this he true of every Christian who shall read these lines.

110. The Wanderers Restored

The Wanderers Restored or Jesus in the midst Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, p. 45.

There can be no doubt that the last days of difficulty and perplexity are present realities. You meet a friend, and almost the first word is, “What a state of confusion everything is in!” His face as well as words seem to say, Everything is gone. Some have been expecting the universal spread of Christianity, and the conversion of the world; others, who have long seen the unscripturalness of such a thought, have been expecting there may be some great display of the Church in its unity on earth. Instead, they find division and sorrow, through the perversity and obstinacy of men. Such become greatly discouraged, and have real sadness of heart.

Thus, if we turn to Luke 24:1-53, we shall find a picture of the things that are happening in our very days. We know the Church, or Assembly, was not yet formed, for the Holy Ghost had not yet come to form it. But the company then gathered at Jerusalem was the very company which was afterward baptized by the Holy Ghost when the Church began.

We find, then, two of them with their backs on Jerusalem — on the Assembly there, and their faces toward Emmaus. They were not going far away — about six miles. Now what was their condition, or state of mind? They were occupied with the things that had happened. Intellect was at work, and they reasoned. There does not appear to be any wilfulness or stubbornness in their conduct; but they were very sad of heart, and sorely perplexed.

Let us remember they were of the company at Jerusalem, but not in their place. They were walking away, as if all were over and lost. Things had turned out very different from what they had expected, and they were sadly disappointed. Is not this a picture of many in this day? They are of the Church of God, the Assembly; they are members of the body of Christ, but as to their position, they are so sad, by reasoning about the things that have happened, that, though of it, “two of them,” yet they are walking with their backs to the Assembly, and their faces toward Emmaus. Did the Lord forget these two wanderers, as they talked together of all these things which had happened? No; it was while they thus communed and reasoned Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. Now what is really the matter with souls in this state is just as it was with them — “Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.”

How tenderly He inquires of their sadness! Does He not feel the same now? Is His love changed? May we not say, “O teach me more of Thy blest ways”? There was little intelligence in them, and their faith in His resurrection was very weak. How tenderly He listens to every word! One thing He did rebuke was their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken! “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” And may not the wandering, sad hearts be rebuked in this matter now? Oh, for the tender love of Christ to open up the Scriptures, and show that not a single thing is now happening that has not been foretold in Scripture. Yes, all our disappointment and sadness of heart arise from

not knowing the Scriptures. They were ignorant of the Scriptures, and they knew not Him. And now they want to turn in, and settle down for the night; a little independent company, or if you please, individuals away from the Assembly. Oh, the love that could not give them up! Though He showed His disapproval of their step, He opened to them the Scriptures, and their hearts did burn, though as yet their eyes were closed. But what a change when their eyes were opened, and they knew Him! “They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.” What a picture! While our souls are in that moral state not to know the Lord in the midst of the Assembly, our backs are sure to be turned to Jerusalem. And the moment we truly know Him, the face is immediately turned toward the Assembly. Wonderfully does this picture illustrate the condition of many of the children of God at this time. Doubtless many are sad of heart, and sorely perplexed with all the things that have happened, who never yet knew the sanctuary of deliverance revealed in this scripture. They reason in vain; their thoughts turn to convocations, alterations in ecclesiastical law, questions of so-called church and state. They are distracted with discord, jarrings, and divisions on every hand, but are as blind to the true deliverance from these tumults, as these two sad hearts were blind to the One who so gently opened unto them the Scriptures.

Others who have walked with Him have been turned aside; not only those who, in wilfulness, have sought to lead disciples after them (Acts 20:30), but such as have, like these two sad hearts, been so occupied with men and things, that they have lost the power of discerning the Person and mind of the Lord. Oh, that such might dwell on the love of the Lord to these two wanderers! Would He not take you to the Scriptures, and show you that all that has happened was foretold? Ah, He would not merely make our hearts burn by His own precious ministry, but He would open our eyes to know Himself. And we cannot know Him without becoming attracted to the Assembly, His Body. Is there anything on this earth so dear to the heart of Christ as His Church? Does not the Spirit of God move the heart of the reader to arise, and go back to the Assembly?

O meditate on that infinite love to the Church, and you will soon find yourselves on the way back. We cannot know Him without loving that which He loves. There may be little intelligence, yet we shall soon find ourselves where He delights to reveal Himself. And soon they arrive at Jerusalem; weariness, and sadness, and disappointment are all left at Emmaus — all uncertainty is now gone. The Lord is risen indeed, is the certainty they find in the company gathered together. And the two returned ones are ready to tell their story of deliverance from sadness and disappointment, “how He was known of them in breaking of bread.” Is it not sweet also in our day to have returning ones tell the story of restoring love? This touched the heart of Jesus; “And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” Surely this was as superior to the earthly sanctuary, the worldly temple, with its priesthood and ritual, as heaven is to earth. Have we been gathered to Christ, the Holy and the True? And are those who had wandered in sadness, a little way from the assembly ground of the twos or threes gathered together unto His name, being now restored by Him? Is it still true that, apart from all worldly sanctuaries, human priesthoods, and carnal ordinances, set up of man, Jesus Himself is in the midst of those gathered to Him? And does He still speak those precious words to those so gathered, “Peace be unto you”? Can we not hear, above the roaring tempest of human discord, those tender words, the very voice we know — “It is I, be not afraid”? Mark 6:50.

It is indeed very blessed when He first speaks peace to the conscience through His precious blood — “It is finished” — “Peace unto you.” Eternity will never unfold the infinite debt of love we owe to Him for this character of peace. But let us see Him, and hear Him in the midst of the company gathered in the upper room. Ah, they were even afraid of the religious world outside, so the doors were shut. What a contrast with that religious world! It had antiquity, and everything to please the ear and the eye. Shall we say they, the little company, had nothing but Jesus? The fullness of the Godhead stood bodily in their midst risen from the dead — the Head, and the beginning of the new creation. Where are you, reader? with the religious world, or with Jesus Himself? He speaks in the midst of those gathered to Himself. Truly He is not now present in body. But is He not as really present in Spirit? They were afraid. Yes, though it is unspeakably blessed, yet it is an awful moment when the soul is first separated from earthly religion and brought into the very presence of the risen Lord. He says, “Peace unto you.” What pen, or tongue, can tell the wondrous peace His presence and His words give, in the midst of those truly gathered to Himself? Peace in every sense, both to conscience and heart.

Now since He is risen, since He is present, since He says, “Peace,” how searching the question He put to them, and to us! “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” Troubled ones, what do you answer to the Lord? Why are ye troubled? Do you say, we are troubled about our sins? He has borne them on the cross; He shows you His hands and His side. Do you say, we are troubled about the confusions and divisions in the professing church? But, He says “peace” in the midst of those gathered to Himself. Nothing can ever break that peace. All the things that trouble you vanish in His dear presence. No need of convocations to legislate or decide in His blest presence. No need of altered prayer books, or learned doctors there — oh, the simplicity, the reality of His presence! But no man can come there truly to Him, unless the Father draws him. It is hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes; and from every stormy wind that blows, He gives perfect rest. “Peace unto you.” Satan’s greatest effort is to keep souls from being gathered thus to Christ. It may be asked, But has not Christ now gone up to heaven? Quite true; and has not the Father sent down the Holy Ghost? He abides with us to the end. How little this is believed! And it may be asked, But is it not all over now? Have not difficulties arisen, and is not this blessed testimony to the Person of Christ all lost? Oh, beware of staying too long at Emmaus. What is lost? Is not Jesus Himself as truly present in Spirit now as at the very moment He was bodily present in the upper room? Is not the unspeakable peace of His presence just the same? Is not the Holy Ghost as truly present to take of the things of Christ as at the beginning? Why then are ye troubled? Difficulties may arise, you say, or have arisen. There are no difficulties where His presence is owned. Disown His presence, and we have human intellect only!

There is always danger in reasoning about the things that have happened. These two had the letter of Scripture for expecting the setting up of the kingdom. They had not spiritual discernment of the times, and hence were greatly disappointed. Some have trusted and expected the testimony to be something to be seen in the world, but if we have the mind of the Spirit, what can we expect beyond the sure promise of the Lord? “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20.) It was not at Emmaus that He said, “Peace unto you,” but in the midst of the little company gathered together at Jerusalem — the foreshadowed Assembly. Yes, all is perfect peace in His presence; while all is perplexity and sadness with those who have turned their backs on the Assembly. May the Lord teach us more of His blest ways in

seeking the sad hearts who have wandered to Emmaus. And may He ever keep us satisfied with Himself.

111. The Swallows are Gone

The Swallows are Gone Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 2, p. 51.

“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made He it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” Jeremiah 8:7-9. The end of the year is near. The swallows are gone; the cold blasts of winter are come; but not one swallow is left behind. We saw them gathered together, and they were seen to fly higher, as the time to depart drew nearer. No one saw them go. But they are gone to sunny lands of the south. The frost and the snow, the sleet and piercing winds of winter never reach them there. Very remarkable is this instinct of the birds. “Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.” Is there not a lesson for us in this instinct of the birds? It was pleasing to watch the swallows as the winter drew near, gathering in companies, seeming to wait for the wanderers. Then they would fly high, as wanting to be gone. We thought, Is not the Holy Spirit now gathering Christians together in little companies to Christ? Now here, now there, a wanderer is coming in. Should we not fly higher? we, like the swallows, are about to leave this scene below. Already signs of this world’s judgment begin to flit across its autumn sky. And now every swallow soared ready to depart, moved by one common instinct. Oh that every Christian were seen manifestly ready to depart, moved by the Spirit of God. But will it be with the whole Church of God as with the swallows? Yes, the Holy Ghost is already gathering them in little companies to Christ. He has revealed to them afresh, after many centuries, the heavenly Bridegroom, and the heavenly calling of the Church. He is leading their thoughts and hearts, higher and higher yet. And soon, very soon, though the world will not see them go, yet every one shall be gone, not one left behind. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Are not these the sober words of inspired reality? Yes, brethren, we shall all be gone; not one be left behind; forever with the Lord. If the swallows are gone to more sunny shores, oh, what will it be to be caught up away from the scenes of this world’s wintry woes, and judgments, and in peaceful rest enter the glory of our Lord! And if God never fails to take by instinct at the appointed time, the stork, the crane, and the swallow, can He possibly fail at the appointed time to take the saints to meet their Lord? Is it not sad and humbling that the Lord should have to complain, that though the swallows should know their appointed time, “My people know not the judgment of the Lord?” Is not this as true now of Christendom, as it was of Israel then? What profound ignorance there is on this important subject. “My people know not.” Men go on dreaming of continual summer, yes, of increasing sunshine, peace, temperance, prosperity — just at the very time when the saints are about to be gone like the swallows of

autumn, and the storms of this world's wintry blasts are about to take them all by surprise. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9.)

It is incredible how utterly unaware the learned of this world are of the wintry judgments about to be poured out on the nations of the earth. "How do ye say we are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us?"

Never was there a day of more boasting, "we are wise." It is quite true the Word of God is in men's hands; but who believes it? The rapture of the Church before the day of the Lord is clearly revealed. God has said it. He has made it perfectly clear, both the departure of His saints to meet the Lord in the air, and the terrible judgments that shall follow. Has He made it clear? Yes, but, "Lo, certainly in vain made He it; the pen of the scribes is in vain." Yes, in vain has God spoken in His Word; men will not believe Him. "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition." Mark 7:13.

Let us now pass on to the December of this world, before the new era of the millennial kingdom begins. (v. 9.) "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?"

Let us anticipate what these learned men, these rejecters of the Word of God will say. "How strange this is; those Christians we despised are all gone, like the swallows of autumn. Not one of them can be found on earth. How we laughed and hated their gathering together! What fools we thought them because they would fly higher; as they said, their Lord was coming to take them. They spoke of their heavenly calling, and would have nothing to do with our earthly societies and politics. We scorned them because they would not join our various schemes for the improvement of man. We hated the thought that we were not to glory save in the cross of Christ. They gathered together — poor little despised companies — and told of the coming Saviour to the wanderers all around. No one saw them go, but they are gone. And now the world's wild, fierce, wintry blasts are blowing. Where is all our boasted wisdom? Peace is taken from the earth. All that we hear on every side is, that men are killing one another. Famine and pestilence, sword, hunger and death are all around. Woe, woe to us, the winter of this world is come.

["And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains… hid themselves in dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Revelation 6:1-17.]

"We rejected the Word of the Lord, but now the Christians are gone, and the great day of His wrath is come. Storm after storm has come; we seek death and do not find it. (Revelation 9:6.) Where is now our boasted wisdom? We are worshipping devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood. (Revelation 9:20.) And what is the end of all our politics? What strange events since the winter set in, and the Church is gone! It is not forty-two months yet, since the new last head of the Roman Empire appeared. But oh, what months! The dragon has given him his power. Ten kingdoms have sprung up and given their power to this Satanic head. When he opens his mouth it is in blasphemy. And all that dwell on earth worship him. And all that refuse are boycotted and put to death. It is true all this was distinctly foretold in Scripture, but we were far too wise then to believe what God said to His servants in Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation

13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18. Certainly there never was such a winter as this since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be. Jesus said it would be so, but we did not believe Him." (Matthew 24:21.)

Yes, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" And now, beloved reader, where are you, and what is the condition of your soul? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb, and ready to be gone like the swallows in autumn? Are you following the wise men of this world, who will so soon be ashamed and confounded? Is Christ the center of attraction? Are you separated to Him, and waiting for Him from heaven? Great is the last effort to draw Christians from Christ to join the confederacies of men. Oh, let us seek to get higher and higher. The Word of God is utterly disregarded. On no account will men allow it to be Christ alone. They would have Christ and circumcision, Christ and the world's various confederacies, or even Christ and profanity. All these things hide the coming of the Lord to take His saints. Every doctrine of human improvement denies the utter ruin of man through sin, and the fast approaching winter of divine judgment on the rejecters and despisers of the Word of God. It is solemnly true of the great men and the wise of the world, "They have rejected the word of the Lord." The mark of a Christian is, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." Revelation 3:8. Which is true of you, beloved reader? Whatever name you may bear, if you have not kept His Word you are not a Christian, and will surely be left behind when the Christians depart like the swallows that are gone. Can you for a moment admit that the instinct of a bird is more sure than the words of the Saviour? As this world's winter approaches, let us then dwell on the words of Jesus. He cannot fail to fulfill His promise. We may not know where the swallows go; but Jesus says to us, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2-3. Do we hear you saying, "Yes: Jesus says so, but our learned, wise teachers do not say so"? Remember the word, "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?"

It is a solemn fact that God by His Spirit has sent forth the midnight cry, "Behold the bridegroom, go ye out to meet him;" Matthew 25:6, and they have rejected the Word of the Lord. God grant we may cease from man; for what wisdom is in him? May the saints of God be now gathered together like the swallows in autumn. May we love to dwell on His sweet words of promise. Has He not gone to prepare the place? Oh, those scenes of radiant glory, far away from earth's cold wintry blasts! And will He not come to take us to Himself? With Himself! How soon, like Moses and Elias, shall we be talking with Him! Glorious reality! Soon we shall be gone; not one will be left behind; and poor deceived apostate Christendom will be left to "become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Revelation 18:2. Blessed comfort — "the Lord knoweth them that are His," 2 Timothy 2:19, and none shall be left behind.

"Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Ephesians 5:14.

112. The Atoning Death of the Son of God.

The Atoning Death of the Son of God.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22.

Charles Stanley.

We shall find this is not a mere solitary text of Holy Scripture; but the basis of all Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. It is all-important, however, to notice the position man is in, since the fall, as recorded in Genesis 3:1-24. "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Thus the head of the human race was driven out of the presence of God through sin. And the question is, What can give man liberty to enter that presence again The first man born of Eve, Cain, tried this principle. He tried to do his duty, tilled the land as he was commanded, and brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. But he entirely ignored the whole question of sin and the curse, and utterly set aside the necessity of the shedding of blood. Outwardly he seems an amiable man; and he comes to God, as some one has said, as if nothing were amiss. Just coming to Him as to a common Father, who was too kind to make any question as to sin. This is the principle of Unitarianism: God, the common Father of all mankind; and the setting aside the need of the shedding of blood. Abel, on the contrary, acknowledged the holy claims of God. He approached God through the death of a substitute. "He also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." God refused the one and accepted the other, thus marking the only true way of approach. And let us also remember, however outwardly amiable the character of Cain had been, he murdered his brother Abel. He might build his city, adorn the world, and his sons seek to make that world as agreeable as possible; yet he was the wandering murderer; the vagabond; his sons the sons of the murderer; the curse of sin upon them, however they might seek to forget or deny those words; the doom of the sinner. "So He drove out the man." Yes, these root principles in these early histories illustrate the position of every human being on earth at this day. The way of Cain is one of the marks of the last days. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain." (Jude 1:2.) Yes, God’s woe is surely pronounced upon all those who approach Him in the way of Cain; upon all who ignore man’s lost and guilty condition, and would come to God without the death of a substitute, as though He were the common Father of all mankind, and there was nothing amiss. No, man is not now as God made him, and placed him in paradise. He is fallen; he is guilty; he is driven out. However amiable, man is a murderer; we are all the sons of the murderers of the Son of God! Jews and Gentiles conspired to put Him to death. Woe to my reader if he denies his true condition and God’s remedy. There is no other. The great truth of atonement, we shall find, does not depend on the meaning of a word. We will bring Scripture to show that it can only mean the real expiatory death of the holy substitute, the Son of God.

We propose to point out: 1. Some of the pictures, or types, of the atonement. 2. The promises of the atonement in the Psalms and the prophets. 3. The fulfilment of the fact of the atonement in the gospels. And 4. The statement, and application of the atonement in the epistles. In a short pamphlet this can only be done very briefly. First, The Pictures of the Atonement.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." Now is it not remarkable that whilst the Lord fully recognized the utter evil of man, yet He accepted Noah's offering, as He had Abel's, before the flood I Thus blessings on this earth to man flow through the efficacy 'of Noah's offering, when seen as it was, a picture of Christ. And when Abraham was tried, in the offering up his only begotten son, what a type of the great transaction on Calvary, when God gave up His beloved Son. Yes, those words of Abraham were then fulfilled: "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb." And God did. Hear him speak: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Isaac was spared. The ram was killed; offered up in his stead. "Jesus must needs suffer."

We have another picture of the "Lamb of God" in the paschal lamb, when God brought Israel out of Egypt. That lamb must die. "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door posts of the houses," etc. Yes, the blood must be shed. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood I will pass over you." Thus we see in this picture, nothing can shelter from Divine judgment but the death of another: the blood of the substitute lamb. God says, "When I see the blood I will pass over."

Now look at Exodus more closely. What is the meaning of that tabernacle? We shall find the answer in Hebrews. But mark this striking fact. Why is that altar with its grate, to receive the killed victim to be burnt for a sweet savour to God, placed at the door of the tabernacle I Is it not to teach in picture that there is no way to God but by the death of another God has been pleased to give us a whole book describing the various offerings and service of Israel: the book of Leviticus. These are not the mere writings of Moses; but "the Lord called unto Moses and spake unto him." Here God gives minute descriptions and instructions. The burnt-offering, the peace-offering, the sin-offering. In all these there must be the death of the victim to make atonement. Now, if these are not pictures of Christ, what are they I For in themselves God had no pleasure. (Hebrews 10:1-39.) There was also the meat-offering, in which case a life was not offered. This evidently set forth the living person of the Holy One of God. The more He was tried in His own person, even by the fire of judgment, the sweeter the savour to God. It would be impossible in so short a paper to point out the precious distinctions in the offerings, precious because pointing to that which is precious in Christ. Beginning with the sweet savour of His offering Himself for us, and our acceptance in the sweet savour of Christ to God, and ending with the sin offering, consumed by fire, outside the camp. Christ forsaken of God during those hours of darkness on the cross; consumed, so to speak, by the fire of Divine judgment for us. Ever bearing in mind that God's great lesson in all these offerings is this, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Leviticus 17:11.) How fully this agrees with those words, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." If, then, the atonement is the great picture lesson of all these offerings, it follows that in order to understand the atonement, Leviticus must be closely studied.

Once every year there was to be a great day of atonement. (Ch. 16.) And don't forget this is what Jehovah spake to Moses. Was Aaron even at liberty to come into the presence of God without blood I Far from it; the sin-offering must be killed. "He shall take of the blood of the bullock and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." Oh, read carefully the whole chapter! What a distinction betwixt these two goats. The one is killed; its blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat for atonement. It is the propitiation that reconciles the holy place and the tabernacle. Now the tabernacle was a figure of things in the heavens, as we learn in Hebrews 9:21-23, we thus see, that through the propitiation of the death of Jesus the glory of God is maintained in reconciling all things unto Himself by the blood of the cross: whether they be things in earth or in heaven. (Colossians 1:20.) Propitiation is not substitution; but that aspect of the death of Christ which maintains the righteousness of God in showing mercy towards all. The other goat is substitution clearly. There it stood, the substitute of the people. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat: and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness," &c. Here, then, is God's picture of Christ bearing the sins of His people as their substitute; and to deny this is to charge God with folly. For if it is not this, it is a picture, or shadow, of nothing. We shall see shortly whether these beautiful pictures are not fully borne out in the New Testament. Is it not strange that God should have, in such loving care, given us so many types of instruction so accurate and yet men are so blind that they see nothing in them. But the truth is, if the atoning death of Jesus is not seen in them, nothing can be seen. What do those two birds in the cleansing of the leper mean if they do not set forth the death and resurrection of Christ? It is either the matchless wisdom of God, in setting forth in picture, that death by the one bird killed over running water, and the risen Christ, by the other bird, dipped in the blood of the dead one, and sprinkled seven times on the leper, to be cleansed, and then letting the live bird loose, the priest pronouncing him clean; or it is a mere formal ceremony. Great was the joy of the poor leper when he heard the words and saw the little bird loose. Greater still the joy of the burthened sinner when lie hears the word of the Lord, and knows that he is now justified from all things; for God bath raised Jesus, His sinbearer, from the dead. Yes, volumes might be written on all the pictures God hath given of the atoning death of His eternal Son.

Whether it be the cleansing of the leper, the consecration of the Levites, or the priests, the blood of atonement must flow, must be shed. What streams of blood were shed for fifteen centuries! The strict observance of these laws of the offerings was what marked obedience in the good kings of Israel; and the neglect of these marked those that did evil in the sight of the Lord. For the laws of these sacrifices read Leviticus 4:1-35 — 7; the consecration of Aaron and his sons, 8, 9. "So the Lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you." (v. 34.) The cleansing of the leper, Leviticus 14:1-57. Nay, in one way or other the atoning offerings of the law form the chief subject of Leviticus, and a great portion of Numbers. And think of the thousands of victims offered in sacrifice by David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, and others; renewed again by the remnant when restored from captivity; and all this appointed by God. Do you say, How terrible this long story of atoning blood! Is not blood most loathsome! It is; but "without shedding of blood there is no remission." If sins were as loathsome to us as to God, we should not then wonder at this long story of atoning blood. Now what can these vivid pictures of atoning blood point to, if not to the one atoning sacrifice of the Son of God?

We now turn to the Promises of the Atonement in the Psalms and the Prophets.

There can be no doubt that Psalms 16:1-11 refers to the death and resurrection of Christ; for so is it applied both by Peter and Paul. Calm, precious rest in Jehovah, when, as man, the Holy One gave up His life. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," etc. But, oh, that terrible cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not this unutterable anguish find its utterance on the cross? (Psalms 22:1-31.) And up to verse 21 we hear the deep cry of the holy sin-bearer forsaken of God. (See also Psalms 35:1-28; Psalms 40:1-17; Psalms 55:1-23; Psalms 69:1-36, and many others.) The things written concerning Himself. And in Isaiah do we not hear Jehovah, who clothes the heavens, say, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting"? (Isaiah 50:6.) And then read His sufferings at the hands of His own nation as the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:1-3.) But then mark, deeper, yea, atoning, substitutionary suffering is foretold. Thus speaks the prophet more than seven hundred years before the Son of God was actually nailed to the cross by wicked hands, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . For the transgression of my people was He stricken. . . . Yet it pleased the Loan to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, etc. . . For He shall bear their iniquities. . . . He bare the sin of many." Now, it is evident from these plain declarations that all the picture instructions of the atoning victims of the law pointed to this one sacrifice, to this one atoning victim, yet to come. And is not all this expressly applied to the Lord Jesus in Acts 8:35? Yes, from this very same Scripture did Philip preach Jesus unto the Eunuch. Surely there is nothing to argue about; we must either believe God or make Him a liar. Such will be the discovery of Israel in the day of their gathering, when this very Redeemer comes to Zion. They will discover that He whom they had esteemed as a mere man, and therefore an imposter, stricken and smitten of God, was in very truth their true sin-bearer and substitute on the cross. This chapter describes their astonishment, and the next their joy. Do you believe Jesus to be the true sin-bearer, as here declared by the word of God? All turns on this, both to Israel and to you. It was clearly foretold in the prophets that Messiah should be cut off, and received up to God, though this should in nowise interfere with His future reign on earth, at the same time His eternal Godhead is maintained. Take this out of many Scriptures: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (or the days of eternity). (Micah 5:2.) Thus we have His birth at Beth-lehem. But He goes to God, is to be ruler of Israel, and His eternal Godhead. You notice this would be all false if Jesus were only man. "Let God be true." So in that wondrous communication from God to Daniel, that within seventy weeks from the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem — or four hundred and ninety years from the twentieth of Artaxerxes — reconciliation for iniquity should be made, everlasting righteousness brought in, and Messiah cut off. All this actually came to pass. Reconciliation for iniquity was made on the cross by the atoning death of the Son of God. Everlasting righteousness was brought in by His resurrection from the dead, and yet as Messiah He was cut off, and His reign postponed until after Jerusalem’s desolations. We now pass on to The Fulfilment of the Fact of Atonement in the Gospels.

How significant His precious name at His birth, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus (Saviour): for He shall save His people from their sins." Such was to be the name of "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matthew 1:21-23.) One thing let us carefully notice — though God with us, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Sin and Satan were in this world, and he would not have a bit of it, no, not so much as a foot of it, where to lay his head. Adam sought to be as God. He sought the highest place; Jesus took the lowest, even unto death, the death of the cross. Satan sought hard to make Him assert His Godhead: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But Satan could not move Him from His path of devoted humiliation, and dependence on God, and adherence to His word. Mark the craft of Satan; he now points to this very path of real humanity, in deepest humiliation, and says Jesus did not teach His Godhead, and therefore He was not God. Will you believe this deceitful lie of Satan? Oh, wondrous Emmanuel, God with us! yet clothed in such humility as had never been seen before; yet even at His baptism the three distinct persons in one Godhead are present; none can deny this. "The heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17.)

How can we understand His humiliation unless we own that eternal glory from which He descended Thus God speaks by the apostle John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." What is here said of "Jesus," "Immanuel," "the Word"? Self-existent was the Word, yet distinct in person with God. Still He was ever eternally God, yet, distinct in person, eternally with God. The whole universe the work of His hands. The Word of God with us. Jesus, Saviour. Such was that blessed One who gave Himself to be the Atoning victim on the cross. Yes, He could say, as no mere man could possibly say, "Before Abraham was, I am." On this occasion He owned His eternal divinity. If He had been only a man it was blasphemy, and the Jews would have been right in stoning Him. (John 8:58, also x. 30.) Yes, there they again took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy, and "because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."

Yes, on His path of humiliation, which led to the cross, His Godhead could not be hid. The dead were raised by His word, the winds and waves obeyed the One that made them all. If only a man, the cross was evidently the death of an impostor. Truly God, eternally God, became flesh; truly man, and thus as Son of God, and Son of Man, He became the devoted victim to bear our sins. In these four gospels then read the accomplishment of the atonement for sins. Did you say the many scenes of blood that shadowed this forth were loathsome What was it to our precious Lord I See Him fall on His face, hear the cry of His heart, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me." It was not possible, if the sinner must be saved; hence entire submission to the Father’s will. But none but the Father knows what He passed through at the prospect of being made sin for us. The torture of the cross was dreadful; the tender hands and feet nailed to the tree; and when the cross was lifted up and let fall in the hole dug to receive it, oh, the anguish! yet hush, hear those words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." It may have been just at the moment of that cruel act. Oh, what hours of anguish! but those three hours of darkness, and forsaken of God. At

last the moment came: "It is finished." He bowed His head and died. And even then man, yes man, must pierce His side.

What is all this I Do the inspired epistles speak with certainty I Was this the atoning expiation for sins? Must He needs thus suffer? If this is salvation, what must be its character, temporary or eternal The redemption thus accomplished I What questions! Let us turn to the epistles and inquire, and God grant that what we find there the reader may, through grace, believe. The Statement and Application of the Atonement in the Epistles.

Let the reader well note, that in the two epistles which speak of the atonement most fully, Romans and Hebrews, Jesus is "declared to be the Son of God with power." (Romans 1:4.) "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (Hebrews 1:8.) Surely we need not say, Such words as these could not be applied unless Jesus was essentially and eternally divine.

If we now call to mind the picture teaching of God in Leviticus on the day of atonement, we shall find in Romans both aspects of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus — the propitiation (chap. 3) and the substitution (chap. 4, 5).

All the world, Jews and Gentiles, being proved guilty before God; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" the righteousness of God in our justification is thus revealed. "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (or mercy-seat) through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (3: 24-26.) How has God revealed His righteousness, whether in remitting sins before Christ died, or in justifying believers since? What is the mercy-seat? "Propitiation through faith in His blood." God sees that blood of propitiation, and He is righteous in the free favour of our justification. What is it, then, to disbelieve the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ I It is to disbelieve God; to deny that which He hath set forth. Thus the propitiation of Christ, His blood, brought before, and on the throne of God, is the only righteous ground on which God can show mercy to a lost world. That is how God explains it. How God is righteous.

We will now look at substitution; the truth pictured forth in the other, the people’s goat. This, as we saw, became the actual substitute of the people. All the sins and transgressions of the people once a year were laid upon it; transferred from them to it; and borne away, never to be seen again. Now, do the Scriptures teach that the Son of God actually took this place, of very substitute of His people I and that our sins were thus laid on Him, the atoning sin-bearing substitute Why, this is the foundation of our justification. It is not only written how Abraham was accounted righteous through faith, "but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed (accounted), if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, is not the real atoning substitution of Christ set before us here, as distinctly as His propitiation in chap. 3? Thus He was delivered for the very purpose of bearing our offences, as the holy substitute; and was raised from the dead for the very purpose of our being accounted righteous. Justified on believing God, who thus gave Him to bear our offences, and raised Him from the dead; all believers are thus accounted righteous before God; and being so, on the principle of faith, we have peace with God. Oh, blessed effect, or result, of faith! but mark, through

Jesus Christ our Lord. And see how this substitution is enforced (chap. 5), "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Can this mean anything but what it says I Ah, when we were not only guilty, but without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. It is no doubt a great mistake to suppose, through sin having come in, God became our enemy; and that the atoning death of the Son of God was to reconcile God to us. The following verses teach the very contrary of this: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we (not God) were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (vv. 8-10.) Thus we have the same two things in the atonement here as in the teaching of Christ. (John 3:1-36.) First, God's righteousness in justifying the sinner must be maintained. The Son of man must be lifted up; for God so loved the world. That love was thus shown in the lifting up of Jesus on the cross, as Moses lifted up the serpent of brass. So here the death of Christ for us. His atoning blood, by which we are justified from sins; His death, by which not God is reconciled to us, but we are reconciled to God. In all this, God commendeth His love toward us when we were enemies. This leads us to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. God accepted the atonement, and proved His acceptance by raising up Jesus from among the dead. We receive the effect of the atonement, that is, reconciliation. Thus the atonement is the foundation of all truth and blessing in the epistle to the Romans. Take it away, and the whole fabric falls to the ground. In like manner, when the apostle declares the gospel he had preached to the Corinthians, he distinctly says it was this: "How that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." (15: 3, 4.) Christ the substitute then, bearing our sins in death, is the foundation of all he preached to the Corinthians. The distinct truth of His reconciliation is taught in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Oh, marvellous words of God! To the Galatians also the apostle writes of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:4.) Thus to them the atoning death of the Son of God was the only true foundation. The same is revealed to be the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:3-7.) The same atoning blood is the foundation truth in the epistle to the Colossians, "Giving thanks to the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." But how and in whom has all this been effected? "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14.) And what was the gospel Paul preached to the Thessalonians which produced such marked effects? Simply this: "That Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." (Acts 17:3.) Thus did the inspired apostles ever set forth the atoning death of the Son of God, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14.) In James there is nothing as to the atonement: that is not the subject of the epistle, but a holy life; justification before men; the fruit of faith. In Peter it is the great foundation truth again. The very sanctification of the Spirit is "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of

Jesus." (1: 2.) "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (v. 18.) "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (2: 24.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (3: 18.) God could not have used more distinct language to teach us the substitution of His beloved Son. It is just this, Do we believe God, or make Him a liar? (1 John 5:12.)

There is one peculiar effect of this atonement however only known, and understood, in the light as God is in the light. Whatever profession, the darkness of unbelief knows nothing of it. It is this, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) This is a statement so amazing that it has no parallel to illustrate it. No words can fully explain it; faith alone accepts it. It does not however mean that whilst we are here, sin is eradicated from the old nature. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (vv. 8-10.) But as God said of the type, "When I see the blood," so here God sees the effect of that blood is to remove from His sight all our sins. It is not past, present, or future, but the infinite efficacy of that blood in the sight of God. But if a cleansed believer should sin? "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." The relationship with the Father is thus sustained in so sad a case; our righteousness is still there, with the Father. But take away Jesus the propitiation, and then what are you — lost for ever! Blessed be God, this can never be to those who can say, "He is the propitiation for our sins." And now in the Revelation of Jesus Christ — His coming judgments and coming glories, what can all believers say "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Revelation 1:5.) Ah with all learned twisting of words, I solemnly ask the Unitarian, can you utter these words, Has Jesus washed you in His precious blood? And when the atoning Lamb of God shall take His place in the midst of the throne, oh, will you be able in that day to say, with the church of the first-born — oh, can you join that song saying — "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou vast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood"? (Revelation 5:9.) Oh, how can the despiser and rejecter of pardon through that blood now, of peace through that blood now, ever sing then the new song of redemption glories! How can he either sit with this redeemed company, or stand with that innumerable multitude yet to come, who will be before the throne and before the Lamb, those arrayed in white robes I One of the elders asks, Who are they, and whence they came? and then answers, "These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14.) Oh, everlasting, fatal mistake, to reject the atoning death of the Son of God!

Having thus noticed in a general way how the atoning death of the Son of God forms the great theme of all Scripture, we would in conclusion call especial attention to the statement of that atonement, and its effect, on those who believe, in the epistle to the Hebrews. As we have already hinted, the glory of His person is first presented. God speaking in Him. The appointed Heir of all things. By whom also God made the universe. "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by

Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Can these words be applied to a mere man? Impossible! What man could be the self-existent brightness of the glory of God It would be nonsense to talk of any mere man upholding this universe. Or how could a mere man have purged our sins eighteen hundred years before we were born No; the Son of God is before us, truly God — "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" yet as truly man — "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows;" and yet as truly the Jehovah of Genesis — "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of Thy hands," etc.

All things shall be put under this Jehovah-Jesus. "But we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for (or by) the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (2: 9.) Please notice, then, that it was the free favour of God, grace — by which the Eternal Son came to die for us. Surely this is enough to melt our hearts. What, then, must be the character of that redemption accomplished by the death of an infinite being like the Son of God I It must be eternal, as repeatedly stated — "And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (v. 9.) This will greatly help us, in studying the atonement, to see its perfect and eternal character, in contrast with the imperfect and temporary atonement under the law. At most its efficacy was yearly. Chapter 9 contains the formal statement of the atonement of Christ. It is the question of what can bring the sinner into the holy presence of God. In the earthly tabernacle there was a veil which shut man out; and within that veil "the high priest alone entered once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." There was no entrance without blood, and then no permanent abiding entrance. "The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while, as the first tabernacle was yet standing," all those offerings, washings, etc., could not make the conscience perfect

We must thus bear in mind, that entrance once a year into the holiest of an earthly tabernacle was a very feeble shadow of that which the Son of God came to open to the sinner, whose sins must otherwise have for ever shut him out.

"We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." Not a place of worship on earth: the heavens opened to Him and to us.

"But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (9: 11, 12.) Then what the High Priest did as an imperfect shadow, for a moment, once a year, on the day of atonement, our great High Priest has done perfectly by entering heaven by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. This is an overwhelming statement. Do we believe it? "For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God 1" Here then is the statement of the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. To deny it is simply infidelity. By His own blood He has obtained

eternal redemption for us. All this through the eternal Spirit. Thus the distinct person of God the Holy Spirit is proved to be eternal, through whom the Son offered Himself; and it is also through that death, "they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" — all is thus eternal. He is the author of eternal salvation (v. 9); eternal redemption (9: 12); through the eternal Spirit. (v. 14); eternal inheritance. (v. 15.) What a study. Every verse is full of living truth, because it is Christ. If then you reject the testimony of God to the blood, is there no remission, no forgiveness of sins Impossible. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Is not this a solemn truths not only to the rejecting Unitarian, but to anyone who puts anything whatever in the place of the shed blood of Christ It is the very sentence of God. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us." Now does not this show that the atoning work is done, the whole thing finished eternally I not like the offerings of the law, "nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the High Priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others. For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world." Thus to suppose another offering, or this continued or repeated, is to disbelieve the eternal efficacy of the one offering. But more, it is to suppose an impossibility; for if the offering is repeated, Christ would have to suffer again. Christ offered again to be of any value for the remission of sins, His blood must be shed again. "For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world."

There is now no holy place on earth. Christ has entered heaven itself, by His own blood having obtained eternal redemption for us. Where then, pray, is the value of all the pretended offerings of Christ on the altar as a sacrifice, and expiating offering for the sins of the living and the dead? Plainly it is all not only a mistake, but a denial of the eternal efficacy of the one offering. A million masses are not worth a farthing unless the priest can assure me that he has shed the blood of the Son of God again; for without the shedding of His blood there is no remission, and unless He suffers the death of the cross again, there is no offering for sins; and this is doubly impossible. There is no more need of an offering, and death can have no more power over Him.

"But now once in the end of the world path He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (9: 26.) It is not thus a question of words. This was the purpose for which the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Did He fail? To offer another sacrifice is to say He did fail. Why should we doubt what God declares? Woe be to him who denies what God says. Thus in the perfect rest of faith we know: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Can you thus say, He bore my sins; God is my Justifier; when Christ comes there is no question of sins for me Think, to see the very One who bare our sins. Don’t alter these words. They do not say that judgment is appointed to ALL men, neither does it say He bare the sins of all; never does Scripture say He bears away the SINS of the world. But this is the question, Can you say, He bare my sins? "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." For such how can there be the judgment of those sins again?

We now come to the effect of the atonement on us who believe God. (Chap. 10.) There is what the sacrifices of the law could not do; there is what the one sacrifice of Christ has done: the first could not take away sins, could not make the comers thereunto perfect, or complete as to the conscience. If they could they would have ceased to be offered, "because that the worshippers

once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." (v. 2.) This, then, is the subject before us. The worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins; plainly the blood of bulls and goats could not thus put away sins. This is granted as impossible, and therefore, which is very precious to our souls, God had no pleasure in those sacrifices which could not put away our sins. What a God we have to do with! He says, as it were, Such is my eternal love to you, I cannot have pleasure in those sacrifices that fail to present you in holiness without conscience of sins. He entirely took away that which could not take away our sins. "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second."

It is important now to notice that the atonement of the Son of God was according to the will of God. God so loved. "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." It is also by His will that we are sanctified or set apart to God, by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. This is the first effect of the atonement as applied to us. Through it, by the will of God, we are sanctified to Him. Then follows a very important verse: "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." This was true of the many Jewish priests then, for the temple was still standing, and its daily sacrifices were being offered. At that time Christian worship was entirely heavenly. Where the priest was, there was the worship; and He had entered heaven itself, as we have seen. But what of the imitation temples in this day, and the many priests of man’s appointment, and the many pretended expiatory sacrifices offered daily? Let all the priests of the Greek and Roman churches, and their imitators in this land, stand up and hear this one sentence of the word of God. All your pretended many offerings "can never take away sins." What! are all these crowds wrong? Yes. "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." (v. 12.) What do these words mean? The word translated for ever is not the one which means everlasting merely, but continuance. The one offering of Christ so perfect, He has never to rise up to offer another. Must it not be so if you think of the glory of His person? The I am; the first and the last; God over all blessed for evermore. To deny this is infidelity. And yet this man! The efficacy of the blood of a goat, or a bull, was temporary, and needed another. Oh, the wickedness of either denying the eternal efficacy of the blood of Christ like the Unitarian, or doubting it with the Ritualist. Truly Jesus may say again, "Ye do dishonour Me." But now mark the effect of this atonement. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We have seen that sanctification, or separation, to God by His will was the first effect of the one offering: "Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." But here we find the effect of His perfect work, His one offering, is equal to the cause. Is He seated in unclouded rest in continuance, after offering one sacrifice? By that one offering He hath perfected for ever (the very same word) those that are sanctified. Thus as to liberty to enter the holiest, as to their acceptance through His one offering, all is perfect, in immutable continuance. Always the same. Mark, there is no question here of our responsibility. That comes after, and is according to this perfect acceptance. But perfected for ever is entirely the work of the Son doing the will of the Father. Now look at the redeemed, the people separated to God by this sacrifice. All their sins laid on Him, transferred to Him, borne by Him; and by one offering He hath perfected them for ever, as to their sins, as true as to this now as it will be in the glory. The three persons in the Godhead engaged in this stupendous work; the will of God; the work of the Son; the witness of the Holy Ghost. Yes, "the Holy Ghost is a witness to us. . . . And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Reader, are you a Christian, separated

unto God by this sacrifice? Then do you believe God the Holy Ghost He says, the Son of God hath perfected you for ever. He says, God will remember your sins no more. Surely, if you believe this, then you can have no more conscience of sins, and no more need of a sacrifice for your sins. Do you say, Does that mean that I shall never more be conscious of failure and sin? No, indeed not; for the nearer we are to God, the more conscious we are of failure. It means this: that all your sins having been laid on Jesus, and purged by His atoning death, God never charges one of them again to you. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." There can be no need of another offering if we believe God. It is no question of repeated offerings, or repeated sprinklings, or fresh applications. All that is Jewish, and has now vanished away. It is eternal salvation, and therefore perfect.

There will be constant, fresh applications of the water of the Word. And in the fatherly care of our God chastisements and restoration to communion if we fail; and in His governmental dealings with us confessions, repentance, and forgiveness; and, above all, the ever-loving, watchful advocateship of the Lord Jesus with the Father (Hebrews 12:1-29; 1 John 1: 11), and constant diligence in holiness. (Hebrews 12:14.) But all these flow from the perfect position, in which we stand for ever perfected as to the conscience — always, continually perfected. This is His work, not ours. He bath for ever perfected. How seldom we meet with any one who really gives Him this glory! One says, "No, I cannot believe that; for the believer after all may be lost." Another says, "No, I cannot believe that, because the Church says we need many continual sacrifices of Christ for the sins of the living and the dead." Another says, "I never saw that before. I thought for every fresh sin there needed fresh blood." If so, He would truly have to die afresh, to suffer often, since the foundation of the world. But oh, how sad, whilst the Unitarian pretends to be a Christian he denies the true atoning sacrifice of the Son of God altogether! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" In this very epistle the Jews who had made the profession of Christianity are warned that if they gave it up, and despised the sacrifice of the Son of God by giving it up, and going back to the offerings of the law, they were assured there was no efficacy left, no possibility of restoration; there was nothing to look for but fearful judgments. (6: 1-7; 10: 26-30.) Oh, Unitarian reader, pause ere it be for ever too late! Do not suppose the atoning death of the Son of God rests on a few isolated texts. It pervades all Scripture. Take it away, and there would be no foundation — no way for a poor guilty sinner like me to enter the holy presence of God. How can you be saved if you reject this eternal salvation, this eternal redemption, that for ever perfects by this one offering for sins? The peace that He has made by His blood is perfect peace. But it is astonishing how few Christians ever get hold of this divine truth. They look at themselves, and have no idea what that means — "For He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He hath. They say, "Yes, I see it up to conversion; but what of sins since?" Were not all our sins future when He was offered for them, the sacrifice for sins "So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many." And God says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Is not this enough Shall we not believe God? Again, remember this is no question of entrance into a place or temple of worship on earth. It is really the holiest of all, the very presence of God in heaven. Now then, reader, does the blood of Jesus give you boldness to enter? or do you need something else? No matter what it is; it would deny the eternal value of that one sacrifice. It is not that we hope to have, but "having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." (Hebrews 10:19.) He having perfected us for ever by His one offering, it is our present, immutable continuous privilege, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Purged worshippers, lift up your eyes to heaven; there is your holy place of worship; there is the great High Priest that purged your sins by His own blood. You have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus. Dying Christian, thy spirit just departing — absent from the body, present with the Lord — thou hast boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus. Hark the assembling shout! the Lord Jesus comes quickly to receive His own to glory, raised in incorruptibility; or we who are alive and remain, changed in a moment. Enter the glory, ye myriads, for each one has boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus! Now we can say, "Unto Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood." And, poor, weary, heavy-laden, guilty sinner, He who gave His precious blood the propitiation for sins, has the right to say unto thee, "Come unto Me, and I will give thee rest."

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

113. God's Centre in Shiloh

God’s Centre in Shiloh Lessons for the Church Today.

Charles Stanley.

Shiloh in the Beginning

Joshua 18:1-28.

God had now redeemed Israel from Egypt. They were delivered from the power of Pharaoh, separated from Egypt by the waters of the Red Sea, and more ■ they had seen the ark pass into the depths of Jordan; they had followed through that type of death into the land. They had been circumcised; the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away; they had kept the passover in the land and had known some fighting, failure and victory. And now "the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there."

Before we examine the first lesson of Shiloh, let us ask, How far have we traveled this journey? Can we remember in the days of our wretched slavery to Satan that we had no power or means of escape? Did God, in His deep compassion for us, send His Son to redeem us by His own blood? Have we eternal redemption through His blood? Have we known real deliverance from sin and Satan? Have we been separated from the world, Satan’s world, by the death of Christ, as Israel was separated from Egypt? Have we had wilderness experience and there learned that in us, that is, in our flesh, there is no good? And, further, have we died to it all with Christ and in Him entered the land? If dead with Him and risen with Him, that is the end of wilderness trial of the flesh, of self, under law. Have we, as dead and risen, been circumcised ■ that separation unto God, as a sign of that righteousness we had in Him when He called us, as ungodly, Egypt’s reproach being rolled away? And have we kept our passover, entering with boldness into His presence by the blood of the Lamb? Do we know anything of fightings, failures and victories?

Yes, Israel had now traveled as far as Shiloh. It is well to ask ourselves, Have we reached that point? Can we trace the hand of our God thus far with us? If so, let us ask, What is Shiloh? and what are its lessons to us? The first lesson we have is this: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there."

Shiloh was the place where the Lord set up His name in the land at first (Jeremiah 7:12) ■ the tabernacle, His dwelling-place in the midst of Israel. Shiloh, the place where the Lord dwelt, was the very center of all Israel. Is not Shiloh, then the gathering of the whole assembly of Israel together, a striking type of the church, or assembly, of God? There was one assembly of Israel, and the Lord was in the midst. On the day of Pentecost, the one assembly of God was formed by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. There are, however, many points of contrast between the type and the antitype. Israel’s redemption was temporal and earthly; the redemption of the church is heavenly ■ for heaven ■ and eternal. The Lord was in the midst of Israel, but the veil shut them

out of His presence. When Jesus bowed His head in death for us, the veil was rent from top to bottom, the way into God's presence forever opened. The calling of Israel was earthly; the calling of the church is heavenly. How much is involved in this! A great work had been accomplished for Israel, and they were now in the land; they had crossed the Jordan, and they had come to Shiloh, the place of gathering to the Lord. What a work had been accomplished for the church, when the first great gathering together took place and the assembly was formed! In one case, all Israel was together; in the other, "all that believed were together" (Acts 2:42-47). "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart" (Acts 4:32-37). With Israel, "the land was subdued before them." And with the assembly, the church, what mighty power there was in those first apostolic days! Converts then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, numbered in the thousands.

Now, though Israel had passed the Jordan and was in the very center of the land, yet it was a well-known fact that seven tribes had not yet received their inheritance. Is not this also the case with the assembly, the church, to this day? The church, in the person of its Head, is in possession of the glory, yet how many dear Christians there are who have not received the inheritance! Have we really laid hold of this truth that all believers are reckoned as having crossed the Jordan, dead with Christ and risen in Him, partakers with Him of the eternal inheritance, joint-heirs with Christ? No doubt we cannot understand this or enjoy it, though in the heavenly position, and we cannot possess it unless we have reached our Shiloh ■ what God began to do at Pentecost. It is important to know what point we have reached in our own souls. How many have passed through deep distress of soul as to sin and its bondage, like Israel in Egypt! They have just reached the blood of the Lamb, having found there is no other shelter from judgment. And, through the mercy of God, they have taken shelter, though in the dark, beneath the blood-sprinkled dwelling in Egypt. There they remain in that house; truly they are safe but have never known in power what deliverance from Egypt is. Redemption, in full eternal deliverance, they have never yet known. Such souls can have no light, in that state, as to what Shiloh or Pentecost mean.

Others may have traveled a step further. They may see distinctly they were slaves of sin and Satan and, as such, may have learned how they found shelter by the blood of the Lamb and more ■ deliverance: Yes, they have been separated from Satan's kingdom and power through the death of Christ. But they have not yet learned the surpassing grace of Ephesians 2:1-22, Colossians 2:1-23 and Colossians 3:1-4. Have you passed through Jordan with the true Ark, which is Christ? This will introduce you to God's thoughts of His assembly now on earth and what He expects from it. "And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" God had given them that goodly land, but they had not taken possession. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. How long have we been slack to go to possess our heavenly inheritance?

Shiloh, then, was not only the true ground of worship ■ there Jehovah dwelt amidst the people ■ but it was also the center of all operations and conquests. From thence three men from each tribe were to go forth and mark out the land that remained. "And they shall divide it into seven parts." "Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the Lord our God." They were solemnly charged to bring the description there to Shiloh before the Lord. And they did so "and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh." Thus they went forth from Shiloh, and they "divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of

the congregation" (Joshua 18:1; Joshua 18:8-10; Joshua 19:51).

Here, then, we have two important principles: The tabernacle being set up at Shiloh as the dwelling-place of God, it becomes the center of gathering for worship, and also it is the center from which all operations have their source. It was so with the assembly once set up at Pentecost; it became the dwelling-place of God (Ephesians 2:19-22). "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." All believers were gathered together, were builded together, and from this center, even from the Lord by the Spirit, all service had its spring and power. (See Acts 13:1-4.) The land was divided at Shiloh, and all cases for judgment were brought there before the Lord. It was there the fathers of the Levites came to Joshua and unto the heads of the tribes, and there they spake unto them (Joshua 21:1-3). Was not this also, in like manner, in the beginning of the church? (See Acts 4:32-37.) The Holy Spirit had come down from heaven, had formed the assembly, and had united it to Christ in heaven ■ had come to dwell and abide in the midst of the one church. The new Shiloh was set up in the wilderness of this world ■ the church, the dwelling-place of God the Holy Spirit. Oh, if our hearts realized this, would it not be enough to settle any and every question brought before Him?

We shall now find that Shiloh was not only a striking picture of the assembly, as Shiloh was first set up in the land, after the full accomplishment of redemption, but also of its subsequent history. Those are very significant words at the end of the book of Joshua: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel." This closes the history of the Acts of the Apostles. While the apostles and the elders who had seen the works of the Holy Spirit lived and also those elders who outlived the apostles, the assembly served the Lord and waited with joyful expectation for His return.

We now turn over the leaf to the book of Judges, and what a picture of the failures of the church! Who that knows anything of history can question the rapid increase of evil in the professing church? Let us not forget that all through the book of Judges, the tabernacle remained at Shiloh. And, in like manner, all through the dark history of Christendom, the Holy Spirit has remained in it, however grieved. When Joshua and all that generation were gathered unto their fathers, "there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about" (Judges 2:8-12). Is not this a sad picture of the church, as seen in its responsibility on earth? How soon it linked itself with the idolatry of the nations of the earth. The presence of the Holy Spirit was soon practically set aside ■ yes, complete redemption was almost forgotten. Where is it to be found in the so-called fathers of the church?

How little is said about the tabernacle at Shiloh during the days of the judges! Yet it was surely there. It is not until chapter 18 that it is even named. "And they set them up Micah’s graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh" (Judges 18:31). Have there been no graven images set up in the so-called church? Yet the Holy Spirit is still here. Again, we find a man going up to the house of the Lord. (See Judges 19:18.) And what scenes of cruelty and fearful wickedness did he witness! This aroused all Israel, and they gathered together and came

unto the house of the Lord and wept and sat there before the Lord and fasted. (See Judges 20:23-27.) What terrible destruction fell on Benjamin that day! This ended in leaving Benjamin without wives. And again Shiloh comes before us ■ yes, its locality needed to be accurately described. "Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah." And it was as the daughters of Shiloh came out of the city to dance, every man caught his wife, to go to the land of Benjamin.

Thus, in the book of Judges, we see the sad downward failure of Israel, with times of revival and deliverance, from time to time, as God raised up deliverers, but the very locality of the tabernacle at Shiloh had to be pointed out. Very, very little is said or known, apparently, about the presence of Jehovah and the place where He recorded His name. Is it not equally so in what is called church history, after the first century? Failure, departure and worldliness crept in, but the true church of God, as seen in the Acts and Epistles, was scarcely named ■ scarcely known. Yes, the heavenly calling and principles of the church were so effaced from men's minds that, even in this day, not a few lie in wait and steal them, as the sons of Benjamin stole the daughters of Shiloh. Yes, how many steal precious truths, not to remain at Shiloh, the gathering together unto Him, but to take and trade with them in the land of Benjamin! Yes, the books of Joshua and Judges read like a prophetic sketch of the church, as seen in its history on earth.

Before we proceed to that deeply interesting and solemn warning of our subject ■ Shiloh ■ as found in 1 Samuel, let us ask, beloved brethren in Christ everywhere, Are we not slack, in every sense, in possessing the land? The whole period of the history of Christendom, before its final apostasy, and perhaps into it, is also divided into seven divisions, or epochs, of its history (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22). But even at this time, how many towns and villages are there where the Lord's people have not got possession of the heavenly inheritance! Are we not slack to go up to help them? Yes, souls need help all along the way from the darkness of Egypt to Shiloh. Yes, do we not all need to arise and take possession? If we are at Shiloh, God's center, still let us remember we are in the midst of enemies, far more subtle than the children of Canaan. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). In Elkanah we have an Israelite who fully recognized the place of Jehovah in Shiloh, as He says, "Where I set My name at the first" (Jeremiah 7:12). This is the more cheering, after all the failure and forgetfulness of their history during the period of the judges. Was it not sad that they should so soon turn aside from the center that God had set up ■ His dwelling-place among them ■ and set up their own idolatry in their high places? Is it not still more strangely sad that the church should have so soon, and for so long, turned aside from God's center, God's gathering-place ■ the Person of Christ ■ and set up churches of men's own in every land?

After all the forgetfulness and departure, Shiloh was the only place where the name of the Lord was recorded. It was as yet still the same. The mercy-seat, cherubim, golden altar, candlestick, laver, altar of burnt-offering ■ all were there as at the first. Thither did Elkanah bring his whole house, all his sons and daughters. There they came to worship. "This man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh." Is not this a refreshing sight? They came to that place where all Israel had been gathered together in the days of Joshua, as we have seen. Has there not been a little reviving in our day, after the true Shiloh had been almost

forgotten? Have not a few believers been gathered together to worship even to the name of the Lord Jesus, in His presence, owning the presence of the Holy Spirit, as in the days of the apostles? After centuries of forgetfulness, like the days of the judges, have not souls been awakened to inquire what is and where is Shiloh, that is, the quiet, true place of the assembly of God? Shiloh means "quiet" or "peaceful" ■ and, oh, the blessed peace of being in His presence as worshippers! Yes, the true Shiloh is wherever two or three are gathered to His name. For a time the scepter has departed from Judah and the period of gathering together to Him has come, even as it will be in another way in a future day.

Happy is the Elkanah of our day, who, with his whole household, is gathered to the true Shiloh, even unto the Lord, to worship. There is one remarkable member of this household ■ we might say a true Philadelphian in her day. Shall we now observe closely Hannah before the Lord at Shiloh? She was a despised woman, of little strength, and, to look at, of little worth, for she had no child, "and her adversary also provoked her sore." She was of a grieved spirit, but she held fast the word. What earnestness of prayer! She asked for what she wished to devote to the Lord in Shiloh. She "prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." And "she continued praying before the Lord." "Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." She was greatly misunderstood, even by Eli the priest. There were others at Shiloh ■ we will notice them soon ■ but how far do we answer to Hannah at Shiloh? She could say, "I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." The Lord heard her cry, and Samuel was the gift in answer to her prayer at Shiloh. The Lord’s presence was very dear to Hannah at Shiloh and to all Elkanah’s household. And what was the inmost desire of Hannah for her precious babe? Let her tell us. She says, "I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever." And she "brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young." She does not say, He is only a child; I will leave him at home in Ramah. No, she brings him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. Is there no voice in this to us? Have we less privileges, as to our children now, than Hannah had then? Then, as now, it was to the overcomer. Who would have thought that sorrowful Hannah was the overcomer? Read her triumphant song of faith ■ what a key-note: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." Faith soars beyond all difficulties, evils and judgments and looks right on to Israel’s ■ no, Messiah’s ■ glory. Here, then, is one, not only on true ground, at the place where the Lord had placed His name ■ the true gathering-place and center of all Israel ■ but she is in the state of heart suitable to that place.

It is sometimes said we do not see that those gathered to the Lord, as in the beginning, are any better than others ■ evil shows itself there as elsewhere. In plain words this means, It is no matter whether we do the will of the Lord or not. After all the evil recorded in the Book of Judges, was not Shiloh still the only place Jehovah owned as His dwelling-place? The ark was still there, and those who sought the Lord, like Elkanah, came there. There Hannah prayed and worshipped. There she brought her young child. There she rejoiced in the Lord. The more we study the case of Hannah at Shiloh, the more we must own it to be of the Lord.

Now let us look at the warning this scripture affords. There was terrible evil at Shiloh, evil that must be and was judged. Could we have a more striking contrast than Hannah and the sons of Eli? In one case, we have a worshipper filled with joy in the Lord; in the other, the most daring wickedness ■ yes, wickedness that refused to be restrained and carelessness that neglected to restrain wickedness.

Yes, all this is a picture of the once one assembly of God and now the great house of Christendom, but to the faith of Hannah or her child, it was still as yet Shiloh, the quiet place of communion with God-Jehovah. Did not the Lord speak there to Samuel? "And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (1 Samuel 3:21). Shiloh was the gathering-place of Israel, and however few were gathered to Him ■ yes, to even one ■ He thus reveals Himself. It is so where two or three are gathered to Him now. It is in Shiloh, so to speak, He appears again. He reveals Himself to those really gathered to Himself in a way unknown elsewhere, and this by the word of the Lord. No one will question that there may be in our closing day two persons, both, as to position, gathered on true ground, both professedly in the dwelling-place of God. The one hears the distinct voice of the Lord by the Word; the other does not hear ■ has no real communication of God's thoughts. How is this? Have we not the answer here at Shiloh?

There is the stout and aged Eli, the very priest of Jehovah. Yes, age, antiquity, office, authority ■ all these he has, and he is in the dwelling-place of God, but he does not hear a word. He had grieved the Lord by the allowance of evil. Is it so with any of us? Can we hear and understand the voice of the Lord if allowing evil? Impossible!

There was another person in the same house of the Lord. But what a contrast! It was the little child, Samuel. Are we like this little child, or like the ancient, aged Eli? There were two things very striking in the case of Samuel. He had been first weaned before he was presented to the Lord in Shiloh. You see that man of importance, who fails to hear the voice of the Lord in the assembly gathered to Him in Shiloh. Ah, he never was weaned. Have you been weaned, or did you take a place at Shiloh with your heart still linked with the world and like it in your ways? It was after Hannah had weaned him she "brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young" (1 Samuel 1:24). "And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli."

Samuel was not only weaned, but he was presented to the Lord through death. Have we been separated from the world and from all human religious efforts to improve the flesh by the cross of Christ? Weaned, dead with Christ and as a little child listening to the voice of the Lord in His Word: It is not enough to be in the right place or position at Shiloh.

But, oh, to be a little child; yes, to be nothing, with the ear open to hear what the Spirit speaks. Lord, search us by this Thy Word! If we are treading in the steps of Eli, we cannot have communion with the Lord. Oh, to be as a little child, weaned ■ yes, presented to our God through death! And notice, it is only as such that we can be used in communicating the word of the Lord to others. Read, again, 1 Samuel 3:16-21. Whatever the Lord reveals to us in His Word we must faithfully declare to others, even to the Elis of this day. Judgment was at the very doors of Shiloh. And is not judgment at the very doors of Christendom? Surely holiness became the house of the Lord at Shiloh! But what has Christendom become? And what will it yet become? Soon will Ichabod ("The glory is departed"; 1 Samuel 4:21) be written upon it. And how terrible its destruction may be seen in Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24. But, beloved children of God, very great are our privileges during the brief moments that remain. If we are little, we shall grow. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him." Oh, to thus grow in grace and in the blessed consciousness of the Lord's presence with us, where two or three are gathered to His name. There is no doubt that men are more determined than ever to reject the testimony of the Lord

Jesus. But the Lord did "let none of His words fall to the ground." May we be fully persuaded of this that the Lord will let none of His words, at this time of rejection, fall to the ground. Judgment must begin at the house of the Lord. In one sense it has begun ■ the whole church is no longer gathered as one to the Lord. The ark has been in the hand of the Philistines, and the little Samuels have to go to Ramah. Ramah was his home. And while the ark has outwardly been a long time now with the Philistines ■ the world, those in Canaan but not of it ■ yet the Lord has never failed to find a Ramah, a blessed home, for His twos and threes in His presence, and to them that home is their Shiloh.

How blessed, even at this day, is the home of His dear presence! Though Christendom be like ancient Shiloh with little that bears the slightest likeness to its original design, how blessed to any who are truly weaned and presented to God, through death with Christ, to find Him with them in Ramah. In conclusion, we would desire to carefully consider those words, "And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord." Let us be careful, on the one hand, not to disconnect the word from the Person of the Lord and so become mere intellectual students of Scripture, which gives no spiritual power to the soul, and, on the other hand, be equally careful lest we separate the Lord from His Word and thus become fanatical and trust in feelings or visions or so-called inward light. May we see and hear the Lord Himself in every scripture. Thus may the Lord reveal Himself to us by the word of the Lord!

It will be seen in Hannah’s song that the Lord is before her soul in every thought; His salvation and His Person fill her soul with joy, at a time when there was everything to discourage in Israel. So may it be with us. C. Stanley

114. Recollections of the Last Days of Charles Stanley.

Recollections of the Last Days of Charles Stanley.

H. H. Snell, June, 1890.

London: G. Morrish, 20 Paternoster Square, E.C.

It is not long since that Mr. Stanley, who has been well known for many years all over the country as a preacher and writer, published a little volume* to show how remarkably God had led him ever since his conversion.

{*“Incidents of Gospel Work, showing how the Lord has led me.” — G. Morrish, London.}

Nothing more is attempted now than giving a few details of his closing days, which many have desired to have: and, in doing this, our chief object is to make it profitable to the living rather than to eulogise the Lord’s beloved and honoured servant, who, we are assured, laboured and spread the savour of Christ, with expectation of reward at His appearing. Few have had the privilege of preaching the gospel of God for upwards of fifty-five years, and fewer still, who, within two days of falling asleep, have closed their gospel testimony with a more earnest appeal to the unsaved to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and to rest on God’s word as giving to every believer the divine certainty of eternal salvation. For three years, or more, he had been now and then interrupted in his public ministry by serious attacks of illness. And early in the autumn of last year, in walking to the meeting-room one Lord’s Day morning, he was suddenly seized with such an attack of giddiness and faintness that he said he felt as if he were dying, and would have fallen had he not laid hold of an iron railing which was close at hand; at that moment, however, his soul was happily lighted up with the words, “In thy presence is fulness of joy.” This illness laid him aside from preaching for some time, though still able to write for the press, and carry on correspondence with many of the loved servants of our Lord both at home and abroad.

Toward the end of September last, he went to Southport for change of air, and often suffered while there from attacks of faintness. It was feared then that he would not preach much more, and his own expressed thought at that time was, that his public evangelistic labours were drawing to a close, but that, perhaps, he might be permitted of the Lord, for a little while longer, to have the privilege of ministering to his fellow believers the following scripture, Numbers 8:25-26, having greatly impressed his soul at this time. While there, he rallied much, and, after a few weeks, returned home. A little before leaving Southport, he preached with much joy in the Lord, and with the assurance of there being marks of God’s blessing accompanying the word. After his return to Rotherham, he felt so much better that he resumed preaching every now and then; but we all saw that he was far from being in his usual measure of health. In public ministry he was now led again to his favourite theme, “The Righteousness of God,” in which he was instructed beyond most, and in the proclamation of which it seems the Lord had much honoured him twenty or thirty years ago. We have been informed by several who were privileged to hear him, that his preaching was with uncommon power and profit. By gift and by grace received, he was an eminent evangelist, and

had great delight in the service, both in oral ministry and in the writing, publication, and gratuitous distribution of gospel tract's (millions of which, for many years, have been spread almost all over the world), and, during the last ten years, he was editor of the monthly serial Things New and Old. He contended earnestly for the divine authority of the holy scriptures, laboured also to build up the children of God in their most holy faith, and was careful to have nothing less before him than the blessing of the whole church of God. To the importance and scriptural teaching of this, he often referred. His ministry, in a word, was concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. He well knew that the Holy Ghost was the Glorifier and Testifier of Him.

It was early in March that he paid us his last visit, and remained for several hours. He then appeared to be so much better, so full of energy, and so free from weakness and faintness, that during a considerable portion of the time he read aloud some extracts of a correspondence on great principles of divine truth which had lately interested him; and he seemed to have regained so much of his accustomed measure of health, that we began to think we had been mistaken as to the diseased heart having arrived at the stage we had supposed. Within a few days after, we visited him, when we found him again fairly well. In his accustomed brotherly kindness, he met us at the Railway Station, drove us to his house, where we had a happy time of prayer and conference, and, on leaving, he again accompanied us into the town in order that we might see as much of each other as we could. Little did we then think that it would be the last time we should meet together for prayer and conference on the things of our Lord Jesus Christ. But so it was. Though he was our hearty fellow-labourer in the Lord's work we did not often meet, because we had our separate lines of service, though, for many years, we were in almost constant correspondence, and often asked each other's prayers, especially as to teaching and preaching the Lord Jesus Christ, and any other matters in His blessed service which might be pressing on us. Thank God, the intimacy between us, as the Lord's servants, which was begun in 1867, was never broken; only, as time rolled on, it became more spiritual, and more truly christian fellowship. The reason, by God's gracious blessing, was this: as a rule, we never met at each other's houses and separated without bowing before God in prayer and thanksgiving. So mutual was the felt importance of this, that even if the interview was necessarily short, one or the other would say, "We must have prayer before we part." His prayers seemed usually to be, not only those of a man who loved the Lord Jesus, but to be the utterances of one who was very near Him. If we had to speak of the failings or sins of others, we usually reminded each other that our prayer more than ever should be, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!" His Last Published Tract. The last tract he published was entitled, "Be ye reconciled to God." We subjoin an extract, because of its earnest appeal to souls to be reconciled to God, and to find all they need in our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 you will notice that the deep enjoyment of divine certainty, even in the presence of death, showed the same peace. (Vers. 1-9.) Then the fact that we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. Are we justified? It will be manifested then. Are we reconciled ? It will be manifested then. Blessed thoughts! Hence we are perfectly free to labour for Christ, and He will give us each our reward. We know the terror of the Lord to such as are not justified and reconciled, and thus we persuade men. Only mark, that we are made manifest unto God. We have to do with God; and if we know that we are reconciled to God, all is as clear now to faith, as it will be then to sight. Still it is most important to think of being manifested there. Are you quite happy about that ?

“There is also new creation brought before us as a present thing: ‘Therefore, if any man be in Christ, a new creature [or new creation].’ But is this present ? Yes, ‘old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,’ etc. . . He sees you in Christ, a new creation. Oh, fellow believer, the Holy Ghost declares that God hath reconciled you to Himself. Will you doubt Him? Surely it is only as we believe God that we can proclaim the true gospel, and beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, to cease their fighting and rebellion.

“But there is still the difficulty of sin in me. Does God reconcile my sinful nature to Himself? Surely not! Now mark the last verse, ‘For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [or become] the righteousness of God in him.’ Compare this with another scripture: ‘God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin], condemned sin in the flesh.’ (Romans 8:3.) In both places, all is of God. If the Holy Son of God was thus made sin, a sacrifice for sin, as well as bare our sins in His own body on the tree, then both our sins, and sin the root, have been dealt with by God, in the blessed Person of His Son, so that before Him there is nothing left to condemn. ‘There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’ Mark, it is not in us, in ourselves, but in Him. He has been made sin; He has endured its awful judgment; and in Him we are a new creation. In Him we are the righteousness of God. In Him, whiter than snow. In Him, the believer is a justified and a reconciled person. And all is of God… If you are a believer, this is as true of you as of the believer 1800 years ago. Why should you doubt? And will all this be displayed in us when in the glory? Certainly; that is, we shall be the display of the righteousness of God as in Him. Nothing short of this would satisfy the perfect love of God to us. So that as to judgment, all fear is gone for the child of God. What we are now, such we shall be presented, ‘holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight.’ Oh, take care that no one moves you away from this certain hope of the gospel. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we shall be like Him when He appears. (1 John 3:2.) Oh, how blessed to be manifested, justified, and reconciled, without spot before God. But do not look within at your own state, or your own righteousness for all this, but at the testimony of God to His risen Son at His right hand. Think what it cost Him, that you might become the righteousness of God in Christ. If an unconverted soul should read this, I entreat you to cease your striving; be ye reconciled to God. The work is done; peace is made by the blood of the cross; Jesus risen from the dead, shows His hands and His side, and says, Peace be unto you.” His Last Gospel Preaching. On Lord’s Day evening, March 2nd, beloved C. S. preached the gospel of the grace of God in Sheffield, and evidently with great joy and the consciousness of the presence and blessing of the Lord. We happened to be in the West of England at that time, and preaching at the same hour in Taunton; and in writing to him the next day, spoke of the help and comfort the Lord had given us by His Spirit in declaring the gospel from Romans 5:8-11. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation]." He replied the next day, March 4th, saying, “I think I never felt more the deep reality of the gospel than on Lord’s Day evening, and from, the same words as you had at Taunton. I got ready to go to see you this morning, but was seized with cold just at the time for starting. So I have deferred my visit. The cold affects me much. But we are

in the Lord's hands." . . . Referring to the truth, he added, "I feel more and more, it must be Christ and the whole church of God… May He lead us in His paths." From some of those who were present that evening, we heard that his word was with great power. This was the last time he preached the gospel on a Lord's Day, and it was evidently, both to speaker and hearers, a very solemn time. No doubt, he felt (as the Lord's earnest servants, advanced in life, must do) the possibility that each time they have the sweet privilege of announcing the glad tidings it may be the last, and that, not only on account of the uncertainty of life, but because of the coming of our Lord; for His coming cannot be far off, it must be near, and, perhaps, nearer than any of us think. At any rate, it is a most blessed manifestation of the goodness and mercy of God, to find, after more than fifty years of preaching up and down England, Scotland, and Ireland, the life-giving, soul-saving gospel of His grace, that any of His servants find more liberty and joy in announcing it at the end of their course than when they began. And why? Because they increasingly realise that it is God's glad tidings, that it is concerning His Son, and that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Precious considerations! We believe that no tongue can describe the delight the Lord's servants have when they see sinners broken down before the Saviour, and, through His cleansing blood, having to do with God. We read that in the presence of the angels of God, there is joy over one sinner that repenteth.

All who knew beloved C. S., can testify that his preaching was not a mere rehearsal of the way of salvation, or a formal exposition of the word, or trafficking in unfelt doctrines; but when he spoke of the Saviour's love, His death, blood-shedding and triumphant resurrection, his whole soul seemed longing for his Master to be honoured in the salvation of sinners, the deliverance of those who were in bondage, and the building up of His saints. On March 10th, the anniversary of his birthday, he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. A., saying. "I have entered my sunny 70th year. . . I would remember David in all his troubles, and sing with him Psalms 34:1-22. . . I feel assured, however stormy may be the path of the little that remains, I am entering my sunny year of 70, and shall in a few more days at most, be in the kingdom and the glory of Him who has loved me, and died for me. Oh, His mercy, and His grace upon grace for these past 69 years, He only can know, for it is infinite. We ought to expect Him today, and this is the cure for every care of tomorrow." His Last Address to Christians. On Thursday evening, March 13th, he felt so much better, that he went to Sheffield, and gave an address to Christians. His subject was, "The Lord's Coming." He commenced the meeting that evening, by reading, with much emphasis, the hymn beginning with—

"'A little while' the Lord shall come, And we shall wander here no more;

He'll take us to His Father's home, Where He for us has gone before— To dwell with Him and see His face, And sing the glories of His grace." etc.

After the hymn was sung, he prayed earnestly, for God's guidance and power by the Holy Ghost in ministering His truth, and for blessing to the hearers. He then took up the burden of Dumah, the words of scorn of those who hated God's people, however low their condition might be, like others who said, " Where is thy God ?" or the scoffers now, who say to us, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Turning to Isaiah 21:1-17, he read, "The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come." (Vers. 11, 12.) He then

showed from various scriptures, that the hope of God's ancient people, the Jews, is the coming of Messiah and His reigning over them on the earth, and that this will be preceded by judgment and great tribulation — a night of weeping before the morning of joy, when they will be peacefully sitting under their own vine and fig tree. Then will be fulfilled the scripture that Jesus will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously. (Isaiah 24:23.) He pointed out how scripture contrasts the hope of God's earthly people with the Christian's hope of our Lord coming at any moment with a shout to take us up to meet Him in the air, and conduct us, His heavenly people, to our Father's house; and that our present posture should be one of watching and waiting for Him. We shall see His face, be with Him and like Him for ever. It may be very soon, for "the night is far spent." In connection with this he read and dwelt on 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. He also said, If any of God's people present are in trial and sorrow, he would ask them to remember David at Ziklag. Not only had he lost almost everything he had in the world, but "the people spake of stoning him," yet withal we are told that "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," and in three days he was actually in the kingdom. How very near our Lord's coming for us may now be. Let us encourage ourselves in Him, and look for His coming!

He said to a friend sitting near that evening, "I am very unwell. Shall I give out, that I will preach here next Lord's Day evening, if well enough?" "No," replied the friend; "say, if the Lord will." This he did in a most emphatic way, and added, "If I come, I shall hope to preach on the righteousness of God." But this was his last public address to the saints. It was a remarkably solemn time, and he spoke with great calmness, There was a large company present. Those who knew him, and loved him, little thought it would be the last time they would hear his voice. But so it was. The address had been very impressive, and his hearers were made to feel that, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

After this, he continued unwell, and kept indoors, but often writing to us and to others on the things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ. The day after he returned from Sheffield, Friday, March 14th, he felt so unwell, that he had serious doubts of being able to preach on the following Lord's Day as he had hoped. He wrote, "I have felt very ill in the night; my throat so bad that I could scarcely speak . . . my voice is still bad. The Lord will give strength if He will have me go to Sheffield on Lord's Day." He was, however, too unwell to come. In the following week, March 19th, he wrote, "I am feeling very poorly. My cold is rather worse. All is my Father's best, as dear H. said, and it is true for me." Referring to a paper for the press he had just revised for a friend, he proposed there should be "added to it a little warm gospel of divine certainty for souls." His Last Address after the Lord's Supper. On Lord's Day, March 23rd, he was much better. He wrote to us, "We had a happy time this morning around the Lord's table. I am thankful to say the Lord enabled me, to be there. My throat is a great deal better, but I still feel it is rest the Lord would give me. He enabled me to speak a few words at the meeting. From a friend who was present, and had known him well for many years, we heard that his ministry that morning was exceedingly sweet and profitable. His subject was, "The Good Shepherd," from John 10:1-42; and he dwelt mostly on verses 14, 15, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." This friend said, that his address that morning was most striking, particularly on the good Shepherd saying, "I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine as the Father knows me." (New Translation.) He referred also to Psalms 23:1-6, to show the present activities of the Shepherd toward His sheep,

after bringing before his hearers His personal glory and perfections. On Wednesday, March 26th, we received from him an affectionate note, mostly in reference to the Lord's work and the teaching of scripture on certain subjects which were particularly exercising his mind at that time. We had hoped to have heard that he was very much better, but, in reference to this, he only said, "I feel I shall not be well enough to be out at night to-morrow," (alluding to his proposed lecture in Sheffield that evening), and added, "May the Lord be with you in a special way!" On this same day, March 26th, his beloved daughter, Mrs A., and her husband, paid him a visit, and remained until the following day. How little did they think that this would be the last time they would see their dear father before he departed to be with the Lord! Mr. A. says, "He met us on the road before reaching the house, his face beaming with joy and welcome. He at once said, 'You have come to see me in my sunny 70th year.' He repeated several times during our visit, 'my sunny 70th year.' He appeared weary, as if from overwork, though bright and hopeful.

"The following morning (Thursday) at the gathering of the household for reading the word of God and prayer, dear father read very impressively Psalms 46:1-11, and appeared to feel deeply every sentence. He spoke there from very sweetly, emphasising that in the world we must have sorrow and tribulation, but the believer, resting in the Lord, should not 'fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.' He dwelt with much joy on verses 4, 5, 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God;' and in conclusion, exhorted us in all our sorrows and troubles to remember that 'the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.'

"His prayer, after the exposition of scripture, was very touching, pouring out his soul in its desires and thanksgivings to God his Father in sweet child-like confidence. He seemed to remember many things before the Lord in supplication, and, at the close, prayed especially for each of his children and their families, separately and severally by name, his heart going out in tender, loving affection after each.

"Afterwards, when walking with dear father in the garden, he remarked, 'I do not think I shall be long down here in this world.' He was looking upward toward heaven, when he spoke, and there was something in the tone of his voice that so filled me with emotion, that I could offer no reply. Shortly after this we left him, for the last time bidding him farewell, little thinking that we should no more see his bright, happy face, or hear his loving voice again." Three days after this he was with the Lord. His beloved daughter, Mrs. C, also came on Thursday, the 27th, and their parents greatly enjoyed having their two daughters with them. It was all, doubtless, graciously so ordered by the Lord, and this brief, but happy visit will ever be remembered with thankfulness. The Secret of True Fellowship with God's Servants.

Though we were very much of one mind, we did not see alike in everything, yet the intimacy between us not only continued year after year, but it grew in brotherly confidence. And why? Because, as we have said, we bowed together before the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving. Often too, we remembered each other when alone in prayer, according to that scripture, "Pray one for another." We have sometimes ventured to say, when we have seen some of the Lord's people very intimate with each other, that it will not last, but probably be connected with bitter fruits, because it seemed more like the social element of the world than that of "fellowship in the Spirit." Alas! how often have we seen sad results. For saints to love each other in the Lord, care for each

other for His sake as members one of another, and in the Spirit of Christ to bear each other's burdens, weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice, is very different from mere intimacy of association. When the Lord is before souls as to this, we may be quite sure there will be a coming together before Him, and, in prayerful dependence and thanksgiving, owning Him as the alone power by the Spirit for "building up," and for being "builded together" according to God.

We remember, about twenty years ago, visiting a large city, where two very able and gifted servants of the Lord were in fellowship, and giving themselves wholly to the work of labouring in word and doctrine. We called on one of them, and, in course of conversation, inquired if he and the other brother ever met together for prayer, and the reply was. "No." We then said, "You may be quite sure that God, however He may bless us individually, will never uphold us as fellow-labourers in His service, unless we come together before Him to guard and bless us as such." In this instance, we had painfully to hear that coldness and distance seemed increasingly to characterise them. Those who knew the beloved servant of the Lord, the reminiscences of whose last days we are recording, would unhesitatingly say, He was emphatically a man who loved and valued prayer. All those who pursue a path of dependence and prayer because it becomes us and honours God, will surely find that word fulfilled in their happy experience, "Them that honour me, I will honour." We may be quite sure that God only is the Source and Sustainer by His word and Spirit of all true christian fellowship; and when this is not practically owned, it proves that such are not going on as to it in faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and if the intimacy should continue, it will sooner or later degenerate into an amiable kind of social or religious intercourse without being spiritual or profitable. The Last Funeral He Attended. On Friday, the 28th of March, our dear departed brother was well enough to attend the funeral of one who had long been in fellowship, and for whom he had much regard. He was a working man, very much respected, and C. S. remembered that he had been recommended to his employers by him thirty-five years ago. This was the last funeral that he attended, and it was in the same cemetery in which his own body was deposited only a few days after. That day he was fresh and manifestly, happy in the Lord, but it was observed by one present, that he appeared unusually impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. The service began by a brother giving out the hymn: —

"We have a home above, From all defilement free; A mansion which eternal love Prepared our rest to be.

"The Father's gracious hand Has built that blest abode; From everlasting it was planned, The dwelling place of God.

"The Saviour's precious blood Has made our title sure;

He passed through death's dark raging flood To make our rest secure."

Then C. S. read the first few verses of 2 Corinthians 12:1-21, and said, "I knew a man in Christ thirty-five years ago," referring to the departed, whose body was then before them, and spoke of his godly deportment and christian-like behaviour toward those with whom he had been associated in his daily employment. He then, with great solemnity, referred to the many sudden deaths which had lately taken place in the neighbourhood, and with what a loud voice they spoke to us of eternity. "This is Friday," said he, perhaps, before another week is ended, some of us may

be buried. If death come, are you ready ?" (There was a solemn silence for several seconds.) He then went on to say, "Through mercy, infinite mercy, I can say, I am; are you ? [A pause.] Perhaps all here could not truthfully sing the hymn we have just had, 'We have a home above.' Are there any present who could not sincerely say, 'We have a home above ?' [A pause.] If so, let us turn to the word of God, and see how you can be fitted to sing now, as under the all-searching eye of God, 'We have a home above.' Our beloved brother then read, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14-15.) He read also, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." (Hebrews 10:5-18.) Then he turned to the crowd of hearers, and preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection — His finished work upon the cross, His triumph over death and Satan, and His coming again to take His own to heavenly glory. Then he read, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:1-8.) Some men tell us, said he, and they are learned men too, that we cannot know with certainty whether we are saved or not; and some even preach that we cannot be sure as to the forgiveness of sins till the judgment of the great white throne. But what does the word of God say? Then pointing to the first verse of the portion just read, he repeated, with solemn emphasis, "' We know, (thus we have the assurance) that we have a building of God (yes, we have it), an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' 'We have' then, this heavenly and eternal building of God, and 'we know' we have it in the heavens if we die. Yes, 'we have a building of God,' a house, 'our house.' God hath 'wrought us' for it, 'an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' What divine certainty God's word gives those who believe on His Son! 'We have a

building of God.' Having received the forgiveness of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is given to indwell us, 'therefore,' it is added, 'we are always confident.' Observe, not 'always doubting,' as some say, but 'always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Does it say we are confident because of what we feel ? Certainly not, but by knowing it on the authority of God's word of eternal and unchanging truth, that because of the finished work of eternal redemption, and the gift of the eternal Spirit, we are always confident." He then prayed. At the grave he again referred to 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, when the Lord will raise the bodies of His saints to meet Him in the air, and the following hymn was sung:

"Christ the Lord will come again, None shall wait for Him in vain We shall then His glory see;

He who died to set us free.

"Then when the Archangel's voice Calls the sleeping saints to rise, Rising millions shall proclaim Blessings on the Saviour's name.

"This is our redeeming God, Ransom'd hosts shall shout aloud:

'Praise, eternal praise be given To the Lord of earth and heaven.'"

Earnest prayer was then offered by our brother Mr. C. for the salvation of the unconverted who were present, many of whom had been fellow-workmen of the deceased, and after committing the body to the Lord's safe keeping till He come the people separated.

How remarkable that this honoured servant of the Lord should have said at the last funeral he attended, "Perhaps, before another week is ended some of us maybe buried… If death come… through infinite mercy, I can say that I am ready." In less than forty-eight hours after this he himself had departed to be with Christ, and in less than a week his body was laid in the same cemetery where he had so solemnly spoken. And yet it is not to be wondered at, if we only consider that those who live in prayerful dependence on the Lord, and in communion with Him, are led to speak sometimes beyond what could have been premeditated. Nor can we forbear at this time kindly asking the reader of these lines the same question, If death come, are you ready ? Do not say, Yes, unless your authority is founded wholly on the blood of Christ, and the word of God. Do not look at yourself, your feelings, your experience, good or bad, but look wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work in His death and blood-shedding on Calvary. Take your true place before God as a guilty, helpless sinner, justly exposed to His condemnation, and approach God by the blood of His Son, and you need not fear; for God delights to welcome, bless, save, and comfort those who thus honour the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. You cannot be saved by works, either wholly or in part, for scripture says, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Happy those, who simply resting before God on the blood of Jesus, can truly say, "My hope is built on nothing less Than Christ my Lord and righteousness I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name; On Christ, the solid rock, I stand, All other ground is sinking sand." His Last Gospel Paper. On Saturday, March 29th, our beloved brother wrote a stirring gospel paper for Things New and Old. It was on the words of our Lord Jesus, "I have compassion on the multitude." He sought to show how compassionate our hearts should be toward the thousands round about us who are still

in their sins, and going on the road to everlasting destruction. We make a few quotations from it to show how graciously God kept the heart of His servant fresh and fervent in the work of the gospel to the last day. On this day, March 29th, exactly 55 years, to a day, had elapsed, since he first preached from “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life;” and two days before he departed to be with Christ, he was at a funeral, and preached to a crowd, as we have seen, Jesus and the resurrection and His coming, and showed from scripture the ground of divinely given assurance as to the certainty of eternal salvation; so that up to, his last day on earth he was occupied in preaching, or in writing for the press, the same precious gospel.

Extracts From His Last Paper.

It is well to remember that Jesus in these days, is the same Jesus as in those days described in Mark 8:1-38. Let us see what He was then, so that we may know a little better what He is now; and what He would have us to be now as His representatives on earth… ‘The multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat.’ Is not this a fact now ?… But mark, the starting point is, ‘Jesus called his disciples unto him.’ What a question this would be to every preacher in this land. Have you heard the call of Jesus ? Have you come unto Him? Do you know Him? You cannot be a river of water, if you have not come and drank yourself, If you do not know Him, you cannot break the bread of life to others. If you do not know your sins are forgiven, you will not be able, in faith, to preach forgiveness to others. If you do not know Him, then just come unto, Him, He has something to say unto you. He says, as it were, ‘I want to tell you how I feel about those millions of lost souls in that world where you at present dwell. I have compassion on the multitude. I have been offered up a propitiation on the cross. I freely offered up myself the sacrifice. I am the mercy-seat. God my Father is just and righteous in sending a free pardon to those millions, and you have never told them. You have never made the proclamation of forgiveness of sins in my name to millions within your reach. I have compassion on the multitude.’

There was a large company that had been with Him three days, and He says, ‘have nothing to eat.’ And all around are great numbers of readers of this paper, multitudes of professors around Jesus, very busy in religious activities, but they have nothing to cat. They have sacraments and outward services, periodicals and religious books, and still they may have nothing to eat. They are unconverted, are in their sins, guilty before God, hastening on to judgment. And literally, no real gospel has been set before them, suited to lost, guilty, hell-deserving sinners… Is it so, dear reader ? Is your house very far from Jesus ? Is Jesus known in your house ? Is the holy perfume of His dear presence there ? If a stranger comes to your house, does he feel that Christ reigns there ? Or is it mere Sunday profession with you, and Satan and his world all the week? … But Jesus has compassion on you; He knows how it will end with you if you are not saved. When your heart shall cease to beat, and there is a hush in your house, and they whisper, He is gone; but, oh where? Will you have refused the compassion of Christ until it is too late? Where will you be? Will it be to lift up your eyes in torment? What a mercy it is, as you read this paper, that it is not yet too late. Think then, of the compassion of Jesus…

“‘He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes, and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.’ The disciples gave nothing, except what they had

received. May it ever be so with us! It is most cheering to hear of souls, in so many distant lands, being brought to sit at His feet; to sit down and rest in His dear presence, to prove His tender compassion; and then themselves to be the distributors of the bread of life. It will be so everywhere if there is fellowship with Him in His compassion for lost souls. Oh, my brethren, where should we have been but for His compassion on us? He has mercy on whom He will have mercy.

"'And they had a few small fishes, and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.' Have you a few small tracts that contain the true gospel of God ? Will you look to Him to bless them ? Can you, in faith, obey Him? He commands you to set them before those who have nothing to cat. You have now the privilege of distributing tracts in Japanese, Arabic, Chinese, Chaldaic, and many other languages; will you give them to such as have nothing for the soul to feed upon?

"Well, dear reader, have you eaten, and are you filled? If so, you will hunger no more. Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' (John 6:35.) . . . The believer knows the truth of that word, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' (1 Corinthians 1:30.) He thirsts no more. He needs nothing more to fit him for the Holiest. He is complete in Christ. . .

"Oh, blessed revelation of God, the heart of God, the love of God to a lost and guilty world! Yes, Jesus says, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' May this be true of all who read these lines— '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 Spirit of the Lord.' (2 Corinthians 3:18.)" His Last Lord's Day.

Little did any one think that that Saturday night would be his last night on earth. From what he said, it was evidently, to him, a night of deep exercise of soul before the Lord. On rising and taking his usual scripture reading alone before breakfast, he turned to Psalms 39:1-13, and was so impressed with it, that, instead of reading in the family in the usual course, he read this psalm again with his dear wife. At the accustomed time, they both went to the Lord's Day morning meeting, in the course of which he said, "Let us give thanks." He thanked the Lord Jesus above all for His death, that marvellous outflow of divine grace, and that we were privileged to be there to remember Him, and announce His death on earth once more. The death of a beloved brother a few days before, was evidently, on the minds of several present, and to it he seems to have alluded when he said something like this, "Thou, Lord Jesus, art removing Thy dear saints one by one, but Thou art soon coming to take us all away together to be for ever with Thyself." On returning to his house, he walked a little in the garden, seemed happy and cheerful. At the usual time he sat down to dine, not in his accustomed place, but very near his dear wife, and shortly afterwards he rose and went to the door for a moment; but immediately after resuming his seat, he put out his arm upon the table toward Mrs. S., his head sank upon his arm, and when his dear wife reached his side, he had departed to be with Christ.

"His spirit had fled, Painless and swift as his own desire; The soul undressed—from her mortal vest, Stepped into the car of heavenly fire, And proved how bright were the realms of light Bursting at once upon the sight." To us, scarcely anything could be more sudden, or unexpected, for during the last few days he had seemed to be improving in bodily health. Still "he was not, for the Lord

took him.” One said, “It was almost a translation.” Another said, “It reminded him of the chariot of fire and horses of fire that carried Elijah into heaven.” It was, however, so instantaneous, that he seems to have been one moment speaking to his dear wife, and the next moment with the Lord. His last ministry on earth was at the Lord’s table, and within two hours he was “with the Lord” — “absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” This is how scripture puts it; and most blessed it is to know that the Christian in his new nature, the new creation in Christ Jesus, leaves the earthly tabernacle to be “present with the Lord.” Such is death to the child of God. He was spared bodily pain, and a lingering illness on a bed of sickness, which many have; and the Lord’s words seemed to be fulfilled in him, “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” Happy those who, when consciously departing, are so looking off unto Jesus who saved them by the blood of His cross, that they do not see death. He was absent from the body, and present with his Lord, whom he had so long been constrained by His love to serve. His 69th birthday, as we have remarked, had been some days before.

Soon after his departure, a paper, written on his 47th birthday, came to hand. It had been deposited by him in a secret drawer of his business desk. It was this: “Lord, Thou knowest how long before I shall see Thee as Thou art. I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness. Let my few remaining moments be spent with Thee and for Thee, my own precious Lord. All is well, Lord, for my times are in Thy hand.” It was dated 10th of March, 1868. The Funeral. The burial took place on Thursday, April 3rd. Long before the arrival of the corpse and the procession of mourners, some hundreds had assembled in the Meeting Room in Moorgate Road, mostly saints from various places, who had long known and loved the dear departed one, and there waited in solemn silence.

After the coffin, which was borne by beloved brethren, had been quietly deposited among us, and the bereaved and their friends had taken their places, a brother prayed. Reverently approaching God, our God and Father, as a company of mourners, all feeling more or less bereaved and sensible of our loss, we could not but give thanks to Him for the grace and strength that had been given to our dear departed brother for such a long series of years in the ministry of His gospel to sinners, and His word of instruction to His saints; and also for the unshaken confidence which we have of his being now “with the Lord.” Fervent prayer was offered for the beloved widow, and for every member of the family; and also that all present might be in the position of waiting on God to learn the lessons He is now seeking to teach by the present sorrow and bereavement.

After this, five words were read from Acts 10:36, “He is Lord of all.” In remarking on this portion of God’s word, it was said, Perhaps no five words could be found within the whole compass of divine revelation which have a more searching, more personal, or more suitable application to every one present on this solemn occasion than those just read. They bring the Saviour before us as He now is on the throne of God, and reveal Him as the supreme and universal Lord— “He is Lord of all.”

He was here in lowliness and grace, and full of compassion toward men, “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” but now “The throne is His, and His by right, The highest place in heaven.” No doubt, as being the eternal Son by whom the worlds were made, as One who was before all things, the Maker of all things, Upholder of all things, the One by whom all things consist, and who is Heir of all things; the One too, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; He could rightfully lay claim in virtue of His Deity to all things. But “He is Lord of all” as having justly merited

it by “the death of the cross.” In that finished work, there was not only eternal redemption accomplished for us in infinite mercy, but there was what He did for God, and the eternal glory that it brought to Him. Man had sinned, disbelieved God, dishonoured God, turned his upon God, was without God, and consequently without hope in the world: but Jesus came into this sin-stricken, God-dishonouring world of which the devil is prince and god, and with everything against Him, and the opposition of Jews and Gentiles, He obeyed God, honoured God, vindicated God, fulfilled His word, did His will in all things, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. If Adam, when he sinned, deserved to be thrust out of the garden—the paradise on earth—what did the God-man Christ Jesus merit for such a glorious work as He accomplished when He had fulfilled all scripture, and said, “It is finished,” and, in obedience to God and love to us, bowed His head in death ? Surely nothing less than the glory of God. Therefore, we now see Him “crowned with glory and honour.” And that glory which has been given to Him as the glorified Man, blessed be His name, He has given to us. He said to His Father, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. . . And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them.” (John 17:4-5; John 17:20; John 17:22) By the Prince of Life going into death, the Holy One bearing the judgment due to us and rising out of it, He not only abolished death, and rendered null him that had the power of death, that is the devil, but all power in heaven and in earth was given to Him— power over all the living and all the dead. Hence we are told, “To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” (Romans 14:9.) In the place then of universal authority, the Head of all principality and power, the risen, ascended, glorified Man Christ Jesus, He has absolute lordship over every human being whether living or dead. Having died for all, having sent the gospel to all, having been long-suffering to all, He is now at God’s right hand “Lord of all.” There God righteously set Him. He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore [mark well this word wherefore], God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things [or beings] in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth [that is the infernal regions], and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Php 2:8-11.)

We know from scripture that the created beings in heaven bow to Jesus as Lord, “angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.” But on earth, this earth on which we are today, who bows to Jesus ? Who owns Him as his Lord ? Who looks up to Him every now and then and says, My Saviour, and Lord? Such only as have taken their true place before God as sinners justly exposed to His condemnation, and gladly receive the assurance of His unalterable word, that the blood of Christ, who is now Lord of all, was shed for many for the remission of sins.

Yet God will have Jesus owned as Lord, and confessed by every human being.

It is evident then from the word of God that every one here today will sooner or later have to do with Jesus as “Lord of all.” Those who bow to Him now as sinners to save them from the wrath to come, will find Him a present Saviour; but if they refuse Him now as Saviour, they must meet Him as Judge. When He comes out of heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire it will be not to save but to judge the living, and to put all enemies under His feet. But more than that, He is, as we have seen, Lord of the dead as well as of the living. We read, therefore, that “All that are in the

graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28-29.) What an amazing contrast are these two resurrections! Blessed for evermore are those who will be in the first resurrection!

Therefore in taking the body of the dear departed one to the grave, we do so with the fullest confidence that he is now absent from the body and present with the Lord; and are assured that He who is "Lord of the dead" will watch over that body (for the body of the believer is the purchase of the Saviour's blood as well as the soul, so that such can say He loved me and gave Himself for me), and by and by bring it forth, changed like unto His own body of glory, and take it up, re-united to the spirit, to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. We expect then to see our beloved brother again. On the authority of Holy Scripture we look to be caught up with him to meet our Lord in the air, but "the dead in Christ will rise first." Happy, indeed, and safe for ever, too, are those who now look up by faith at the Lord Jesus Christ where He is, and trust Him as their own Saviour; and such will not only say " My Lord, and my God," but will rejoice in the fact that "He is Lord of all."

After these remarks, a servant of the Lord, now on his way to New Zealand, gave thanks to God for the blessing the departed had been, under God, to so many souls, and the hundreds of times some there present had been cheered by his christian ways and words. Earnest prayer was offered that by his many writings he though dead might yet speak. Seeing also that his removal was a loss to the world as to the ministry of the Gospel, a loss to the Church also, there was fervent supplication to God to raise up others to fill up the blank occasioned by his departure. The following verses were then sung: —

"O happy morn! the Lord will come, And take His waiting people home, Beyond the reach of care; Where guilt and sin are all unknown: The Lord will come and claim His own, And place them with Him on His throne, The glory bright to share.

"The resurrection morn will break, And every sleeping saint awake, Brought forth in light again;

O morn, too bright for mortal eyes! When all the ransomed Church shall rise, And wing their way to yonder skies—

Called up with Christ to reign." At the grave, where it has been said that 700 or 800 persons were assembled, the latter part of the 4th chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians was read. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Dr. D. prayed that we might have grace and strength supplied to serve and honour our Lord while waiting for His coming. He thanked God also for the long-continued service of our departed brother, and that his beaming face, when mentioning the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, showed

how precious to His servant He was; and that with confidence and peace we placed the body in the grave until the Lord comes. A few words of prayer were added by another for God's blessing on His truth to those who had heard it that day, and again commending the bereaved and sorrowing at this time to the mercy of God, the meeting separated.

Before laying aside this paper, it would be well, perhaps, for both the christian reader and writer to inquire, How much are we enjoying the Father's perfect love, and how far are we living and acting as those who watch and wait for the coming of our Lord? The great snare for Christians today is, worldly-mindedness, notwithstanding it is so plainly written that "whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4.) But when the Father's love fills our hearts, we become lifted above the attractions and snares which we could not otherwise escape. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" he is not enjoying this sweet relationship, he does not realize that the Father loves him as He loved His Son. (1 John 2: 15; 17: 26.)

It is also clear, that if we are truly looking for the coming of our Lord, it will separate us from what dishonours Him, for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3.) May we then enjoy our Father's perfect love, walk in obedience to His word, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and waiting for His return from heaven! Such are ready when the Master calls!

sermon index

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net